

How Will College be Different from High School for Students with LD?

Students

College students have to be actively involved in disability services- disclosing a disability, providing documentation, and requesting specific Academic Adjustments. (Students are not *required* to disclose a disability or use Academic Adjustments.) It is also necessary to meet each semester with the Learning Disabilities Specialist to discuss Academic Adjustments and meet with instructors to inform them of Academic Adjustments. Independent learning and initiative are necessary in college- more will be required than just attending class. There will be a great deal of homework, and tests may include information that was not discussed in class. Students must manage their time and stay abreast of due dates and assignments, including makeup work. If it is necessary to miss a class, the student should contact the instructor beforehand whenever possible (but it may be difficult to catch up with the material after missing just one or two classes). Students may have to schedule appointments with the testing center.

Support Services

General assistance is available from the part-time Learning Disabilities Specialist, but there is no Special Ed program or Special Ed staff. Academic Adjustments do not begin or continue unless the student actively participates and self-advocates throughout each semester. There is no one to monitor students' overall progress during the semester and instructors do not keep the LD Specialist informed of students' progress. Colleges are legally responsible only to respond to students' timely requests for reasonable Academic Adjustments. Colleges do not prescribe Academic Adjustments or create individualized education programs. Optional tutoring is available for most basic courses, but the tutors are not trained educators. Not all of the modifications used in high school will be allowed. Personal aides are not provided.

Instructors

Instructors provide authorized Academic Adjustments, but not specialized instruction. Course content and the amount of material is the same for all students. Instruction is rarely individualized although some instructors work outside of class with students who request help. The pace is often quicker than in high school, even if some students fall behind. Instructors provide syllabi for assignments and due dates. Progress reports are not provided, but students may (and should) ask instructors for feedback.

Parents

As adults, students are expected to advocate for themselves. Progress reports and grades are not provided and communication between instructors and parents is rare.

The Bottom Line

Colleges are required by law to provide *access-* the opportunity to compete, using reasonable Academic Adjustments. *Success* is not guaranteed, and many who start college may not graduate. The keys to success are motivation, maturity and intelligence.