



Office of Disability Services and The Focus Program

“Q and A” for Students and Parents

❖ Question One: What are the major legal differences between high school and college?

Short Answer: Entitlement vs. Eligibility

It is important to remember that disability laws for high school students focus on “success” while applicable laws for postsecondary disability services focus on “equal access.” IDEA does not apply to college students!

Let’s look at two specific laws and students with disabilities in college.

- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act require that,

No otherwise “qualified” individuals with disabilities in the United States . . . shall solely by reason of his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (29 U.S.C.794)

A person with a disability is an individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. An individual is considered to be a person with a disability if he/she (1) has a disability, (2) has a history of a disability, or (3) is perceived by others as having a disability.

Individuals must also be viewed as “otherwise qualified” despite the disability. In other words, unlike elementary and secondary students, postsecondary students must be qualified for acceptance to the college by meeting the admissions criteria, and fulfilling the requirements for staying in college. In addition, the student must also meet essential technical requirements of the program or course.

Reasonable accommodations are also referred to as “academic adjustments” and “auxiliary aids.” These accommodations are designed to level the playing field for students with documented disabilities. The law requires postsecondary institutions to provide equal access to courses and course materials so that the student with documented disabilities is allowed equal participation in his or her educational experience. Some examples of reasonable accommodations include extended time on tests, testing in a minimally distractive environment, and use of assistive technology. It’s important to note that academic adjustments are determined based on individual disabilities and individual needs. In providing these adjustments, colleges are not required to lower or effect substantial modifications to essential requirements. For example, it may be a reasonable accommodation to allow a student extended time for a test, but it is not a requirement to change the substantive content of the tests. Also, a college does not have to make any modifications that would fundamentally alter the nature of a service, program or activity. Postsecondary institutions do not have to offer services that would result in undue financial or administrative burdens and colleges do not have to provide services of a “personal” nature.

❖ **Question Two: What are some general differences between high school and college?**

Short Answer: High school students tend to take a passive role and depend on their parents and the “system” to meet their needs. College students take an active role and must “step to the plate” and accept responsibility for ensuring that their needs are met.

High School	College
Mandatory and usually free	Voluntary and expensive
Time is structured	Structure your own time
Need permission for activity participation	Activities are up to you
Parents /Teachers guide you	Responsible for yourself
Classes/Times are decided for you	You and your advisor decide classes and times
Most work is done in class	More out of class studying (2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class)
Textbooks are free	Textbooks are costly
Reading/writing is minimal or balanced	Substantial amounts of reading and writing
Teachers review assignments	Professors give you a syllabi
Teachers give you missed information	You are expected to get missed information from other students
Teachers are trained in teaching methods	Professors are trained in areas they teach-not how to teach
Frequent testing and reviews	Infrequent testing over large amounts of material/little review
Make up tests are okay	Make up tests often not allowed
Opportunities for extra credit	Little or no extra credit

You may pass with a D or higher	A grade of C to pass or have a certain GPA to graduate
I.E.P. or 504 plans	Each college has documentation guidelines for a disability
School provides evaluation	You provide evaluation and documentation from a qualified professional
School identifies students with disabilities	You must self-identify to office of disability services
Course modifications	Reasonable accommodations
Grading modifications	No grading and few test format changes
Parents may monitor grades and progress	Grades and progress are confidential

❖ **Question Three: What can help me be successful in college?**

Short Answer: Commitment! Attend class & utilize tutoring center 3 hours daily.

Recommended Academic Supplies

Flash drive
Textbooks should be ordered after your schedule is completed
Day Planner
Black pens/pencils, erasers and colored pencils, highlighters
Notebook, paper, graph paper
Three ring binder and subject dividers
Spiral notebook
Index Cards
Scotch tape

Before you arrive....

1. Check to make sure that all of your paperwork is "in order" with financial aid, housing, business office, and Director of Disability Services.
2. Order your textbooks if you know your schedule will not change.
3. Contact your roommate and discuss who is bringing what.

Other important things to think about and know when you arrive...

1. What are my specific disabilities and how they affect how I learn, work, and play?
2. What are my medications, how do I take them, why do I take them, and how do I refill them?
3. What do I do in bad weather?
4. How do I handle my budget? Do I know how to write checks and use a bankcard?
5. How do I do laundry?
6. Where do I go and what do I do if I am sick?

7. Who is my advisor? (Focus students: Mrs. Bennie C. Mattox)
8. What is my schedule and where are my classes?
9. Where is Focus? (Stop by Focus and say hi!!)
10. Where are the important offices/departments on campus and who do I contact for different issues?

❖ **Question Four: How can parents help students?**

Short Answer: Give them lots of “P&R.” In other words, keep things in “perspective” and provide lots of “reassurance.”

Office of Disability Services Recommendations for Parents

Assist your student with self-advocacy skills before he/she leaves the nest.

Ask yourself the following:

- Does my son/daughter know his/her rights under ADA and Section 504 and understand them?
- Does my son/daughter know how to ask for help?

Assist your student with disability awareness and ask the following:

- Does my son/daughter know and understand his/her disabilities?
- Does my son/daughter understand his/her documentation and is it current?
- Does my son/daughter know/understand his/her strengths and weaknesses?

Assist your student with specific accommodation needs and ask yourself:

- Does my son/daughter know which accommodations have worked in the past and which were not helpful?
- Is my son/daughter registered with Vocational Rehabilitative Services?

Assist your student with becoming more independent....

- Ensure that they have independent “living” skills
- Encourage them to develop their own problem solving and decision making skills
- Correspond on a regular basis
- Send care packages and letters
- Enjoy the rewards of an “empty” or almost “empty” nest and value the “adult” relationship you can foster with your student!
- Ensure awareness and importance of medication management

“It is true love that allows us to let go and let our children have their own lives.”

Pauline Tague