CUQUIS: It's about that time

to start thinking about graduation.

And boy do I have a story

to share about my own.

♫ Pomp and Circumstance ♫

Cuquis smiles and gives a thumbs up in cap and gown.

I'm Cuquis Robledo, and I

had a difficult experience

with my college graduation in 2017.

♫ ♫ ♫

Cuquis and two friends smile together in cap and gown.

I had my cap and gown ready.

Duke University football field.

I knew our graduation

ceremony was supposed

to be held on the football field,

but I didn't realize that it

was supposed to rain that day.

Cuquis using her motorized scooter.

Normally I use a motorized scooter

to travel long distances,

and so I was planning on

using it at my ceremony

because I was going to have to walk

the length of a football field.

Panicked, because my scooter's battery

will short circuit if it gets wet,

I contacted the Disability Office

to see if they had a solution.

Their first response was:

"I imagine the main ceremony

will be out -"

"- (because we don't

need you to short circuit)."

Basically, because they didn't want

to move the ceremony inside,

I was not going to be able

to attend my own graduation.

[record scratch]

What?!

I was completely shocked

by their response.

The last thing I wanted

was to be segregated,

isolated, and not graduate

with my whole class.

I was angry.

So, if you're a student with a disability

you're going to come across issues

like this and some others.

Here are a few tips based

on my own experience

to not only ensure that

this doesn't happen to you

but to also educate your school

on how to properly accommodate.

Tip #1, know the locations

of your ceremonies.

Photo of Cuquis amidst a crowd of her fellow graduates.

Make sure that you know

where you need to be

and that these locations have

the accommodations you need.

Tip #2, write to your

Disability Office

and your administration.

When you sign up for your graduation,

write to your Disability Office

six months before graduation.

Make sure you explain what

accommodations you need

so you can participate

alongside everyone else.

Which brings me to Tip #3.

If the Disability Office

doesn't come up with a solution,

start giving ideas of your own.

When the Disability Office didn't

come up with an immediate plan,

I started suggesting my own

reasonable accommodations.

Is there a covered place

where I can park my scooter?

Can I bring an umbrella or

ponchos to cover my scooter?

It's important to know that you

can be part of the solution, too.

[crowd cheers]

Cuquis rides her motorized scooter in her graduation procession.

Luckily, I was blessed

with sunshine

on the day of my graduation

and I was able to attend.

Graduation is a time for celebration.

Always fight to be included

in any ceremony with your friends,

because you have the right

to participate in your graduation.

Cuquis celebrates in cap and gown.

Congratulations future grads!

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