

Cast Your Net Wide! Ask Questions!

Cast your net wide when looking at colleges and universities. Look first at schools based on their geographic location, campus size, and academic programs. Then look at the disability support services.

It is important when considering a particular school to talk to other students with disabilities who attend or have attended the school and perhaps talk with their parents. The students' personal experiences will enlighten you about many aspects of campus life.

Remember to ask questions. There are no "dumb" questions when you are making a major decision about where you will spend the next two to four years of your life! Programs and services provided by individual colleges vary greatly, so investigate your options carefully.

Do not necessarily limit your search to those colleges that indicate they have specific services for students with disabilities. Some small colleges may suit you depending on your needs. As you research, evaluate, and compare colleges, consider the following questions:

Academic Program

What degree programs does the institution offer? Majors? Minors? Electives? Are there majors in which you might be interested?

What core courses are required?

For what programs is the college known?

How intense is the academic pressure on students?

Activities

What kinds of campus activities and organizations does the college offer?

What kinds of events and activities does the local community offer?

Is the campus primarily residential or a "commuter" campus?

Admissions

What are the admission requirements?

Does the institution accept the ACT or SAT – or either? Do you need accommodations on these tests? Educators Testing Service, the SAT publisher and the ACT Assessment have web sites where you can obtain the requirements and procedures for requesting accommodations: ETS Disabilities and Testing at <http://www.ets.org/disability> and ACT Services for Students with Disabilities at <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/>

Which diploma types will the institution accept?

What academic units / credits does the college require and accept? Virginia's graduation requirements are available at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/2plus4in2004/>

Are there course requirements for admission (e.g. foreign language requirements)?

Does the college accept course substitutions or waive requirements for persons with disabilities?

Is an interview required?

Are class rank and high school grade point average considered in admissions decisions?

What letters of recommendation are needed?

Do I need to take any special achievement tests?

Are appropriate academic adjustments in test administration allowed on the institutions required admission examinations?

What are the admissions deadlines?

Rolling admissions?

Early admissions?

Deferred admissions?

What is the application fee?

Of the total number of applicants, how many does the college accept annually?

What are the average ACT and SAT scores for incoming freshman?
What are the minimal acceptable scores?

Campus Community

What is the campus setting? Urban? Suburban? Rural?

How large is the campus? How many buildings? How accessible is the campus?

Are other colleges nearby?

What are the local cultural and social attractions?

Costs

What is the tuition?

Is a down payment required? When?

What is the payment schedule?

Are there any special payment plans?

What are the housing options and their costs?

Meal options and costs? Are different plans available?

Other expenses? Books? Laundry? Transportation? Parking?

Counseling and Advisement

Do faculty or student advisors provide help with course selection and program planning?

What counseling services and programs are available? Group counseling? Individual counseling? Financial? Career? Placement?

Faculty / Class size

What is the size of the faculty? Full-time? Part-time? How many with doctorates?

What is the student / faculty ratio?

Do graduate students teach?

What is the average class size?

Financial Aid

What financial aid programs does the college have?

How many students receive financial aid?

What are the requirements?

Does the college place a student in a job on or off campus?

Living Arrangements

Are dormitories available? How many?

Are dormitories co-ed or single sex?

How many students per room or suite?

What conditions are the rooms in? Phone? Computer hook-up? Air-conditioning?

Are there accessible dorm rooms for those in wheelchairs?

How do you arrange for personal care assistants?

What are campus regulations and restrictions?

Matriculation Requirements

Does the college provide special classes in basic skills, study habits, time management, and notetaking? Is there a freshman orientation course?

Does the college provide individual tutoring and/or counseling? Are these services free? If not, what do these services cost?

Does the college offer academic adjustments and auxiliary aids and services, such as taped books, word processors, readers, note takers, transcribers, Braille writers?

What kind of experience and training do the disability service coordinator and his or her staff have?

Can professors be hand picked and can classes be hand scheduled?

What are the requirements for program completion?

What are the course load requirements to maintain eligibility for financial aid? Does the college waive these requirements for students with disabilities?

Sports

What kinds of athletic facilities are available and accessible to ALL students?

What intercollegiate sports does the college offer?

What intramural sports are available?

Are athletic scholarships available?

Student Body

How many students? Residents? Commuters? Undergraduates?
Graduate students?

Where do they come from?

Mix of men and women? Ethnic background? Religious background?
Academic abilities?

How many graduate? How many graduate on time?

Transportation

What public transportation is available? How easy is it to travel on the campus?

Is ample, accessible parking available on campus? Is it free?

Can residential students have cars? Bicycles? Motorcycles?

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www.pen.k12.va.us