

A College Guide for Students with Disabilities at North Carolina Central University

Like any other prospective college student, students with disabilities will likely have questions about the transition from high school to college. Students with disabilities making the transition to college will find that the procedures for accessing accommodations are different from those at the high school level. At the collegiate level, students with disabilities serve as their own self-advocates regarding their status as an individual with a disability. The management of obtaining disability documentation, requesting services, and disclosing a disability is the responsibility of the student.

For example, students with disabilities at the collegiate level must seek out the appropriate office on campus (usually "Office of Disability Services") to inquire about the procedure for accessing accommodations. Upon disclosing a disability, students will be asked to submit requests for accommodations in writing along with documentation of their disability according to the standards of the university or college. Requirements for documentation of a disability may vary by institution, and students may be asked to obtain disability documentation at their own expense. Generally, students with disabilities approved for accommodations will notify each instructor of their needs and coordinate the effort to access accommodations and services.

Unlike high school, students attending college who are 18 years old or older have the same privacy and confidentiality rights afforded to adults. Therefore, college professors and administrators must speak directly to the students themselves and may not, with certain exceptions, talk with parents or guardians about a student's activities without written permission from the student. Whereas parents used to be the student's primary advocate, the student must now engage in self-advocacy. This is an important life skill for young adults.

For more on disability services at North Carolina Central University information please contact:

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An Overview

There is a wealth of information available to students with disabilities. So much information is available, in fact, that it can be overwhelming to wade through it all. To aid in the process of gathering and sorting information, CFNC has put together some topics that may be of interest to students with disabilities and their families. In addition, the Resource Guide at the back of this publication has some contact information for relevant organizations that will provide more details on topics of interest.

CFNC.org

CFNC and NCCU, a partnership striving to serve all students!



James E. Shepard, Founder

**College
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The Laws

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”), as amended, Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (collectively “ADA”) prohibit discrimination based on a disability. In terms of higher education, this means that as long as a student meets admission requirements, a college may not deny the student admission simply because the student has a disability. A college may deny admission to any student, regardless of ability, who does not meet admission requirements or essential requirements for a specific program.*

According to both Section 504 and the ADA, a “person with a disability” is anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his or her major life activities, such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, writing, and thinking. The definition covers a range of disabilities from psychological disabilities to chronic health problems. Students with disabilities must establish that they are substantially limited in this manner and that they need reasonable accommodations.

As far as college entrance tests, according to the U.S. Department of Education’s *Transition of Students With Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators*, “federal law requires changes to the testing conditions that are necessary to allow a student with a disability to participate as long as the changes do not fundamentally alter the exam or create financial or administrative burdens.” Some examples of testing accommodations include providing materials in large print or Braille, extended testing time, and allowing tape-recorded responses.

Colleges should not ask questions related to a student’s disability status prior to the student’s admission. After the student is admitted, colleges are not required to ask about disabilities and students are not required to disclose their disability. Some students may not need accommodations for their disability and may choose not to disclose that information to the college. In that case, the college would not get involved unless the student approached the Office of Disability Services on campus and requested information on accommodations. Students may only receive accommodations after the time they disclose their disability for that semester (e.g., not retroactively) and will need to request accommodations each semester thereafter.



Choosing a College

For students with disabilities, one of the most important factors in applying to college is to start early! Allow extra time to research services available on campus and learn what documentation is required to receive services. There are many books on choosing a college, a couple of which are highlighted here.

Resources for Choosing a College

Mangrum, Charles T., II, and Strichart, Stephen S., eds. *Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorders*. 8th ed. New Jersey: Peterson’s Guides, 2006.

Reiff, Henry B. *Self-Advocacy Skills for Students with Learning Disabilities, Making it Happen in College and Beyond: A Resource for Students, Parents, and Guidance Counselors*. New York: National Professional Resources, Inc., 2007.

The best way to start researching colleges is to visit in person or online. Information on all of North Carolina’s colleges can be found at CFNC.org. You can also call toll free 866-866-CFNC to speak with a representative about colleges and financial aid.

If it is possible to visit a campus in person, make sure to contact the admissions office to arrange a tour. Ask the admissions officer how to contact the Office of Disability Services on campus. These offices often have different names on individual campuses, but usually contain the phrase “disability services” or “student support services.” Pick up business cards to contact college administrators later if necessary.



* U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Transition of Students With Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators* (Washington, DC: 2007), <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html>.