



How Do I Choose a College?

College Search for Students
With Learning Challenges

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Basics

- **You're not alone!**

Students with disabilities constitute the largest minority in the United States. (Olkin, 2002)

- **What is a learning disability?**

“Both learning and attention deficit disorders are lifelong conditions of neurological origin that result in interference with academic achievement and daily activities. In general, learning disabilities involve at least one deficit, in the areas of receptive and expressive language, visual-spatial abilities, attention problems, impulse control, organizational skills, and emotional maturity.” ¹

ADD and ADHD

- While ADHD is not classified as a Learning Disability, 20 – 30% of children with ADHD also have have a specific learning disability.²
- Many colleges include ADD/ADHD in the populations of students who require and receive special support and services.

Student **Self** Inventory

- What is your attitude toward your learning challenges? Do you accept them?
- What are your Parent's attitudes?
- Do you self-identify/self advocate in high school?
- Have you been formally tested? Within the past 3 years of expected date of application to the college/LD program? What was the scope of testing? Is there a report? Was testing done through school district or privately? By whom?
- Do you have an IEP or 504 Plan?

Student Self Inventory, cont'd.

- What has been the scope of school or private intervention/counseling/tutoring in high school?
- What, if any, accommodations, assistive technologies, tutoring, study/test/writing remediation, therapies or other support have you had?
- What impact has your LD had on your academic and social success?
- What impact have any supports and academic interventions (such as listed above) had on your academic and social success?

Student Self Inventory, cont'd.

- Are you a self-initiator? Can you make and stay on a schedule?
- Have you ever been away from home for any length of time (ie., sleep-away camp)? For how long? How well did it go? What were the challenges, if any?
- Are you more likely to live at home while attending college? Attend a nearby college but live on campus? Attend a college within a few hours driving distance? Or a college requiring air travel/more extensive travel?
- Are you more likely to attend a 2 year college or a 4 year college?

Student/Parent LD Checklist for College Visits

Campus Visits are always recommended!
Plan ahead!

Campus Learning Disabilities Office

- Is there an Office of Disability Services? Number of staff _____
- Are there Learning Specialists? Writing Specialist? Tutors?
- Specialized Counselors? Does Staff have advanced degrees?
(PhD., CSW, Masters degree, etc.)
- Number of students served _____ What is the ratio of
professionals to students in the program? _____

Counseling

- Are the student's social and emotional needs addressed?
- Do certified professional social workers or psychologists meet with students individually or in groups?
- Are counseling support services required or left to the student's discretion?
- What services are available for career advising?
- How are parents' concerns and questions addressed?
- Is there a multi-disciplinary team to coordinate academic and social/emotional interventions and support?

Social/Emotional

- Are the dorms suitable for the student's social, emotional and academic needs?
- Are students with learning disabilities or any disabilities housed together? If so, can I opt out if I prefer?
- Are there quiet dorms and/or quiet rooms or floors in the dorms?
- Are there any social outreach programs on campus for students with learning disabilities?
- What if I don't like my roommate or if s/he doesn't like me?

Academic

- What academic services are available? On-on-one tutoring? Study skills, organizational skills and time management workshops? Writing tutors? Note-takers? A testing center? Assistive devices and programs?
- Are resources coordinated to meet the individual student's needs or must the students advocate for their own needs?
- Do program personnel have ongoing relationships with faculty to sensitize them to students' needs?
- Are students mainstreamed in all college courses?
- Are there course modifications for students with learning disabilities?

Academic, cont'd.

- Are alternative modifications and assistive technologies available and delivered systematically (ie., not left solely for student to request)? **Examples:**
 - Books on tape
 - Recorded Lectures
 - Readers
 - Scribes
 - A standardized procedure for extended time tests
 - Courses or workshops to help writers with LDs succeed in required English Composition courses
 - Assistive software, such as *Ghostreader* and *ReadingPen*

- Are there course modifications for students with learning disabilities?

- What is the average class size?

Academic, cont'd.

- Is a summer diagnostic-experiential program required?
- What criteria are used to evaluate the student's performance during the diagnostic period?
- Does the official transcript respect student confidentiality by not revealing the student's participation in a learning disabilities program?
- What is the average graduation rate and average number of years to graduate for students in this program?

Admissions

- Is there a separate procedure for admission to the LD program?
- Is the ACT or SAT required? SAT Subject tests?
- What documentation is required for admission to the LD program?
- Is any special testing required? How recent must the testing be?
- Is a personal interview required or recommended?
- When is the best time to apply to the LD program? What is the deadline?
- Is there a maximum number of students in the LD program?
- When can I expect to hear if I've been accepted to the LD program?
- What are the criteria for admission to the LD program for transfer students?

Checklist for Colleges and Universities that do not have a separate LD Program

List for yourself the services you will need. Refer to the longer checklist in this presentation.

- Who should I see about services for my learning challenges?
- What services are provided? When? Where? By whom?
- Are there time management, study and organizational skills workshops? A writing center? Special academic advising?
- Are these services provided without a fee?
- What documentation for my LD is required?

Checklist for Colleges and Universities that do not have a separate LD Program, cont'd.

- Who is responsible for coordinating services? Is this a full-time, permanent position?
- Does availability of these services/accommodations depend on the disposition of each instructor or is it established by school policy?
- How hard must students self-advocate to get services?
- Are faculty responsive to the needs of students with LDs?
- Is there a learning center where subject tutoring is available to all students?
- How many students receive services for LDs?

Resources and References

Resources

- Transition2College, www.transition2college.com
- Learning Disabilities Association America (LDA)
<http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/teachers/understanding/adhd.asp>
- LD Online, www.ldonline.org
- The Yale Center For Dyslexia & Creativity, <http://dyslexia.yale.edu>
- College Sourcebook for Students with Learning & Developmental Differences, Wintergreen Orchard House,
<http://store.wintergreenstore.com/223sld5.html>
- Colleges With Programs for Learning Disabled Students:
www.college-scholarship.com/learning_disabilities.htm
- The K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD – The Princeton Review
- Peterson's Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or AD/HD
- Preparing Students with Disabilities for College:A Practical Guide for Transition-Paul H. Brooks

Resources and References

Resources, Cont'd

Associations

- CHADD www.chadd.org
- AHEAD www.ahead.org
- LDA www.ldanatl.org
- National Center For Learning Differences www.LD.org

Testing Accommodations

- SAT www.collegeboard.com/ssd/student/index.html
- ACT www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html

Other

- Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities, US Dept. Of Education Office For Civil Rights, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

Resources and References

References

- ¹ College Students With Disabilities: Assessment of ADD/ADHD and Writing Disabilities, Jennifer Harrison, UCLA Extension
- ² Learning Disabilities Association America (LDA) <http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/teachers/understanding/adhd.asp>
- Practical Guidelines For Counseling Students with Disabilities, Mark E. Beecher, Rochelle A. Rabe, Lynn K. Wilder; Journal Of College Counseling
- Admission/How Do I Choose A College? Adelphi University, Garden City, NY
- Colleges For Students With Learning Disabilities (July 2011) UCLA Extension
- Colleges With Programs for Learning Disabled Students:
www.college-scholarship.com/learning_disabilities.htm
- Selecting a College for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder BY Juliana M. Taymans, www.ldonline.org/article/
- Checklist for Preparing a Student with a Disability for a Postsecondary Education, The Office for disability Services, Penn State University
www.equity.psu.edu/ods

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