Differences Between High School and College for Students with Disabilities

Applicable laws:

High school

* IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) ensures success meaning students are entitled to services
* Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

College

* ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) ensures equal access and protects from discrimination
* Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Required documentation:

High school

* IEP (Individualized Education Plan) and/or 504 Plan
* School provides evaluation at no cost to student
* School retests over time

College

* Documentation guidelines specify information needed for disability (IEP/504 plan alone is typically insufficient)
* Student must obtain evaluation at own expense
* Additional accommodations and/or change in the impact of disability may warrant additional documentation

Advocacy:

High school

* Student is identified by the school and its supported by parents and teachers
* Primary responsibility for arranging accommodations belongs to the school
* Teachers approach the student if they believe assistance is needed

College

* Student must self-identify to the support services department
* Primary responsibility for advocacy and requesting accommodation belongs to the student
* Instructors are usually open and helpful, but most expect students to initiate contact if assistance is needed

Parental Role:

High school

* Parent has access to student records and can participate in the accommodations process
* Parent advocates for student

College

* Parent does not have access to student records without students written consent
* Student advocates for self

Disability Services Provider Role:

High school

* School seeks out students and reminds/creates/coordinates additional resources as needed
* Primary responsibility for accommodations belongs to the school

College

* Support services determines eligibility for reasonable accommodations under the ADA and Section 504 upon request from student
* Support services does not duplicate resources found elsewhere on campus; refers students to resources as students identify potential need

Instructors:

High school

* Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter curriculum pace of assignments
* Teachers prompt students about grades, assignments and due dates
* Student is expected to complete assignments that are then discussed and often re-taught in class
* Attendance is legally mandated

College

* Instructors are not required to modify design or alter assignment deadlines
* Student must monitor own progress and manage their time
* Student is responsible for substantial amounts of homework which may not be directly addressed in class
* Attendance is the students responsibility; student accepts consequences of non-attendance

Tests and Grades:

High school

* IEP or 504 plan may include modifications to test format and/or grading
* Teachers often take time to remind students of assignments and due dates

College

* Grading and test format changes (i.e. multiple choice vs essay) may not be available; accommodations on HOW tests are given (extended time, test proctors) are available when supported by disability documentation
* Instructor expect students to read, save, and consult the course syllabus, which spells out exactly what is expected, when things are due and how the student will be graded