Autism in College

Serving the full spectrum of learners

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Disclaimer

I have no affiliation with, nor financial interest in, any of the colleges/programs mentioned. I do not accept compensation from any school for recommending or placing students. **I work with families to find the best-fit programs for students.**
About Dr. Eric Endlich

- College admissions consultant
- Clinical psychologist
- Clinical Advisory Board member, Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)
- Co-author of book on autistic adults
- National presenter at autism conferences
- Taught at Boston College and Tufts University
"Your development has to go at its own pace. It just doesn't happen to be the usual pace."
Madeleine L'Engle, A Wrinkle in Time
How to find autism-friendly colleges & universities

Visit TopCollegeConsultants.com for an extensive list
Why focus on autism in college?

- **50,000** autistic students graduate high school in the US annually
- **36%** enroll in college (vs. **75%** of peers)
- Most do not earn a degree
- **40%** of those who disclose their autism receive special services or accommodations

(Source: National Autism Indicators Report, 2015)
What about work?

- 58% work between high school and early 20s (vs. 99% of their peers)
- Most work part-time, averaging $9/hour.
- About 40% who disclose autism receive accommodations at work
Core college readiness indicators

Students must be able to:

• *Independently* identify when they need help in any area
• *Independently* seek out services, despite obstacles
• *Independently* apply the supports they’ve accessed*

*Courtesy of Jake Weld, Mansfield Hall Director of Admissions*
# How college differs from high school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High school</strong></th>
<th><strong>College</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many hours in class</td>
<td>Few hours in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few hours of homework</td>
<td>Many hours of homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is very structured</td>
<td>Time is unstructured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many supports in place</td>
<td>Students must seek out supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What skills do students need in college?

- Academic/study skills
- Self-awareness: strengths & challenges
- Self-advocacy: seek resources, schedule/attend appointments
- Organization: data, time & money management
- Motivation
- Emotion regulation
- Self-care
Emotional Readiness

What to know:

- Conditions you are prone to
- “Red flags” of distress
- Go-to strategies
- Available supports
Applying to College: Testing Accommodations

- Include testing accommodations in education plan
- Identify school contact person
- Obtain testing that documents diagnosis & needed accommodations
- Leave time for test reports and appeals
- Remember test-optional schools
Accommodations in College

• Consider when to disclose diagnosis
• Education plan (e.g., IEP, 504) doesn’t transfer to college
• Recent documentation of diagnosis/disability is needed
• Research requirements/services
• Contact college disability center
• Accommodations may suffice
Educational Options After High School

- Vocational training (e.g., trades, healthcare, computers)
- Non-degree certificate program
- Transition/gap year program
- College plus external supports
- Support program at college
- Specialized college
- Mainstream/no supports
Certificate Programs in college settings

Suitable for students who:

- May have mild intellectual disability
- Need additional employment training
- Desire a college-like experience
Certificate Program Example: Project Forward

- Cape Cod Community College in Massachusetts
- Commuter program
- Vocational focus
- Established 1988
- Internships: food prep, office skills, animal care, landscaping, hospitality and more
- Option to take college courses
Certificate Program - Residential

Such programs:

- May be more intensive/comprehensive compared to a commuter program
- May offer more opportunities to learn social skills
Certificate Program – Residential Example: Threshold Program

Lesley University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

✓ Program is typically two years, with ongoing alumni opportunities after graduating
✓ Students can take regular college courses and join clubs

Typical students have:
✓ Demonstrated learning differences
✓ Finished high school (diploma or certificate of completion)
✓ Received special education services (e.g., IEP, 504)
✓ Scored below average on testing (e.g., IQ from 70-90)
College readiness/transition programs

Such programs:

- May occur the summer before freshman year
- May fill a gap year before college
- Give students organizational and other skills to succeed in college
College Transition Program
Example: College Internship Program

• 5 locations nationwide
• Independent living component
• Career or academic track options
• Full year or summer option
• Post-program support
• Family support
Another option:
Attend a mainstream college and obtain *outside* support

- **Mansfield Hall** – several college options; communal dorm-like residence (VT, WI, OR)
- **Beyond Booksmart, New Frontiers** – coaches provide remote help to students in any college
- **Focus Collegiate** – intensive support for students in Boston-area colleges
Comprehensive Programs for Autism/Learning Differences

- May involve significant additional cost
- More coordinated services
- Social component
- Support throughout college
Academic Support Program
Example: Lynn University – Boca Raton, FL

- Institute for Achievement and Learning (IAL) – since 1991
- Nearly 20% of Lynn students enroll in IAL
- Academic coaches are certified professionals
- Students get 2 coaching and 2 tutoring sessions weekly
Autism Support Program
Example: Drexel University

- Philadelphia, PA
- Urban university
- Help with co-ops and career placement
- Social skills instruction
- Peer mentors
- No fee
Specialized Colleges
Landmark and Beacon

- Small-college setting
- Fewer majors available
- All instructors and staff know this population
- More accommodating
Takeaways

- **Assess** and enhance college readiness
- **Encourage** students to self-advocate
- **Know what a student needs:** an alternative to college, a transition program, an autism support program or simply accommodations
Ready to look beyond high school?

There’s a program or college out there for almost everyone!

For more assistance choosing and applying to programs, contact us at: info@topcollegeconsultants.com

(617) 515-3568 or (833) WE-APPLY.
Resources

• A Guide to Assessing College Readiness (Landmark College)
  https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/College-Readiness_Assessment.pdf

• Autism-Friendly College List
  https://www.topcollegeconsultants.com/autism-in-college/

• Planning for College: A 4-Year Guide for High-Schoolers with IEPs