

NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE PROCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

WHO IS ATTENDING COLLEGE

- Increase in students with learning disabilities attending college
- Increase in students with physical disabilities attending college
- Increase in students with mental health issues attending college

A SHIFT

More than ever before, students with a wide range of learning disabilities and mental health issues attend college and universities

29.6% of first year college students have disclosed they have a learning disability

35% of first year college students have a mental health problem that interferes with daily life

COLLEGE SEARCH

Identify Goals

- What do I want to do after college?
- What do I want to accomplish in college?

Identify Needs

- What specific needs does the student have in order to be successful in college?
- What will the college need to provide?

Identify “Wants”

- What type of learning environment does the student desire? (i.e. small classes, relationships with professors)
- What college setting does the student want? (i.e. rural v. urban, large v. small, liberal arts v. research university)

PROGRAM VS. SERVICES

Disability Support Program

- Only available at select colleges which offer it
- Often have separate application
- Documentation required when applying to college
- SAT/ACT may not be required for college admission Additional fee may be charged for program
- Communication between program staff and teaching faculty
- Content tutoring done by tutors who are disability specialists
- Appointments may be scheduled by program staff

PROGRAM VS. SERVICES

Sample Program Elements (select schools)

Weekly academic coaching sessions with learning specialist

- Learning strategies
- Organizational skills
- Time management
- Self advocacy

Priority course registration

Extended course withdrawal period

Summer Program

Credit bearing courses with skills development content

PROGRAM VS. SERVICES

Disability Support Services

- Available at all colleges
- No application required
- Documentation supplied after acceptance
- SAT/ACT required as per admissions standards (Massachusetts State schools will waive SAT/ACT with IEP/testing)
- No fees to utilize services
- Communication between faculty and program staff only in specific instances
- Strategy based skills assistance provided by Learning Specialists
- Appointments are student initiated

PROGRAM VS. SERVICES

Examples of services provided (all schools)

- Visual or hearing impairment technology devices
- Recorded texts or other assistive technology
- Note-takers
- Scribes for exams
- ASL interpreters
- Separate location for exams
- Extended time for exams
- Classroom relocation
- Accessible or preferential classroom seating

PREPARING TO APPLY

- Visit each school-All students are encouraged to visit each school before applying
- Request copies of any school-based evaluations (IEP students)
- Contact the Disability Services Office at each school
- Determine services provided
- Discuss Documentation Guidelines

DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

- Learning Disability (Recommended Guidelines)
- Psycho-educational or neuropsychological evaluation by a certified or licensed evaluator
- Battery completed within the past three years (length may differ at different schools)
- Statement of diagnosis of a specific learning disability
- Battery of assessments generally must include Diagnostic Interview Aptitude Test (WAIS-R, Woodcock-Johnson Cognitive) Academic Achievement Test (WIAT, Woodcock-Johnson Achievement)
- Summary with recommendations and rationale

APPLICATION PROCESS

Complete application process as stated on the college's Admissions webpage

Contact Admissions office to ask:

if/where/when to submit testing

How to document foreign language exemption if available and applicable

Submit separate application if applying to a Disability Support Program (separate service as discussed above)

ONCE YOU ARE IN...

Make an appointment with Disability Service staff to discuss:

- Ensuring sufficient documentation
- Timeline for determining/applying for services
- Steps to ensure continuation of services each semester
- Responsibilities of student, faculty, Disability Services staff