Differences between High School and College for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities transitioning from high school to college can expect to see a number of differences in how services are provided and what the responsibilities fall to the student. This includes applicable laws, accessing support and accommodations, classroom and professor expectations, and student responsibilities.

Applicable Laws

High School	College
IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)	ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title 11)
Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973
IDEA is about *SUCCESS*	ADA is about *ACCESS*

Required Documentation

High School	College
EP (Individualized Education Plan) and/or 504 Plan	High school IEP and 504 are not sufficient. Documentation guidelines specify information needed for each category of disability.
School provides evaluation at no cost to student or family.	Student must get evaluation at own expense.
Documentation focuses on determining whether student is eligible for services based on specific disability categories in IDEA.	Documentation must provide information on specific functional limitations and demonstrate the need for specific accommodations.

Self-Advocacy

High School	College
Student is identified by the school and is supported by parents and teachers.	Student must self-identify to the Disability Services Office.
Primary responsibility for arranging accommodations belongs to the school.	Primary responsibility for self-advocacy and arranging accommodations belongs to the student.
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance.

Source: University of North Carolina, Penn State DuBois

Parental Role

High School	College
Parent has access to student records and can participate in the accommodation process.	Parent does not have access to student records without student's written consent.
Parents advocate for student	Student advocates for self
Parents talk with teachers/counselor when there is an academic issue.	Student talks with professor or advisor when there is an academic issue. Professors do not talk with parents.

Instruction

High School	College
Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter curriculum pace of assignments.	Professors are not required to modify instruction or alter assignment deadlines. Colleges provide academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services to accommodate the functional limitations of qualified students with disabilities, as indicated in the appropriate documentation.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed and often re-taught in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing that may not be directly addressed in class.
You seldom need to read anything more than once; sometimes listening in class is enough.	You need to review class notes, text, and material regularly.

Grades and Tests

High School	College
EP or 504 Plan may include modifications to test format and/or grading.	Grading and test format changes (i.e. multiple choice vs. essay) are generally not available. Accommodations to HOW tests are given (extended time, distraction reduced environment) are available when supported by disability documentation.
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material.
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded.

Source: University of North Carolina, Penn State DuBois

Studying and Academic Preparation

High School	College
Tutoring and study support may be a service provided as part of an IEP or 504 Plan.	Tutoring DOES NOT fall under college disability services. Students with disabilities must seek out the tutoring resources that are available to all students.
Your time and assignments are structured by others.	You manage your own time and complete assignments independently.
You may study outside of class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute preparation.	You need to study at least 10-12 hours weekly outside of the class for each course.
You usually study only when there is an exam	Studying material is an on-going process with or without an exam scheduled.

Source: University of North Carolina, Penn State DuBois