

Transitioning To College With A Disability

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Higher Education Disability Services Professional & Proud WHS Alumna

Who Am I?

- Winchester High: Class of 2012
- Moved to Winchester when I was 3 years old & started at Lynch in early intervention
- Attribute my success to Winchester Public Schools & the great educators
- Undergrad: Salem State University 2016 – B.S. in Education and History
 - Named to Salem State's 40 under 40 list in 2023
- Masters: George Washington University 2019 – M.A. in Higher education concentrating in Policy / Finance
- 2023: Published a chapter in the book titled: *DISABLED Faculty & Staff: Intersecting Identities in Higher Education*



How I Describe My Career Path So Far:

“Seriously, though. When people sometimes ask me, how did I ‘get here’ — I have to smile. It was not a straight line. It was a zig-zagging, dotted, sometimes broken line, with pauses and detours and beginnings that ended too soon, and endings that turned out to be beginnings.”

- Savannah Guthrie

Our Panelists



Liandra Federico ' 27

(she/her)

College of the Holy Cross



Irene Mandile ' 27

(she/her)

College of the Holy Cross

Goals of the session

- How is high school different than college with accommodations
 - Laws
 - Responsibilities of parent, student, higher education institution
 - How to request accommodations
- Self advocacy tips
- Scenarios
- WHS Alumna panel

Differences Between High School And College

Laws

High School

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Ensures a free and appropriate education.
- Private K-12 Schools do not fall under IDEA.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

College

- Americans with Disabilities Act. Passed in 1990
- ADA Amendments Act passed in 2008
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Fair Housing Act
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Documentation Guidelines

High School

- Public K-12 Schools provides documentation free of charge.
 - Documentation may include an Individual Educational Plans (IEP) or 504 Plan
- Private K-12 Schools are not required to provide documentation free of charge.

College

- Every college and university has their own set of documentation requirements so check out each individual website for the schools you are interested in applying to to ensure your documentation is accepted at that institution.
- They are not required to accept IEP or 504 Plans and may require an updated neuropsychological evaluation.

Rights / Responsibilities: Parents

High School

- Parent advocates for student and has access to their records.
- Works with school to implement accommodations.

College

- Must receive consent from the student in order to receive information due to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Offices can talk in generality about students but can't speak to a student's specific situation without consent.

Rights / Responsibilities: Teacher/ Professor

High School

- Teachers will reach out to students if they believe someone is struggling.
- Receive coaching from Special Education Staff on how to support students with disabilities in their classroom.

College

- They must implement accommodations as outlined by the Office of Disability Services
- They do not need to fundamentally alter the curriculum or modify assignments.
- Reviews accommodation letters when a student provides them.

Rights / Responsibilities: Students

High School

- At the age of 16, students may attend their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting.

College

- Students are required to disclose and provide sufficient documentation to the Office of Disability Services.
- Student will send the accommodation letters to the faculty members and discuss the letter with them.
- Students are expected to self advocate for themselves and ask for help.
- Students can receive accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the curriculum.

Rights / Responsibilities: Schools / Colleges

High School

- Schools may modify a students curriculum to **ensure success**.
- Identify students that may have a disability.
- Time management help may be included as part of the IEP.

College

- Engage in an interactive process to implement reasonable accommodations focused on **providing access**.
- To review documentation that supports a student's claim of disability status.

While Researching Colleges

In addition to speaking with admissions:

- Encourage you to reach out to the Disability Services office to schedule a meeting, learn more about the office and get your questions answered!
 - Ask about their documentation guidelines, what services they provide and programs!
 - Ask about how many students the Disability Services office works with

Initiating Accommodations

- Students need to self identify to the higher education institution
 - If you are looking for a housing based accommodation such as for a chronic medical disability there may be deadlines so reach out to inquire
- Intake meeting
 - Typically will happen over the summer via zoom leading into your first year of college via
 - Understand and be able to communicate what accommodations worked for you in high school, and how your disability impacts you. Bring your questions to the intake meeting!
- Start of the semester
 - Receive your academic accommodation letters - you will need to share these with your Professors
 - Your disability will not be stated on your accommodation letter
 - No retroactive accommodations

Tips and Resources at Many Institutions

- Academic Advising / Tutoring / Academic Coaching
- Writing Center
- Research Librarians
- Use office hours
- Staff and faculty want to help!
- Counseling and Health Services
- Residence Life staff including your Resident Assistant who can help with living on campus!
- CARE Team

Scenarios

Scenario #1

It's the first week of college classes and the Disability Services office provides you with your accommodation letters for you to deliver with your college professors. The accommodation letter states that you are registered with the Disability Services office and receive extended time on quizzes and exams (1.5x). The letter does not specifically state what type of disability you have.

How would you go about advocating to your professors / having the conversation with your Professor so you can receive the support you need?

Take a minute and brainstorm and then we will share out!

Scenario #2

You have just received your first exam back for your science class and didn't do as well as you had thought you did. You had studied for hours and do not believe that your effort that you put into studying reflects the grade that you received.

How would you approach the situation?

Take a minute and brainstorm and then we will share out!

Tips and Resources at Many Institutions

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Panel

What insights could you give to students with disabilities and their families about your experience transitioning to College with a disability?

What are some of the differences you have experienced in college compared to high school?

What tips do you have for advocating for yourself with your professors about your disability?

Thank you! Questions?

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