

College Planning Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities

Find out what steps students with learning difficulties or ADHD need to take to apply for college.

It's estimated that four to six percent of high school students have been diagnosed with a learning disability - a general term that refers to disorders which create difficulties with listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.

Yet, in spite of these challenges, there are reasons for students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, autism, and ADHD, to stay confident about options when it comes to planning for college.

Universities and admissions officers from around the country are hopeful that taking certain steps to apply for college will help secure you a spot on their campus. Read on for what steps to follow...

College courses are challenging, which means high school students should start preparing as early as freshman year. For example, instead of opting for the easier high school classes, stick to college prep courses. Four-year universities understand that high school is the training ground for time management, test-taking, and studying skills, so taking on a rigorous academic schedule will improve your academic standing.

With so many choices for schools, it's important to start your research as early as possible. After narrowing down your list of potential schools, make an appointment with your high guidance counselor to discuss potential options. You may find that colleges like Landmark College and the University of Arizona's SALT Program— which are exclusively for students with learning disabilities— may be best suited to fit your individual needs.

Once you've chosen a list of potential colleges, visit each campus or schedule a phone interview. Certain college campuses will go above and beyond to meet special learning needs (i.e. a learning center available for tutoring help), while other schools may not have extensive services. Make a list of questions relevant to your unique needs ahead of time.

Making the shift from high school into college may seem daunting, but there are ways to make the transition smoothly.

It's important to note that campuses do not require your IEP (Individualized Education Program) documents, but you will need substantial proof of your disability. The documents required vary by college, so be sure to contact the admissions office to see what their mandatory criteria is (whether it is a psycho-educational evaluation, an IQ test, or neuropsychological testing).

You can also prepare for the college track by enrolling in evening or weekend courses at a community college to get a feel for what a new learning environment will be like, as well as to get a practice run on the level of workload that comes along with college-level courses.

What to Expect From College Admissions Officers

It is not required for you to disclose whether or not you have a disability to college admissions officers, but officials have said that knowing that information can be helpful in determining whether a student should be admitted, as it may explain something unusual on a transcript.

If you do decide to disclose that information, it should go directly to the school's disabilities services office, which will be informed on how to handle it.

Disability Support Services at Colleges

While the quality and support of each school's individual disability services will vary from campus to campus, academic personnel will help evaluate and decide what kind of assistance is needed.

Eligibility for disability support services are typically evaluated by the college. Benefits of applying can include in-class note takers, academic counseling, authorizing necessary accommodations, arranging for exams, and career training.

Preparing For the ACT/SAT

There are several options for students with learning difficulties when taking the SAT and ACT, including Braille tests, large print, and extended time. But proper documentation of a disability is required for these special accommodations and can take a minimum of seven weeks for approval. So be sure to prepare in advance.

In addition, practice tests are available online and also advisable, as they will give you a feel of what to expect come test time.

Source: <http://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/8840E1D0/College-Planning-Guide-for-Students-with-Learning-Disabilities/>