College Readiness for Students with Disabilities

There are fundamental differences between services for students with disabilities in K12 and accommodations appropriate to the higher education environment. Helping high school students understand these differences before entering college, prepares them for the post secondary setting. This document is intended to provide parents and K12 educators with a general understanding of the way accommodations are provided in higher education. This does not constitute legal advice. For information about the policies and procedures at a specific institution, contact their disability services office.

Although Section 504 protections apply to students in both K12 and higher education, accommodations from a high school 504/IEP plan do not necessarily transfer to college.

Special education services are not provided in the post-secondary system.

Changing exam content, shortening assignments, and allowing test retakes lessen academic rigor and are not accommodations typically provided in higher education.

Grades are based on the mastery of course content, not seat time or effort.

There is no supplemental instruction or para-education specifically for students with disabilities in higher education.

HELP IS AVAILABLE!

Colleges have a variety of resources to help students with and without disabilities develop academic skills. Utilizing resources such as tutoring and academic mentoring, as well as meeting with faculty during office hours, can be beneficial for students who require additional support.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

- In higher education, students are considered to be adult learners. Colleges provide services to students, not parents.
- Accommodations are a student-led process. While Disability Services offices can help students develop self-advocacy skills, students must be active participants in the accommodation process. This includes scheduling appointments, responding to emails, and having conversations about their access needs.
- A signed release of information enables college staff to share information but does not enable parents to act on behalf of their students.
- Logging into a student's account or learning management system may violate state privacy laws. Instead, parents may wish to help students develop strategies for monitoring their own progress.

Washington Association on Postsecondary Education and Disability

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THE PROCESS

Colleges are required to have someone who determines reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. This may be an individual or a department. This area may be called Disability Services, Access Resources or something similar.

- Students may be asked to fill out an application for services to begin the process.
- Many, but not all, schools require students to provide information about their disability from a health care provider. The requirements about this information, often called documentation, varies by school.
- Students will meet with a staff member to talk about the way their disability impacts them in the educational or housing setting and to identify appropriate accommodations.
- Accommodations are provided to mitigate institutional barriers.
- Students will work with staff to notify their faculty of their approved accommodations each quarter.
- Students are expected to bring concerns to the attention of the disability office in a timely manner.
- Disability offices consult with students and faculty as issues arise.

SKILLS FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS

Working on the following skills can help students prepare for college. Students will continue to develop mastery in these areas throughout their educational journey.

⇒ The ability to name their disability and describe how it impacts them.

⇒ Awareness of their strengths and challenges in learning.

⇒ A willingness to ask for help when necessary.

⇒ The ability to manage their schedule independently including getting to class on time, doing homework, and studying without external support or prompting.

⇒ Strategies for coping with stress and anxiety.

⇒ Effective notetaking skills (or the ability to use technology to capture information from lectures)

⇒ A system for keeping track of assignments and appointments.

All students, including students with disabilities, are required to comply with college policies including the code of conduct and satisfactory academic progress requirements.

Accommodations in higher education do not guarantee success. Students with disabilities have the right to take risks in their educational journey and experience the growth that comes from experiencing both success and failure.

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