

STUDENT COLLEGE RESOURCE GUIDE

Thinking about college can be overwhelming. There are so many decisions and so many options. It can feel like the biggest decision of your life. But it's really just a lot of little choices. This student guide pulls together some information that we hope will help. Remember, you have to do what's right for you. Trust yourself!!

Here's what's inside:

What I Wish I Knew	1
College Readiness Assessment.....	14
College Action Plan	17
Questions to ask the Disability Services Office During a College Visit.....	21
College Prep Checklist.....	22
Conversation Strategies for Students to Talk to Parents about College	24
National Organizations and Websites.....	25
Recommended Books	26
Disability Specific Resources for College Planning.....	27
Top Ten List for College Students by College Students	28

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Designed by David Temelini and Meg Grigal

WHAT I WISH I KNEW

There's nothing quite like getting advice from someone who has been down the same road and really "gets it." Here is some advice for high school students thinking about college from current or recent college students with disabilities.

Developed by Kim Elmore, Hetsie Veitch, & Wendy S. Harbour

CONTRIBUTIONS BY



NIGEL Abduh



CRYSTAL Fike



KINGS Floyd



JASON Harris



ANN WAI-YEE Kwong



TARA McFadden



KATE Pollack



KATIE Roquemore



K Wheeler



STOP AND THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN A COLLEGE, AND THEN START LOOKING.

Jason explains: “Know what programs you might be interested in but also know what kind of environment would work for you. The college that I went to had a large number of commuting students, and there wasn’t a lot of people around over the weekends. I didn’t like that. You have to look at every aspect of your life when you look for a college. That is important.”

KNOW WHAT PROGRAMS YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN BUT ALSO KNOW WHAT KIND OF ENVIRONMENT WOULD WORK FOR YOU.



Ann reminds students that they are the ones who have to live with the choices they make: “At the end of the day, I need to be happy with my choices that determine my life.” And both Jason and Crystal suggests students remember that not everyone wants to go to college for a four-year degree, and other options for college exist. As Jason says, “There are many options out there for different people.”

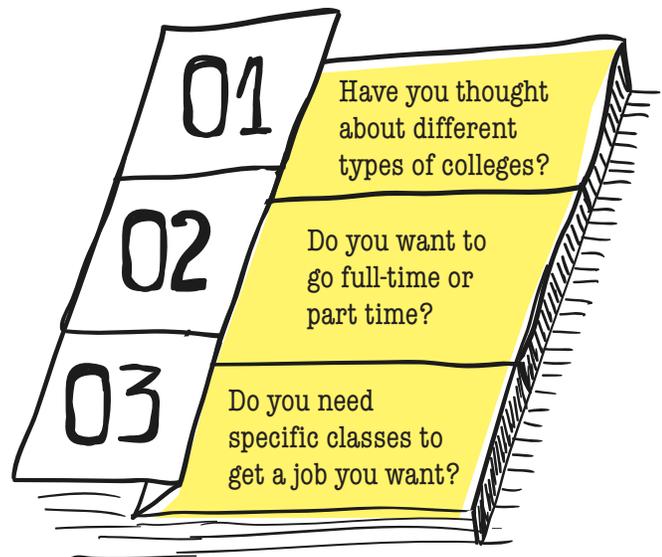
When choosing a college, think carefully about being the only one with your disability on a campus. It’s easy to ask disability services offices if they have significant experience with your type of disability and how many other students on campus have similar disabilities. It’s your right to attend any campus, but it can be tougher if the disability services office doesn’t have experience

with your disability, and there is no one to talk to when problems arise.

Ann and her friend both dealt with this: “I had one friend in high school who is blind. We both had AP classes and the same vocational rehabilitation services. We were the

only blind students using Braille at [our respective] colleges, so ODS [Office of Disability Services] would say, ‘No one else needs Braille,’ or ‘Nobody else is complaining.’ We would like to have known this might happen when we were in high school.”

WHEN CHOOSING A COLLEGE, THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT BEING THE ONLY ONE WITH YOUR DISABILITY ON A CAMPUS.



BE COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT YOUR DISABILITY.

Kate struggled with a disability resource office that had only one counselor who worked with a handful of deaf and hard-of-hearing undergraduates. She had to be very persistent and keep excellent records to support her self-advocacy efforts and eventually graduate with high marks. “You are your strongest advocate in college. Telling people what you need to succeed puts you in the driver’s seat.

YOU ARE YOUR STRONGEST ADVOCATE IN COLLEGE. TELLING PEOPLE WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED PUTS YOU IN THE DRIVER’S SEAT.



GETTING INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Find information for your parents and families if they need it. Some parents or family members are very nervous about college for students with disabilities. While high schools are supposed to provide college information to students and their families, this is not always the case.”

Ann tells us, “One of our friends was accepted by a [state university] but the parents said, ‘No, that’s too far, go to the local community college. We’re not comfortable with you going to a university far away because we still have to cook for you.’” Ann suggests reaching out for the information and forming connections: “Parents don’t get this information [about college] and there are resources out there for parents.”

What do your parents think about your college choices?

Are they supportive?

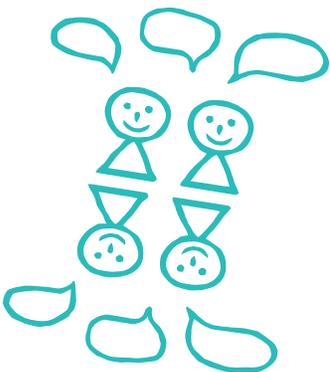
Do they have any concerns?

Is there a family friend who could talk to them?

LEARN FROM OTHER FAMILIES

K and her parents found resources when they “joined the International Child Amputee Network (ICAN) for families and people born without limbs or those who become amputees as children, and it’s an international network, so they can ask questions

and connect to others.” K told us that “Shortly after I was born my parents connected with [a young adult] in Maryland with almost the exact same disability as me, and she ended up coming to Seattle about three months after our first contact, and we were able to meet.” K visits this friend every summer and she has influenced K’s thinking about college and success. And now K has formed a similar relationship with a younger person with the same disability.



ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED AND USE THE RESOURCES TO WHICH YOU ARE ENTITLED.

Kings explains, “asking for help is never a bad thing. I was afraid that if I reached out to parents, my guidance counselor, or anyone about accommodations, that would be seen as a sign of weakness or giving up. But the rewards for asking for help are almost immediate. Overcoming pride and learning to ask for help is very valuable.”

THE REWARDS FOR ASKING FOR HELP ARE ALMOST IMMEDIATE. OVERCOMING PRIDE AND LEARNING TO ASK FOR HELP IS VERY VALUABLE.



Nigel adds “Come out of your comfort zone. Don’t let anybody tell you that you can’t and don’t be afraid to ask for help. Find out who you are as a person. Don’t look at your disability as a bad thing. Don’t let anybody keep you from being yourself.”

And Tara reminds us that real friends will not

think differently about us because of an accommodation: “Don’t be afraid to use the resources that you are entitled to. I don’t mind that it took me longer to fully understand information. It doesn’t bother me that I had to take longer just because my brain works differently. Friends who don’t get accommodations don’t care [that you have] another 30 minutes on a test.”



Do you know the accommodations you use in school? If not—ask.

Don’t forget to think about accommodations you’ll need outside of class, like for getting around campus, joining clubs, or attending events.

IT DOESNT BOTHER ME THAT I HAD TO TAKE LONGER JUST BECAUSE MY BRAIN WORKS DIFFERENTLY. FRIENDS WHO DONT GET ACCOMMODATIONS DONT CARE [THAT YOU HAVE] ANOTHER 30 MINUTES ON A TEST.



FIND FRIENDS, INCLUDING OTHER STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

I NEEDED TO STEP OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE TO BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK. I TRIED DIFFERENT CLUBS AND NEW ACTIVITIES, AND STARTED TO BE COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.



Also include students with disabilities in your support network. After having disagreements with her disability resource office, Ann found it helpful “to talk to others with disabilities with similar experiences to get advice because when the ADA officer was disagreeing with disability services and I’d just spent three hours on the phone, sometimes I felt like the only one dealing with this.”

GO OUT, MEET DIFFERENT PEOPLE, AND DO DIFFERENT THINGS.



Ann explains how she “needed to step out of my comfort zone to build a support network. I tried different clubs and new activities, and started to be comfortable being uncomfortable.”

K had difficulty finding friends their first semester because they had only two classes on campus each week and uses speech recognition software to do homework, which makes studying with others difficult. “Joining the Harry Potter Club changed that. The club included people from all levels of college, and I discovered I was not necessarily alone in feeling isolated my first semester on campus.”

THE CLUB INCLUDED PEOPLE FROM ALL LEVELS OF COLLEGE, AND I DISCOVERED I WAS NOT NECESSARILY ALONE IN FEELING ISOLATED MY FIRST SEMESTER ON CAMPUS.



While many students express concerns about making friends at college at first, they find their new friendships fun as well as supportive. Crystal loved “going out, meeting different people, and doing different things” so much that she became president of her program’s social gathering committee during her last year.



CONNECT WITH PROFESSIONALS TO BUILD YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK.

Ann encourages students to go beyond friendships. Also, Ann and Kate specifically state that in addition to support from the campus disability resources offices, local support from the state's VR agency is essential for lower income students. When Kate was still in high school, the local VR representative, Kevin Shea, and his service dog approached her and her mom to explain how they would pay for her tuition, books, and rent to help her reach her career goals.

Katie adds that building supportive relationships with professors is important: "While the Office of Disability Services certainly was helpful, the most important resource was making connections with professors, especially in my department." She advises new college students to "make an effort to build a relationship with your professors so they see you as a person they want to help be successful. And be confident in expressing what you need to be successful."

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE ON CAMPUS LETS THEM SEE WHO YOU ARE. PROFESSORS AND INSTRUCTORS INVEST MORE TIME AND ENERGY IN STUDENTS WHO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH THEM (AND NOT JUST WHEN AN ASSIGNMENT IS LATE!!)



IN ADDITION TO SUPPORT FROM THE CAMPUS DISABILITY RESOURCES OFFICES, LOCAL SUPPORT FROM THE STATE'S VR AGENCY IS ESSENTIAL FOR LOWER INCOME STUDENTS.



LEARN TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF.

Kate advises students to learn self-advocacy skills and to know their legal rights as a student.

She encourages students to “Try to set up a support network of as many people as you can and learn your legal rights. Learn about the ADA. Learn about what access strategies are going to work for you. Sometimes access is really a trial-and-error thing so don’t feel bad if one type of access you thought might work does not actually work. Demand respect. Learn to advocate for yourself. Know that you are going to have to work harder than everyone else. Expect that often your professors are not going to know the first thing about disability and they are likely to not know the law either. That is why you need a disability services office and a [VR] organization like VESID in your corner. Professors may think that access and accommodations is “special treatment” but they have to follow the law.”

Ann also recommends cultivating a support community that understands your accommodation needs, empathizes with your experiences as a culturally deaf or disabled student, and can give you advice and support.

LEARN ABOUT THE ADA. LEARN ABOUT WHAT ACCESS STRATEGIES ARE GOING TO WORK FOR YOU. DEMAND RESPECT. LEARN TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF.



Do you know your rights?

Check out info on:

the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990–
www.pacer.org/publications/adaqa/adaqa.asp
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973–
www.pacer.org/publications/adaqa/504.asp

Have you ever talked to a teacher about how your disability impacts you in class?

How about in life?

Give it a shot.

Do you know who can help if you have problems in college?

Ask!!!

Here’s what I need to succeed:

-
-
-
-
-
-



LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF.

While you're in college, you'll have a chance to learn more about yourself, both within and outside classwork.

For Nigel, this meant not letting disability be the only part of his identity: "Find out who you are as a person, and don't let your disability define you. Don't look at your disability as a bad thing, either. Always know you're going to be a person at the end of the day – don't be anybody but yourself."

K agrees that personal growth is part of the college experience: "College is a great thing – it helps you to figure out who you are as a person."

Kings reminds us though to "accept that education and self-awareness can come in many different forms. You can learn in the classroom, but also through study abroad or from volunteering."

DONT LET YOUR DISABILITY DEFINE YOU. DONT LOOK AT YOUR DISABILITY AS A BAD THING. EITHER. DONT BE ANYBODY BUT YOURSELF.



COLLEGE IS A GREAT THING – IT HELPS YOU TO FIGURE OUT WHO YOU ARE AS A PERSON.



In college I would like to explore...

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

LEARN ABOUT AND SHARE DISABILITY HISTORY AND CULTURE.



Jason recalls the profound impact an undergraduate course on disability culture had on him: “I took a class about disability, equity and culture at a time when I was very down and negative about my disability. This helped me a lot to better understand that it is not an individual thing and about me the whole time, but that disability is also a cultural thing. I think it is very important for disabled students to know some of the history of disability and so on, to understand it better for themselves. I think it is good to take a course about it. You don’t have to major in it and everything, but you will learn more about it. I would recommend that.”

I THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR DISABLED STUDENTS TO KNOW SOME OF THE HISTORY OF DISABILITY AND SO ON, TO UNDERSTAND IT BETTER FOR THEMSELVES.



Other students value disability studies so much that they add a disability studies concentration to their major.



CONCENTRATED IN EDUCATION, LANGUAGE, AND DISABILITY STUDIES

WORKING ON MASTER'S DEGREES IN EDUCATION AND DISABILITY STUDIES



Even if you don't take a class, you can explore info online about leaders with disabilities.

Learn about Richard Branson, Peter Knight, Bram Cohen, Charles Schwab, Judy Heumann

Check out www.yodisabledproud.org/



DOUBLE-MAJORING IN LAW, SOCIETIES AND JUSTICE, AND DISABILITY STUDIES

FIND A MENTOR.

Mentors during high school and college can be a great help to students with disabilities, guiding students toward opportunities that might have otherwise been missed.

MY MENTOR HELPED BY JUST KNOWING THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS TERMINOLOGY. I ALSO KNEW THAT MY MENTOR COULD PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT WHEN NEEDED.



need a mentor. My mentor helped by just knowing the higher education and disability accommodations terminology. My mentor couldn't provide the actual advocacy piece, but I knew that my mentor could provide emotional support when needed."

Crystal realized college mentors could help with much more than academics. Prior to the first semester in her college program, Crystal participated in a Mentoring Matching Party where "we went around and introduced ourselves and got to know each other." Later, each student selected their top three mentors and was then matched with one of the three. Crystal says, "I didn't have mentors before I came to college, but now they help me with everything I need. We go out and meet different people and do different things. My biggest challenge has been working on math skills and reading skills, so I also work with my mentors to build those skills."

I DIDN'T HAVE MENTORS BEFORE I CAME TO COLLEGE, BUT NOW THEY HELP ME WITH EVERYTHING I NEED.



HOW TO FIND A MENTOR.

Finding a mentor isn't always easy, as Ann notes: "I had to be very proactive to seek out mentors. A lot of the mentoring programs for first-generation college students don't go to disability student spaces. A blind friend and I thought we would make a mentoring program since we didn't know of one for disabled students, and most disability services just track students as they progress instead of offering mentoring. We got together with some other students at other colleges, some at independent living centers, and some at community colleges and we started "Survive or Thrive" in California. Since 2012, we've expanded to two workshops per year and social events including families."

Kings tells students that she more often discovers mentors informally rather than through mentoring programs: "You can find a connection with almost anyone anywhere. You just have to be a good enough detective to find it. I didn't think I would necessarily connect with my boss, David, but we started talking about William Faulkner and Mark Twain on my first day of work, and I was super nerdy because I love both of those authors and he really liked both authors. It was a cool connection to find almost right away. So look for ways to connect with people, try to find that connection. Asking questions is the best way to be a detective, even if they're simple open questions like 'Oh, how was your day?' Or 'Oh, where do you live?' Or 'What do your parents do?' A simple connection can lead to building a bridge that could last a lifetime."

YOU CAN FIND A CONNECTION WITH ALMOST ANYONE ANYWHERE. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE A GOOD ENOUGH DETECTIVE TO FIND IT. ASKING QUESTIONS IS THE BEST WAY TO BE A DETECTIVE. EVEN IF THEYRE SIMPLE OPEN QUESTIONS...



Places to find mentors:

in class

advising

at a volunteer job or internship

disability resources office

college fitness center

part-time job on campus

a student club or organization

campus church, Hillel, or ethics center

What would a college mentor do? Check out this one online program called College Career Connect.

<https://c3.pyd.org>

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND YOUR ABILITY TO GET THROUGH DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES OR DISCOMFORT.

Nigel advises students to “always stay positive and come out of your comfort zone. Don’t let anybody tell you that you can’t.”

Crystal also encourages students to “never let anybody tell you no.”

ALWAYS STAY POSITIVE AND COME OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE. DON'T LET ANYBODY TELL YOU THAT YOU CANT.



THE BIGGEST THING IN HAVING A LEARNING DISABILITY IS THAT YOU NEED TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF. BECAUSE OTHER PEOPLE HAVE NO IDEA HOW YOUR BRAIN WORKS AND HOW YOU PROCESS INFORMATION.



Tara says, “The biggest thing in having a learning disability is that you need to advocate for yourself, because other people have no idea how your brain works and how you process information.”

K tells students “Do not underestimate yourself. If you put your mind to it, you can do it. There will be hurdles you’ll have to jump through, but you should try because it also helps you figure out who you are as a person.”

Finally, Ann reminds students that “Transitions are always difficult and it is going to be uncomfortable, so I would be worried if you felt completely fine. Learn to be okay with that and you will pull through.”

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE YOURSELF. IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT, YOU CAN DO IT. THERE WILL BE HURDLES YOU’LL HAVE TO JUMP THROUGH, BUT YOU SHOULD TRY BECAUSE IT ALSO HELPS YOU FIGURE OUT WHO YOU ARE AS A PERSON.



NOTES...

College Readiness Assessment

Description & directions

This assignment will help you determine your present level of knowledge regarding some of the topics related to getting ready for college. **Please complete each section of this assignment as completely as possible without assistance from your family members, teachers, or classmates.**

About me

Learning styles

My two strongest learning styles:

List ways I can use my learning style to enhance my learning:

My strengths, preferences, interests, & needs

My strengths:

My preferences:

My interests:

My needs and weaknesses:

My college interests

Name the major types of colleges or higher education found in the United States?

The ways I will pay for college include:



My top 3 college choices and my reasons for selecting each college:

College	Reasons for Interests
1.	
2.	
3.	

My technology

List pieces of technology than can enhance my learning:

My decision to disclose

Please review the statement and then type in whether the statement is true or false.

Statement	True or False
I can choose to tell or not tell the college I attend that I have a disability.	
I will have a special education teacher who can help me in college.	
Students can always use all of the accommodations they have in high school in college.	
Most colleges require more documentation than just your IEP or 504 plan to qualify for services in college.	
The only thing you need to do get accommodations in college is to sign up with the Disability Support Services Office.	

My plans

My postsecondary employment goal is:

My postsecondary education goal is:

The steps I need to take to reach my postsecondary goals include:

College Action Plan Assignment

Description

This step-by-step plan will assist you in getting closer to reaching your postsecondary and training goal needed for your career. After you complete this activity, follow up on the action plan regularly.

Directions

- 1. Review your responses from the previous portfolio activities:**
 - Career Search – Lesson 2
 - Knowing Myself Profile – Lesson 3
- 2. Answer questions 1 – 7 starting on page three of this document.**
- 3. Review this assignment with your case manager and family. Bring it with you to your next IEP meeting.**

Assignment tips

Education and training section

If you are not aware of the type of training or education required for your career of choice, take the time to research the criteria to enter into this field.

Timeframe section

Based this on the information you have on the type of education or training required for your career choice. For example, if your career requires a Bachelor's degree, than that will take at least four years to complete. If your career will require you to complete on-the-job training, then that may take up to six months.

Postsecondary goals section

For this section, you are to develop postsecondary goals in the areas of employment and education and training. Remember, these goals are your desires for life AFTER high school and are included in your IEP and Academic and Career Plan. Make sure you review the steps for making these S.M.A.R.T. goals, and use the formula to assist in the development of each goal.



Examples of postsecondary **employment** goals:

- By March 2018, I will be employed full-time as a network security technician.
- By June 2019, I will be employed full-time as an officer in the juvenile justice system.
- By June 2021, I will be employed full-time as a mechanical engineer.

Examples of **postsecondary education** and **training** goals:

- By December 2017, I will complete the network security course from J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Workforce Center and earn my certification in network security basics.
- By May 2019, I will complete my Associate’s Degree from John Tyler Community College in the career field of criminal justice.
- By May 2021, I will earn my Bachelor’s Degree from VA Tech in the career field of engineering.

Action plan section

For this plan, outline the steps you will need to take to achieve your postsecondary education and training goal listed above. Begin your action plan by thinking about where you are now, and identify the actions that will lead you to accomplishing the education and training required for your career of choice. Make sure to identify at least **five to seven** actions. Use various resources to assist you with this section. Resources can include teachers, family members, the Internet, career services at your high school, and the “Getting Ready for College” checklist listed in the Expanding Your Knowledge section of this unit.

Sample action plan

Action	Deadline	Will you need support?	This person can help me. (Family, friends, school counselor, coach, agency case manager, etc.)
Meet with your school counselor to discuss college entrance requirements	September, 2016	No	
Register for the PSAT in the fall	October 30, 2016	Yes	Mom
Submit request for PSAT accommodations has been submitted	October 30, 2016	Yes	School Counselor

College Action Plan

Career interests

1. What is your top career choice that you are interested in pursuing after you leave high school?
2. Why is this career important to you?

Education and training

3. Which the type of education and training you will need for your career choice? (Check one):
 - Participate in on the job training to acquire the skills required for the career
 - Complete course work to earn certification
 - Complete a vocational/technical training program
 - Complete an apprenticeship program
 - Earn a Bachelor's degree
 - Earn a Master's degree
 - Enlist in the military and complete a career training program

Time frame

4. What timeframe you are expecting need in order to complete the above education/training?
 - within 6 months of high school graduation
 - within 1 year of high school graduation
 - within 2 years of high school graduation
 - within 4 years of high school graduation
 - other, indicate timeframe



Postsecondary goals

Postsecondary goals are your desires for life **AFTER** high school and are included in your IEP and Academic and Career Plan. Develop postsecondary goals in the areas of employment and education and training. Remember to make these goals SMART.

5. What is your postsecondary employment goal?

By _____ (timeframe), I will be employed _____ (full-time or part-time) as a _____ (career title).

6. What is your postsecondary education or training goal?

By _____ (timeframe), I will complete _____ (specific education and training needed) in the career field of _____ (interest).

Action plan

Outline the steps you will need to take to achieve your postsecondary education and training goal. Use various resources to assist you with this section, which can include teachers, family members, the Internet, career services at your high school, and the “Getting Ready for College” checklist listed in the Expanding Your Knowledge section of this unit.

7. What are the five to seven action steps you need to achieve your postsecondary education and training goal required for your career choice?

Action to accomplish	Deadline	Will you need support?	This person can help me. (Family, friends, school counselor, coach, agency case manager, etc.)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE DURING A COLLEGE VISIT

The only way to know how a college responds to these issues important to you is to visit the campus and ask questions. In addition to attending a tour of the college or an open house, students with disabilities and their families should be encouraged to visit the disability services office on campus.

Questions to consider include:

- How welcoming and responsive are the staff people?
- Is the office located near the center of campus or far off on the edge of campus, where it might be harder to access?
- What is the minimum number of courses one can take to be considered a full-time student? You should take the minimum number of courses possible, especially the first year.
- Does the college offer a quiet place to take tests? Are you able to take essay tests on a computer?
- Does the college have a writing center? You will need a writing center to assist you in organizing written assignments, especially long-term research papers. Check the hours of operation and inquire whether it is professionally or peer staffed.
- Are organizational coaches available? You may need a coach to assist with staying on task with day-to-day and long-term assignments.
- Are note takers available? How are they selected? You want a note taker that is chosen by the professor or the learning specialist, who hands in notes to the learning specialist, where you can pick them up anonymously.
- Does the college offer priority registration? Being able to register early will help you manage your time better, have later start times, and schedule breaks between classes.
- Is there a contact person who will be able to assess if you are taking a balanced course load each semester? You should avoid having too many heavy reading classes in the same semester.

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My College Prep Checklist

BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL



- Enroll in a well-balanced portfolio of challenging courses, including classes in English, math, science, technology, history, geography, foreign language, and fine arts.
- Review high school course offerings and pinpoint which classes will prepare you best for college.
- Make sure your plan of study is added to your IEP transition plan.
- Work to address any basic skills deficits in reading, math, writing, and oral language.
- Sharpen your skills with smartphones, computers, and the Internet.
- Develop a full toolbox of study skills and learning strategies you can use in high school and beyond.



FRESHMAN YEAR

- Increase your knowledge of your disability and how it may affect academic performance.
- Practice explaining your own strengths and challenges to others.
- Work with your transition team and guidance counselor to register for courses and ensure you have the credits needed for your high school diploma.
- Start a transition portfolio of disability documentation, letters of support, verification of test accommodations used on statewide assessments, copies of past IEPs, and school records.
- Begin identifying adaptations and modifications you can use in college to support your learning.
- Be sure that at least one annual goal on your IEP addresses postsecondary or other vocational transition activities.
- Prepare for and pass all end-of-course exams.

SOPHOMORE YEAR



- Conduct research on colleges. Talk to guidance counselors, go to college fairs, and chat with college representatives who visit high schools.
- Review college disability documentation guidelines.
- Work with parents to make sure your disability documentation records are current.
- Find out how to prepare disability documentation for college.
- Identify and apply for high-stakes test accommodations.
- Prepare for and take the PSAT to gauge how prepared you are for the SAT.
- Acquire and expand on specific study skills, such as using the library, reading with auxiliary aids and assistive technologies, and writing a term paper.
- Develop fluency with assistive technologies you can use in college.



JUNIOR YEAR

- Consider possible career goals and college majors that support those goals.
- Identify a short list of potential colleges that are a good fit for your goals, interests, and abilities (and have the disability support services you need).
- Use college catalogs and websites to research information about admissions, prerequisites, tech requirements, housing, campus life, and disability services.
- If the website has a place to submit a question, send queries to admissions and disability services personnel in preparation for your campus visit.
- Plan campus tours, including a visit to the disability services office. Be prepared to talk to postsecondary disability service personnel about access to support services.
- Consider retaking high-stakes entrance exams, if necessary.
- Start working on college application essays (high school English teachers and guidance counselors can usually help you prepare for this).
- Request letters of recommendation from teachers and other staff.



SENIOR YEAR

- Meet with your guidance counselor early in the year to review your transition portfolio and identify materials you need for your college application.
- Talk to the guidance counselor about receiving a Summary of Performance to include in your transition portfolio.
- Continue to develop self-advocacy skills and study skills for college.
- If your target colleges require an admissions interview, practice before the interview by role-playing with the transition coordinator or guidance counselor.
- Go on final campus tours. Bring a list of questions about academics, disability services, and more—admissions procedures, financial aid, housing, social activities, athletics, etc.
- Review how to complete college application forms online.
- Fill out college applications (most colleges require applications to be filed by December of senior year).
- Ask your guidance counselor to review completed applications 2-3 weeks before the deadline.
- Wait for a letter of acceptance—letters will probably begin to arrive in mid-March.
- If multiple acceptance letters arrive, congratulations! Consider second campus visits or follow-up phone calls to ease your final decision.
- Write a short acceptance letter and mail it early along with any deposits and housing requests.
- CELEBRATE your awesome achievement!

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CONVERSATION STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS TO TALK TO PARENTS ABOUT COLLEGE



PLAN WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY.

Think about what you want your parents to know about your goal to attend college and why you need them to be on board.



BE DIRECT.

Tell them there is something you want to discuss and make sure you have their full attention.



PICK A GOOD TIME TO TALK.

Approach them at a time when they will be able to focus on the conversation. You can even set a time in advance, for example, “There’s something I want to talk with you about. Can we make some time when we eat dinner tonight to talk about it?”



WRITE IT DOWN FIRST.

Write down your thoughts in a letter or email before your conversation. If you want to send it, you can. Or, you can just use what you write to get ready and get your thoughts organized.



DISAGREE WITHOUT DISRESPECT.

Remember, you are challenging ideas that your parents have had for a long time. Be sure to use respectful language, listen to them, and stay calm.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

GOING-TO-COLLEGE

This website provides information about living college life with a disability. It is designed for high school students and provides video clips, activities, and resources that can help get a head start in planning for college.

www.going-to-college.org

I'M DETERMINED

This website provides direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior.

www.imdetermined.org

I'M FIRST

Online community for first-generation college students, including stories from college students and resources for finding colleges and getting answers to questions about going to college.

www.imfirst.org

KNOWHOW2GO

Website by the American Council for Education with resources to encourage primarily 8th to 10th grade students to prepare for college.

<http://knowhow2go.acenet.edu>

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The NCCSD provides resources and technical assistance to all college students with disabilities, including undergraduate and graduate students.

www.NCCSDonline.org

They have an online Clearinghouse where students can get resources for free (nd DREAM, a national group run by college students for students

www.NCCSDClearinghouse.org

www.DREAMCollegeDisability.org

THE NATIONAL DEAF CENTER FOR POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES

If you are a culturally Deaf student, deaf or hard-of-hearing, the NDC can help connect you to resources and information. They can also provide information about deafness, hearing loss, and common accommodations to any parents, high school teachers, college faculty, or disability services staff. For high school students, they also have an online training tool to help students plan goals and a path to college.

www.NationalDeafCenter.org/

STEP BY STEP: COLLEGE AWARENESS AND PLANNING FOR FAMILIES, COUNSELORS AND COMMUNITIES

Curriculum on college awareness by the National Association for College Admission Counseling with components for middle school, early high school, and late high school. Includes both learning activities for students and guides for leading parent workshops. A workshop on financial aid is also included.

www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/advocacy-and-ethics/initiatives/steps/2017stepbystep.pdf

THINK COLLEGE

Think College focuses on information and resources on college options for students with intellectual disability. The website has student stories, a college search directory, a resource library, and many videos about college students with intellectual disability. It also offers information about financial aid and college planning.

www.ThinkCollege.net

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Preparing Students with Disabilities for College Success: A Practical Guide to Transition Planning Stan F. Shaw, Joseph W. Madaus, and Lyman L. Duker

While this was written for professionals, parents and students can find everything they need to know about getting ready for college, and what high schools should be doing during the transition process. It includes comprehensive information about the ADA and Section 504, and how college disability services offices work.

Learning Outside the Lines: Two Ivy League Students with Learning Disabilities and ADHD Give You the Tools for Academic Success and Educational Revolution

Jonathan Mooney and David Cole

This book can help students with any type of disability consider how they learn best, and practical strategies for dealing with college-level academics.

Empowering Leadership: A Systems Change Guide for Autistic Students and Those with Other Disabilities by the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network.

This handbook by and for disabled students helps develop leadership and organizing skills to foster change on campus. Students may also find the information helpful for dealing with administrators when problems occur.

Navigating College: A Handbook on Self-Advocacy

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

While written for students who are on the Autism Spectrum, the information could easily apply to students with many other disabilities, including mental and emotional illnesses. With tips for academics, housing, social situations, and talking about disability with others, it covers practical information that most students could use during their first years of college.

The K&W Guide to College Programs and Services for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, 13th (2016) Edition

Princeton Review

This book provides a good starting point in researching the learning support services and programs at more than 350 colleges and universities in the U.S.

DISABILITY SPECIFIC RESOURCES FOR COLLEGE PLANNING

BLINDNESS

A webpage from Accredited Schools Online that provides information on accommodations for students with visual impairment, tips for finding the right school, and links to resources and scholarships

www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources/helping-students-with-visual-impairments/

A webpage for faculty at Rutgers University with information on accommodating students with visual impairment that may be useful for understanding the many strategies that can be used

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/faculty/visual>

DEAFNESS

A guide for students from Pepnet on college success for students who are deaf or hard of hearing

www.pepnet.org/sites/default/files/1nutsandboltrevision.pdf

MENTAL HEALTH

A downloadable guide for college students from the National Alliance on Mental Illness to begin the conversation about mental health issues during college

www.nami.org/colleguide/download

A webpage from Mental Health America with information on planning for college for students with a mental health disorder

www.mentalhealthamerica.net/whats-your-plan-college-mental-health-disorder

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

A website that provides information and resources on college for students with intellectual disability, including interviews and advice from college students

www.thinkcollege.net/for-students

LEARNING DISABILITIES

A guide from DO-IT on academic accommodations for students with learning disabilities

www.washington.edu/doit/academic-accommodations-students-learning-disabilities

A webpage from Understood.org that gives tips for families to ease the transition to college for students with learning disabilities

www.understood.org/en/school-learning/choosing-starting-school/leaving-high-school/9-steps-for-easing-the-transition-to-college

A webpage from Great Schools that provides information for families to understand college for students with learning disabilities

www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/college-planning/

ADHD

List of resources for college students with ADHD from the Attention Deficit Disorder Association

<https://add.org/college-students/>

College survival guide from ADDitude magazine, with articles and tips for students and parents

www.additudemag.com/adhd-guide/college.html

MOBILITY

List of tips for college applicants and students with physical disabilities from U.S. News and World Report

www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/12/05/4-tips-for-college-applicants-students-with-physical-disabilities

AUTISM

A downloadable guide for autistic college students written by adults on the autism spectrum, with a focus on self-advocacy

www.navigatingcollege.org

CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

A website by the Center for Online Education that provides information and resources on attending college for students with a chronic health condition

www.onlinecolleges.net/for-students/chronic-health-issues/

TEN TIPS

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES...

FROM STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students involved in DREAM: Disability Rights, Education, Activism, and Mentoring, a national online group for college students with disabilities, produced the following list of top tips for college students:

1. DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ARE RIGHTS, NOT SPECIAL HELP.

Ask for what you need. Advocate for yourself.

2. YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE PART OF CAMPUS DIVERSITY.

Diversity includes disability.

3. COLLEGE DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICES CAN BE GATEKEEPERS.

Most are good allies for students, but some are not. Demand professional, individualized, respectful services and file a complaint if you don't get them.

4. FEED YOUR SOUL AND BODY – RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES.

Balance your valuable time, energy, and health.

5. STAY FOCUSED ON YOUR CAREER.

If it won't help you get a job or maintain your passion for college, don't bother.

6. FIND A COMMUNITY.

Never go it alone. Consider connecting with others who have disabilities.

7. UNIVERSALLY DESIGN YOUR OWN LEARNING.

Learn how you learn best, and then use your strengths and unique learning style.

8. NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR YOUR DISABILITY OR YOUR ACCOMMODATIONS.

If you apologize, people may think you are ashamed.

9. FIGHT OPPRESSION AND BULLYING IN ANY FORM.

Ableism is just one "ism." If one of us is oppressed, all of us are oppressed.

10. LEARN DISABILITY HISTORY.

Learn about the people and movements that made it possible for you to be in college.



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