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This chapter examines the changes in supports and services from secondary to postsecondary for students with disabilities. It recommends ways organizations, practitioners, and students must coordinate and collaborate to affect the environment and increase student success in postsecondary education.

Facilitating College Supports to Ensure Student Success

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Approximately 11% of college students have disabilities (Madaus et al., 2016). This proportion has steadily increased since the 1980s, reflecting successful policy initiatives such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, and a United States Department of Education focus on college and career readiness for all students. Research indicates that purposeful collaboration in preparing for postsecondary education (Test et al., 2009) and interdisciplinary supports once on campus (Bailey et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016) are more likely to lead to successful outcomes for students. With increased enrollment of students with disabilities in postsecondary education, institutions, faculty, staff, families, and students must be increasingly mindful of effective ways to foster partnerships.

Along with rights to access free and appropriate public education, IDEA (2004) mandated that schools incorporate post-high school transition planning into individualized education programs for students with disabilities, including providing students with a summary of performance document to enhance the connection to postsecondary services and supports. HEOA (2008) legislated that students with an intellectual disability may receive funding from the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Federal Work-Study programs. Finally, with the rise in college and career readiness policy initiatives of the past decade, increasing numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and subgroups, including students with disabilities, are pursuing college.

The challenge remains to ensure that these students complete a high-quality postsecondary education and are well equipped for success after college. While students with learning disabilities enrolled in postsecondary

education at the same rates as the general population, data indicated that 41% of individuals with a learning disability earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 52% of college students without a disability (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014).

Students with disabilities who transition to college are often not fully prepared to meet the challenges of this new educational setting (Getzel, 2008; Newman & Madaus, 2015; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, & Shaver, 2010). Understanding the differences between high school and college, and creating a system of supports to help students remain in and complete post-secondary education are critical. Students with disabilities, as all students entering college, must adapt to fewer contacts with faculty, larger amounts of material to cover outside of the classroom, changes in support systems previously used in high school, and higher expectations to achieve independently (Ahmann, Tuttle, Saviet, & Wright, 2018; Getzel & Briel, 2013). Added to these changes, students with disabilities must obtain accommodations to ensure access to academic information and materials (Getzel, 2008; Getzel & Briel, 2013; Newman & Madaus, 2015).

Seeking accommodations and becoming eligible to receive them is a significant change for students with disabilities as they enter college. These differences and what students need to do will be described in more detail later in this chapter. What is important to note is that seeking accommodations is an essential part of a student's total individualized support system that covers both academic and social areas. To provide further insight into developing an individualized system of support, two critical components will be discussed. First, understanding the critical characteristics of self-determined behavior that students need to possess in order to create this system; and second is the collaboration between students and the services and supports on campus and in the wider community. While self-determined characteristics and collaboration to access a support system are important for all successful students, there are distinct aspects of these components for students with disabilities in postsecondary education. The importance of student connectedness to services and supports is emphasized by Newman, Madaus, and Javitz (2016). They reported that students with disabilities who access a variety of supports and services while in college are more likely to finish college than students who did not (Newman, Madaus, & Javitz, 2016).

As this chapter focuses on these two components, essential to successful collaborations it is also important to note the bi-directional nature of effort. The student must be responsible for understanding her needs and strengths, as well as determining the supports that will benefit success. The student must then also take the necessary steps to navigate and access that system of both formal and informal supports. Of equal importance, the postsecondary institution and campus community must facilitate access to these supports through an intentionally welcoming atmosphere and navigable, accessible services (Finn,

Getzel, & McManus, 2008; McCormick, Kinzie, & Korkman, 2011; Wilson, Getzel, & Brown, 2000).

Self-Determined Characteristics

Much of the research on students' experiences in college has focused on faculty accommodations, and the innate characteristics impacting students in higher education (Lightfoot, Janemi, & Rudman, 2018). Specific characteristics, identified as research-based predictors for successful transition into postsecondary education include self-determination (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Test et al., 2009), goal setting, and youth autonomy and decision-making (Mazzotti et al.). A conceptual framework by Field and Hoffman (1994) describes self-determination as "the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself" (p. 136). Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes (1998) described twelve component skills that are essential to the emergence of self-determined behavior in an individual. Some of the skills identified include choice-making, problem-solving, self-advocacy, internal locus of control, self-awareness, and self-knowledge. College students with disabilities identified these behaviors as critical to success in postsecondary education (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Thoma & Getzel, 2005). These students' support systems required establishing friendships with peers, seeking out service support staff members on campus, and joining support groups. Their level of self-awareness of their strengths and needs allowed them to open up to others for support, including family members and community agencies (Getzel and Thoma (2008); Thoma & Getzel, 2005).

Self-determination and self-advocacy skills taught when students are in elementary and secondary school, take on critical importance for adult students. The services and supports provided by the K-12 system for students with IEPs must be pursued in colleges, universities, and technical schools. Adult students may qualify for accommodations that enhance their access to the content, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); but, they must present documentation of the disability to utilize such services supports. Additionally, once determined eligible for accommodations, an adult student may need to present and explain the needed accommodations to each instructor and likely advocate for the provision of such services as a note taker, extended time on tests, testing in a quiet setting, use of technology in class, or other common accommodations. Additionally, while elementary, middle, and high schools provide natural mechanisms for peer interactions in their inherent structure, adult learners may need to actively pursue social supports. Interdisciplinary supports, such as counseling or other services, that may have been available within a school building are likely spread across or outside a postsecondary campus. Finally, supports that a student may have naturally had while living at home with family members—health, nutrition, housing, financial, transportation—may become new areas for an adult learner to navigate.

This connects self-determination to the second aspect of developing a system of support in college. The component skills facilitate a student's awareness and ability to collaborate with both formal and informal supports on campus and in the community. As Madaus et al. (2016) identified, accessing tutoring services, participating in study groups, and engaging in social extracurricular activities within the college community were suggested practices to improve student success in college. In a series of topical briefs on student retention, the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability—Youth (2016) emphasized the critical importance of students in community colleges being connected to (a) health (physical and mental) services, (b) academic assistance, (c) housing and transportation resources, (d) workforce or career planning, (e) volunteer opportunities, and (f) financial assistance to facilitate postsecondary degree completion.

Campus Environment

A component of collaboration in higher education settings is the creation of a welcoming campus environment (McCormick, et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2000). Services and supports offered on campus may include disability specific services, as well as services for all students such as writing labs, career, or counseling centers. McCormick et al. (2011) note that increasing numbers of higher education institutions are focusing on student engagement to address student retention and completion of college. This is due, in part, to greater numbers of students entering college with diverse learning and support needs, and the emergence of new technologies and teaching strategies. Added to the increasing diversity on campuses, colleges and universities exist within an atmosphere of high expectations and a reduction of resources (McCormick, et al., 2011). This has led to the development of strategies to create active and collaborative learning and increased student-faculty interactions early on in a student's college experience. Examples of support provided include an emphasis on "road maps" to aid students' academic planning and completion of program requirements, learning communities and seminars for first year students, and peer-to-peer instructional support (McCormick, et al., 2011).

Creating a welcoming campus also includes various strategies, supports, and services used by universities and colleges in recognition of diverse learners and the need for supports to promote student learning and engagement in the campus community. Coaching or mentoring strategies are being used for all college students. For example, upperclassmen may provide academic support to first- and second-year students to keep them on track to increase the likelihood of staying in school (Brown, Takahashi, & Roberts, 2010; Getzel, 2008). For students with disabilities, there are a number of models used to create systems of supports for students with ID/DD, autism, learning disabilities and ADHD (Finn et al., 2008). These systems help to provide more intensive supports to assist students to meet the demands of college.

Campus Supports

Once in postsecondary education, students with disabilities must understand that the nature of support services is philosophically different. Governed by the ADA, students are now protected from discrimination on the basis of disability rather than entitled to services in special education (as provided by IDEA). While they may seem similar enough, the fundamental differences between the ADA and IDEA may dictate the supports available to college students. As a result, and in the most extreme cases, students may qualify as a person with a disability under the IDEA but then not qualify under the ADA once in postsecondary education, and vice versa. Table 8.1 shows important differences between high school and college settings that students and their families should consider when planning for this important transition.

As IDEA is an entitlement law, students who qualify for special education services in the K-12 system are entitled to a free appropriate public education, which includes the development of an individualized education program (IEP) based upon their unique needs. The school is required to conduct periodic evaluations and to monitor the student's progress. In contrast, once the person exits the K-12 system, he or she may become eligible for protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and/or the ADA. However, as these are civil rights laws, the onus of responsibility for proving eligibility shifts to the person with a disability. The person seeking protections and services must provide evidence of a current and substantial limitation to a major life function. Typically, this is done via documentation, or records, that provide verification of the disability and of its impact on a major life function.

All postsecondary institutions are required to house an Office of Disability Services. This office can vary greatly with regard to size and readily available resources. For example, at some institutions this "office" might be constituted of one individual or even one half-time individual. At other institutions, an entire staff could be devoted to this type of support. Institutional websites will contain information on the type of resources available, as well as the necessary documentation that students will need in order to register and receive auxiliary aid and accommodations. Documentation requirements are institution-specific, meaning it is up to the institution to determine precisely what is necessary to determine proof of a disability. Most institutions will not accept a high-school IEP document. Research on practices focused on student retention in college suggests that collaboration and students linking with multiple sources of support are among key components of success. A U. S. Department of Education (2016) publication focused on the topic of college completion identifies two critical factors: (1) frequent communication with an academic advisor and (2) support of first year students from an interdisciplinary team on campus.

Table 8.1. Differences Between High School and College

Area	High School	College
Personal freedom	Less freedom—living at home with parents	More freedom—especially if students live on or off campus
Structure	More structure—school sets schedule	Less structure—student sets schedule
Classes	Predictable—typically 15 to 35 students	Less predictable—some classes can have 100 to 200 students or more
Teachers	Frequent contact—may see teachers every day	Less frequent contact—may only see professors one to three times a week
Study time	May be able to get studying done in a study hall or spend minimal time outside of class studying	Significant reading and independent work demands and may study 2–4 hours a day
Tests	More frequent tests on less information -assessments may come in a variety of formats, not necessarily in-class exams (e.g., project, paper, group work)	May have only a few tests a semester and assessments may cover many chapters or be cumulative -assessments may come in a variety of formats, not necessarily in-class exams (e.g., project, paper, group work)
Grades	Course grade often based on many assignments	Course grade may be based on only a few assignments, depending on the course and size of the class
Physical environment	Classes often held in one building	Classes may be held across a campus in many different buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students typically have more opportunities to take online courses, which may reduce or eliminate barriers in the physical space, but require technology skills to retrieve and contribute information
Legal protection	IDEA: Entitled to a free appropriate public education	ADA and 504: Must be eligible for services and reasonable accommodations

(Continued)

Table 8.1. Continued

Area	High School	College
Special education classes	Specialized instruction, classes and resource room services for students with disabilities	Special education classes do not exist at the postsecondary level but supports do exist. Some colleges may offer specialized programs, but often charge additional fees.
Documentation	School evaluates the student and develops the individualized education program (IEP)	Student must provide disability documentation in order to receive accommodations. Student's IEP or Summary of Performance (SOP) may not be considered sufficient documentation.
Advocacy	Teacher and parent advocate for services	Student must advocate for services
Receiving accommodations	Accommodations determined as a part of the IEP process	Student must contact the person/office on campus responsible for arranging accommodations. Student may need to negotiate specifics of some accommodations with an instructor, directly.

Source: www.going-to-college.org (Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, Virginia Commonwealth University).

Documentation

As students prepare to move forward into postsecondary environments, they need to have appropriate documentation of their disability to be eligible for services and accommodations. Most importantly, the documentation must provide evidence of a *current* and *substantial* limitation to a major life function. As mentioned, documentation requirements are institution-specific. It is not sufficient to simply provide a statement of disability—the documentation must verify how it results in a substantial limitation to a major life function. If the person cannot provide such documentary evidence, he or she may not receive the services and protections needed in postsecondary education and

employment. This can occur regardless of whether or not he or she received services under IDEA.

A growing number of institutions follow guidelines developed and provided by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), available online at <https://disabilityservices.syr.edu/aboutods/documentation/>. In general, a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation may be needed to provide evidence of a disability. However, ideally the K-12 system, as governed under the IDEA, will provide adequate documentation upon exiting. This process may involve an updated and/or final psychoeducational evaluation prior to graduation or exit of the K-12 system for all students on IEPs. Also, as loosely governed by the IDEA, K-12 educators may have facilitated the development of a Summary of Performance (SOP) document. The SOP is an established documentation procedure under the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA that encourages the IEP team to collect and track data regarding successful supports for the student prior to graduation. The SOP typically is developed during the student's last year of services and must include a summary of a student's academic achievement and functional performance as well as recommendations on how to assist students in meeting postsecondary goals (Yell, Delpont, Plotner, Petcu, & Prince, 2015).

The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) provides a four-page SOP template that includes four sections, one of which is meant to track understanding and use of accommodations (see: www.transitionta.org). It is intended that the student and IEP team will work together to develop the SOP to provide information to appropriate postsecondary settings about accommodations that work well for the student, as well as those that do not. An ultimate goal of such documentation is that the student knows what to advocate for when arriving on a college campus or upon employment in a workplace. Ideally, a student will be able to share the SOP with future employers and postsecondary institutions as a form of documentation to obtain reasonable accommodations, as well as to share information about what types of supports work best. The SOP can provide college advisors or faculty with a sense of the additional supports (connections) a student may require for success in the postsecondary institution.

Ultimately, while postsecondary institutions are increasingly aware that a variety of services, supports, and linkages may ensure greater success for students, individual students must be able to identify and access such supports.

Partnerships

Often a collaborating partner in higher education is the vocational rehabilitation agency, involved in supporting students with disabilities pursuing a degree or certificate. A study conducted by Getzel, Briel, and Grauer (2010) surveyed vocational rehabilitation counselors in Virginia serving college students with autism. When asked about strategies to facilitate collaboration with campus services, (e.g., disability support services office and campus career centers),

they responded that all team members in the collaborative relationship need to know the roles and services of each agency or program. Several strategies for imparting this knowledge were mentioned, such as participating in professional development opportunities, transition teams, conferences, maintaining a resource list, holding regular meetings, and developing methods of communication.

Collaboration among members of a student's individualized support system is what ties together all the various supports that are needed, whether on campus or in the community. Campus communities can enhance this collaboration through the following (Harbour & Greenberg, 2017):

- Provide information that is clear and consistent, and available in a number of formats for accessibility. This information should include the academic, social, and personal supports needed to encourage the persistence and retention of all students.
- Continue to provide opportunities for students to interact with faculty, staff and other students to help them feel valued as members of the community.
- Increase the visibility of the services for students with disabilities so that they can gain access to programs, services, and information on campus. Develop a variety of ways for the university community to obtain information about disability services (e.g., student orientations, faculty meetings, articles in campus publications about the contributions of diverse learners including students with disabilities, etc.)
- Align and create a shared vision and learning priorities to ensure that all diverse learners on campus can access the supports needed to reduce the fragmentation of services, which can impact student learning.

Family members continue to be part of the college students' support system and can assist in helping students to build a support network (Pleet-Odle et al., 2016). Often, family members feel they are not welcomed to be part of their son or daughter's support system after the student enters higher education. It is important that students and families gain an understanding of the accommodation process in college and the policies that govern communication with families prior to transitioning to help identify ways to support students within this new environment. Providing materials and resources in different formats that provide clear and concise information on such topics as prerequisites for college, entrance exam requirements, supports provided on campus, and the role of adult services providers on campus and in the community can assist family members in better understanding their changing roles as well as provide guidance to students on creating their own support network (Pleet-Odle, et al.). Getzel and Thoma (2008) reported that college students with disabilities identified the important role of family members in encouraging, supporting, and understanding them and the issues they face in college. As one student emphasized, "It is important that parents let them

(college students) do things on their own. That's the way to learn" (Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

Resources regarding differences between high school and college frequently note that the role of the parent and others shrinks dramatically when a student transitions from high school to postsecondary education. There are both legal and developmental reasons for this shift. However, the student is not—or should not—be expected to completely “go it alone.” Many traditional colleges have some level of expectation of parent or family contact. From family orientation and parent weekends, to sections of the website, family Facebook pages, or electronic messaging services, colleges and university programs understand the importance of parents having quality communication from the institution. Parents and families could be providing some level of financial, logistical, and emotional support while a child is participating in postsecondary education. The degree of this support will vary and will have necessarily and naturally shifted from the K-12 support. However, acknowledging the significance of these different supports is important.

Concluding Comments

While the focus of this chapter is the transition into postsecondary education for students with disabilities and the critical partnerships to consider in this process, it is important to emphasize a key component in a successful transition is a self-determined student. The emphasis on fostering self-determination skills cannot be understated; students with disabilities must be able to effectively self-advocate and navigate a complex array of postsecondary education institutional supports. Ensuring students exit the K-12 system with strong self-determination skills and adequate disability documentation are important considerations for high-school transition specialists. In addition, there are critical differences between secondary and postsecondary environments (listed in Table 8.1) that are due mainly to the laws that govern the two systems. Understanding these critical differences, which may affect student eligibility for accommodations, is key.

Additionally, it is important that the organizations and institutions engaged in the education of adult students with disabilities are proactive in creating a supportive environment. As noted in this chapter, this includes an array of services; but, also an environment that values the diverse contributions offered by individuals with disabilities to a classroom and campus.

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