

College Options for Students with Disabilities

College programs for students with disabilities are as unique as the students they support. Programs differ by awarded credentials, admission requirements, costs, and the levels or types of support, just to name a few. There are many different options for students with disabilities to access college. The three main categories of college options for students with disabilities are college accommodations, supported education programs, and Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs.

College Accommodations

All colleges and universities are required to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. College accommodations can be similar to those provided in high school, but college students must apply for accommodations and inform their professors. Students who are accepted and enrolled may apply for accommodations at any time during their program. Common accommodations include alternate format course materials, permission to use assistive technology like recording devices, extended time on tests and assignments, peer note-takers, and priority course registration.

College accommodations are a good fit for students who:

- Have earned a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma
- Require low levels of academic support for college success
- Are degree-seeking students who applied through traditional admissions criteria
- Are willing to self-advocate & take on significant responsibility for their own learning

Supported Education Program

To succeed in college, some students with disabilities need more significant support than class accommodations can provide. Supported education programs provide additional support outside class for students in the areas of academics, social skills, and executive functioning. Students might receive tutoring, social skill instruction, independent living support, and help with organization. Supported education programs typically serve students with autism, learning disabilities, and mental health disabilities. Services vary by program and cost money. Fees may be covered by scholarships, grants, vocational rehabilitation agencies, or private pay.

Supported education programs are a good fit for students who:

- Have earned a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma
- Require significant support with independent living, executive functioning, and social skills
- Are degree-seeking students who applied through traditional admissions criteria
- Are willing to pay a fee for support services

Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs

Students with intellectual disability have not had access to college in the past, but that is no longer true. Students now have access to over 350 Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs at colleges and universities across the country. IPSE programs give students with intellectual disability access to college classes, campus life, and employment. IPSE programs provide the most amount of support and accept students who wouldn't otherwise have access to college. IPSE programs vary in their levels and types of support, awarded credentials, and costs. Additional financial support can be provided through scholarships and vocational rehabilitation agencies.

IPSE programs are a good fit for students who:

- Have not earned a Standard or Advanced Diploma
- Have an intellectual or developmental disability
- Are not eligible to access college through traditional admissions requirements
- Want to attend college but not earn a Bachelor's degree

Conclusion

Programs with different levels of support for students with disabilities are available at colleges and universities across the country. All colleges provide accommodations, while only some may provide supported education and IPSE programs. Knowing the basics about program types, admission requirements, and what is provided will help you on your way to planning your college experience!