



How to Evaluate a College's Disability Services

Like other college-bound students, those with learning differences or ADHD should make a point of visiting colleges before applying. However, in addition to visiting the admissions office, these students should also make a beeline to the Office of Disability Services to look for another type of match: support services with the appropriate accommodations for their needs.

Although all colleges are required by law to offer support services and accommodations, the level of support and types of accommodations available to students with learning differences varies widely from campus to campus, ranging from basic to comprehensive.

A visit to the Office of Disability Services is an opportunity to ask about the availability of support and accommodations that will help the student be successful in college by putting him or her on a level playing field with peers.

Questions to Ask a Disability Office

Here are important questions to ask:

1. How current must my testing be to apply for accommodations?
2. How many students use your services?
3. What Assistive Technology (AT) services do you offer? Do you have an AT expert on staff?
4. What are the procedures and timelines to receive accommodations?
5. How many Disabilities Support counselors do you have on your staff? Do they act as liaisons?
6. If a professor is not in compliance regarding the student's needed accommodations, how is the situation resolved?
7. What is the procedure to get extended time on exams? How much notice is required? Do students arrange extended time with professors or through the Disabilities Services Office?
8. Where do students take exams? Who proctors?
9. What do you consider the most difficult majors/classes for Disabilities Support students on this campus?
10. Will I have both an advisor in the Disabilities Services Office and a regular academic advisor? If both, how will the two advisors work with each other?
11. What is the four-year graduation rate for students with learning disabilities similar to mine?
12. Do you track students who have used your services after graduation? If so, what do your findings show about their success after graduation?

Would you please comment on the following accommodations and talk about the process for securing each? Select those that are appropriate for you or your child.

- Priority registration
- Reduced course load
- Extended time on tests
- Assistive technology
- Foreign language waiver or substitution
- Notetakers

LD Red Flags

Two red flags to watch out for when evaluating campus disabilities services:

- The personality of the director or staff member is off-putting. This is paramount since she/he represents the personality of the department.
- The college's Disabilities Services Office website is not user-friendly or is difficult to locate.

As with admissions meetings, students should prepare ahead of time for their meeting with the Disabilities Services Office. Practicing the questions they want to ask with a parent or other adult beforehand can be helpful, so that they avoid having to read questions from a script. It is perfectly fine for the student to take notes.

Ideally, the student should also meet with a successful current DS student while on campus. Rest assured this process gets easier with each campus visit.