

# Navigating the College Search:

## Considerations for Students with Learning Disabilities

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## Differences Between Secondary Ed and Post-Secondary Ed for SpEd Students

### K12

- Governed by IDEA & ADA
- "free & appropriate for all"
- School identifies disability
- Free evaluation
- District designs ed plan
- District ensures IEP is implemented & goals met

### Higher Ed

- Governed by CAEd Title 5 & ADA
- "ed. is a privilege, not a right"
- Student must provide documentation which verifies disability and functional limitation
- Student's financial responsibility
- Student identifies own needs
- Student responsible for own goals and progress

- IDEA requires K12 districts to provide specialized instruction and very supportive services to help students achieve to their maximum potential (i.e. **success**). Section 504 and the ADA, however, simply require colleges to provide students with disabilities **access** to their programs, not specialized education or enough accommodations to make them successful; essentially they protect against discrimination only.
- Part of the reason for the changes in disability services after high school is that colleges are not subject to IDEA, which only applies to students in K12. Since IDEA no longer applies, IEPs are no longer valid; they "expire" upon graduation and have no legal standing in the college environment

## Differences Between Secondary Ed and Post-Secondary Ed for SpEd Students (cont)

### K12

- Teacher advocates for student
- Fundamental alterations are allowed to the:
  - >program of study
  - >graduation reqs.
  - >instructional methods
- Personal services offered
- Right to **succeed**
- Transportation to/from school
- Parent involvement

### Higher Ed

- Student advocates for self
- Accommodations may NOT alter fundamental nature of degree, applicable courses or degree requirements or or instructional methods
- none; student responsibility
- right to **access**
- student's responsibility
- Per FERPA can't disclose info

- Students considered adults even if not 18 when start college so parents can't request accommodations for their child.. FERPA protects privacy of students even from parents who are paying for their education.
- Usually there is a FERPA waiver, students can sign so colleges can share info with parents—but the college will not initiate communication with parents.
- Most commonly, communication is via email, directly to the student; or, it's delivered via a campus webportal that students have to login and check.

## Services Colleges Provide for Students with LD

Any college that accepts federal funds (i.e. student loans) must adhere to Section 504 and ADA to provide services and accommodations for students with disabilities.

Emphasis is on making students into independent learners who use compensatory strategies and assistive technology to get around areas of weakness.

Level of program services, vary:

### **BASIC** (compliance-only)

- Academic support for all students; minimal accommodations available.
- Accommodations may include extended time for tests and the opportunity to record classes.
- Programs work well for students who can self advocate, for students who are independent.

## Services Colleges Provide for Students with LD (cont)

### **COORDINATED** (moderate support)

- Access to learning specialists or trained tutors and other more supportive services; available to anyone approved for disability services.
- Services may include:
  - learning strategies instruction
  - counseling
  - tutoring,
  - assistance with advocacy

## Services Colleges Provide for Students with LD (cont)

### **STRUCTURED** (comprehensive support)

- Program with own admission process and participation fee
- Services may include:
  - Staff trained in learning disabilities
  - Special orientation programs
  - Curriculum modifications
  - Assistance with advocacy
  - Academic monitoring and counseling
- Usually need to apply and be admitted to the university first, before applying to program.
- Fees run \$1k-\$3k/semester.
- The goal is typically to gradually wean students off their intensive services before they graduate.

## Considerations for the College Search

- Level of program services required
  - Arrange to meet with Disability Services when tour the campus
- Academic term type (semester, quarter, block)
  - Semester = 5 classes over 16 weeks. Quarters = 4 classes over 10 weeks (might be bad for procrastinators or those lacking motivation).
  - Block system is one class at a time for 3 weeks; good for ADD. E.g. U Western Montana (Dillon); Quest (BC, Canada).
  - Might be able to negotiate via Disability Services and Registrar to reduce course load but still be considered a full-time student (for insurance purposes).

- offer programs specifically for students with diagnosed LD/ADHD and ASD populations:
  - Landmark College (VT) – entire college is focused on this population
  - Beacon College (MA) – entire college is focused on this population
  - Curry College (MA) – PAL program
  - Dean College (MA) – ARCH program
  - Hofstra U (NY) – PALS program
  - Lesley U (MA) – Threshold program
  - Lynn University (FL) – Institute for Achievement and Learning
  - Marshall U (WV) – HELP program
  - Mitchell College (CT) – LRC program
  - Mt. Ida (MA) – LOP program
  - Muskingum College (OH) – PLUS program
  - Schreiner U (TX) – LSS program
  - U AZ – SALT program
  - U Denver (CO) - LEP program

## Considerations for the College Search cont.

- Campus size and class size/ratio  
Smaller tends to foster community and facilitate teacher/student relationships; structured programs typically offered at larger universities.
- Location and setting
- Access to support at home; pros/cons of rural campus
- Identifying a “good fit” at a college or university/college with a support program requires looking at the supports offered (academic, social) and understanding the differences between the classroom & workload and determining which is best.



## Considerations for the College Search cont

- Colleges That Change Lives (CTCL) are good examples of engaging campuses where students report high satisfaction on the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE).
- There are also some small, public liberal arts colleges (e.g. Evergreen State [Olympia, WA], Fort Lewis [Durango, CO]); see College Maps in Naviance for list
- Regis University (Denver, CO) Admissions identifies students who might be appropriate for support services and reaches out to students.
- MT State can admit by exception those who don't meet eligibility criteria by admission to Gallatin College (2-yr. college) that offers transitional, developmental support while students are integrated on campus. W CO Community College is located on CO Mesa's campus.

- offers both 2-yr and 4-yr degrees:
  - Beacon (MA)
  - Dean College (MA)
  - Landmark (VT)
  - Marymount College (CA)
  - Mitchell College (CT)—even offers offer a post-grad year, prior to applying to college

## Resources for All Students

- Tutoring or Learning Centers
- Career Counseling Centers
- Health Centers
- Writing Center/Lab
- Math labs
- Peer Mentoring programs
- Academic advising – general advising for goal planning/course selection and for specific majors/professional goals

## Required Coursework for 4-yr Colleges

- Traditional 4-yr colleges each have their own Admission course requirements.
- A "C-" or above is considered a passing grades for the vast majority of colleges. As a rule, a "D" counts for graduation credit, only.
- Non-college prep courses (i.e. NCP classes) are not considered to fulfill the course requirements for the vast majority of colleges
- Three years of math (completion of Alg 2) are required by the vast majority of colleges.
- Few colleges don't require V/P Art or World Language

Check specific requirements for each college by looking on the College Board or in Naviance under "high school preparation".

Public universities typically have specific required courses, GPA, and test score minimums; private colleges are typically more flexible and more likely to do a holistic review of an application essay as well as letters of recommendation.

## College Entrance Tests for 4-yr Colleges

- Your student's grade-level counselor can work with you and/or your student's case manager (if applicable) to request accommodations for taking the SAT and/or ACT.
- Some students with learning challenges find the ACT to be a "friendlier" test in that the questions are more straight-forward since it's an assessment test rather than an aptitude test (where specific strategies can help), like the SAT.
- There are also many colleges that are "test optional" in their Admission review. Find a list on [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org) (or in the College Maps section of Naviance at Paly).

- Remember, there's free test-prep in Naviance (for both SAT and ACT)
- Some "test optional" colleges will accept some other assessment (graded high school work or AP/SAT Subject test scores) in lieu of SAT/ACT scores.
- Submit documentation well in advance of test dates. PSAT in October of junior year; SAT/ACT typically in March/April of junior year.

## Required Documentation

- Varies by support services level requesting and from college to college
- Psychoeducational testing current within 3 years of college matriculation date is advised

If found eligible for accommodations:

- Those granted may be outlined but colleges do not typically write formal plans
- Students alert professors by delivering Letter of Accommodations given by Disability Services and communicating needs in advance

IEPs are not acceptable documentation because they are K12 documents, only. Neither is having been granted testing accommodations from SAT or ACT.

## Disclosure of LD During Application Process

- Not required
- If disclosed, Admissions cannot use info to discriminate
- Info might be useful to Admissions:
  - contextual background to evaluate applicant
  - might help to admit student "by exception" (though with systemwide impact at CSU and UC it's less likely there)
  - might forward info to Disability Services to do outreach and/or offer opinion as to likelihood for success
- If want to disclose, no need to address in an essay; can write factual statement in Additional Info section of UC and Common App

- Regis University (Denver, CO) Admissions identifies students who might be appropriate for support services and reaches out to students.
- MT State can admit by exception those who don't meet eligibility criteria by admission to Gallatin College (2-yr. college) that offers transitional, developmental support while students are integrated on campus.
- While different, should know about EOP program at all CA colleges and apply if first-gen, low income students to receive additional support (EOP can advocate for admission).

## Disclosure of LD After Admitted

- If placement tests are required before college starts, request needed accommodations (h.s. case manager might simply need to complete a form)
- Contact Disability Services at the college ASAP after admitted to inquire about documentation required and set up meeting
- Ask about any transition/bridge programs available before college starts.
- Inquire about any scholarships available for LD students, specifically

## NCAA Eligibility and Learning Disabilities

- Students with learning disabilities must meet the same eligibility requirements as all other students (# of core classes, grades, test scores) but may be provided certain accommodations to help meet these requirements.
- The NCAA will consider granting students with “education-impacting disabilities” certain accommodations to meet the NCAA requirements (including letting them complete up to 3 core courses after the 8th semester of high school (i.e. graduation) for **D1 athletes**. Submit documentation



## Other Options

- Start at a local CA Community College, part-time
- Attend a vocational school/program accredited by the State Dept. of Ed to prepare for employment
- Volunteer/Gap Year Experience/Get a Mentor/Job Shadow
- Transition/independent living options; academic and vocational opportunities combined with significant support:
  - College Living Experience (CA and multiple locations)  
<http://www.experiencecle.com>  
post-secondary programs provides intensive assistance to college students with special needs at campuses across the U.S.
  - College Internship Program  
<http://cipworldwide.org>  
post-secondary, academic, internship and independent living for young adults with LD and Aspergers Syndrome
  - CollegeExcel (OR)  
[www.collegeexcel.com](http://www.collegeexcel.com)  
residential program helps students build personal and academic confidence while they earn a college degree.

- Vocational school is great for hands-on training for specific jobs. Usually a short-term, full-time commitment. Can include internship and/or apprenticeship. May be costly, yet offer placement assistance. Some provide housing. E.g. HVAC (6 mos), Wyotech in Fremont has apt. complex, Expressions College for Digital Arts in Emeryville (specific interests, hands-on, accelerated, year-round)
- Gap Year is better when structured. Can involve travel. Chance to mature before college. Can be expensive but some offer financial aid. Ask for references to inquire into reputation of program.
- Transitional programs located near vocational opportunities as well as 2 and 4-yr colleges.

## Resources

- Naviance document library "College and Students with LD" folder
- *K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities*, 9th Edition (College Admissions Guides); Princeton Review
- *Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADD*; Peterson's
- *The College Sourcebook for Students with Learning and Developmental Differences*; Wintergreen Orchard House
- *The College Finder* (entry: for students with learning or physical challenges), Antonoff, Wintergreen Orchard House

These books are available for check out from Paly's C&CC.