High school students often find the transition to college academically challenging and emotionally draining. The transition from high school to college for students with disabilities can be even more stressful because of their disabilities.

College is a time of change and you will now be required to take on more responsibility for your education. More specifically YOU must become your own advocate. You can do this by becoming proficient at realistically assessing and understanding your strengths, weaknesses, needs, interests and preferences. We recommend that you discuss these issues with the appropriate members of our faculty, staff or administration.

Once you are enrolled in college, members of the university consider you to be an adult responsible for meeting the requirements for your education, seeking support services available to you on campus, and interacting with the appropriate members of the university community to discuss your academic progress, and any issues or concerns that may arise.

Disability Support Services is here to ensure that the campus and all university-sponsored activities and events are accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations. In order to receive services with DSS, you must inform the office of your needs and provide appropriate documentation of your disability.
QUICK COMPARISON: DIFFERENCES IN SERVICES

High School

• Education is a right and must be provided in an appropriate environment.
• The school system is responsible for identifying a student’s disability.
• Individualized Education Plans, IEPs, are in place to discuss the student’s progress.
• The public school system provides educational and psychological testing at no charge.
• Course modifications are made in order to facilitate student success.

College

• Education is not a right; students must meet the same admissions criteria as non-disabled students.
• Students must self-identify in order to obtain services and accommodations.
• No annual review or IEP is held; students are responsible for monitoring their own progress.
• Once accepted to the university, the student must provide appropriate documentation of disability.
• Fundamental alterations of programs or curricula are NOT required.

Things to remember

• You are now your own advocate. You must request accommodations and disclose them to your professors.
• As a college student, you must structure and plan your own study time. In college, time management, organization and general study skills take on an even greater importance.
• Professors and classes may differ regarding attendance requirements, assignment due dates and exam dates. It is your responsibility to study the syllabi and know the deadlines and other requirements of the class.
• Professors have different teaching styles; it is imperative for you to understand your own learning style and to adjust as needed.
• If you are over 18, university staff cannot talk with parents or guardians about your academic activities unless given prior authorization by you.
Checklist for Successful Transition

If you can check off each statement below, you are ensuring that your transition from high school to college will be much smoother. If there are items that you have not completed, it is important that you do this as soon as possible before the start of your college enrollment.

☐ I understand my disability; I can discuss my strengths, weaknesses and needs in detail; and I am able to identify accommodations and services that will provide me with an equal opportunity to succeed in college.

☐ I am currently attending my IEP meetings.

☐ At the time I apply for college, my documentation will meet the criteria for each college.

☐ I can manage my time effectively, which includes going to class on time, balancing study time and completing assignments by the due date.

☐ I have visited the colleges that I would like to attend, seen the campus, and met with disability services staff regarding documentation guidelines and possible accommodations.

☐ I am signed up for an orientation session at the university that I have been accepted to and plan to attend.
DEMYSTIFYING THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Applying to The Catholic University of America
The university is not allowed to ask, by law, if a prospective student has a disability. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions reviews each application on its own merits. Students with disabilities must meet the same standards as all other applicants. Documentation of your disability should not be sent with your application. Prospective students with disabilities are encouraged to write an additional personal statement.

Writing the Optional Personal Statement
HOW: Write about how the disability has impacted your learning, and how this may be seen in areas such as grade point average, ACT/SAT scores and grade fluctuation.

WHEN: Discuss when you were diagnosed and how that may have impacted your education. For example, if you were diagnosed later in your educational career, did your performance improve after the diagnosis and/or intervention? You may also want to include how frequently you used accommodations, such as taking more time on tests, help with notes, or the use of a calculator.

WHAT: Focus on what you did to compensate for your learning differences. Many students say that they “worked very hard” or “overcame” their disability, but this alone is not enough. The admissions office will want to know more information about the specifics of what you did to succeed in high school. Note whether or not you used accommodations, worked with a tutor, or used other resources. You may also wish to focus on what steps you plan to follow in the college/university setting to bolster your success.

WHY: Tell the admissions office why you would be a good addition to the CUA student body. Don’t be afraid to “toot your own horn” during the application process! Discuss special talents or skills, personal characteristics or unique qualities that you will bring to CUA that will make the campus a more diverse environment.
Accommodations on the ACT or SAT

High school personnel (i.e., special education teachers, transition coordinators and school counselors) can help you obtain accommodations on college entrance exams, such as the ACT (www.act.org) or SAT (www.ets.org), by starting the process early.

You will need to have disability documentation that meets the guidelines of the testing service. Even if you are approved for accommodations in school, it does not automatically make you eligible to take the entrance exams with accommodations.

Documenting the Disability

- Take the appropriate and required tests that a college requires to document a disability so that you can obtain services in college. (Work with a high school transition team to take updated testing prior to your graduating from high school.)

- Remember, at the post-secondary level, documentation for AD/HD needs to be much more comprehensive than what is required for services in secondary education.

- The DSS Web site has information about documentation guidelines for all categories of disabilities at http://disabilityservices.cua.edu. You may also contact the Disability Support Services at 202-319-5211 to have the information mailed to you.

NOTE — Documentation requirements to receive services in college are different from high school requirements. Receiving services in high school does not guarantee eligibility for services in college.
DSS INTAKE CHECKLIST

After you are admitted and have mailed your deposit to CUA, you will need to begin your registration process for DSS. Contact DSS to request an intake packet.

☐ 1. Complete a green “intake” form and return it to our office with a copy of your documentation of your disability.

☐ 2. When the intake form and documentation are received, DSS will contact you with an update designating your file’s status as approved or incomplete. Please be patient; we have many files to review.

☐ 3. Once file is “approved”:
   - Call 202-319-5211 to schedule an intake appointment. This can be done at any time after the documentation is approved.

☐ 4. At the intake appointment you will
   - Discuss the accommodations and services that you are eligible to use.
   - Discuss the policies and procedures that you will need to follow in order to access your accommodations.
   - Discuss other possible resources that are available to you.

Once you have registered for classes
   - Submit an Accommodation Request form with your schedule to DSS.
   - Receive a copy of your accommodation letter to share with your professors.

☐ 5. In college, it is the student’s responsibility to disclose his or her disability to instructors.
   - If you do not receive your accommodation letter at the intake appointment, it will be available to pick up within 72 hours of your appointment. This letter lists your accommodations for your courses.
   - If you plan to disclose your disability to your professor(s) and use your accommodations in your course(s), then you must meet with your professor(s) to go over the accommodation letter with him or her.
   - Depending on your accommodations, you may also be required to complete additional paperwork.

☐ 6. Each semester, you need to complete a request form to obtain your accommodation letter. You can do this by turning in a hard copy of the form with an attached schedule. You will need to meet with a staff member if there are any changes to the accommodations.

You can meet with your DSS coordinator at any time throughout the semester to discuss your progress and your needs. Just call or send an e-mail to make an appointment.