

# STUDENT TRANSITIONAL GUIDE TO COLLEGE

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This document is intended to serve as a tool for students with disabilities who are preparing to attend a college. It provides tips and things for them to consider as they make decisions, apply for admission, and seek financial assistance. This document was developed by a college freshman with disabilities to assist other students like him to better prepare for postsecondary education.

## 1. Attend all of your high school classes and keep your grades and grade point average (GPA) up.

*All colleges look at the GPA for admission, especially the four-year universities, so make sure you keep it high. If you think you want to attend college, work with your teachers and counselor to make sure you are taking the required classes for that institution. Students should research their colleges of choice first to see what the requirements are. Many have a component of being involved in clubs, activities, volunteering, etc.*

*The accommodations you had in high school may not be the same when you enroll in college. Your IEP was a legal document in high school but only serves as one piece of documentation for colleges. Just because you had an accommodation in your IEP during high school does not mean you will be eligible to receive that in college. The IEP can be a helpful too in providing a clear picture of your strengths, weaknesses, goals, and accommodations that did help you reach success.*

*Current testing (usually within the last three years of high school) is required by colleges and universities to document a disability.*

## 2. Take one or both admission exams.

*The American College Testing (ACT) or Standard Achievement Test (SAT) is required for most four-year universities unless you transfer from a two-year or community college. If you are on an IEP, you might be eligible to receive accommodations while you take an admission exam. Consult with your teacher or counselor during your sophomore year to see what is required to make this request. You should begin taking these exams in either your sophomore or junior years in case you need to take them again.*

## 3. Apply for financial aid.

*You can complete the Federal Application for Student Financial Assistance (FASFA) on the Internet. This application is found at <[www.fafsa.edu.gov](http://www.fafsa.edu.gov)>. The FASFA helps your college determine what financial aid you might qualify for. Talk to your counselor about the application and other financial assistance that might be available to you. There are loans, grants, scholarships, and college work study.*

#### **4. Apply for scholarships.**

*There are numerous scholarship Web sites. Some scholarships require different things if they are awarded to you. You will need reference letters, but look on the application for each of the scholarships because each scholarship may require letters from specific individuals. Some scholarships may also want you to write an essay or provide a current resume. You may want to have documentation of the volunteer work you have completed, jobs you have held, or leadership positions in which you served.*

*You should also apply for the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (OHLAP). OHLAP is a scholarship awarded by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and is based on classes you take in high school and income level of your parents. If you qualify and continue to meet their requirements, OHLAP will pay for all four years of college. You can find out more about OHLAP by visiting <[www.okhighered.org/ohlap](http://www.okhighered.org/ohlap)>. A great Web site for scholarships is <[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)>. It has thousands of awards on it and updates with new ones nightly. Once you build your profile, it will inform you of awards for which you might be eligible.*

#### **5. Decide on the top college(s) you would like to attend.**

*The college you may want to attend may or may not have your major, so it might be a good idea to see if they offer your major. There two- and four-year colleges. You can only get an associates degree at a two-year college. Depending on what your major is, it might be more beneficial for you to go to a four-year college. At a two-year college, class sizes are a lot smaller, and you get more one-on-one time with the professors or instructors. You know your learning style and work ethic best, so pick the college that will meet all of your needs.*

#### **6. Take tours of your top college choice(s).**

*Most colleges offer tours of their campuses. Just call and schedule an appointment with the college. You can check with your school counselor to see if any tours are scheduled through the school for sophomores, juniors, or seniors. If your interested some college offer virtual tours of their campuses.*

#### **7. After you take tours of your top college(s), write down the pros and cons of each college.**

*This will give you a good reference list to refer back to when choosing your college. It can often be a difficult decision, but you must consider course offerings, schedules, class sizes, activities on campus, distance from your house, tuition and fee expenses, etc. Don't forget to write down the pros and cons of the disability support services office.*

#### **8. Apply to your favorite college—the one that best suits you and has your area of study.**

*You may want to apply early in the spring before the fall that you want to attend, so that if you are not accepted, you will still have time to apply to a different college. You will probably need*

*your high school transcript, IEP, letters of reference, etc. Contact the admissions office of each college to find out their requirements.*

**9. During your junior and senior year, you will need to seek out and talk with the disabilities support service center at your college of choice.**

*The disabilities service office does not know about you or what you were provided while in high school. It is up to you to seek them out, provide them documentation, and seek assistance. While you are there, begin making friends with these professionals. You will find they have a lot of good information and are willing to share it with you if you just ask.*

*They will review your documentation, including your IEP, to see if you are eligible for accommodations, and, if so, what they might be able to provide. To receive accommodations, you must be able to document that you have a disability, have current comprehensive documentation or demonstrate a functional impact that would require accommodations. If you had an IEP or 504 plan while in high school does not in itself entitle you to services. Once your disability has been verified by the college, the IEP will help the college serve you better, but it is by no means any document that will force them to provide you accommodations. You have to demonstrate you do have a disability, and they will guide you through their service delivery options.*

**10. When you start taking college classes, give each one of your professors the accommodation sheet made for them by disabilities support services.**

*Each college has different requirements and procedures for informing professors/instructors. Some provide the information to them for you, while others may provide you with a tool to give to your professors yourself. Be sure to ask disability services office about when or how is best to get this information to your professors. Even if the disability support services office gives the information to the professor, it is a good idea to introduce yourself and make sure he has the information and can put a face with the name. It is helpful to sit near the front of the room so you can hear better and be less distracted by other students. Always attend class because every class you miss, you have to make up the work and you get behind. If you miss a class, go to the professor immediately to get missed work or get the work ahead of time if you know you will miss a class. Professors always appreciate you telling them you will not be in class, but each of them has different requirements.*

*Starting college is a very exciting time full of hope and new beginnings, but do not overwhelm yourself. Take a light course load your first year to see how you will adapt. Twelve hours is considered a full-time schedule (i.e., four classes). Take time to do some self-evaluation. Do you consider yourself a morning person? Do you function better in the afternoon? Would you like to space your classes over several days or spend an entire day each week at the college? The choice is yours, but you need to know what you want out of college. If you are lucky enough to receive a scholarship, be very sure you understand what is involved in maintaining your scholarship. Most require you maintain a certain GPA. Some require you to do community service. Just be certain you understand what your scholarship requires.*

*As you start your college life, remember you do have a lot of freedom; however, with that freedom comes much responsibility. Use the resources your college offers, and you can and will be successful! **Good luck!***