Transition Handbook for Students With Disabilities and Their Parents
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Introduction

Purpose of this Transition Handbook

This transition handbook is for students with disabilities who are about to enter Bismarck State College, their guidance counselors, and parents. It provides basic, helpful information for students with disabilities. The purpose of this handbook is to help ease the transition from high school to college, thereby increasing the likelihood for success in the first year and beyond.

The challenge for students, parents, college staff, and faculty members is to work together while adhering to academic standards, developing the student's independence, and providing appropriate guidance and support. At BSC, we build collaborative partnerships that foster independence and provide equal access to the educational experience. We look forward to those relationships.
Relationships with parents change dramatically at this transitional juncture. The high school's obligation under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) implies success and pushes for parental involvement. In college, no guarantees of success are in place and, although they are important players in the transition piece, parents are asked to cheer from the sidelines and not to remain "guides at the helm." This is a difficult step for many parents. It may mean that their son/daughter will make mistakes or experience failure, but it ultimately facilitates the partnership and dialogue between the student and his/her professors and administrators at the college.

If a parent has specific expectations regarding academic performance and behaviors, these should be discussed with the student before he/she leaves home at the end of summer. It is realistic to assume that the student can receive a passing grade in all courses in the first semester. The college offers many resources to support its students. However, it is not necessarily realistic to expect the student to continue to maintain his/her high school GPA in the first year.
If a student with a disability wishes to find success during this first year, he/she should be motivated and ready to:

- Understand and explain the impact of his/her disability to each instructor, when necessary
- Study independently
- Manage time wisely
- Fully participate in the accommodation process by documenting and requesting appropriate accommodations in a timely fashion.
- Follow intuitional procedures and standards of conduct

Self-Advocacy

Advocacy becomes the student’s job in college. While it is appropriate for parents to encourage their son/daughter to talk with his/her advisor or faculty member, it is not appropriate for the parent to make the call directly. It is appropriate for the parent to call the Student Success Center if he/she has concerns or questions, but the student must request and document the need for services. Although it is frustrating for parents to watch their son/daughter deny the need for services, it is an important experience for the student. Often, many interventions have been selected and monitored by others in their lives; these students need time to find out for themselves what actually makes a difference. In most classes, students will have face-to-face conversations with their instructors about their particular needs. There are many well-trained staff members at the college to help students in this process. Although many students develop these self-advocacy skills after the first semester, students who have been most successful recognized the need to advocate early on.

A Checklist of Responsibilities:

High School Personnel

- Provide a transition plan
- Forward all requested records to Bismarck State College Student Accessibility Office
- Offer helpful transition information before the first semester of college
- Identify the student’s strengths and weaknesses
- Outline the areas of potential difficulty for the student’s transition
Parent(s)

✓ Provide an “ear” for the student’s frustrations and disappointments
✓ Celebrate successes
✓ Help guide the student with his/her finances
✓ Purchase necessary equipment or assistive technology/software
✓ Help forward all necessary documents and documentation from the evaluations and the school in a timely fashion, while adhering to specific guidelines

Student

✓ Disclose and understand the nature of the disability
✓ Document the need for requested accommodations
✓ Advocate for those needs
✓ Make decisions regarding course selection
✓ Use appropriate campus resources
✓ Understand the potential impact of the disability in each classroom
✓ Manage time wisely
✓ Learn good study strategies

College Personnel

✓ Provide a learning environment which is free of discrimination
✓ Offer support services
✓ Assist in the navigational and decision-making processes (advising)
✓ Inform students about access, policies, procedures, and services
Getting Ready to Go

Too soon to go?

For many students with disabilities, it may be premature to enroll in college the year immediately following high school graduation. In many cases, these students have received structured support from parents, careful supervision from school staff, and individualized assignments. They often need time to mature, gain self-confidence, and develop independent coping strategies before moving into an environment where they become fully in charge of their learning.

Some students have worked long and hard to get into Bismarck State College and they need a break from study to discover more about themselves. Increasingly, students with disabilities are joining their peers by deferring enrollment after they have been accepted. They use this time to travel, work, or enroll in part-time coursework for a year or two. These are important considerations that work well for some students.

It is common for parents to believe that college will offer more positive opportunities than staying at home for another year, but this may not be the case. The first semester of college offers many new and difficult challenges. Students have left their nurturing high school teachers and supportive friends and family. Students need the emotional strength, resources, and coping strategies to deal with the occasional feelings of loneliness, workload pressure, sleep deprivation, and the many other issues that accompany older adolescents in a college environment.
Suggestions for parents for the summer preceding college

✓ Set up a bank account that has limited funds and instruct the student on how to use it.

✓ Discuss mutual expectations for the first semester (grades, attendance, spending, use of drugs or alcohol, etc.) and whether a reduced credit load the first semester may be necessary. Perhaps a written contract would be appropriate.

✓ Purchase assistive technology, special alarm clocks, etc., and make sure the student has an opportunity to learn the software well ahead of the first day of classes.

✓ Discuss your family health care plan and how the student might access confidential health services.

✓ Help the student “connect” over the Internet, Facebook, or phone with another new BSC student.

✓ Share and discuss all psychoeducational test data and academic history; make sure the student understands the data and what it suggests. Help him/her articulate expected needs.

✓ If appropriate, arrange contact with a physician in Bismarck to monitor any medication.

✓ Avoid running interference for his/her personal/financial issues over the course of the summer.

✓ Review the catalog and other college materials with the student, highlighting what is important.

✓ Put together a list with names and numbers of possible resources, both on-campus and off-campus, for the student to contact should issues arise.

✓ Explore with the student the policies and procedures on BSC Web pages and in the student handbook.
Suggestions for students for the summer before the first semester

✓ Contact the Student Accessibility Office if you have concerns, questions, or you anticipate the need for classroom accommodations.

✓ Set up a bank account and work out all other financial and medical arrangements.

✓ Understand your learning strengths and weaknesses and learn to articulate them to another person.

✓ Try to connect with another student who will be attending for the first time. This person may be a roommate or a student from your locality.

✓ Read through the catalog to make choices about courses that interest you.

✓ Purchase available, required, reading material ahead and begin to read over the summer.
Self-Regulated Learning

Discovery

It is no secret that students learn best when they are motivated and self-directed. They must set their own goals and proceed on a path of their own choosing. Many students with disabilities lack the self-knowledge that would allow them to become successful students. They need to have the skills to plan, perform, and evaluate or self-reflect on their learning. In addition, they need individualized support, guidance, and strategic interventions and solutions.

The Sykes Student Success Center offers professional learning specialists, peer tutors, and peer learning strategies instructors. All are trained to help students identify their strengths and shortcomings in the learning process and to offer strategic help. Students who become actively involved in some combination of these partnerships generally experience more success and satisfaction than their peers who struggle alone.

In addition, the Mystic Advising and Career Counseling Center is staffed with career and personal counselor who are sensitive to the specific needs of students with disabilities. They can help students identify their interests, values, and strengths, and lead students toward meaningful internships and network connections.

Selecting Courses

BSC, academic advising is available and recommended for all students. It’s up to the student to disclose their disability to the advisor and discuss how it may impact first-semester success. Although it is sometimes difficult to trust first-year students to make their own independent choices, it is imperative that they feel a sense of control (investment) regarding their selected classes and choice of major. Parents may want to coach their student about how to discuss their disability (self-advocate) prior to coming to college.
How Disability Support Services Work at BSC

Management

Initially, accommodations are approved and set up through the Student Accessibility (SA) Office. From that point, the SA office works with all campus departments in the coordination of accommodations and services for students with disabilities. It is ALWAYS the student's responsibility to disclose the disability, in a timely manner, to the SA office and provide the required documentation. The documentation policy is listed below and can be found on the BSC website.

It is up to the student to meet with personnel from the SA office at the beginning of each semester in order to renew accommodation services.

Disclosure

Successful students disclose their disabilities to the appropriate college staff. This can be very critical at the college level. This is typically done during the admission process and should ideally begin before the start of classes. Students and their parents should consult with their medical provider or school district for specific information. Some students may wish to leave their disabilities behind and reinvent themselves in college. Some parents may fear that a disclosure may somehow be detrimental to their student's academic or professional career. Choosing NOT to disclose can potentially lead to unnecessary frustration and disappointment.

Documentation

North Dakota Disabilities Services Council
Guidelines for Disability Documentation

One of the objectives of the North Dakota Colleges and Universities Disability Services Council (NDDSC) is to create a comprehensive accessible environment where students are viewed on the basis of ability, not disability. NDDSC members use documentation of disability to 1) establish whether an individual is a person with a disability and 2) provide a rationale for identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations.

Reasonable accommodations and services are available for students with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The ADA Amendments Act, effective January 1, 2009, included
the original major life activities and expanded the definition to include “major bodily functions.”

The Amendments Act retained the original ADA basic definition of a disability as:

1) Having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; 2) Having a record of such an impairment; or 3) Being regarded as having such an impairment.

The NDDSC reflects the Association of Higher Education and Disability’s (AHEAD) “Sources and Forms of Documentation” (2012) in its criteria for documentation guidelines.

Along with the more objective determination of a disability and its impact provided by external documentation, institutions recognize input from the individual with a disability as also an important source of information on the impact of the disability and on the effectiveness of accommodations. This is gathered through the student’s self-report and observation and interaction with the student.

Disability documentation gathered from various sources to support the student report and interactions can include:
1) A clear diagnostic statement that describes the condition.
2) A description of the diagnostic criteria and/or evaluation methods and/or tests used, and/or clinical narrative and/or observations, and specific results, which are congruent with the particular disability.
3) A description of the current functional limitations and how those limitations affect the student in a major life activity. A “functional limitation” is defined as an adverse effect on a major life activity caused by the disability. Functional limitations should be described in terms of how significantly the activity is affected by the disability, the frequency with which the activity is affected, and how pervasive the disability is in the performance of the major life activity.
4) A description of medications and their effectiveness in relation to the functional impact of the disability. Information about any significant side effects from the current treatment or medication and its effect on physical, perceptual, behavioral, and cognitive performance is helpful.
5) A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability including the expected changes over time, information on the cyclical or episodic nature of the disability and any known suspected environmental triggers.
6) The credentials of the evaluator/provider relevant to the diagnosed disability. The professional should be licensed or otherwise properly credentialed.
7) Professionals may provide recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or support services that are logically related to the functional limitation(s). College disability service providers are under no obligation to provide the recommendations but may opt to consider them in determining reasonable accommodations.

Flexible and accessible documentation should make use of current and relevant information that illustrates a connection between the impact of the disability, the described barrier, and the requested accommodation (AHEAD).

*Adopted April 2001
Revised and approved by the NDDSC: October 2006, April 2013*

**Requesting Reasonable Accommodations**

All requests for accommodations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This is a collaborative effort that may include the student, SA personnel, advisor, and/or faculty members. Accommodations that compromise the integrity of the course or degree requirements are not appropriate requests. Equal access is provided while academic standards are maintained. At the college level, compensatory strategies are paramount; a student’s work should always demonstrate college-level achievement. During the first weeks of the semester, after SA personnel has had time to review all documentation and high school records, the student and SA personnel meet to determine whether the disability significantly impacts a major life function that compromises college endeavors. Together, they discuss what would be appropriate accommodations for each course. This review is conducted each semester, for each class, as the student’s needs change.

After the point of disclosure and documentation, it is the student’s responsibility to begin a working relationship with his/her instructor by providing a letter of recommended accommodations from the SA office. It is very important for students to work closely with faculty members when the disability impacts coursework. Faculty members are great resources and can usually help the student navigate the course requirements more efficiently.

BSC endeavors to support its students in ways that do not compromise the integrity of a program. Students will be expected to fully meet the expectations and demands in each course and major as determined by the individual faculty member and/or the department chair.
We understand that first-year students may become discouraged or frustrated in a particular course, or with a particular professor. Know that we have many resources in place to help them have a positive first-year experience. First, we encourage all students to begin a dialogue with the appropriate faculty member. Faculty members are often a tremendous source of support and assistance. We also recommend the Sykes Student Success Center where students can receive tutoring as well as strategies for organizing, planning, and performing in a particular course.
Legal Issues

Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 1990), and the ADA Amendments Act of 2009, are the laws that define support services and access at the college level. Although Section 504 is applied in public education as well as in colleges, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act governs K-12 adaptations. Although these laws are similar in their intent to provide qualified individuals with disabilities the right to equal access, there are notable differences between the two.

Under IDEA, the schools are responsible for identifying, evaluating, and planning for students with disabilities. Under 504 and ADA, the student is responsible for providing required documentation and requesting appropriate, supported accommodations. Section 504 and ADA further state that the student must be “otherwise qualified.” It is important to note that the status of “otherwise qualified” may change over time. For example, a student may have been able to participate fully in a residential full-time day college upon admission, but then developed significant mental health issues. He/she may no longer be “otherwise qualified” at that point. The following information should answer questions about these differences:

High schools must:

- Identify students with disabilities.
- Provide assessment of learning disabilities.
- Involve parents in decision-making.
- Provide non-academic services.
- Structure the student’s weekly schedule.
- Modify educational programs.
- Prepare Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- Provide a free and appropriate education.
- Help each student reach his/her potential.

Post-secondary institutions must:

- Protect the student’s right to privacy and confidentiality (this includes conversations with parents). Provide access to programs and services that are offered to non-disabled students.
- Make information available to students regarding office locations and procedures for requesting accommodations.
✓ Evaluate documentation.
✓ Determine whether the student's disability \textit{substantially limits} a major life activity, such as the ability to read, write, learn, hear, speak, sleep, breathe, walk, see, or care for oneself.
✓ Determine whether a student is otherwise qualified, with or without accommodations, and whether reasonable accommodations are possible.
✓ Provide reasonable accommodations.
✓ Provide equal access to programs available to non-disabled students.
✓ Make reasonable classroom adjustments that do not alter the integrity or essential components or technical standards of a course or program.
✓ Inform students of their rights and responsibilities.

\textbf{Post-secondary institutions are not required to:}

✓ Reduce or waive the essential requirements of a course or program.
✓ Provide disability assessment.
✓ Provide personal attendants.
✓ Provide tutorial support beyond what is available to all students.
✓ Prepare IEPs.
✓ Ensure a student reaches his/her maximum potential success.
✓ Keep parents informed.

\textbf{The student is responsible for:}

✓ Disclosing his/her disability to the appropriate office and providing documentation in a timely manner if requesting accommodations/services. The college has the right to establish its own documentation policy and timeline.
✓ Acting on his/her own behalf as an independent adult. It is the student’s job to advocate for himself/herself, not the parent’s.
✓ Discussing classroom and testing accommodations with instructors in accordance with college policy.
✓ Arranging for personal attendants or specially designed assistive technologies.

\textbf{Important Things to Remember}

In high school, students with diagnosed disabilities are entitled to specific services and accommodations. In college, the \textit{severity and degree of functional impact} of the disability is taken into consideration when determining whether accommodations are appropriate—a diagnosis alone does not determine eligibility. Also, these accommodations are intended to provide \textit{access}, not ensure \textit{success}. 
Students who attend college are considered to be adults, protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). College staff cannot talk to parents about confidential information, including academic activities, without the student’s signed consent. Parents need to talk to the student directly. Students act as responsible adults when disclosing disabilities and requesting accommodations.

It is the student’s responsibility to know and understand the college’s documentation policy. Documentation should be current, verify the disability, describe the extent/severity of the impairment, provide information on the functional impact of the disability, and offer college appropriate recommendations.

Many students with mild or moderate deficits were identified as students with special needs in primary or secondary school and received accommodations that may not be appropriate for college level work, or they may not qualify for accommodations under ADA or Section 504.

Confidentiality

Although the college endeavors to respect the student’s right to privacy, disclosure of the impact and nature of the disability to school officials, including faculty, may occur in an effort to support the student.

No information or records regarding the disability are released to outside interests, including parents, without the student’s consent. With this in mind, students must be ready to have a conversation with individual faculty members regarding the impact of the disability. Parents should understand that they may not learn a great deal from college staff. This is done in compliance with FERPA to protect the student and to make a deliberate effort to win his/her trust. In this way, students learn to better understand and articulate their needs to others who are in a position to help and guide them.
Typical First-Semester Issues

1. **Workload is much heavier in college for most students.** Most high school students have not experienced either the work demands or the self-regulation required for college work. Students will be required to do many hours of work outside the class each week. This may include independent reading, research, group meetings, and writing. Classroom participation demands that they keep up. Tutoring services are available at the Sykes Student Success Center for all students.

2. **Time management is a problem for most first-year students.** In high school, most students had curfews or they lived in households where the house was silent late at night. This is not the case in college. Faculty members do not "keep tabs" on students and course attendance may become a problem. It is best if they balance coursework throughout the day. Certainly, if medication and health issues impact the student’s readiness in the early morning, suggest later classes. If time management and organization are problematic, suggest contacting the Sykes Student Success Center for information on attending a time management workshop. Encourage the student to balance social, work, and home obligations in that first semester.

3. **Homesickness is predictable for some.** Actively involved parents and friends have supported many students with disabilities. The transition to a new social system, new resources, new advocates, and new sleep/awake patterns can be very stressful. While it is important for parents to listen to their discomfort and support them in many ways, it is not helpful if parents rescue the student and bring them home at a time in the semester when weekend absenteeism impacts social connections. Parents should visit the campus. If parents become concerned, they should alert the counseling office and suggest to their son/daughter that he/she should make appointment to speak with a counselor. Resident advisors are a good source of support for homesick students as well.
4. **Risk-taking is common.** Most students experiment in the first years of college when they are out from under the watchful eye of their parents. Some reasonable risk-taking is part of normal development. However, if parents, friends, or relatives notice an increase in this behavior and feel alarmed, they should discuss this concern with the student and alert the Mystic Advising and Counseling Center (MACC).

5. **Social pressures can be significant.** The pressure to conform and adopt the culture of the college can be stressful during the first semester. The student should be encouraged to connect with upper-class students and vary the members of the groups they "hang with." In addition, faculty advisors, instructors, resident advisors, and coaches can provide support for these issues.

6. **Getting to know faculty and administration is difficult.** Most students have not worked closely with professional staff in their high schools. They are often slow to realize that instructors can be a tremendous source of information and assistance. When students get to know the faculty and resource personnel, it is much easier to communicate if a crisis arises later.

7. **Roommate issues are common for all students.** Most students have never lived with another person in his/her room. We offer many resources to help students resolve these issues. There are resident advisors, resident supervisors, and counselors who can help offer support. Students should be encouraged to handle these situations themselves, unless there are unusual circumstances. Students with disabilities generally gain a great deal by having a roommate the first semester. Roommates can be very helpful with technology, wake-up prompts, social contacts, etc. Unless there are extremely unusual conditions, first-year students are not provided single rooms to accommodate a disability.

8. **Grade expectations can be unrealistic.** Many students have become accustomed to good grades in high school and are expecting to continue their high school GPA in college. Such is not always the case during the first semester at college. Transition issues and adjustment to autonomous monitoring make good grades more difficult to achieve. Some students with disabilities have been insulated from timed exams and comprehensive tests. College typically does not offer unlimited exam time to students with disabilities, although extended test time is common. Many courses require comprehensive exams that tax students who have memory or anxiety concerns. Students should learn to develop exam preparation strategies and test regulation behaviors. The Sykes Student Success
Center offers workshops such as Preparing for Tests, Improving Memory, and Countdown to Finals to help students with these issues.

**Common Causes of low first-semester grades**

- Weak background knowledge
- Poor study habits (time management, prioritizing, note-taking, test preparation, critical reading skills, homework habits)
- Demanding outside interests and activities (sports, friends, theater, instant messaging, email, computer games, jobs, television, etc.)
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Poor sleep habits
Academic Resources

Most of a student's learning time in high school takes place between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. In college, much of the learning time takes place outside of the classroom through textbook reading, collaborative projects, and research. Therefore, the student's self-regulatory behavior becomes crucial. High school teachers review textbooks in class lectures and generally only test what they have taught. In college, that is not the case. Students are responsible for work not covered in class, but assigned nevertheless. Study time in high school averages 1-2 hours per night and in college that can be 3-4 hours per night. Remember that no one is reminding the student to turn off the TV or computer.

Other Campus Resources

Support for students with disabilities on the BSC campus is decentralized. That means that campus-wide opportunities are available. If a student faces issues that warrant intervention, the following resources are available:

Faculty advisors will help students choose courses, make schedule changes, balance their coursework, and negotiate the first semester registration process.

The MACC Center staff will help students with roommate issues, anxiety concerns, social, and emotional issues that face college students, as well as, basic academic advising.

The classroom faculty member will help students with assignments, test preparation, alternative resources, accommodations in the classroom, and any other academic concerns related to the course.

The BSC Library staff will help students as they begin to do more advanced research work. This may include teaching them how to use CD Rom, Internet, Interlibrary Loan, journal searches, and how to reference certain materials. Many students make private appointments with the reference librarians.

The Sykes Student Success Center tutors will assist students who need help with the writing process. This may include interpreting assignments, using references, outlining, developing an argument, grammar, and style. The Sykes center will also help students develop organizational and time management skills and shape strategic learning skills.
Warning Signs that Warrant Inquiry and Intervention

Failing mid-semester grades are a red flag for trouble. Generally, failing grades in the first semester suggest problems with time-management, class attendance, excessive social activities, risk-taking behaviors, or inadequate entering skill levels. The student should discuss these issues with staff at the appropriate campus resource, starting with his/her advisor. In some cases, the student has chosen not to use support services, despite a history of disability and academic concerns. These students will need encouragement or an incentive to do so at this juncture.

Depression or significant weight changes should be discussed with personnel in the MACC. Many students experience significant emotional difficulties during the first semester of college. Students with disabilities often have greater challenges to face and some are at higher risk to become depressed because of these challenges. This is where the student’s connection to faculty and staff is critical. At this point in their lives, students are struggling to move way from parent support into an independent world.

Daily calls/emails home or frequent visits home may indicate adjustment problems. Suggest that the student stay on campus every other week and you may come to the college to visit. When students are off campus a great deal during their “down time,” they miss out on opportunities to develop a bond with the college and to strengthen their friendships. Encourage the student to talk with his/her RA or visit the counseling center.

Summary

This is an exciting time full of new challenges, experiences, relationships, and intellectual adventures. We look forward to working with students with disabilities at Bismarck State College and we hope you will find this handbook a useful resource.

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# Campus Directory

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<td>Admissions Requirements</td>
<td>224-5429 or 1-800-445-5073</td>
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<td>Academic Support/Tutoring Services</td>
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<td>Athletics</td>
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<td>Bookstore</td>
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<td>BSC Foundation</td>
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<td>Career Counseling</td>
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<td>Work-Study Positions</td>
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ONLINE RESOURCES LIST

Going to College – A resource for teens with disabilities (updated 05/05/2009).
http://www.going-to-college.org/

ConquerCollege (2010)
http://www.youtube.com/user/ConquerCollege?feature=watch

Conquer College with LD/ADD (2013)
http://www.conquercollegewithld.com/about

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html

http://www.und.edu/org/nddsc/Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.htm

40 Amazing iPad Apps for the Learning Disabled (2013)

College-Planning Tips for Special-Needs Families (5-07-2013)

Help for College Students with Disabilities

Academic Accommodations for Students with Learning Disabilities (2012)
http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/accomm_ld.html

Transition: There are no IEP’S in College (2010)
http://www.tcnj.edu/~technj/2004/transition.htm