

College Information for Students with Learning Differences and/or ADHD

Many students with learning disorders or ADHD have received accommodations during high school. They might be tempted to “go it alone” in college, but there are dangers in doing so. First, it is important to make sure that accommodations are approved in place, even if the student does not take advantage of them. Once the school term begins, there is very little time before midterms and major papers are due. Should the student discover that help would be needed, accommodations cannot begin immediately upon request. It can be a long period of time – a semester or a full academic year – before all paperwork and evaluations are in place. A second reason you do not want to avoid utilizing assistance at college is that students will be missing one of the most important lessons college has to offer: how to find and use help. This step toward becoming an independent learner is crucial to success in college, and students with learning differences would be well advised to get all the assistance available at the beginning of the college experience.

No college has the right to ask an applicant if he/she has a disability. However, there may be very good reasons to self-disclose, such as:

- Grades in classes such as math or English were consistently lower than other classes.
- The disability was identified at a certain point in high school and grades improved dramatically once the student began receiving accommodations.
- The student was unable to pursue a high level of study in a certain subject, such as foreign language, due to the disability.

There are three categories of assistance provided by colleges:

- **Structured Programs:** Colleges with structured programs offer specific programs for students with LD/ADHD that go well beyond mandated services. These services might include special admissions procedures, specialized and trained professionals, compensatory strategies, one-on-one tutoring, additional fees, compulsory participation and monitoring.
- **Coordinated Services:** Colleges with coordinated services offer programs for student with LD/ADHD that might be somewhat involved with the admission decisions and might include voluntary participation, services beyond those that are mandated, low or no fees, and less structure.
- **Basic Services:** Colleges with basic services comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but rarely have specialized LD staff, do not have monitoring, and are totally dependent on student advocacy.

The student with LD/ADHD must take steps when applying to college in order to be eligible for services:

- Self-disclose the LD or ADHD
- Request accommodations
- Submit current and appropriate documents

The colleges will then exercise their right to independently examine the documentation and identify the services they feel are reasonable and appropriate.