

College Preparation for Students with Disabilities Handbook



Summer 2015

Purposes of this Handbook

If you're reading this handbook, then that means you are probably interested in pursuing education past high school graduation. This resource is intended to serve as a guide to help you:

- Navigate the college application process
- Understand differences in laws for post-secondary institutions and high school
- Receive accommodations in the college setting
- Advocate for yourself
- Understand additional, important resources

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SECTION
1

Getting Started: The Admissions Process

As a student with a disability, there are special considerations to take into account as you prepare for college admission.

- What course of study will best fit your skills and interests?
- What are the differences between the types of post-secondary programs?
- What should you expect to provide during the college application process?
- How will your disability affect financial aid?

Determining the right course of study

Many students experience greater success in college if they enter with a career goal. Such a goal helps provide direction in choosing a school, a specific program and a major. It also helps you choose which extra-curricular activities you need to get involved in while you are in college.

To help you establish a course of study while in college, you'll want to consider exploring career options while in high school.

- (1) Complete a career interest inventory. Check with your high school guidance counselor or vocational rehabilitation counselor for assistance.
- (2) Review the results of the inventory and identify the career areas in which you are most interested.
- (3) Research those careers of interest including information related to job duties, working conditions, education & training requirements, employment outlook, and earnings.
- (4) Job shadow or interview people employed in that career. You can learn a great deal from people employed in your career of interest. Check with your guidance counselor or vocational rehabilitation counselor if you need assistance.
- (5) Begin researching post-secondary programs and identify the degree or training required to attain your career goal.
- (6) Identify post-secondary settings that offer the program of study related to your career goal.

Choosing a higher education program

Students choose a higher education program by using a number of different criteria.

The following are some of the deciding factors:

- Type of program you are eligible for
- Geographic location
- Type of program or course of study related to career interests
- Financial resources
- Type of degree desired or needed for career goal

While deciding on a program, research the school's admission requirements. The chart on the following page outlines the different types of schools, admission requirements, and programs available.

Important Notes:

- Admission requirements will vary at each school. It is important to either speak with an admissions counselor or visit the admission website at the school of your choice to make sure you meet the requirements for admission.

Questions to ask admission counselor:

- What is the process for applying for admission?
- When is the deadline to apply?

- Once you narrow your college choices, contact the Disability Services office at each college to learn more about the registration process as well as services and accommodations that may be available

Questions to ask disability service coordinator:

- How do I register with disability services?
- What medical/disability documentation is necessary to be eligible for services?
- How is confidential information handled?
- What are some examples of accommodations and/or services provided through your office?
- What additional services may be available to students with disabilities?

Types of Post-Secondary Programs

It is important to attend a school that matches your educational and career goals. There are a variety of postsecondary schools that offer different programs and certificates and/or degrees.

	Technical College / Vocational School	Community College/ Junior College	Four Year College / Liberal Arts	University
Focus of Program	Specialized training for particular occupation	Two-year degree in career area or academic courses for transfer	Four-year degree; general academic courses plus focus on major.	Four-year degree plus graduate programs
Length of Program	Nine months to two years	Two years	Four years	Four years or more
Admission Requirements	Public-usually open enrollment; Private high school diploma: other requirements vary	Public- usually open enrollment to high school graduates. Private high school diploma. GPA, SAT, or ACT or other.	GPA, class rank. SAT or ACT; essay. Interviews: may be other requirements	GPA, class rank. SAT or ACT; essay. Interviews: may be other requirements
Document Awarded Upon Completion of Program	Diploma, certificate, license, or an Associate's degree	Certificate or an Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree; some offer Associate's and Master's degrees	Associate, Bachelor, Master, Doctoral, and/or Professional Degrees

College Application Requirements

Information collected from www.collegeboard.org

Applications vary from college to college, but most require some or all of the following:

Application Form

You can often apply online directly to an individual school or use the Common Application, entering your information just once.

Application Fee

This fee is usually nonrefundable, even if you're not offered admission. Many colleges offer fee waivers for applicants from low-income families.

High School Transcript

This form is completed by an official from your high school.

Admissions Test Scores

At many colleges, you have to submit SAT[®], SAT Subject TestTM, or ACT test scores.

Letters of Recommendation

Many private colleges ask for one or more letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adult who knows you well. When asking someone to write such a letter, it can be helpful to provide them with a summary of your achievements.

Essay

If you're applying to private colleges, an essay often plays an important role. Take this opportunity to express your individuality in a way that sets you apart.

Interview

This is required or recommended by some colleges. Even if it's not required, it's a good idea to set up an interview because it gives you a chance to make a personal connection with someone from the institution.

Audition/Portfolio

If you're applying for a program such as music, art, or design, you may have to document prior work by auditioning on campus or submitting a sample of your work to demonstrate your ability.

The Sum of the Parts

Your entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are and what you'll bring to the college. The more the pieces of the puzzle support one impression, the more confident the admissions committee will be in admitting you.

Financing College

COLLEGE IS EXPENSIVE...

Plan ahead to budget your college expenses and **remember, tuition is only part of how much it costs to attend college.** Be sure to consider fees, room, computer/software, books, transportation, supplies, food/meal plan and any recreation or fun activities you'd like to do.

Once you calculate your school expenses, factor in financial resources including scholarships, grants, parent contributions, government and/or private loans, work study or off-campus work, gift money and savings.

If a financial gap exists, you may want to see if you are eligible for financial assistance.

Begin by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at www.fafsa.ed.gov/ to see if you are eligible for grants, scholarships, work study jobs, or loans.

You do not have to pay back money from grants or scholarships but you do have to pay back loans.

Additional resources to explore for financial assistance include:

- Your High School Guidance Counselor
- Your college of choice
- Financial Aid Office
- Admissions
- College Catalog
- Student Organizations
- Parents' employers
- Friends' parents
- Your community
- Large Employers
- Civic and Religious Organizations
- Scholarship Search Engines
- Disability-specific organizations

Financial Aid/Scholarship Resources:

- **FinAid** (www.finaid.org): comprehensive source for student financial aid information, advice and tools both on and off the web.
- **SayStudent.com** (www.saystudent.com): a “one-stop shop” for information relating to financial aid, scholarships, money tips, and more. To search scholarships, visit www.saystudent.com/scholarship
- Finally, you may want to do a Google search for “scholarship applications to find additional resources available. When applying for scholarships, it is important to **start early!** Each scholarship will indicate the last day to apply. If you miss the deadline, you miss the opportunity for free money.

SECTION 2

Once You Select a College: Requesting Accommodations

Once you select a college, it's important to plan ahead by contacting the Disability Services office to learn more about their specific registration process.

Applying for Accommodations

Disability Services offices have similar procedures for setting up accommodations and services for students with disabilities.

Because all schools, however, are *not exactly the same*, the first and most important step is to contact the institution and find out what the application procedures and documentation requirements are.

The office that provides services for students with disabilities may be called different things. You may try locating the office by searching for one of the following:

- ADA Office
- Office of Disability Services
- Disability Support Services
- Disability Resources

Some schools do not have stand-alone offices that service students with disabilities. The person that coordinates accommodations may have multiple roles. You may try the following offices to locate where services are housed:

- Counseling Services
- Student Affairs
- Academic Support Services
- Student Support Services
- TRIO Academic Services

Documentation

You will be required to submit documentation of your disability in order to be determined as eligible to receive accommodations. *Be sure to check with your institution to find out specific documentation guidelines.* Documentation guidelines may include the following criteria:

- **Current**—this will vary depending on institution and on disability
- **Assessment information**—testing should be completed as an adult. You may consider exploring your high school as a resource to provide testing prior to graduation if you have not been tested as an adult.
- **Completed by qualified evaluator**
- **Clear statement of diagnosis**
- **Description of current limitations and suggested accommodations**

Important Notes

- Receiving accommodations in High School or at another college doesn't mean you are automatically eligible to receive accommodations at another institution
- Many high school students have an IEP or 504 plans. Generally, these are not sufficient as stand-alone documentation to receive accommodations in college. You will likely need to have original documentation from a diagnosing professional or evaluator.
- Accommodations are generally not retroactive. You begin receiving accommodations once you are completely registered. **So, start the process early!**
- The registration process may take several days to weeks to complete depending on the completeness of the documentation submitted.
- Having a diagnosed disability does not necessarily mean you will qualify for accommodations.

Initiating Classroom Accommodations with Instructors

When presenting your request for accommodations to your course instructors, please consider the following guidelines:

1. **Make an appointment.** Request an appointment with the instructor or go by his/her office during office hours. It is not advisable to attempt to discuss your disability or accommodation request with your instructor in front of the class or as he/she is coming from or going to a lecture.
2. **Verification to instructors.** Present your "accommodation letter" when you talk to your instructor. If the instructor questions your need for accommodation or has questions you are not comfortable answering or feel you cannot answer effectively, encourage him/her to call the Disability Services office. You should also contact the Disability Services office.
3. **Be specific.** When meeting with the instructor make sure your accommodation request is specific and details of implementation (when, where, how) are mutually understood and agreeable. Remember, you do not have to disclose your specific disability if you do not want to do so. If you are uncomfortable identifying your disability, keep the conversation focused on accommodation arrangements.
4. **Stay in communication.** Students and faculty are encouraged to maintain ongoing conversations throughout the semester regarding accommodations. Do not assume that something is scheduled or taken care of, unless you have specifically discussed it with your instructor. Also, since instructors are often very busy, it is advisable to remind them of planned accommodations the class meeting before to avoid difficulty. Arrangements for testing accommodations should be refreshed at least a week (5 working days) before an exam.
5. **Report problems to the Disability Services office.** If problems arise which cannot be satisfactorily resolved between you and the instructor, contact Disability Services (DS) staff for assistance. DS staff will attempt to resolve the issues causing concern by assisting the student in discussing issues with the instructor, department, or program, participating in such discussions, or calling the instructor or head of the department in an effort to clarify and resolve the issues. Most situations are positively resolved through DS consultation. However, there is a dispute resolution process and a formal complaint procedure, if needed. Check with your institution for the specific procedure.

Helpful Tips for Receiving Accommodations in College

Start the process early. As soon as you are accepted to the institution, start the process of applying for services from the office that works with students with disabilities.

It is your responsibility to self-identify and disclose your disability to an institution. Some schools will have you complete an application to start this process. Do not assume that an institution knows you desire accommodations; this is up to you to let them know.

Find out the documentation requirements of the institution. You can do this by calling the office that works with students with disabilities or you may be able to find information on the institution's website.

Provide the necessary documentation. It is your responsibility to provide the required documentation; this includes all the necessary testing and assessments for your disability.

Remember, just because you have a disability, doesn't automatically mean you qualify for services. Each institution will make that determination on a case-by-case basis based on the documentation submitted.

Make requests for special accommodations early. If you require accommodations that need special arrangements, such as an interpreter or captionist, books in alternative format, assistive technology (including software and hardware), or a housing accommodation you need to notify the disability services office as far in advance as possible to ensure that these accommodations will be provided in a timely manner.

Communicate with your Disability Services Office. If you experience any difficulty, discrimination or feel like you are being treated differently because of your disability, you need to notify the disability services office as soon as possible so they can assist in finding a solution to the problem.

Purpose of Accommodations. Accommodations are designed to provide support for your disability so that you can perform up to your potential. They are not designed to provide an advantage compared to your peers.

You are held to the same standard as all other students. Students with disabilities are expected to complete the essential requirements of all classes, just like every other student. It is possible for accommodations to be denied if they alter the nature or format of the class or the essential requirements.

Disability services are not obligated to provide personal services unless they are available to the general student population. This includes tutoring, transportation and personal services (such as an aide).

SECTION 3

The Differences between High School and College

It's important to have an understanding of some of the major differences between the high school setting and the post-secondary environment. This section will provide an overview of some of the important changes you can expect when you get to college which include:

- Advocating for your needs
- Personal services
- Legal rights and responsibilities
- Confidentiality

Self-Advocacy

Now that you are in college, it's up to you to advocate for yourself and your needs. When you were in high school, your parents and teachers likely determined what you needed and discussed your disability. Teachers and parents likely identified that you had a disability and made arrangements for you to receive services. In college, the process works much differently. **In college you must do the following to receive accommodations:**

- self-identify and disclose a disability to an institution
- provide the necessary required documentation of a disability

In addition to self-identifying and providing the necessary documentation, **you will need to be able to answer these questions when arranging for your accommodations:**

- What is your disability?
- How does your disability affect you in the classroom?
- What accommodations have been helpful in the past?
- What accommodations do you think you need?

Advocating for yourself also means that it is your responsibility to talk to your professors about what you need. It is up to you to decide if and when you will use your accommodations. You may choose to use some accommodations in some classes and choose not to use them in others.

So, you will need to be able to discuss the following with professors:

- Which accommodations you intend to use in the classroom (don't assume that they know)
- How the accommodations will be provided, such as extended time on tests, alternative format for tests, etc.

Professors and instructors will not remind you when assignments are due or if you have incomplete assignments. They will have no parental contact. They expect that you will read, save, and refer back to your course syllabus. You are completely responsible for your classes. If you need assistance, they expect you to approach them and ask.

Some other examples of things you will need to do to advocate for yourself in college:

- Act as independent adults
- Arrange your own weekly schedule
- Contact your instructors regarding assistance
- Arrange for and obtain your own personal tutoring
- Self-monitor and seek assistance and help when needed

Personal Services in Postsecondary Education

One of the biggest differences between high school and college for students with disabilities is the difference in services provided. Personal services are services such as personal care, transportation, tutoring and other services that meet the one-on one needs of a student. Colleges are not required to provide such services unless the service is available to all students attending the school.

Transportation

Parking and transportation are an issue for all college campuses. It's important to communicate with parking services on campus to arrange for handicapped parking if one qualifies, since this service is usually coordinated by the Parking office on campus, not the Disability Services Office. Unless transportation is provided to all students on campus, the school is not required to provide transportation services to students with disabilities.

Transportation Resources for the Birmingham Area:

- *MAX (Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority): www.bjcta.org*
- *ClasTran: www.clastran.com*
- *Commute Smart: www.commutesmart.org*

Personal Aide

While postsecondary schools are not required to provide personal services to students with disabilities, they are required to work with the student to ensure the personal assistant has the necessary access to assist the student when needed. This may include entrance to the student's residence hall to assist with bathing and other personal needs. This may also include allowing the personal aide to attend class with the student to physically assist with pushing the student's wheelchair, to assist with taking notes or other personal needs the student may have.

Tutoring

Many students in college find the need for tutoring services at some point in their college career. It's important to note that tutoring services are not considered an academic accommodation for students with disabilities. If tutoring services are available to all students, it must be made accessible to students with disabilities. However, if tutoring is not available to all students at the institution, the school is not required to provide the services to students with disabilities.

The Differences in Legal Rights and Responsibilities in Secondary and Postsecondary Education

In order to understand the differences between being a student in special education in high school and being a college student with a disability, you have to have a basic understanding of the legislation that dictates how each of those educational settings operates. The following chart will help you compare the laws:

	Secondary Education	Postsecondary Education
What is the law?	IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 504: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990	504: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, particular reference to Subpart E ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
What is the intent of the law?	IDEA: To provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to identified students with disabilities, including special education and related services. 504/ADA: To ensure that no other-wise qualified person with a disability is denied access to, benefits of, or is subject to discrimination solely on the basis of disability.	504/ADA: To ensure that no other-wise qualified person with a disability is denied access to, benefits of, or is subject to discrimination solely on the basis of disability.
Who is covered under the law?	IDEA: All infants, children and youth requiring special education services until age 21 or graduation from high school.	504/ADA: All qualified persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meet the college's admissions requirements and the specific entry level criteria for the specific program and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by Section 504.
What is a disability?	IDEA: A list of 13 disability classification areas are defined in IDEA and include specific learning disabilities. 504/ADA: have no such list. A person with a disability is defined as anyone who has: <ol style="list-style-type: none">any physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life functions;a history of such an impairmentor is regarded as having such an impairment.	504/ADA: A person with a disability is defined as anyone who has: <ol style="list-style-type: none">any physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life functionsa history of such an impairmentis regarded as having such an impairment. ADA: also includes HIV status and contagious and non-contagious diseases.

Who is responsible for identifying and documenting need?	School districts are responsible for identifying and evaluating potential students with disabilities. When such a determination is made, the district plans educational services for classified students at no expense to the family.	Students are responsible for self-identification and for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their particular disability; cost of the evaluation must be assumed by the student, not the post-secondary institution.
Who is responsible for initiating service delivery?	School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities and providing special education programs and services, including related services, and transition services as delineated in an Individualized Education Program.	Students are responsible for notifying the Disability Support Services staff of their disability and of their need for reasonable accommodations. Accommodations (not special education) are provided on a case-by-case, as-needed basis in order for students with disabilities to have equal access to the institution's programs and activities.
Who is responsible for enforcing the law?	IDEA is an entitlement law, enforced by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the US Department of Education. Local enforcement is the responsibility of the NYS Department of Education Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)	504/ADA : are civil rights statutes overseen by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) , and the US Department of Justice in conjunction with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) .
What about advocacy?	The parent or guardian is the primary advocate. Students with disabilities from age 14 on must be invited to participate in the IEP process. If the student does not attend, the district must ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.	Students must be able to self-identify and discuss their disability and needs in order to work with the Disability Support staff to implement reasonable accommodations. The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) guarantees student confidentiality. Conversations with parents regarding confidential information without written consent from the student are illegal.

Basic Principles of the ADA As They Apply to Colleges and Universities

By J. Trey Duffy

1. **The ADA is a civil rights law intended to provide equal access and opportunity for people with disabilities.** It is not intended to afford special privileges.
2. **Disability = Impairment + Functional Limitation/s + Major Life Activity.** Determining impairments and major life activities is relatively straightforward. Measuring the impact of a "functional limitation" is the complex aspect of determining disability. Not everyone with impairment is disabled; only those whose impairments rise to the level of "substantial limitation" are qualified as disabled.
3. **The individual must be otherwise qualified.** In education this means the individual meets the academic and technical standards for admission or participation. However, if the qualification for attending a specific event, such as a lecture or performance, is having a ticket, then an individual with a disability possessing a ticket is qualified.
4. **Institutions must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities.** In addition to auxiliary aids and services, reasonable accommodations include modifications to policies, practices or environments that allow equal access or opportunity.
5. ***Institutions do not need to provide a reasonable accommodation if it fundamentally alters the nature of the program or activity.*** For example, a student, who because of their disability will miss several weeks of classes, asks for permission to work from home and not attend classes. This may be reasonable but the request can be denied if the instructor/college believes attending class is fundamental. Attendance may be fundamental in a foreign language class and not in math (*e.g. all the math assignments can be done at home and class participation may not be an essential requirement*).
6. ***Students must self-identify, provide documentation of disability and request services and accommodations.*** Accommodations requested after the fact are not appropriate and generally need not be provided.
7. ***The institution can decide on the type of accommodation to be provided and need not always provide what is requested.*** The institution should consider specific requests and provide them whenever reasonable and feasible. The primary issue is that accommodations need to be 'effective'.
8. ***Only individuals who currently have a "disability" are entitled to accommodations.*** An individual with a "history" of a disability is protected from discrimination but is not disabled for the purposes of receiving services and accommodations.. For example, an individual acquires the substantially limiting impairment of cancer. For two years, the student requests and receives accommodations (due to the effects of the chemotherapy). Three years after being diagnosed the student is fully recovered. The student no longer is disabled. However, they are protected against discrimination related to their prior history of having cancer.

Confidentiality and Your Disability

Now that you are in college, you are an adult. The laws of the United States recognize an 18 year old as an adult. All documentation, forms and information that you submit to a Disability Services Office are kept in a confidential file. Disability Services personnel will not discuss your information with anyone without your specific permission.

This includes faculty, doctors, and parents. Under the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) no person from the college can discuss confidential information, which includes anything related to grades or disabilities without permission from the student.

Faculty. If a faculty member calls to ask questions about your accommodations, with your permission, DS personnel may discuss your specific accommodations with them. They may not, at any time, release information about your disability or diagnosis, as this is confidential information.

You are encouraged to not disclose your disability to faculty as well. Some faculty, being well-intentioned, may say, "If you tell me your disability, then I can know better how to help you." You do not need to tell them your disability in order for them to provide accommodations. If you have given them your accommodation letter, then you can let them know that the accommodations listed will be helpful to you. If you have any difficulty with faculty telling you that they need to know your disability, please contact the DS office as soon as possible.

Parents. Federal law prohibits college personnel from discussing confidential information with your parents as well. This includes any information related to grades or disabilities. DS offices cannot release any confidential information without your explicit permission. At the high school level, the relationship is between the school district and your parents; at the college level, the relationship is between the college and the student.

What Are The Differences Between High School and College?

For Students with Disabilities

In High School	In College
You are “entitled to education.”	You have a “right to equal access”
Accommodations are designed to make you successful and lead to graduation.	Accommodations are designed to “level the playing field” between students with disabilities and those without.
You have a group of people making a specialized plan for your education (504 plan or IEP).	You are responsible for designing your educational experience and plan for success.
Laws governing high school education are included in the IDEA of 2004.	Laws governing education for students with disabilities in college are the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

General Differences

In High School	In College
High school is mandatory and usually free.	College is voluntary and expensive.
Your time is structured by others.	You manage your own time.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities. You will face moral and ethical decisions you have never faced before.
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending 6 hours each day—30 hours a week—in class.	You often have hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening and you spend only 12 to 16 hours each week in class.
Most of your classes are arranged for you.	You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your advisor.
You are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate.	Graduation requirements are complex. You are expected to know those that apply to you.
<i>Guiding principle: You will usually be told what to do and corrected if your behavior is out of line.</i>	<i>Guiding principle: You are expected to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.</i>

Classes

In High School	In College
You do most of your studying in class, with homework as a backup.	You do most of your studying outside of class (at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class) with lectures and other class work as a guide.
You seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough.	You need to review class notes and text material regularly.
You are provided with textbooks at no expense.	You need to budget substantial funds for your textbooks.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class.
<i>Guiding principle: You will usually be told in class what you need to learn from assigned readings.</i>	<i>Guiding principle: It's up to you to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you've already done so.</i>

Tests

In High School	In College
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. You, not the professor, need to organize the material to prepare for the test. A particular course may have only 2 or 3 tests in a term.
Makeup tests are often available.	Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, you need to request them.
Teachers frequently rearrange test dates to avoid conflict with school events.	Professors in different courses usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.
Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.	Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant, one who comes prepared with questions.
<i>Guiding principle: Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you, or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown how to solve.</i>	<i>Guiding principle: Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.</i>

Grades

In High School	In College
Grades are given for most assigned work.	Grades may not be provided for all assigned work.
Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low.	Grades on tests and major papers usually provide most of the course grade.
Extra credit projects are often available to help you raise your grade.	Extra credit projects cannot, generally speaking, be used to raise a grade in a college course.
Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade.	Watch out for your first tests. These are usually “wake-up calls” to let you know what is expected—but they also may account for a substantial part of your grade.
You may graduate as long as you have passed all required courses with a grade of “D” or higher.	You may graduate only if your average in classes meets the departmental standard.
<i>Guiding principle: “Effort counts.” Courses are usually structured to reward a “good-faith effort.”</i>	<i>Guiding principle: “Results count.” Though “good-faith effort” is important in regard to the professor’s willingness to help you achieve good results, it will not substitute for results in the grading process.</i>

Teachers/Professors

In High School	In College
Teachers check your completed homework.	Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume you can perform the same tasks on tests.
Teachers remind you of your incomplete work.	Professors may not remind you of incomplete work.
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance.
Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.	Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours.
Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.	Professors have been trained as experts in their particular area of research.
Teachers provide you with information you missed when you were absent.	Professors expect you to get from classmates any notes from classes you missed.
Teachers present material to help you	Professors may not follow the textbook.

understand material in the textbook.	Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic you are studying. Or, they may expect you to relate the classes to the textbook readings.
Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes.	Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting you to identify the important points in your notes. When professors write on the board, it is to amplify the lecture, not summarize it. Good notes are a must.
Teachers impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading you through the thinking process.	Professors expect you to think about and synthesize seemingly unrelated topics.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended.
<i>Guiding principle: Teachers bear much of the responsibility for your learning.</i>	<i>Guiding principle: You bear the responsibility for your learning while your professors serve as guides, mentors, and resources.</i>

The information on this page is adapted from and courtesy of the [Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center](#) at Southern Methodist University.

Life in College

Life in college is very different from high school. Now, you are expected to behave as an adult. Your professors, employers, and other college and university staff will treat you as an adult. This means greater responsibility and more expectations are put on you. You must think, act, and advocate for yourself. Some of the changes you can expect in college are listed on this handout.

Academic Environment in College:

- Less contact with instructors
- Less individual feedback
- More academic competition
- Instruction is mainly by lecture
- Independent reading assignments in addition to lectures
- Classes meet less often and for fewer hours
- An entire course is completed in 16 weeks or less
- New and increased social pressures
- Using the library effectively is more important
- Students are responsible for what they learned in high school
- More emphasis on understanding theory

Grading in College:

- Harder work is required for an “A” or “B”; “C” is just an average grade
- Semester grades may be based on just two or three test scores
- Exam questions may be more difficult to predict
- More major writing assignments
- Essay exams are more common

Knowledge Acquisition in College:

- Comprehension skills are more important
- Taking good notes is important
- Being able to identify main ideas is more important
- Effective communication skills are more important
- Students are responsible for monitoring their own progress and are responsible for recognizing the need for getting additional help
- Paying attention in class is more important
- Studying is more important

Support in College:

- No resource room; students must be independent and responsible for seeking assistance
- Behavior problems are not tolerated
- More students on campus
- More social activities
- Environment may be impersonal

Stress in College:

- Increased workload and faster pace
- It is more difficult to earn high grades
- Students are expected to know what they want from college, classes, life, etc.
- Students need to be able to juggle assignments, job responsibilities, family responsibilities, plus any extra-curricular activities
- Responsible for planning own weekly schedule

Responsibility in College:

- Students are more independent and are accountable for their behavior both in class and out, including residence halls and extracurricular activities
- Increased number of choices and decisions to be made
- More self-evaluation; accepting responsibility
- More independent reading and studying required
- Students are responsible for time management
- Students establish and attain their own goals
- Students are more responsible to whoever is paying for their education
- Students must be motivated to succeed
- Students are responsible for independently completing assignments and handing them in on time.

(Adapted from the WNY Collegiate Consortium of Disability Advocates,
www.ccdanet.oro/iscolleciforme.html)

A Letter to Parents Whose Child is Entering College

Congratulations! If you're reading this letter, it's because you have successfully navigated your son or daughter through high school. Your child has now begun the journey into higher education. Over the years, you have likely assumed the role of parent advocate for your child because of his or her disability. You have probably spent a great deal of time with teachers, counselors and administrators determining your child's needs, discussing his or her disability, and advocating for accommodations.

Now you're ready to learn about parent advocacy at the college level. The most important thing for you to learn about college advocacy is that it really needs to begin in high school. Up to this point, you have likely assumed the role of spokesperson for your son or daughter, but in college, that can no longer be the case. As soon as your son or daughter receives his or her diploma, all the rules change.

For many parents, the most difficult change between high school and college is the recognition that the laws of the US recognize an 18 year old as an adult. At the college level, this means that the student, not the parent, is the advocate. See the handout *"Self Advocacy" for more information about how to help your child become his or her own advocate.*

While the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* governs the provision of accommodations for children with disabilities in primary and secondary education settings, it does not apply in postsecondary settings (see *"The Differences in Legal Rights and Responsibilities in Secondary and Postsecondary Education"* handout).

Under *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)* the student must self-identify as a person with a disability, provide appropriate documentation of that disability and assist in the process of determining what accommodations would be effective in meeting his or her needs.

Under the *Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)* no person from the college can discuss confidential information, which includes anything related to grades or disabilities, with parents, without permission from the student. At the high school level, the relationship is between the school district and the parents; at the college level, the relationship is between the college and the student.

Disability Services offices may provide general information to you about the process of receiving accommodations, specific documentation requirements, and how specific accommodations work at the institution your child attends. Confidential information such as grades or if your child has picked up accommodation letters, however, may not be discussed without explicit permission from your son or daughter.

SECTION

4

Additional Resources

In order to be a successful student, it is important to be aware of and to take advantage of the many resources available to you. The following pages include information of the many resources that are available to students both on and off campus.

Common Campus Resources

Every campus has additional support available to students in addition to the Disability Services office. It is strongly encouraged that you get to know your institution and all of the resources available to you. This handout lists several common offices that can help provide opportunities to have the most enjoyable and successful college career.

Career Services: Career Services offices are available to help you get the most of your college experience so that you can be prepared for a successful career. Common services include choosing a major, career assessments, personality assessments, job seeking strategies, resume writing, and interview skills training.

TRIO Academic Services: If you are a first-generation college student, have a disability, or meet federal income requirements, you might be eligible for free support services and incentives created to help you achieve your goal of graduating in four years. TRIO Academic Services (TAS) is a Student Support Services program that is a part of a network of TRIO programs fully funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Counseling Services: Confidential personal counseling services may be available to you to deal with issues such as anxiety, depression, relationships, grief, stress, living away from home, time management, and dealing with a disability while being in college.

Academic Advising: Be sure to talk with your academic advisor (sometimes this may be a faculty member or a designated professional on your campus) about support services that may be available to you.

Student Health: Some institutions have health centers that are available to serve students. They may provide routine check-ups, prescriptions, and help when you are sick.

Tutoring and Academic Support: Check with your campus to see what kind of tutoring or other academic services may be available. Some campuses have Writing

Centers where students can get extra help with writing papers. Other campuses may have Math Labs where extra tutoring is available. Some schools have workshops or 1-on- 1 support such as academic coaching to help with things like study skills, note-taking skills, and test taking.

NOTE: Every campus is unique regarding the support services available to students. Please note that if a service is not available for all students, then it may not be provided to students with disabilities and would be considered a personal service. For example, some campuses have tutoring available for all students. If tutoring is not available for all students, then it may not be available for students with disabilities either. (Tutoring is not considered an academic accommodation).

Vocational Rehabilitation Resources

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' transition from school to work services help ensure that Alabama's students with disabilities leave school as independent, productive and contributing members of their communities.

The transition from high school to college is a crucial time, particularly for young people with disabilities. Since 1990, Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) has helped college-bound students prepare for life after high school.

College Prep for Students & Parents

Offered by ADRS' Lakeshore Rehabilitation Center, the college prep program offers programming to students with disabilities on a college campus. The program is aimed to help students learn skills to be successful and also give students a chance to experience college life.

College Prep participants learn how to:

- Take good notes
- Find their best study style
- Improve computer skills
- Manage their time
- Polish their social skills
- Handle stress
- Improve reading, writing, and math skills
- Manage their money
- Advocate for themselves
- Seek financial resources
- Apply for Disability Services

To be eligible for College Prep, students must be referred by a VRS counselor. For more information, call the VRS office in your area.

ADRS' Lakeshore also provides, an opportunity for parents to learn more about what to expect when their child goes off to college through **College Prep for Parents**. This is an information-packed, two-hour session designed to help parents help their child to be successful in college. Experts are available to answer questions related to:

- Financial Aid
- Accommodations
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- General college information

For more information about the College Prep for Parents program, contact, ADRS Lakeshore at 205-870-5999.

Explore at ADRS Lakeshore

Discover your talents, skills and abilities. Through vocational evaluations, we can help you determine your strengths and needs. We also offer recommendations that may be used as you and your counselor work together on your employment plan. Evaluation services are available to ADRS consumers throughout the state. You can travel to the Birmingham facility or Lakeshore staff will come to you.

The specially trained staff at ADRS Lakeshore can help you identify:

- Appropriate accommodations
- Functional and vocational effects of disability
- Appropriateness of employment goals
- Feasible vocational options
- Appropriateness of post-secondary goals

Learn to navigate the workplace. That's one of our specialties. ADRS Lakeshore's Employability Development Services include:

- College preparation
- Social skills training
- Career exploration and job readiness skills
- Job placement and job coaching

Your specially tailored program may include one or more of the above services. Many of the services are offered in groups or one-on-one, whichever is appropriate. If similar services are not available in your area, we can also provide them in a location convenient to you.

Make technology work for you. For many people with disabilities, assistive technology is the key to independence. Our Assistive Technology Services are available through two programs:

- **Adaptive Driving Training Program:** offers assessment and training to ADRS consumers who are interested in learning to drive; three vehicles with varying levels of technology are available to provide hands-on experience.
- **Assistive Technology Program:** provides evaluation and training with a range of technology solutions aimed at improving your functional abilities and work productivity; from voice input to infrared mouse control, from screen-reading applications for visual magnification, various low-to-high tech solutions are available for hands-on exploration.

About ADRS Lakeshore

Located in Birmingham, ADRS Lakeshore is an Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services facility. To be eligible for services, you must be an Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services consumer and have a referral from a Vocational Rehabilitation Service rehabilitation counselor.

For more information about ADRS Lakeshore:

1-800-441-7609

1-800-499-1816 (TTY)

www.rehab.alabama.gov

About Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

ADRS' mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.

For more information about ADRS: www.rehab.alabama.gov

Mental Health Resources

If you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder it is important to manage your illness during your time in college. The stress during this time in life can cause adjustment issues and an increase in symptoms.

Make a plan for how you will continue treatment if moving away from home. Check with potential schools to find out what medical or psychiatric services are accessible on campus. If none are provided, find out about the community around the school you choose. All 67 counties in Alabama have mental health clinics available to the public. They may accept insurance or provide services at a reduced cost.

If you are having trouble locating a community mental health provider contact the Alabama Department of Mental Health by calling the referral line at 1-800-367-0955 or by reviewing the online provider list at:

<http://www.mh.alabama.gov/UT/FindServices.aspx>

Alabama Institutions of Higher Education Websites

Four Year Institutions:

University of Alabama	www.ua.edu
University of Alabama at Birmingham	www.uab.edu
University of Alabama at Huntsville	www.uah.edu
Alabama A&M University	www.aamu.edu
Alabama State University	www.alasu.edu
Auburn University	www.auburn.edu
Birmingham Southern College	www.bsc.edu
Huntington College	www.huntington.edu
Jacksonville State University	www.jsu.edu
Judson College	www.judson.edu
Miles College	www.miles.edu
University of Montevallo	www.montevallo.edu
University of North Alabama	www.una.edu
Samford University	www.samford.edu
University of South Alabama	www.usouthal.edu
Spring Hill College	www.shc.edu
Troy University	www.troy.edu
Tuskegee University	www.tuskegee.edu
University of West Alabama	www.uwa.edu

Two Year Institutions:

Jefferson State Community College	www.jeffersonstate.edu
Lawson State Community College	www.lawsonstate.edu
Shelton State Community College	www.sheltonstate.edu
Southern Union State Community College	www.suscc.edu
Wallace State Community College	www.wallacestate.edu

Online Resources for Career Research

Career Interest Inventories:

1. O*NET Interest Profiler: www.onetcenter.org/IP.html
2. iSeek Career Cluster Interest Survey: www.iseek.org/careers/clusterSurvey
3. Holland Code Career Test: www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test

Career Research:

1. Occupational Outlook Handbook: www.bls.gov/ooh
2. O*NET: www.onetcenter.org
3. Career OneStop: www.acinet.org
4. Alabama Career Information Network: <http://alcareerinfo.org>