MADISON HOUSE AUTISM FOUNDATION

Going to College with Special Needs

Autism and higher education guidance for parents

By Hallie Ertman

A brief note on language: Individuals of all genders can be on the autism spectrum. For the sake of brevity and clarity, we have chosen to use masculine pronouns for the hypothetical student introduced herein, but the advice and information presented is intended for all people regardless of gender.

Just getting into college, let alone succeeding through four long years of classes, is stressful for most students and their families. When your child is autistic, this process can seem downright unmanageable. Many individuals on the autism spectrum have the smarts to succeed in higher education but may face struggles in other areas such as time management, organization, finding and adapting to new and changing routines, and understanding social cues.

None of these challenges will necessarily prevent your child from succeeding. There are over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States, and many of them have excellent supports and even dedicated programs for students with disabilities. It will take both planning and effort, but your child can earn a degree. There will be plenty of obstacles along the way, but with a little preparation, they can teach your child greater independence and the stronger self-advocacy skills.

Part One: Preparation

Start Early

When you're preparing for college applications, middle school is not too early. Don't think just in terms of classes and grades, but also in terms of connecting with teachers. We received some expert advice from Jeffrey Deutsch, Ph.D., a speaker and life coach with Asperger's who has his own firm, A SPLINT (ASPies LInking with NTs, http://www.asplint.com). He told us that starting in middle school, "students should be encouraged to identify teachers and others who think well of them", and to keep in touch even after leaving that teacher's class. "Asking one's 9th grade math teacher for a college recommendation after two years of total silence is kind of awkward. Instead, keep potential recommenders updated maybe monthly -- not to mention incidentally, say upon winning some great award".

Classes and Grades

Most colleges and universities would rather see rigor than grades. Experts say that most schools consider rigor, then grades, and then test scores – in that order.

This does not mean that you should ignore grades; you should still help your child perform as well as possible in his chosen schedule. It does mean that you should encourage your child to take some stretch classes. If your child wants to take on an academic challenge, like a specific advanced placement (AP) class, honors class, or an academic club, encourage him even if you are both nervous about performance. Never sacrifice exploration or challenge just to achieve perfect grades in a mediocre curriculum.

Of course, the most selective colleges will be able to require high test scores and grades in a challenging curriculum. The more a student achieves, the broader his options will be, but don't forget that there are thousands of colleges and universities in the US. Getting a good education doesn't require going to the most selective schools.

Unfortunately, some high schools and school districts have poor reputations, or are known for grade inflating. For applicants from these schools test scores may take on an inflated importance. This is an area where your guidance counselor may be helpful, and it may be an issue you want to bring up when you visit colleges.

Extracurriculars

Colleges look for depth over breadth in extracurriculars. They look for deep, meaningful, and continued involvement with one or a few areas of interest. This is great news for a lot of students on the spectrum who might naturally focus on one or two passions rather than joining lots of different clubs. Encourage your child to pursue his interests in a way that creates tangible accomplishments. Joining or even starting a club might be outside the comfort zone of some individuals on the spectrum, but social involvement will be good practice for a college environment. You might also encourage your child to consider volunteering outside of school. In general, look for ways that your child's specialized interests and knowledge can be incorporated into a resume and clearly explained to colleges as a selling point.

Connect with Your Counselor

A good relationship with your child's guidance counselor is important for several reasons. First, as you probably know, it can help you get needed services and ensure that promised accommodations are truly put in place. A good counselor who knows your child well is invaluable during high school. What you might not know yet is that this relationship becomes even more important when your child is ready to apply for college.

Researchers have found that school counselors see themselves as responsible for the success and overall growth of students on the spectrum. Specifically, they want to support their students through consultation, collaboration, and advocacy. Most counselors believe that a collaborative transition process, begun early in a student's high school education, is the most important counseling service they can provide.

Your guidance counselor is an ideal person to provide information about schools and programs in which your child would succeed. She may already know about specific programs for students on the spectrum, but even if your counselor does not specialize in this area, she will be able to learn about programs and resources through colleagues and trade journals. The sooner you connect with your child's counselor, and the earlier your child starts thinking about post-secondary goals, the more time your counselor will have to ask around and investigate options for you. The better a counselor knows your child and your family, the better they can match resources to a student's needs.

When your child is ready to apply to schools, his guidance counselor will probably need to write a letter or recommendation. If your child has a strong relationship with the counselor, this can be a very helpful stage in the application process. Your counselor is experienced with the transition process and will know how to describe your child's strengths and achievements to an admissions committee.

No matter how well your child knows his counselor, it is a good idea to supply her with a brag sheet. This is a document that summarizes your child's personality, goals, and achievements to ensure that a guidance counselor who works with many students will be able to describe these things accurately. Some schools require a brag sheet and will give your child a template to fill out. Others will not offer your child any guidance, but it is worthwhile to create one on your own. Some brag sheets take the form of high school resumes; these should be formatted like any other resume, with bullet

points, little first person language, and brief lists of achievements.

The question of when or whether your child should disclose his autism to a college is a complicated and personal one that we will discuss in more detail later. One option is having your child's counselor discuss it on his behalf, if the school intends to contact your counselor directly. If your child elects to do this, then his brag sheet should discuss ways that he has overcome challenges. The goal, in this case, is to help your counselor best frame the disclosure. If you do not want your counselor to disclose for your child, or do not intend to disclose at all before acceptance, then your brag sheet should not contain any mention of autism.

Writing a good brag sheet comes down to crafting an appealing message with which your child is comfortable. Review our sample brag sheet for an example of one that openly discusses an individual's autism.

High School vs. College

There are some major differences between high school and college for which your child must be prepared academically, socially, and emotionally. Start talking about these differences as early as possible, and help your child think about what he will do to prepare. Some students on the spectrum have difficulty with executive function. These individuals, in particular, may have trouble with long range planning and may need more time and guidance to define their long-term goals. If this describes your child, you may want to consider a disability-specific transition program or creating a longer transition in some other way.

Use our list of differences as a jumping off point for your conversations (see below). Share your personal experiences with your child, or try to connect him with another adult who is familiar with college. Ask your child what he is looking forward to and what he fears. Brainstorm coping strategies, and practice them as soon as possible. Ideally, your child will be responsible for laundry, waking up on time, and other life-management essentials during high school. Do test runs of independence by leaving your teenager home alone for short stretches. This can be extremely challenging, especially the first several times, but it is important to develop independence in stages and start when the stakes are lower.

One of the most important ways for your child to practice self-advocacy in high school is through involvement with his or her own IEP, if there is one. Have your child work with his teachers to figure out what accommodations are needed and what his goals are. Have your child come to IEP meetings and present those goals himself. Try to make sure your child is familiar with all the forms and requirements. Taking initiative this way can be very difficult for some adolescents, but it is the closest thing to college-level self-advocacy your child will have the chance to practice while he still has you to fall back on.

Set Clear Goals

Through person-centered planning, your child should be able to set very clear goals for college and his future career. Abstract planning is difficult for some individuals on the spectrum, but specific and concrete objectives may make it easier. Goals serve as motivation during difficult times, will help your child target the best schools for him, and will help him communicate his needs to college counselors and other important individuals.

IDEA, ADA, and Section 504

Before you can start finding and applying to the right schools, you need to know what to look for. Part of that is understanding the differences between the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

As the parent of a high school student, you are probably very familiar with IEPs and possibly 504 plans. Put simply, an IEP is an Individualized Education Plan based on the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, also called IDEA. The IEP is developed with input from teachers, doctors, and parents. It contains information on a student's current performance as well as goals (usually set annually), performance on state or district tests and other assessments, measures of progress, and the services or accommodations provided. Ideally, it should also contain a transition plan that can start as early as is deemed necessary for an individual student. Most professionals believe this transition plan should start as soon as a student enters high school, but it is usually required in a student's final year.

Some students have a 504 plan. This is similar to an IEP, but not exactly the same. The name comes from Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A 504 specifies modifications to a student's educational program that will be implemented in a regular classroom setting, whereas the accommodations specified by an IEP can be made in a regular classroom setting or a special education setting. Also unlike an IEP, a 504 plan does not legally require the involvement or approval of a parent, although parental involvement is generally very important for a student's success. It is possible for a student to have both an IEP and a 504. Many students will have an IEP developed while they are in a special education classroom and then receive a 504 when they transition out of that environment.

After high school, an IEP ceases to be in effect because a student is no longer covered by the mandates of IDEA. High school 504 plans also end; although section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act applies to all post-secondary institutions that receive federal funds, the requirements are different than those for high schools. All institutions are covered by the ADA regardless of their funding.

The most important difference between IDEA and the ADA is that IDEA requires a school to provide an education to all students, whereas the ADA requires reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified. The accommodations required by the ADA may not be sufficient for your child to succeed, but your child can still do well in college. Many schools go above and beyond what is required by law, and to find these schools you have to know what is required by law, what your child needs, and where they do and do not overlap.

The second most important distinction is that public schools have a mandate under IDEA to find students who need services and provide testing. In college, under the ADA, your child will need to initiate the request for services and no testing will be provided, although schools may still require testing to receive services.

Section 504 requires that students with disabilities receive all the same services and supports available to the general student body. It does not require that a school compose any written plan, although this is sometimes done anyway as administrators and students may find it helpful.

An IEP or 504 remains important after graduation because it codifies the services and accommodations your child has been receiving. This will help you know exactly what you need to ask for when investigating colleges. In addition, your child's high school must provide an SOP, or a summary of performance, to seniors with IEPs. This document contains a summary of your child's academic achievements, functional performance, and recommendations to help the student achieve his or her secondary goals. IDEA does not spell out exactly what the document must contain or what kind of recommendations the school must offer. If your child intends to go to college, it is worthwhile to advocate for specific recommendations with this academic future in mind. Some colleges and universities will actually ask to see the SOP, but many will not. In these cases you may submit it as part of your request for certain services even though it is not required or you may use it to guide yourself in evaluating schools and requesting certain services.

If you have ever had to advocate to get an adequate IEP or 504, then you know it is much harder in practice than it sounds in theory. The good news is that colleges and universities generally do not resist accommodations the way your child's high school might have. They do not all provide the same type or quality of accommodations, but they are clear about what services they offer and what documentation is needed to receive them. Generally speaking, if a student seeks out the services he needs and provides the needed documentation, he will receive the promised services.

Preparation Courses

Some community colleges and disability organizations now offer courses or summer programs for high school students on the autism spectrum to help them prepare for the rigor of higher education. These courses may be a series of workshops or they may be evening classes lasting one semester. These classes tend to cover social skills and academic services available in college, stress management training, daily living skills, self-advocacy, and executive functioning training. Contact your local autism organizations and community colleges to see what is available in your area; if you find such a class, your child may find it very helpful.

Resources

Sample Brag Sheet
LINK TO OUR PDF

High School vs. College Comparison Sheet
LINK TO OUR PDF

The Department of Education's ADA Section 504 FAQ
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html

Section 504 Subpart E (Post-secondary Education)
www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/reg/ocr/edlite-34cfr104.html#E

A Toolkit for Your Guidance Counselor
http://heath.gwu.edu/files/downloads/toolkit.pdf

The HEATH Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center
http://heath.gwu.edu/

Section 504 and Post-secondary Education FAQ
http://www.pacer.org/publications/adaqa/504.asp

Part Two: Choosing a School

Levels of Support

Individualized Support

Many college students on the autism spectrum are enrolled in integrated classes and live in integrated housing while receiving individual support services. This arrangement is more like a

continuum than one specific level of support; it can be thought of as a model for accommodating many different people with different needs in one integrated student body. This is also by far the most common arrangement, and most schools fall somewhere in this category. In this model, most or all services will be academic in nature, and most students will receive them through the Disability Support Office (DSO). Sometimes services will be received through the Disability Services Office, Student Support Services, Office of Student Development, or another department that may or may not be entirely focused on students with disabilities. This office is usually staffed by professionals who advocate for students, coordinate services, provide some services directly, and may offer support groups, workshops, or other special social experiences.

External Special Disability Programs

Some organizations offer intensive and comprehensive programs dedicated to students with special needs. These are usually affiliated with one specific school but run by independent organizations. They are extremely expensive, sometimes costing as much as $20,000 per session, but they also involve dedicated housing and staff to provide significant supervision. In most cases these programs are intended to be transitional and may provide one to four semesters of intensive supports with a light course load, often at a community college. Some of these programs are not transitional in nature, and, instead, provide significant support outside an institution throughout a student's college tenure. In these cases, the program usually does not involve dedicated housing.

Internal Special Disability Programs

Some schools offer dedicated programs for students with various special needs that not only coordinate, but also provide all or most of a student's services. These programs are more likely to offer services outside the academic realm, such as social skills training, daily living skills support, or personal organization assessment and training. They are not usually as intensive as the external programs and do not tend to involve as much supervision, although they might include dedicated housing.

Usually a representative will be on the university's admissions committee that is good news for many students, because this representative is usually a specialist in learning disabilities. In most cases students will apply to the school and the program at the same time and be admitted to both or neither.

These programs are also generally fee-based. They can be quite expensive; many cost $2,000 to $5,000 per semester, in addition to tuition, and some cost more. Unfortunately, this will put such programs out of the reach of many students. However, this income allows these programs to own and supply more advanced tools and assistive technology than disabilities support offices that do not charge additional fees. They are also able to employ specialists in various learning, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, psychologists, and at some schools even organizational coaches, professional tutors, and mentors.

In some cases, tuition for dedicated disability programs may be tax-deductible. If the primary reason for sending your child to a specific program is medical, and based on an official diagnosis, you should consult a tax professional to find out what deductions, if any, are available to you.

Developmental Programs

Developmental programs are designed to help talented, but underachieving, students to reach their full potential and to prepare them for college. Most such programs are especially interested in students with a low GPA and high test scores. Typically, they involve getting an associate's degree at

a four-year school. Specific requirements differ, but in most cases achieving a designated GPA in the program allows a student to matriculate automatically. Often the required GPA is only 2.0, though it may be higher. Dr. Jeffrey Deutsch recommends that families look for programs labeled “college prep” to be sure they’re finding a true developmental program that will lead to a complete college education.

Transitional Programs

The defining trait of a transitional program is that it does not provide a complete college education, but is meant instead to serve as a transition to a post-secondary experience. Most external dedicated disabilities programs are transitional, but this is a broad category that includes many types of programs.

Some provide intensive life and social skills supports as well as academic training. Others, often run by a four-year school, provide a short bridging experience to students who have already been accepted to a four-year school (which may or may not be the institution running the transitional program). In either case, the program will typically involve taking for-credit college classes as part of a lighter course load than a full-time college semester.

No Meaningful Services

Some schools do not offer services at all, offer a very narrow range of services, or do not administer their services well. These schools may not even have a DSO or unqualified professionals may staff it. Most of these institutions will not be suitable for students on the spectrum.

Two-year vs. Four-year

Many people underestimate the value of good community colleges. There are some jobs for which an associate’s degree is good preparation, but even students who need a bachelor’s degree can benefit from two-year schools. Some students and their families feel that a two-year school is a good transitional step between high school and a bachelor's degree program. These schools, which are often community colleges, tend to cost less per credit hour and will often enroll students without a competitive admissions process. This removes a major barrier for some students. Success in community college also allows individuals to build a track record of post-secondary achievement, which *may* allow them to apply to universities as transfer students without sharing their high school transcripts or test scores. Finally, many students choose to begin their education at a community college because it allows them to live at home and receive some of the same supports they received in high school, from the same individuals, in the same settings, while doing college level work.

That does not mean that two-year schools are the right choice for everyone. Transferring out of community college means going through an additional major transition; students will have to adapt to two schools, two programs and two campuses within a four-year period. You must also consider the academic potential of each individual two-year school. Some institutions have well-regarded programs or pipelines into good state schools. Others are not academically challenging or just do not have strong programs in your child's area of interest. Dr. Jeffrey Deutsch points out that unfortunately, some universities discount credits from two-year schools. This means that students might have a difficult time getting in to a four year school or they might have to repeat many classes after transferring, even if they went to a high quality two-year school. If your child's preferred four-year school will not accept the needed transfer credits from the community college in your area, then starting at the community college is likely to lengthen the time required for a bachelor's degree and wipe out any money saved. If your child is considering community college, contact specific four-year schools to discuss what credits they will accept from the two-year schools in your area. Do not just

rely on the two-year schools for your information.

One last strategy is to allow your child to take community college courses in their personal areas of interest during high school. Most high schools will accept community college courses for credit and some even allow time during the school day for juniors or seniors to attend community colleges; those that do not will generally allow students to take these courses over the summer. It is important to note that the more specialized the class taken, the less likely it is that a university will accept it for transfer credit. This means that taking college classes of personal interest during high school is a great educational opportunity, but may not shorten the time required to earn a degree. Working towards a bachelors in high school will typically require a strong dual enrollment program at your child's high school and your child's willingness to take general education requirements at the community college.

Common Accommodations

When looking at schools, it is important to know what services they offer. Your child's IEP and guidance counselor are great starting points when deciding what to look for in colleges, but it also helps to know what the most common options are.

Note takers
Books on tape
Access to instructor notes
Extended testing time (usually time-and-a-half)
Preferential seating
Tutoring
Altered assignments
Extended deadlines
Alternate exam formats
Use of a calculator
Tape recorder
Having a laptop in class
Speech-to-text software
Ability to leave classroom for self-regulation breaks
Assistive communication devices (text to speech devices, letter boards, etc.)

Choosing Accommodations

When identifying the services your child will need to succeed in college, consider your options carefully. First, think about the services received in high school. Examine the IEP closely, but also meet with your child's teachers to talk about the accommodations and services he receives in the classroom. You might find that in your child's day-to-day life, some things have been implemented differently than envisioned or that some teachers have made some additional adjustments as they learned about your child. You do not want to forget about these 'unofficial' accommodations, and your child may not think to mention everything that has become part of his classroom routine. The more time you make to speak with teachers, and the earlier you start the process of encouraging your child to notice everything that helps him succeed in the classroom, the more accurate your list of needed services will be.

Next, consider the differences between high school and college. Conversations about the transition to post-secondary education are not just important for your child but you, too. Think about

the new challenges that college brings and what extra supports could smooth the way. For example, in high school the school day is one continuous block for most students, but this is not true in college. Will your child need help managing a daily schedule for class, homework, and study time as he adjusts to college?

Evaluating Accommodations

Not all institutions that offer the same services implement them the same way. Tutors, for example, can be professional or peer. Generally speaking, any tutor who is paid will be called a professional tutor, but that does not tell you everything you need to know. Try to find out how many are available, what kind of training they get, whether or not they are certified, how much experience they have, and whether they are available for every subject or class. Sometimes tutors will even be available for social skills mentoring.

You should also think about what each service really means and why your child needs it. You need to find out if a school is implementing something poorly or in a way that just will not work for your child. For example, he may receive extra time on tests. Why? Does it have to do with concentration, verbal processing, both, or something else entirely? If concentration is a factor, will he need the entire test time to be uninterrupted? Does he also need a distraction-free area? If he hasn't needed a separate testing area in high school, is it possible he will in college, when his classes are in large lecture halls with hundreds of other students? Some institutions offer extra time on tests by creating a dedicated, distraction free test area in the DSO or elsewhere. At other schools, all students take the test together in one lecture hall and the majority of students are released when their time is up, which creates noise and other distractions for the students who receive extra time. In the least effective cases, all students receive the same amount of test time in the classroom, and when that time is up, the students who receive extra time are escorted somewhere else to finish the test. It is not enough to know if a service is offered, you must also find out how it is implemented.

Meet with People

When visiting a school, make sure to visit the Disability Support Office (DSO) or its equivalent. The DSO employees will be able to explain the services and accommodations available, give you advice on describing needed accommodations to professors and fellow students, and should also be able to describe how various supports are most often implemented. Do not be afraid to press for details.

It may also be helpful to ask how students on the spectrum usually participate in campus life and what social events there are that will appeal to your child. If there are any special groups for students with autism, this office will know about them. They may also be able to connect you with current students on the spectrum who would be willing to speak with him.

Ask to visit with some professors in departments that interest your child. At many schools this will not be possible, but if you find someone who is willing to speak with prospective students you will have a chance to ask important questions like how she has implemented various accommodations, what her experience teaching students on the spectrum has been like, and what she recommends to a student like your child who wants to succeed in her area of expertise.

Classroom Environment

Some supports are hard to quantify. Dr. Jeffrey Deutsch points out that some in-classroom supports are more social than purely academic, which is further reason to meet as many professors and school employees as you can. These can include “more direct feedback, volunteering criticisms

including about social behavior, understanding that annoying behaviors may not be intentional, signals to stop trying to ask questions in class when the discussion needs to move on", and more. He also reminds us that "even if an autism spectrum condition contributes to misconduct (e.g., unintentionally harassing someone) accommodations may not extend to student conduct issues, and the student may find him or herself being judged in the same light and taking the same consequences as any other student".

Supports Outside the Classroom

If your child needs support or help with life outside the classroom, you must think very carefully about exactly what is needed and what form you would like the support to take. Academic accommodations are much more common than life skills assistance (like social interaction or life skills training). You will have to look very carefully for schools with this kind of support, and you may find yourself looking at a transitional program or a fairly expensive dedicated disabilities program, which may offer broad supports for extra fees. These options will be necessary for some students, but they will also restrict your choice of school. Alternatively, you may pay for support not affiliated with an institution. This can be very costly, but it may not restrict your child's choices as much. Ultimately, receiving the necessary supports can be the difference between successful independence and academic failure, and some investments may save money in the long run.

Program Requirements

Required classes vary between schools, both for specific majors and general education requirements. If your child has significant trouble with a type of class like math or foreign languages, to the extent that it could prevent him from doing well in a degree program, then it may be worth looking for a school where he will not have to take that subject at all. Some schools simply will not require the problematic class and others may be willing to negotiate or waive requirements for some students. To have specific requirements waived, it is best to look for a school that has a history of making those adjustments to the curriculum and an established process for documenting and granting those requests.

When evaluating schools, always make sure that the general education and major requirements you have are accurate and current.

Class Structure

Some students on the autism spectrum will have an especially hard time with huge classes and crowded lecture halls. Not only do these classes mean dealing with more people, it may also be harder to self-advocate when there are more students making demands on a professor's time. Other individuals may have a harder time with smaller classes that may place more emphasis on group work, discussion, or other social interaction. There is no single 'right' class structure for individuals on the spectrum; it is just one more thing you and your child need to think about when choosing a school.

When visiting a campus, ask about average class size within specific departments. Ask to peek into some classes your child will have to take. If possible, ask to speak with some students in the majors your child is considering. Most students will have to take some classes that do not suit them very well, but different schools emphasize different teaching methods and your child should aim to have as many classes geared to his learning style as possible.

Living Arrangements

This is one of many new issues that will arise in college. In some dedicated programs, there

will be special housing, but in most cases students on the autism spectrum will have the same housing choices available as all other students. There is no best choice for everyone; you and your child must consider his strengths and challenges.

Living at home may offer a longer transition period between high school and the full independence of college and it may save money as well. This is an especially good option for students who choose to go to community college (or start at community college and then transfer). The downsides of living at home include a restricted choice of schools, difficulty of socializing on campus, and delaying the beginning of real independence.

A single room in student housing is a good option for many individuals on the spectrum. It offers the ability to be in the social environment of a college campus with the guarantee of a private place for needed retreats. Not being assigned a roommate, who will most likely be a stranger, also alleviates some of the most difficult aspects of the college transition. Some self-advocates recommend a single room strongly, but others caution that having a single room may make it too easy to retreat from socialization, classes, and other challenging but important aspects of college. A single room might also make it too easy for the student to miss meals and classes without anyone noticing. Most families will also need to consider that single rooms cost more, although many schools will provide this at no extra cost if it is a documented need backed by a disability.

Sharing a dorm room presents many challenges in the social sphere, but it is almost always cheaper than having a single room. For some students on the autism spectrum, having to deal with social complexities every single day even in their most personal space will just be too much of a burden on top of everything else college entails. For students prepared to take on this challenge, it provides huge opportunities for growth and learning.

Sensory Friendly Design

There is a huge variety of design and layout among campuses. When you visit schools, it is important to evaluate as many spaces as possible for lighting, spaciousness, and other issues of sensory-friendliness. You need to look at the communal living spaces as well as classrooms. Most guided tours will not include every building on a campus and may focus on the newest and most updated buildings, so do not be afraid to ask specific questions about where your child would be living or taking classes. Ideally, your child will have the opportunity to see the specific buildings and even classrooms where he would be learning and living.

If at all possible, try to see the campus at different times of day. You can often request private tours, but you may also be able to spend a day or two on campus. This is ideal, because tours are often conducted during times of the day when they will be least disruptive to and least disrupted by students, and your child needs to see what the various spaces on campus will really feel like during a typical school day. Your child may also need to find some good, quiet places on campus that can be used for decompressing and alone time. In order to find these places, your child needs to see how the library, dining hall, computer labs and other common areas are used throughout the day during an active semester.

Resources

Association on Higher Education and Disability
http://ahead.org/

The College Sourcebook for Students with Learning & Developmental Differences, by Midge Lipkin, PhD, 2009

Think College, a Site Devoted to College Options for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities:
http://www.thinkcollege.net/

Institute for Community Inclusion, Overview of Program Models
http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178

Transition Resources by State
http://www.ncset.org/stateresources/resources.asp

Navigating College, a Project of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network
http://www.navigatingcollege.org/

Part Three: Getting In

Standardized Testing

SAT vs. ACT

Your child should choose to take the SAT, American College Test (ACT), or both based on his skills and aptitude. If registration fees are not a problem for you and your child is willing and able to take both tests, there is no harm in doing both and comparing scores before deciding which to submit to colleges.

1. The ACT is slightly longer and allows slightly less time per question, not including testing accommodations (215 questions on the ACT vs. 170 on the SAT).
2. The SAT essay is required, and the ACT essay is optional (until 2016, when the SAT essay will become optional).
3. The ACT has a science section. This is primarily an assessment of a student's ability to read graphs, understand hypotheses, and follow research summaries. It is not primarily a test of curriculum knowledge.
4. The ACT includes basic questions about trigonometry and the SAT does not.
5. The SAT has a guessing penalty (until 2016, when this will be removed).
6. The SAT places more emphasis on vocabulary (until 2016, when many vocabulary words will be removed).
7. The ACT is generally considered to have slightly more difficult math, but all math questions are multiple choice, unlike the SAT.
8. The SAT includes tricky questions designed to reward high attention to detail and very close reading (double negatives, words that look almost the same like nattiest and nastiest, etc.)

Testing Accommodations

Any accommodations your child's school provides for test taking do NOT apply to standardized tests like the SAT and ACT. These tests do provide accommodations like extra time, but you must apply for them separately.

The SAT is administered by the College Board, which also administers advanced placement (AP) exams. A student can receive more time, extra breaks, or other accommodations on these tests. Most applications for accommodations from the College Board are made through the student's school.

This is generally easier for the student and the family because the student is considered “school approved” and, in most cases, will not have to submit any additional documentation. This process can also be completed online by school employees. A student can choose to apply for testing accommodations without the help of his or her school by using the Student Eligibility form, which can be found online, and submitting documentation of the disability. In either case the process for approval takes about seven weeks. If received, the approval will last throughout high school, which means that the student may receive the approved accommodations on every College Board test he takes.

ACT administers the ACT, Inc. Students can receive several types of accommodations for this test, including extra time, testing over multiple days, and writing in the test booklet. However, this application process is more complicated than the College Board's and involves submitting more documentation (usually including the entire IEP). Students must apply directly to ACT, Inc. rather than through their school, although the application does include information, which must be filled out by a school employee. In addition, the ACT uses three separate forms depending on the specific accommodations needed and where they will be received. A student must register for the ACT before applying for accommodations. The application must then be submitted through the mail, not online, and be postmarked four weeks before the scheduled testing date. If the student is approved, he will then be scheduled to test at the nearest testing center (or school) which provides the approved accommodations. If this is not the location where the student was originally assigned to take the test, his registration will be updated online to reflect the change. This means he must monitor his registration as the testing date approaches. If a student wants to test again, he must register and then indicate either online or over the phone that the same accommodations will be used.

If Standardized Test Scores Are Bad

Generally speaking, most schools prioritize rigor, then grades, and then tests. This means below average test scores are not the worst thing in the world. Most schools publicize their students' average scores, which allow you to target institutions where your child's scores are not outliers. But what if his scores are really below average, or even downright bad? Some students on the spectrum might find that although they are very smart, and prepared to do well in college, they just do not test well. That is OK, but you need to make a plan to deal with it.

Some schools do not require test scores at all, and it may be worthwhile to focus on them. Many of these schools will still distribute scholarships based on standardized tests, but if you know your child's scores will not qualify for additional funds then you can choose not to share them at all. Your child's application materials are essentially marketing documents that he will use to sell himself to colleges. If something doesn't enhance your child's appeal and is not required, do not include it.

Crafting the Application

Disclosure

When and whether to disclose their special needs is a tricky subject for students in higher education. If your child needs any services or accommodations to succeed, then he will have to self-identify at some point. Because your child is no longer covered by IDEA, this disclosure is solely his responsibility and all decisions about when and how to self-identify belongs to your child.

Many individuals choose to disclose initially in their application essays. This can be a good technique if the essay is compelling and focuses primarily on challenges he has overcome while avoiding excuses for weaknesses in his application. If you are not sure how well your child's essay

addresses his autism and any concerns it might raise for the school, you should have your child's guidance counselor or teachers review a draft. If the application is especially weak in one or more areas, you might consider hiring a private educational consultant to help make the essay as compelling as possible. (Fees for such consultants vary considerably, but $3,000 is average for a counselor who will work with your child throughout the process of college applications). Experts strongly caution against sharing emotional challenges such as depression and anxiety in an essay. Finally, remember that your child's essay does not have to touch on the topic of disability at all; it is absolutely fine to disclose only after acceptance, and in many cases it is better.

During the college application process, you must always have your final goal in mind. In many cases, your child will gain nothing from early disclosure. After he is accepted to a school, your child will gain services from his disclosure. Before acceptance, your child can hurt his chances for admission and will only profit from the disclosure if he can also offer a compelling narrative about his personal strength and desirability as a candidate.

As discussed above, some schools have special programs designed for students with disabilities. At some institutions, a student must be accepted to the university before applying to the program and the advice above will apply. At most schools, a student applies to the university through the special program or applies to both at the same time and will therefore need to disclose very early in the process. In these cases, disclosure is unlikely to hurt your child's chances and there is no reason to avoid it.

Finally, you may consider having your child's guidance counselor disclose his autism if she is contacted by a university directly, rather than just being asked to write a letter. This should only be attempted if you have fostered a close relationship with a counselor who knows enough about your child to describe how well he has dealt with the difficulties of his disability and achieved academic success.

Resources

College Board Services for Students with Disabilities
http://student.collegeboard.org/services-for-students-with-disabilities

College Board Student Eligibility Form Instructions
http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/ssd/eligibility_form_instructions.pdf

ACT Services for Students with Disabilities
http://www.actstudent.org/regist/disab/

List of schools that do not require any standardized test scores
http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional

Part Four: Getting Services

Documentation

In high school, when your child was covered by IDEA, his school had an obligation to identify students with special needs and was therefore required to provide testing. In college, your child must self identify to receive any services or accommodations under the ADA. This means that you must not only plan but also pay for all required testing. For some colleges and universities a diagnosis from the

DSM-V will be sufficient; this is not always the case, but it is somewhat more common for students on the autism spectrum than students seeking services for other reasons.

However, many schools will require more documentation. This can include both aptitude and achievement tests. Generally, all documentation must be less than three years old. Colleges also usually require that your child receive the adult version of each specific test even if he received the childhood version extremely recently. To prepare for this, you should start requesting that your child receive the adult version of all scales and assessments as soon as possible (usually when your child is 16, but if he is close to the required age it will not hurt to ask). This is important because it will sometimes allow you to have the assessments required by colleges paid for during high school without going out-of-pocket, and it minimizes the likelihood that you will have to pay for an adult assessment shortly after receiving the child version of the same test. This not only saves money but also reduces stress for your child who will have to undergo less testing.

Disclosure Letter

Some students use a disclosure letter, or accommodations letter, to present their special needs and their approved accommodations to each professor. In many schools, the Disability Support Office (DSO) will help the student write a letter that briefly and clearly explains what is needed. Some schools require this, but most treat it as an optional and helpful tool that students may use to self-advocate.

In the Dorms

Some students will need certain services or accommodations outside the classroom and in their living environment, and others will just need a little understanding and acceptance. Students on the autism spectrum who intend to live on-campus should meet with the director of their dorm. A disclosure letter, either the same one given to professors or one written specifically for housing, can be brought to the meeting to help start a conversation about what your child needs to thrive and be happy on campus. Students should also meet with their Resident Advisor (RA) to discuss their needs. A strong relationship with peer supports, like his RA, will serve your child well throughout college.

Living on campus and away from home is one of the biggest changes between high school and college for students who choose this path. Identifying individual needs and getting those needs met is an ongoing process. Help your child understand that it is always OK to revisit decisions about housing needs and that he should never be afraid to request additional meetings with the dorm director, his RA, or anyone else he needs to talk to. These people should all understand that adjusting to college is a process and that the conversation about individual needs is ongoing.

Funding

If your child receives any financial awards, you will need to be very aware of how (or if) it impacts any income from Social Security Insurance (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

IDEA

Dual enrollment, where a student is enrolled in college credits while still in high school, can often be paid for by the student's public school using IDEA funds. Dual enrollment cannot be used to obtain a college degree, but it can be used to earn some college credits and therefore lessen the eventual cost of a college education.

Vocational Rehabilitation

A state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funding may pay for college courses or offer tuition waivers for eligible students whose courses of study are geared towards gaining employment. Funds may also be available for books, transportation, or employment supports for students who want to work while in school. The easiest place to begin to gather information about VR funding is at your child's transition IEP meeting, where you should have the chance to talk with representatives of one stop career centers, agencies that administer individual training accounts, and/or other developmental disabilities agencies.

Students eligible to use VR funding for post-secondary education will need to have a regular high school diploma (rather than a certificate of completion or IEP diploma). Other specific guidelines differ widely based on the agency and the type of funding, and so most families will find it worthwhile to contact their local vocational rehabilitation office and inquire.

State Developmental Disabilities Offices

Some state I/DD offices will offer scholarship programs for which your child might qualify. These scholarships are often geared towards post-secondary education generally rather than towards a four-year degree program specifically.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), through its many programs and projects, provides an array of discretionary grants and other funding opportunities to serve individuals with disabilities and their families.

Private Scholarships

There are some autism-specific scholarships for which your child might qualify. It never hurts to apply for many scholarships, so investigate what is available for students with the same challenges as your child. Do not forget to look at scholarships specific to your child's target schools.

Resources

College Autism Spectrum, an organization providing private college level supports and consulting
http://collegeautismspectrum.com/

Self-Advocacy Skills for Students With Learning Disabilities: Making It Happen in College and Beyond, by Henry B. Reiff, PhD., 2007

A Freshman Survival Guide for College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Stuff Nobody Tells You About!, by Haley Moss

Autism Specific Scholarship from the Organization for Autism Research
http://www.researchautism.org/news/otherevents/scholarship.asp

The Rehabilitation Services Administration
https://rsa.ed.gov/

Disability and Other Special Programs

Adrian College, ACCESS and EXCEL programs

The ACCESS program offers many well-implemented supports to students with a documented disability. The program strongly supports self-advocacy and prioritizes student retention and graduation. This program also covers the Disability Issues Committee, which meets regularly, and the HANDS student group (Helping to Appreciate the Needs of the Disabled in Society).

EXCEL is a grant program that provides funds to cover various useful services for specific groups of students. It is not disability specific, but students with disabilities may qualify. Unlimited free tutoring, disability related services, and study skills help are among the services EXCEL provides.
http://archive.adrian.edu/academic_services/access.php
http://archive.adrian.edu/academic_services/excel.php

Arizona, University of, Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques Center (SALT)

The SALT center is a fee-based program of providing comprehensive resources that include individualized learning plans, help with learning strategies, tutoring, skill development seminars in various academic areas, psychological services, social programs, leadership development, and assistive technologies. SALT also offers some scholarships to offset the cost of participation.
http://www.salt.arizona.edu/

Beacon College

Serving students with learning disabilities and ADHD exclusively, Beacon does not have any autism specific programs but aims to serve students with auditory and visual processing differences as well as expressive or receptive language deficits. Offering both bachelor's and associate's degrees, the school takes pride in its array of services and its retention and graduation rates.
http://www.beaconcollege.edu/

Bellevue College, Autism Spectrum Navigators

Students who meet admission requirements at Bellevue may visit the disability resource center to fill out an intake request form for this program, which provides individualized services specifically designed to support students on the spectrum.
http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/autismspectrumnavigators/

Bethany College, PASS

The Program for Academic and Social Success is a program for students identified as having specific learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders. Students participate in one-on-one appointments with certified, experienced learning specialists to develop the cognitive and multisensory strategies necessary for college success. A separate application process is required for PASS, and an additional fee is charged based upon the level of services.
http://www.bethanywv.edu/academics/learning-services

Dean College, Arch Learning Community

Arch is a fee-based program that offers individual and group coaching, access to smaller-sized college classes, specialized advising, and a weekly seminar. Students may enroll for all four years of college but do not have to; the Arch approach is a step-down progression of services, where students begin with fairly intensive supports and then transition to less intensive intervention as they discover how to learn most effectively. Graduation and career are high priorities.

http://www.dean.edu/arch_program.aspx

Denver, University of, LEP

The Learning Effectiveness Program (LEP) is a fee-for-service program that provides individualized academic support for University of Denver students. LEP does not involve a modified curriculum; it provides services like subject-specific tutoring, organizational and time management assistance, and specialized counseling. The fee is billed on a per-quarter basis and students are not obligated to participate all four years. LEP serves approximately 230 students per year.
http://www.du.edu/studentlife/learningeffectiveness/index.html

Drexel University

The Drexel Autism Support Program provides a peer-mediated community for current Drexel students to promote academic excellence, self-advocacy, and social integration. This is not an academic program and there is no cost. Current Drexel students apply online and are then scheduled for an in-person conversation. They do not need to provide any documentation.
http://drexel.edu/provost/aard/resources-programs/autism-support/

Elmhurst College, ELSA

ELSA is four-year, non-degree certificate program, located on the main Elmhurst campus. ELSA admits young adults, ages 18-28, with intellectual, developmental, learning, physical, or sensory disabilities. Applicants must have completed high school but may have a diploma or certificate. ELSA teaches independent living skills as well as academic knowledge. It is currently a commuter program and admits 15 or fewer new students per year.
http://public.elmhurst.edu/elsa/

Gannon University, Program for Students with Learning Disabilities (PSLD)

PSLD is a special program at GU that offers students assistive devices, weekly sessions with a writing instructor, weekly meetings with a learning specialists or tutors, advising help, and many other services including extended test time, accommodations letters, and quiet test taking areas.
http://www.gannon.edu/Academic-Offerings/Special-Programs/Program-for-Students-with-Learning-Disabilities/

Hofstra, The Program for Academic Learning Skills (PALS)

PALS is a fee-based program that provides students with a learning specialist from freshmen year through graduation. The guiding principle of PALS is to help students think not only about the subjects they are studying, but also the process of their learning
http://www.hofstra.edu/StudentAffairs/stddis/index.html

Indianapolis, University of, Baccalaureate for University of Indianapolis Learning Disabled (BUILD)

The BUILD program is a fee-based program that offers more intensive and profound supports than those available through the university's disability support office. BUILD offers participants many services **including one-to-one tutoring with professional tutors, specialized courses in English and math, private study areas and adapted test-taking accommodations, assistive technology, books in alternate formats, and more. The program also aims to foster and teach self-advocacy skills.**
http://www.uindy.edu/ssd/build

Iona College, College Assistance Program (CAP)

Cap offers comprehensive support and services for students with learning disabilities. Students take the standard full-time course requirements for baccalaureate degree programs to ensure the level of quality education expected of all degree candidates. CAP is staffed by learning specialists and professional tutors with post-graduate degrees. Tutors aim to teach individually appropriate strategies that will be useful across disciplines and help foster academic independence. CAP also provides special accommodations and tools like assistive technology.
http://www.iona.edu/Academics/Academic-Resources-Advising/Office-of-Student-Success/College-Assistance-Program.aspx

Kansas University, Supportive Educational Services (SES)

SES at Kansas University is a federally funded TRIO program, which means it has received a federal grant to support and assist students with disabilities, who are first generation college students, or who come from a low-income background. SES provides an array of free services, including tutoring, professional mentoring, and access to a laptop checkout program. To participate, students must be accepted to KU, have their disability documented through the disability resources office, and then apply to the program. Admission is not guaranteed.
http://www.apex.ku.edu/ses/

Landmark College

A small college in Vermont, Landmark caters to students with learning differences like ADHD, dyslexia, and autism. Landmark is a primarily two-year school but it does offer some bachelor's degrees. Faculty specialize in teaching students who do not learn in traditional ways and are prepared to help students with social difficulties as well as academic ones. The school employs assistive technologies when needed as well as innovative teaching methods.

The Lincoln College, Academy of Collegiate Collaboration for Effective Student Success (ACCESS)

ACCESS is a fee-based academic support program for students with disabilities that negatively impact executive functions. Students in the program work with an academic coach to develop skills and study strategies that fit their individual needs. ACCESS coaches work closely with faculty to monitor student progress and with the Academic Success Center to ensure students take full advantage of the one-on-one tutoring and learning labs.
http://access.lincolncollege.edu/

Marshall University, Higher Education for Learning Problems (HELP)

HELP works with students on course content, campus life, organization, and other areas of executive functioning. It provides access to a variety of tutors and academic coaches. Students usually apply to HELP and Marshall at the same time; the application processes are separate. If a student is not accepted to Marshal, HELP staff can write a letter of exception on their behalf, but this does not guarantee admission. Current Marshall students may also apply to the HELP program.
http://www.marshall.edu/help/college-h-e-l-p/

Marshall University, College Program for Students with Asperger Syndrome

This program is for students already admitted to Marshall. This program uses a positive

behavior support approach and person-centered planning to assist students with social, communication, academic, leisure and personal living skills.
http://www.marshall.edu/collegeprogram/

McDaniel College, Academic Skills Program (ASP)

ASP is a fee-based program that involves weekly one-on-one sessions with an academic counselor who provides intensive support in academics, time management, organization, and self-advocacy. Peer tutoring, priority registration, and weekly sessions with graduate assistants are also available.
http://www.mcdaniel.edu/undergraduate/the-mcdaniel-plan/build-your-education/academic-support

McDaniel College, Mentorship Advantage Program (MAP)

A fee-based program that consists of weekly workshops on socialization, organization, time management, resume writing and interviewing. Students will also practice skills in a series of social events throughout the semester.
http://www.mcdaniel.edu/undergraduate/the-mcdaniel-plan/build-your-education/academic-support

McDaniel College, Providing Academic Support for Success (PASS)

A fee-based program that consists of group academic support sessions three times a week. Graduate assistants monitor these sessions.
http://www.mcdaniel.edu/undergraduate/the-mcdaniel-plan/build-your-education/academic-support

Mercyhurst, Learning Differences Program (LDP)

LDP consists of two levels. Level I is free and provides the academic adjustments and auxiliary aids required by Section 504, including academic adjustments like extra time on tests and access to peer tutors. Level II is a more structured program providing more intensive supports to students who need them. This level includes weekly meetings with an academic counselor, priority registration, note taking services, access to a summer program that takes place during the summer before freshman year, and more.
http://my.mercyhurst.edu/handbook/student-life/learning-differences-programs/

Mercyhurst University, Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM)

This is a fee-based program specific to students with autism. In addition to the academic accommodations of level I of the Learning Differences Program, AIM students receive social support, participation in an Asperger advisory group, a peer mentoring program, priority for single rooms, special social events and more. AIM students also have the option to live in a dedicated living/learning community to practice needed life skills.
http://my.mercyhurst.edu/handbook/student-life/learning-differences-programs/

Minnesota Life College (MLC)

MLC is a not-for-profit, vocational and life skills training program for young adults with learning differences and autism spectrum disorders. MLC is not a traditional college and students do not receive a bachelor's degree at the end of the three-year program. The first two years, called the core phase, introduces students to vocational skills and volunteer work opportunities in a real life setting along with personal financial management, social skills training, leadership practice, and more. The third year, the transitional phase, involves making a transition to independent living by participating in

internships or attending traditional post-secondary educational institutions.
https://www.minnesotalifecollege.org/

Missouri State University, Project Success

Project Success is a fee-based program that provides extra supports for students at MSU, including tutorial support, developmental writing skills, computer assistance, study skills training, time management and organizational strategies.
http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc/Project-Success.htm

Mount Ida College, Learning Opportunities Program (LOP)

LOP is a fee based program for students of average to superior intellectual ability and a primary diagnosis that includes executive functioning weakness, language based learning disability, or ADHD. Students accepted to LOP will meet bi-weekly with an assigned learning specialist and will also be eligible for various services including classroom modifications and assistive technology.
http://www.mountida.edu/academics/academic-support/the-learning-opportunities-program/

Muskingum University, PLUS program

PLUS is a fee-based program providing a wide array of intensive services to students. It offers three levels with differing fees: full-service, maintenance, and independence. Students are encouraged, but not required, to progress through these support levels during the course of their academic careers at Muskingum.
http://muskingum.edu/home/cal/plus.html

Options for College Success (OCS)

OCS supports students while they attend one of a number of two and four-year schools including Columbia College, Illinois Institute of Art – Chicago, University of Chicago, and Loyola University. Students apply first to OCS and then OCS supports students and their families during the application process to the chosen school. The length of the program depends on students' needs and goals, and students can participate in a residential or day program format. OCS also aims to teach independent living skills, personal financial management, and social skills while focusing on future career goals.
http://www.optionsforcollegesuccess.org/

Regional Center for College Students with Learning Disabilities at Fairleigh Dickinson University

This program offers a structured plan of intensive advisement and academic support and counseling services that tailored for students with learning disabilities. Successful applicants to this program will have been mainstreamed during all four years of their high school experience and have taken college preparatory classes. The center is offered at both FDU campuses to students in the two-year and four-year programs. Students must apply to the center and FDU simultaneously.
http://view.fdu.edu/default.aspx?id=731

Roosevelt University, Learning and Support Services Program (LSSP)

LSSP is a fee-based program offering a supportive learning environment and academic planning, tutoring, counseling and modified test-taking accommodations.
http://www.roosevelt.edu/StudentServices/AcademicSuccessCenter.aspx

St. Thomas Aquinas College, Pathways Program

Pathways is a fee-based program that provides intensive supports to students with certain disabilities. At its core is a mentorship program, but it also involves study groups, workshops, tutoring, assistive technology, a transitional summer program before freshman year and many other services. http://www.stac.edu/pathways.html

Southern Illinois University, Achieve Program

Achieve provides many services and assistive technologies for students who are accepted to the program. Prospective students apply to SIU and Achieve simultaneously. http://achieve.siu.edu/

Western New England University, Peer Mentoring Program

The Peer Mentoring Program for students on the Autism spectrum and with ADD/ADHD was developed by the Office of Student Disability Services, faculty from the Psychology department, and students in the Ph.D. in Behavior Analysis Program. This program is designed to ease students' transition into a new environment, assists students in becoming more independent, confident, self-advocates, to help students develop a strong social support system, and to provide quick, useful feedback that leads to improved relationships.
http://www1.wne.edu/sds/index.cfm?selection=doc.10406

Wisconsin Oshkosh, University of, Project Success.

Project Success is a remedial program for students with language-based learning disabilities attending the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Project Success does not involve any extra fees. Students apply to the program during high school (not before their second semester of junior year) and then apply to UWO. If they are accepted to Project Success but do not meet UWO admissions criteria, they must complete a summer transition program between high school and college. http://www.uwosh.edu/success/

Wisconsin Whitewater, University of, Project ASSIST

ASSIST is a fee-based program that provides comprehensive and individualized support services to qualified students. Project ASSIST tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who complete a training that includes various study skills and learning strategies, assessment of learning styles, and techniques for working with individuals with disabilities The primary focus is academic support, but the program also addresses time management, organization and problem solving skills. Students may choose to participate in this program each semester.
http://www.uww.edu/csd/disability-services/csd-project-assist

Transitional and Developmental Programs

College Internship Program (CIP)

CIP offers students with learning differences, particularly those on the autism spectrum, individualized supports in social skills, life skills, academics, internship and career development. Incoming applicants are assessed and a level of support is determined to provide each student with the appropriate amount and type of supports. The College/Certification track is one of three available. Students on this track attend a local community college or university while participating in the

program.
http://cipworldwide.org/

Hofstra The Program for Academic Learning Skills (PALS) Summer Program

The PALS summer program offers students with learning difficulties transitional academic support while preparing them for college. Applicants should be high school graduates or seniors who would benefit from acquiring new learning strategies, weekly workshops on campus resources, and the chance to practice self-advocacy in a college environment. The class size is currently limited to ten students.
http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/Summer/summer_pals.html

Iowa, University of, Realizing Educational and Career Hopes (REACH)

REACH is a two-year transitional program for students with multiple intellectual, cognitive, and learning disabilities. REACH provides courses, a big-ten campus experience, and career preparation. The program aims to stay in contact with its alumni to encourage their independent living and career related skills. Students who complete the program receive a certificate.
http://www.education.uiowa.edu/services/reach/home

Landmark College Transition Program

Admission requires a letter of acceptance to a four-year college or university. This transition course is a 3-credit college course that students complete the summer before beginning college.

Minnesota Life College, Pre-Orientation Program (POP)

POP is designed to for incoming college freshmen and high school juniors and seniors with plans to attend a traditional college or university. It offers extra time to learn how to access their campus, how to handle dorm life and roommate concerns, practice using the campus computer system, manage a syllabus, and more.
https://www.minnesotalifecollege.org/index.php/programs/pre-orientation-program-pop

Mitchell College, Thames Academy

Thames Academy is a residential post-high-school program. It provides a structured learning and living environment that includes college level courses for credit and small class sizes. The Thames Academy is on the Mitchell College campus, but students are not enrolled at Mitchell. Graduates of the program usually go on to attend traditional post-secondary institutions, including Mitchell.
http://www.thamesacademy.org/

Moving Forward Towards Independence

Moving Forward is a residential transitional program in Napa, California that focuses on social and daily living skills while providing various supports. Individuals in this program move through two phases as their track record of successful independence grows. Not everyone in this program is in school; some participants work or volunteer. Those who are in school usually attend classes at a nearby community college. The supports provided are not primarily academic in nature, but strong vocational resources and supports are emphasized.
http://www.moving-forward.org/index.html

Muskingum University, First Step Summer Transition Program

First Step Summer Transition Program is an intensive and comprehensive summer orientation to post-secondary education. Primary emphasis is on the application of learning strategies within the context of a University-level expository course. Additional focuses include campus familiarity and the social and emotional changes associated with the transition to a University. Overall, the program aims to reduce student anxiety and to improve student success in the post-secondary environment.
http://muskingum.edu/home/cal/firststep.html

National Louis University, The Professional Assistance Center for Education (PACE)

PACE is a two-year certificate program offered by the National College of Education at National Louis University. It is a transitional program that integrates career preparation, life skills, and socialization instruction. The program is primarily intended to prepare graduates for the working world, but some graduates use the program to transition to a bachelor's degree program. The program is small, admitting 25 new students each fall.
http://www.nl.edu/pace/

Vincennes University, Student Transition into Educational Programs (STEP)

STEP is designed to build and students strengths instead of focusing on their weaknesses. Students must be accepted to VU and the STEP program. Students in the program will have access to learning specialists, weekly tutoring, remedial and support classes, counseling, assistive devices, and other program accommodations.
http://www.vinu.edu/step

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