College is Different from High School

For students with a disability, there are three major differences between high school and college.

1. Students must become self-advocates. No longer will someone else see that their needs are addressed.
2. Different laws apply in college than in the public school system.
3. The goals and responsibilities of the public school system are different than those of the college setting.

Transitions to College for Students with Disabilities

This publication compares the differences between high school and college settings and looks at the information students, parents and teachers must know for students to be successful in their educational college experience.

Statement of Intent

WinAhead member institutions desire to create an accessible community where individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to pursue their educational goals, limited only by their abilities, not their disabilities.

Each institution is committed to:

1. Providing direct, reasonable accommodations and support services for individuals with disabilities.
2. Encouraging self-determination, independence and personal responsibility for students with disabilities.
3. Providing resources, advocacy, collaborative services, and information to their various constituencies.
4. Promoting an open and welcoming environment around campus for individuals with disabilities.
5. Informing and educating institutional communities about disability-related laws, rules, regulations, and policies.

Students with disabilities entering the world of college education may find the experience overwhelming and intimidating. When a student moves from high school to college, reality as he or she knows it is forever altered.

College is Different from High School

For students with a disability, there are three major differences between high school and college.

1. Students must become self-advocates. No longer will someone else see that their needs are addressed.
2. Different laws apply in college than in the public school system.
3. The goals and responsibilities of the public school system are different than those of the college setting.
**Which College is Right for You?**

When deciding which college is right for you, make sure you ask about the college’s disability services. It is important that you obtain as much information as possible about services for students with disabilities and services that are relevant to your particular disability before choosing a college or, if you have already chosen a school, before beginning classes.

You want to be sure you have done all that you can to make your educational or job training experience satisfying, rewarding and productive. Below are some sample questions you may want to consider asking when you visit colleges.

- **What services are typically available?** (e.g., notetakers, books on tape, extra time, etc.)
- **What is the name of the director and staff persons connected to providing services?**
- **Where is the Disability Services Office located, and what are its hours of operation?**
- **Is there a document available that describes the Disability Services Office and the services available?**
- **Who is available to help locate services on and/or off campus?**
- **Do other students who have a disability like mine (or another disability) attend here? Is there someone with a disability like mine (or another disability) who would be willing to talk to me about their experience here so I can learn from their experience?**
- **What arrangements do other students make in situations similar to mine?**
- **Is there a representative from Vocational Rehabilitation on campus? Where is s/he on campus? Where is his/her office?**
- **Are there local organizations or support groups for providing services to individuals with disabilities like mine? What services can I obtain through them?**
- **How many students with disabilities attend through graduation?**
- **What kind of record does the program I’m interested in have regarding providing accommodations?**
- **How much advanced notice is typically needed for providing accommodations?**
- **Are there local organizations or support groups for providing services to individuals with disabilities like mine? What services can I obtain through them?**
- **If an accommodation request is denied, what is the process to be followed to contest the decision?**

**Transition Resources on the Internet**

- **Going to College:** http://www.going-to-college.org/overview/index.html
- **We Connect Now:** http://weconnectnow.wordpress.com/
- **Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT)** http://www.washington.edu/doit/
The qualified student has the responsibility to:

- Be a self-advocate for his/her needs
- Be independent and in charge of his/her own life
  - Register with DSS.
  - Provide current evidence of a disability.
  - Discuss accommodation needs with disability services coordinator.
  - Give accommodation letter to professors.
  - Communicate with faculty as needed.

A student has the right to:

- Not be discriminated or retaliated against because he/she has a disability.
- Participate in and enjoy the educational programs and services offered by the institution the student has chosen to attend.
- An accessible education.
- Appropriate accommodations.
- Have information about his/her disability kept confidential.
- Expect that other units of the College will work cooperatively with the disability services office and the student in providing accommodations and addressing legitimate needs.
- Choose not to register with disability services or request accommodations.

Faculty have the right to:

- Expect students with disabilities to attend and participate in class.
- Expect students to observe the code of conduct.
- Expect that students will adhere to the academic integrity policy.
- Determine the curricula for their courses.
- Determine student progress and assign grades.
- Provide input regarding the accommodations employed in their classrooms.
- Question accommodations that would fundamentally alter the academic standards or compromise the mastery of essential competencies.
- Receive a letter of notification about accommodations a student is entitled to receive.
- Provide timely notification of specific needs.

Faculty have the responsibility to:

- Provide an atmosphere in which all students can learn course material.
- Include a Reasonable Accommodation statement on the syllabus for each course taught.
- Provide accommodations in a fair and timely manner.
- Contact the Disability Services Office with questions or suggestions regarding the appropriateness of an accommodation.
- Grade students based on their performance, without counting off for reasonable accommodation.
- Make academic adjustments in instruction as appropriate.

If internet resources and other technologies are used, then these resources must also be as accessible to students with disabilities as they are for other students.
Should I Disclose My Disability?

- When preparing to go to college or university, students with disabilities may need to decide whether to disclose their disability to staff and faculty of the college.
- When you tell someone something that they don’t already know, you are practicing disclosure. Disclosure is a form of the word “tell,” which means to open up, to reveal, or to tell.
- The decision to disclose a disability belongs only to the person with the disability. Disclosure is a very personal choice.

Some Things to Consider

- It is up to you to decide how much of this sensitive information is necessary to reveal in order to get the accommodations you need.
- Circumstances in which you may choose to disclose a disability include:
  - To a potential employer when requesting job accommodations.
  - To new friends who have invited you to a concert because you need accessible seating close to the stage in order to see.
  - To your coach because your math tutoring sessions overlap with team practice after school.
  - To a benefits counselor if you are applying for financial benefits.

Definitions

The definition of an “individual with a disability” covered by and used in §504 and the ADA:

- an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and
  - is qualified to be a student (in college, students must also meet the admission criteria and meet or maintain standards and requirements that are required for continued participation in a program of study or for graduation, whether they have a disability or not).

The definition of a “reasonable accommodation”

An accommodation is something provided for the student. It is an adaptation designed to help the student display knowledge around the learning barriers caused by the disability.

- Reasonable accommodations are TOOLS.
- Reasonable accommodations are NOT intended to guarantee success, but to provide access.
- Reasonable accommodations are intended to ensure that a student with a disability has an opportunity to succeed.

Academic adjustments/auxiliary aids cannot:

- Result in fundamental alterations to courses or programs.
- Substantially modify program requirements.
- Cause undue administrative or financial burden.

Purpose of Disability Services

- Provide services and accommodations to qualified students with disabilities.
- Serve in an advisory and supportive capacity to faculty and staff.
- Provide equal access for individuals with disabilities.
- Assist in and/or facilitate the development of reasonable accommodations for students.

Confidentiality

- The specifics and documentation about a student’s disability are confidential and will not be released without written authorization from the student. (The student may choose to disclose information.)
- Any inference about a particular student and the disability is inappropriate.

Privacy Issues

HIGH SCHOOL

- Student has little or no privacy.

COLLEGE

- The College is obligated to protect a student’s right to privacy and confidentiality.

• The Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) does not allow institutions to release information to the parents without permission of the student.
• Students may disclose, to whom and when they choose, information about the disability. Students must “own” their disability in order to enjoy a level playing field.
• Instructors receive information that applies to the accommodations a student needs, but not about the disability itself.

Some Things to Consider

- When you disclose, you are intentionally releasing personal information about yourself for a specific purpose. Some personal information, such as identification numbers, financial records, or health information, may be important to keep private. It is important to keep in mind that your decision to disclose is personal and doing so should help you in some way.
- You are not required to share personal information about your disability. However, if you are requesting reasonable accommodations, you will need to disclose: (1) information about how your disability affects your ability to learn and perform effectively; (2) what kind of support, services and environment you will need in order to access and participate in your studies or job, and in the community.

Responsibilities in a Nutshell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
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The Disability Services Office

Purpose of Disability Services
- Provide services and accommodations to qualified students with disabilities.
- Serve in an advisory and supportive capacity to faculty and staff.
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- Assist in and/or facilitate the development of reasonable accommodations for students.

Confidentiality
- The specifics and documentation about a student’s disability are confidential and will not be released without written authorization from the student. (The student may choose to disclose information.)
- Any inference about a particular student and the disability is inappropriate.

Definitions
The definition of an “individual with a disability” covered by and used in §504 and the ADA:
- Is an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and
- Is qualified to be a student (in college, students must also meet the admission criteria and meet or maintain standards and requirements that are required for continued participation in a program of study or for graduation, whether they have a disability or not).

The definition of a “reasonable accommodation”
An accommodation is something provided for the student. It is an adaptation designed to help the student display knowledge around the learning barriers caused by the disability.
- Reasonable accommodations are TOOLS.
- Reasonable accommodations are NOT intended to guarantee success, but to provide access.
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Academic adjustments/auxiliary aids cannot:
- Result in fundamental alterations to courses or programs.
- Substantially modify program requirements.
- Cause undue administrative or financial burden.

EVIDENCE OF DISABILITY
- Includes a diagnosis of a specific disability.
- States how the disability limits a major life activity.
- Explains how the disability affects the student’s academic performance.
- Suggests educational accommodations appropriate to a college setting.

A qualifying disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of a student; or having a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.

Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

The term “qualified individual with a disability” means: “An individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications, meets the essential eligibility requirements (e.g., any academic and/or technical standards required for admission or participation in the educational program or activity) for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity.”

An accommodation is an adaptation, designed to help the student display knowledge around the learning barriers caused by the disability.

Some Things to Consider

Should I Disclose My Disability?
- When preparing to go to college or university, students with disabilities may need to decide whether to disclose their disability to staff and faculty of the college.
- When you tell someone something that they don’t already know, you are practicing disclosure. Disclosure is a form of the word “disclose,” which means to open up, to reveal, or to tell.
- The decision to disclose a disability belongs only to the person with the disability. Disclosure is a very personal choice and should be done only after careful thought. If you have a disability, there are no requirements that you disclose your disability to anyone at any time, but in order to receive accommodations at work or in college, you must disclose.
- It is up to you to decide how much of this sensitive information is necessary to reveal in order to get the accommodations you need.
- Circumstances in which you may choose to disclose a disability include:
  - To a potential employer when requesting job accommodations.
  - To new friends who have invited you to a concert because you need accessible seating close to the stage in order to see.
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Be sure to read Transitions 4 and 5 for WinAHEAD's additional insights and resources.
Colleges have an obligation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide qualified students with disabilities access to their programs and services. Institutions also have an obligation to provide reasonable accommodations. HOWEVER, students also have equal, if not greater, responsibilities to be partners with educational institutions in meeting their needs.

The qualified student has the responsibility to:

- Be a self-advocate for his/her needs
- Be independent and in charge of his/her own life
- Register with DSS.
- Provide current evidence of a disability.
- Discuss accommodation needs with disability services coordinator.
- Give accommodation letter to professors.
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A student has the right to:

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- Participate in and enjoy the educational programs and services offered by the institution the student has chosen to attend.
- An accessible education.
- Appropriate accommodations.
- Have information about his/her disability kept confidential.
- Expect that other units of the College will work cooperatively with the disability services office and the student in providing accommodations and addressing legitimate needs.
- Choose not to register with disability services or request accommodations.

Each member of the faculty plays an important role in the implementation of accommodations to students with disabilities. Providing accommodations is NOT negotiable; the way the accommodations are provided may be negotiable, and in keeping with that role...

Faculty have the right to:

- Expect students with disabilities to attend and participate in class.
- Expect students to observe the code of conduct.
- Expect that students will adhere to the academic integrity policy.
- Determine the curricula for their courses.
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- Contact the Disability Services Office with questions or suggestions regarding the appropriateness of an accommodation.
- Grade students based on their performance, without counting off for reasonable accommodation.
- Make academic adjustments in instruction as appropriate.

Postsecondary Responsibilities

If internet resources and other technologies are used, then these resources must also be accessible to students with disabilities as they are for other students.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

HIGH SCHOOL
The school district has almost all the responsibility for the student and his/her education.

COLLEGE
The student and the institution each have responsibilities.

The HIGH SCHOOL is required to:
- Identify students with disabilities.
- Provide (and pay for) assessment of learning disabilities.
- Classify disabilities according to specified diagnostic categories.

The COLLEGE must inform students of:
- Their rights and responsibilities.
- The location of support offices.
- Procedures for requesting accommodations.
- The College must also provide appropriate reasonable accommodation at no cost to the student.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS

HIGH SCHOOL
Education plans are required for each student covered by IDEA and/or §504.

COLLEGE
An IEP or a §504 Plan determines services and accommodations. Parents, teachers and counselors are involved, and the plan requires the parent’s signature.

The “§504 Plan” developed at a high school will NOT be binding at a college or university. IDEA and §504 plans do not apply.

ACCOMMODATIONS & SERVICES

HIGH SCHOOL
Public schools provide non-academic personal services.

COLLEGE
The College has no obligation to provide services of a personal nature.

Examples:
- Appropriate services are provided by the school health service.
- Teachers and parents actively remind the student of responsibilities and assist in setting priorities.
- Parental care, guidance and involvement in the educational program is expected.
- Teachers and parents usually decide what the student is involved in, including extracurricular activities.
- The student meets with Disability Service personnel to discuss the disability and accommodations needed.
- The student interview and supporting information provided by the student is used to determine the eligibility for accommodations.
- If the student is qualified, the institution must determine whether a reasonable accommodation is possible.
- Work with the student to identify appropriate reasonable accommodations.

“Effort counts.” Courses and/or expectations are usually structured to reward a “good-faith effort.”

Make reasonable adjustments in teaching methods which do not alter the essential content of a course or program.

Subjects may be waived for a student before graduation, if they were specifically related to the student’s disability.

After careful consideration, occasionally course substitutions may be possible; waivers are not possible.

Ensure that off-campus and contracted program facilities also comply with Section 504 (Subpart E) and ADA.
## ADVOCACY

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<tr>
<td>The student’s parent serves as the primary advocate.</td>
<td>The student must assume the responsibility for his/her own advocacy.</td>
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## LAWS THAT APPLY

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<td>• Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA).</td>
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<td>IDEA – a funding law enforced by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE).</td>
<td>ADA/§504 - A civil rights law enforced by the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Justice (U.S. DOJ) and also the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).</td>
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## SYSTEM GOALS: MANDATORY VS. VOLUNTARY

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<td>A student covered by IDEA has a legal entitlement to an education regardless of disability.</td>
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Education must be offered in the least restrictive environment. | Institutions are obligated to provide access to, and opportunity to participate in the programs and services available. To facilitate access, the institution is obligated to provide reasonable accommodations. |

Public schools are mandated to provide special/regular education services to ensure that the student has a free, appropriate public education. | Institutions have no obligation to guarantee an education. A college education is a voluntary opportunity; it also includes costs (e.g., tuition, fees, room, board, etc.). |
The school is to do everything it can to help the individual succeed. | Institutions are not obligated to ensure that the individual succeeds. |

## WHICH STUDENTS ARE COVERED?

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<td>IDEA covers K-12 students for whom a disability has been documented until age 21 or until graduation. IDEA lists specific disabilities that bring an individual under its coverage.</td>
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## Which College is Right for You?

When deciding which college is right for you, make sure you ask about the college’s disability services. It is important that you obtain as much information as possible about services for students with disabilities and services that are relevant to your particular disability before choosing a college or, if you have already chosen a school, before beginning classes.

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In college, students are expected to exercise greater self-determination and to be more independent than in high school. For many students and their parents, this change can be threatening and confusing.

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