

College Selection and the Admissions Process for Students with Learning Challenges

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Good Postsecondary Transition ⇔ Success

Options After High School

- PG Year
- Gap Year
- Independent Living Program
- Community College
- College exclusively for students with LD
- Four-year college or university

True or False?

False

A student with a learning challenge who has done well in high school will probably not need support in college.

Understand the differences between high school and college:

High School

- Others structure your time.
- Parents & teachers remind, prioritize, and guide you.
- You spend 6 hours/day, 30 hours/week in class.
- You will be told what to do and corrected.
- You will be told what you need to study & learn.
- Teachers remind you of incomplete work.
- Effort counts.

College

- You manage your own time.
- You set priorities and make your own decisions.
- Only 12-16 hours of class/week.
- You are responsible for what you do and don't do.
- You are expected to understand assigned material.
- Professors expect you to ask for help if you are struggling.
- Results count.

College is not the same as high school!

- Classroom attendance is not checked.
- There are constant distractions (dorm life, friends, parties, events).
- There will not be modifications to the curriculum.
- The college provides support, but it is up to the student to make use of it.
- The student is in a new situation separate from parents, judged solely by his or her own behavior.
- The student is on his/her own without specific time lines, warnings, or follow-up.
- Parents will not be notified if the student is not doing well [Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)].

From IDEA to ADA

The IEP/504 Plan from high school ends with graduation. When the student graduates from high school, s/he is eligible to receive accommodations under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

From IDEA to ADA

- "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) . . . requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs."
- IDEA requires public school systems "to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for each child."
- The ADA "prohibits discrimination," "restricts questions that can be asked about an applicant's disability," and requires that accommodations be made for "otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities, unless it results in undue hardship."
- "The postsecondary institution has no obligation to provide or adopt recommendations made by outside entities."

Source: U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, September 2005

The Continuum of Support in Colleges and Universities

- Legal/ADA accommodations
- Support services (available to all students)
- Comprehensive support programs

There is a wide range within each of these three categories.

Accommodations

All colleges have to provide accommodations if you have provided documentation of a diagnosed learning disability or attention deficit to support services.

Most colleges require diagnostic testing results from within the last three years. Call or e-mail the support services office to find out what the college requires.

See "Seven Essential Elements of Quality Disability Documentation" (www.ahead.org/resources/best-practices-resources/elements)

Accommodations at all colleges and universities

- Extended Time
- Quiet Room
- Note Takers/Scribes
- Use of Computer

Accommodations that are offered at fewer colleges and universities

- Alternative forms of testing (e.g., oral exam)
- Use of calculator, tape recorder
- Assistive technologies (Kurzweil, Dragon NaturallySpeaking)

Support Services vs. Program

Support **services** are tutoring services that are offered to ALL students at the college. Tutors may be professionals trained in learning differences, or they may be other students.

In a support **program**, you can expect a professional tutor trained in assisting you and knowing the college and its professors. You will meet regularly with the same person and develop a close bond.

Comprehensive Support Programs provide

- A dedicated advisor/tutor, regular meetings, a caring relationship over time, content support for coursework, working on and completing long-term assignments
- Organization and time management
- Assistance in implementing accommodations
- Assistance in accessing text in alternate format

Support Programs have a variety of names:

- Supportive Learning Services Program (American International College)
- Program for Advancement of Learning (Curry College)
- Productive Learning Strategies Program (DePaul University)
- Student Support Program (Endicott College)
- The Institute for Achievement and Learning (Lynn University)
- Center for Advancement of Learning (Muskingum College)
- The Learning Center (College of Wooster, U. of Ozarks)

Shopping for Colleges

Students should not limit themselves only to colleges with comprehensive support programs.

Look at a variety of schools.

Think about the student first—his or her strengths, passions, personality. Then look at what the student needs in order to be successful. The college may well provide what the student needs without a comprehensive support program.

Think beyond admission.

Think SUCCESS.

The application list should include safety, reach, and match in terms of challenge.

Adelphi University, Alfred University, American University, American International College, Bard College, Boston University, Bryant College, Bryn Mawr College, Champlain College, Clark University, Colby-Sawyer College, College of the Atlantic, College of Charleston, College of Santa Fe, College of Wooster, Curry College, Dean College, DePaul University, Dickinson College, Drexel University, Endicott College, Fairfield University, Fort Lewis College, Franklin Pierce College, Hartwick College, Hawaii Pacific University, High Point University, Hobart & William Smith College, Hofstra University, Iona College, Ithaca College, Johnson & Wales University (RI)

Kenyon College, Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus, Lynn University, Millersville University, Mitchell College, Moravian College, Mount Ida College, Muskingum College, Northeastern University, Pine Manor College, Quinnipiac University, RPI, Ringling College of Art & Design, Rutgers University, St. Lawrence University, Salve Regina, Savannah College of Art & Design (Atlanta), Simmons, Slippery Rock, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Susquehanna University, Temple University, University of Arizona, University of Denver, Ursinus College, Warren Wilson College, Wheelock College, Wittenberg College

Questions to Ask Support Services

- What types of academic accommodations are typically provided to students with learning challenges on your campus? Will this college provide the specific accommodations that I need?
- What types of support are available?
- Does the program have professional tutors or peer (student) tutors? Does the college have tutors available who are trained and understand the needs of students with learning differences?
- Are students assigned a regular appointment or do they receive services on a drop-in basis?

Questions to Ask Support Services (Cont.)

- Are there additional fees to participate in the support program?
- How long has the support program been in place at this college?
- How many students are enrolled in the support program?
- What is the retention rate of students with learning challenges at this college? How many students with learning challenges have graduated in the past five years? What were their major fields of study?
- Is there a summer pre-college program available to incoming first-year students?

When you are shopping, also find out if the college offers

- Alternative to semester structure
- Reduced course load
- Pass/fail in area of challenge
- Alternative fulfillment of requirement

What is the difference between students with learning challenges who succeed in college and those who don't?

Research comparing the two groups has shown

- Students who were successful in college arrived with specific skills that the unsuccessful students did not have when they began college.
- The difference was not in IQ or academic achievement in high school.
- These were skills that the unsuccessful students could have learned in high school.

(Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, & Herman, 2003)

What are the skills that successful college students are using?

1. The student has a good understanding of, and can articulate, his or her learning profile (what are my strengths, my passions, my areas of challenge?).
2. The student has a clear picture of what s/he needs to do in order to be successful (compensatory strategies, support, accommodations).
3. The student is proactive (does not wait until struggling to ask for help, works effectively with helpers).
4. The student is prepared for the dramatic differences between high school and college (especially the loss of structure in college).

In addition,

5. The student has the documentation required in order to receive accommodations in college, and
6. The student matriculates at a college that is a good match for his or her strengths, interests, and needs.

Summary of Proactive Skills

- The student is prepared to ask for and receive support and accommodations.
- The student does not wait until she/he is struggling in a course to seek support. The student starts with it, and is committed to receiving it.
- The student receives support for at least the first 2 to 3 semesters.
- The student advocates for accommodations with instructors.
- The student works with professionals on campus who are familiar with the courses, the instructors, and the assignments.

Preparing our students to be successful:

What can we do now to help our students develop these skills?

1. Help the student understand and practice articulating his or her learning profile—"These are my strengths, my passions, my areas of challenge."
2. Make sure the student has a clear picture of the compensatory strategies, support, and accommodations that help him or her succeed.
3. Encourage the student to be proactive.

How and When to Disclose

Admissions

- Application
- SAT/ACT scores
- H.S. transcript
- Letters of recommendation
- Essay

Director of Support Services

- Diagnostic testing (usually within the last 3 years)
- The accommodations and support received in high school.
- Your learning profile = your strengths and weaknesses as a learner.

Web sites for organizations

www.ldonline.org
www.ahead.org (or call them a 704-947-7779)
www.aheadd.org/ (for students with asperger or autism)
www.lदानatl.org/aboutld/parents/index.asp

Summer High School and Pre-College Programs

<http://landmarkcollege.org/summer/>
www.heath.gwu.edu/node/724 (national listing of summer programs)

College fair and workshops

Saturday, Nov. 8, 2008 (See www.ldam.org)

Books

100 Things Every College student with a Disability Ought to Know, Johnson and Hines
Guiding Teens with Learning Disabilities, Roffman
Learning Outside the Lines, Mooney and Cole

Research

Predictors of success in individuals with learning disabilities: A qualitative analysis of a 20-year longitudinal study (Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, & Herman).

www.frostig.org/research/publications/index.html

Materials from ReelWisdom

College Success for Students with Learning Challenges (DVD and guide)

Get Ready for College! (workbook for high school student with learning challenges)

To see previews, go to www.reelwisdom.com
