Guide For Students & Parents
Dear Students and Families,

We know that selecting a college can be a complicated task. Parents often want to be assured that their student will receive appropriate academic support. We want to provide students and their families with information to help them in this very important search. We hope this guide can offer some insight into the transition process and disability support at Colby-Sawyer College. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Petra Schaefer
Coordinator of Access Resources
Access Resources at Colby-Sawyer is committed to providing qualified students equal access to the curriculum, services, and activities of the college in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Office of Access Resources knows that students with disabilities enhance the culture of the college and contribute diverse perspectives to our academic community. We value student agency and independence, and this notion is embedded in our work with students. We look forward to working with you, as you become part of the exciting Colby-Sawyer College community. We collaborate with faculty and staff to foster a welcoming environment and implement reasonable accommodations to ensure that all students benefit from opportunities available to them. Student success is very important to us.

Web Address:
http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/disability/forms.html
How Does College Differ From High School?

Residential liberal arts colleges, such as Colby-Sawyer, introduce many wonderful opportunities and significant responsibilities. While students take advantage of new academic and co-curricular options, they must also adapt to an increase in academic rigor, independent study and residential living. Students also experience a considerable change in their personal support networks as they integrate into a new social community.

- Students spend 12 to 15 hours in class each week, much less than in high school. Thus they experience less direct contact with their instructors.
- Students are expected to spend two to three hours preparing for class for each hour they spend in class (up to 45 hours per week); however, this time is not structured for students.
- Students are expected to complete homework and faculty may not check attendance or monitor daily work in their classes. Faculty members expect students to be responsible for both keeping up with course material and actively seeking assistance when they have questions.
- Coursework requires students to synthesize and evaluate information and to use abstract thinking skills.
- Exams may be less frequent but may constitute a larger portion of students’ grades.
- Writing assignments are frequent and usually require students to demonstrate strong conceptual understanding and synthesis of the course material.
- Students are also evaluated on their contributions to class discussion and their collaboration for group projects.
- Beyond the initial transition to college, students experience continually increasing expectations as they progress through their education, particularly as they advance into major-level courses (sophomore/junior years) and internship programs.
How are college service policies different from high schools’?

Post-secondary institutions design their disability service policies in line with a different set of laws than those that govern primary and secondary education. Prior to college, students may receive accommodations, auxiliary aides, academic modifications and personal services as covered under The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). IDEA has no impact on higher education as The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the law which is applicable to colleges. The ADA does not require the same level of assistance and modification as IDEA. Although postsecondary institutions have a responsibility to offer reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, these institutions are not required to fundamentally alter the nature of their programs or courses.

Colleges are not required to provide case managers, personal attendants or tutors, readers for personal use, or other personal devices. Auxiliary aids are provided when they are necessary to ensure effective communication.
What is Colby-Sawyer’s approach to providing services?

Students with disabilities thrive at Colby-Sawyer when they are prepared to be independent in their learning and living experience. They act as self-advocates, are fully knowledgeable about their disabilities and employ effective learning strategies. To support students in this, Colby-Sawyer College offers reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids, weekly academic coaching, and selected services and referrals to students with documented disabilities. In addition, the Access Resources office coordinates general academic programming, such as tutoring or workshops on study strategies. The college does not specifically monitor students’ academic progress or track students’ use of services.

What about documentation and testing?

Students must provide current and adequate documentation to Access Resources and are responsible for evaluation costs. Appropriate documentation constitutes psychoeducational testing, neuropsychological assessments, or other relevant clinical assessments. The documentation must identify each specific disability for which the student is requesting accommodations. Furthermore, a student’s documentation needs to clearly support any request for accommodations by explaining how the disability currently and substantially impacts particular learning and/or other major life activities. Documentation must be comprehensive and current. (Please see our “Guidelines for Documentation of Disabilities,” for specific information on our website.)

Families and prospective students often ask whether IEPs or 504 Plans should be sent to the college. IEPs and other educational plans can serve as supplemental materials but are secondary and optional.
When and how should I disclose my need for accommodations and services?

After you have been accepted to Colby-Sawyer and have sent in your deposit, you will receive an email with a link to our website. Applications for academic and housing accommodations and guidelines for documentation of disabilities can be found there. Applications and documentation should be submitted by the summer prior to beginning Colby-Sawyer. We strongly suggest that students submit documentation at least a few weeks before the beginning of the school year.

How do I initiate accommodations?

Students are responsible for initiating services once they arrive at Colby-Sawyer. They should contact the Access Resources within the first week of classes and make an appointment with a learning specialist. The initial meeting will begin the process for documentation review and granting accommodations. Students may initiate services at any time during the semester; however, documentation review and related arrangements take time and are not retroactive.
What happens when I meet with Access Resources?

At Colby-Sawyer we collaborate with students on a case-by-case basis to provide accommodations and services. Once a student has initiated services with an appointment, the learning specialist reviews the student’s documentation. The learning specialist and the student work together to develop an accommodation letter. This letter is then shared with the student’s academic advisor and course professors. The student should plan to meet with his/her professors to discuss the accommodations. This act of self-advocacy provides the student an opportunity to explain his/her learning needs and to establish a rapport with the instructor.

Letters must be renewed every semester that a student wishes to use accommodations. Students should simply make an appointment with the learning specialist at the beginning of each academic term to update their letter. If the student experiences problems with the assigned accommodations or wants to discuss alternative/additional accommodations, he/she must see the learning specialist as soon as possible.
What accommodations and services are available?

Reasonable accommodations supported by disability documentation can include: testing accommodations, such as extra time with minimal distractions; communication accommodations such as speech to text software; assistive technology such as screen readers; and other need-specific accommodations for students with physical disabilities. Accommodations should not compromise the educational intent or evaluation standards of a course or assignment.

Learning specialists are available to meet with first-year students for weekly consultations. These meetings often provide students with organizational skills, time management, academic coaching, and support for scheduling tutors and test accommodations. Access Resources works closely with The Academic Development Center (ADC). The ADC offers educational support for all Colby-Sawyer students through peer and professional tutorial assistance. All services are by appointment and free of charge. Students may schedule one tutoring appointment per class per week and as many as three writing appointments per paper.

Students with physical disabilities should disclose their disabilities to Baird Health and Counseling Center and Safety if they require physical modifications or medical services.
Requests for single rooms and other housing accommodations come to Access Resources. We determine appropriate housing accommodations and/or adjustments and then forward these recommendations to the director of residential education. Questions regarding housing accommodations should be directed to Access Resources.
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