

College Support White Paper

Brian Walker, History Teacher– Telos Academy

“Can my son succeed at a college-level?”

“Is there a higher education institution that will work with his real challenges?”

These are common questions posed by parents as the high school experience of their child finishes. Naturally, most parents are interested in subsequent higher educational opportunities for their child and seek placements where the opportunities for success are greatest. This hope is sometimes checked by the reality that some students retain significant impairments or do not overcome some educational challenges during the high school experience.

The purpose of this document is to inform. There are a myriad of colleges, universities, and educational programs in the United States higher education system. Many of these institutions offer support for bright students who are ready for college curriculum/environments, but still require some supervision or academic accommodations to reach their potential. This paper will explore the types of support offered by many universities, provide a few examples of such programs, and advise how to properly navigate and investigate pertinent resources.

What kind of support is out there? Autism Spectrum: A case study

Students diagnosed as on the Autism Spectrum are often very bright and capable academically. They excel in many ways, but are impaired in key areas. Assessing and managing expectations in multiple courses, interacting with sometimes unpredictable professors (with varying expectations) and social interaction are areas where a student on the Autism Spectrum feels particularly challenged in a typical college setting.

Many colleges offer support. The incidence of such diagnosis is becoming more recognized in the U.S. population, and higher education institutions are responding to such rates. Rutgers University is a clear example.

Located in New Jersey, Rutgers enjoys consistently high Top-Ten national rankings in many of its programs Liberal Arts, Humanities and graduate level programs. It is also rated high in its “value for cost.” Rutgers offers a program specifically designed for students on the Autism Spectrum. From its webpage:

“The College Support Program (CSP) offers individualized support for Rutgers University students who are on the Autism Spectrum. Students who have met the University’s admission requirements can apply for separate admission into the CSP.”

The CSP offers the following:

- A coordinator who meets with the student a minimum of once per week
- Assistance with the identification of goals to address academic, organizational, social and life skills
- Strategies to meet the identified goals
- Trained peer mentors
- Optional social events
- Parent workshops
- Referrals/ follow up with academic and support services

See: <http://dddc.rutgers.edu/college-support.html>

Rutgers, like many universities, offers this program through their Office of Disabilities. While each university may call their respective department dedicated to disability support by unique names, all accredited institutions maintain such offices. Each institution offers differing levels of support, and it is important to investigate such when considering a placement during the application/admission process.

How can I find support these types of programs when surveying colleges?

Start with Disability Services. Most colleges have offices dedicated to serving students with documented disabilities. Check into other offices with similar functions. Below are some examples with their respective colleges. Visit them to get a picture at what you will find when pursuing information:

- Smith College: Office of Disability Services <http://www.smith.edu/ods/>
- Bethel College: Center for Academic Success <http://www.bethelcollege.edu/academics/tutoring/>
- Disabled Students Programs and Services Los Angeles Mission College <http://www.lamission.edu/dsps/>
- College Internship Program – CIP Amherst, Amherst, NY <http://www.cipworldwide.org/cip-amherst/amherst-overview/>

While not an exhaustive list by any means, the links above demonstrate a clear point: support is available for struggling students at the college level. This support can vary in intensity and take different forms. It should be noted that such assistance is only most effective when the student uses it with commitment and consistency.

When investigating for such programs these key words may help locate possible resources:

- Student Support
- Academic Support
- Disability Office
- Student Counseling Office
- Academic Advisement Center
- Student Services

Keep in mind, at smaller schools, often one office serves many different functions. It may be difficult to find the right service that you need without some detective work.

As you review various programs, another similarity is instructive: many programs offer support not only for physical limitations but also for psychological and learning disabilities. These often include ADD/ADHD, test anxiety, student advocacy support, etc. While these are commonly addressed in secondary educational venues, it is important to note that many colleges will offer similar accommodations when a disability is documented, and when the student requests assistance in an approved manner.

Further Reading:

K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities, 9th Edition. Princeton Review, 2007

A comprehensive resource for selecting the right college for students with learning disabilities, the *K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities* includes profiles of over 300 schools, advice from specialists in the field of learning disabilities, and strategies to help students find the best match for their needs.

Peterson's Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or AD/HD, 2007

Online Organizations with Relevant Information:

- ASD, NLD: <http://www.aheadd.org/>
- ADHD: <https://edgefoundation.org/>
- General Disability College Support: <http://collegeacademicssupport.com/>