

Guidelines for College Selection Process for Students Who Have OI

Planning for college is an exciting and time consuming process. Here are a few suggestions of topics for students who have OI and their parents to jointly explore in order to find a balance between the student's needs and interests. It doesn't pay to attend an accessible college that doesn't have the major you wish to pursue or attend a famous college where you cannot easily get into the labs and dorms.

You will want to work with a good college counselor and your high school's guidance department. Check the institution's web site for information regarding services for students with disabilities.

When you visit, you will want to evaluate the terrain, the weather, the distance from dorm or parking lot to dining hall, and classrooms. Check out the availability of public transportation to, from or on campus, laundry facilities and health care. If you are considering residing on campus, you will need to see several dorms and evaluate the room size, furniture, closets, and restroom features. Some colleges have special accessible dorm rooms similar to ADA hotel rooms, either in a separate building, or within an existing dorm.

These suggestions are necessarily quite general. Be sure to consider your type of OI, and your daily needs, as you go through the college search process. Begin the process as early as possible.

1. Prepare Yourself

- A. Develop a resume in high school of grades, community service and extracurricular activities.
- B. Explore your interests.
- C. Develop your self-advocacy skills.
- D. Learn self-care, and independent living skills to the degree possible.
- E. Learn about your OI and your own medical history.

2. Prepare Yourself Academically

- A. Like any other student, become well informed about the college admission testing requirements, procedures and deadlines.
- B. Develop sound study skills

3. Prepare Yourself Personally: Take Time for an Honest Self Evaluation

- A. Know your academic strengths and weaknesses.
- B. Determine the accommodations you need for daily living and in the classroom.
- C. Determine your preferences in terms of college size, location, and area of academic interest.
- D. Determine your preference concerning commuting to college or residing on campus.

4. Search for the Right College

- A. Get all the information possible from your high school Guidance Department about programs in your state for students who have a disability. These programs can be academic and/or financial.
- B. Contact your state's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for information about personal assistance, special training programs, internships, transportation and financial aid.
- C. Contact your state's Office for Post-Secondary Education to learn about any special programs for students with disabilities already in effect at your state's public colleges and universities.
- D. Contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at your nearest community college or at your state's public university to learn about their programs and procedures.
- E. Become familiar with general graduation requirements of colleges you are considering.
- F. Become familiar with the requirements for the major(s) you are considering.
- G. Go visit the colleges you are seriously considering.
- H. If possible, stay overnight on the campus of the colleges you are most serious about.

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5. The College Visit

- A. Arrange ahead of time to supplement the regular tour with a tour that is tailored to your particular needs.
- B. Have your own checklist of needed accommodations for college offices including the Financial Aid Center, Registrar, and Business Office, Student Center, bookstore, classroom buildings, restrooms (in multiple locations), labs, libraries, health center, sports and recreation facilities, dining center, dormitories, social facilities, parking and campus transportation.
- C. Ask specific questions.
- D. Get a sense of how inclusive the campus is in attitude. Are students with disabilities housed in a separate facility, or among the general student body? Are there disability related clubs or adapted sports teams? Do disabled students participate in student government, etc.?
- E. Determine whether the campus has a full office for disability services or an individual who serves as service coordinator.
 - a. Determine what types of academic support services are available and if there are any extra fees involved. (e.g.: note taking, study groups, assistance for the hearing impaired, alternative exam procedures)
 - b. Learn what types of personal services are available (wheelchair pushers, personal care attendants.)
 - c. Get a profile of the students with disabilities who already attend (types of disabilities, total number, and percent of total student body) and make arrangements to contact some of these students.
 - d. Discuss existing strategies available through the college/university for dealing with accident, injury and time away from campus without loss of credit, (i.e. completing course by Internet, completing course by independent study)
- F. Meet with a representative of your intended major.
 - a. Learn if other students with a physical disability have been accepted in their program.
 - b. Discuss availability of internships, etc. for a person with your disability.
- G. Meet with a representative of the Career Center, and determine if any special services are available for students with disabilities.
- H. Evaluate Medical Facilities
 - a. Tour campus medical facilities.
 - b. Gather information about nearby community medical facilities.
 - c. If the college you are considering is in a different city from your current home, seek a referral from your current primary care doctor or orthopedist for an OI knowledgeable doctor near your college.

The Bottom Line:

Determine whether this particular college or university offers the education, the services and the physical accommodations that **YOU** need.

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