

Getting College Ready!

5 Tips for Students with Disabilities Wanting to Attend College

By: Hilary Garrett

Going to college can be very daunting, but, add to that having a disability, it can seem impossible. Let me assure you, it's not! I want to share a few of the things that have helped me balance my academic and personal needs with you. I hope you find them useful!

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH- Research is so important. Not only do you need to look at the right school for your academic needs, but you also must consider the best school that can help meet your accommodation needs too. I am not afraid to admit that I didn't do this when I started my college journey, which made my first year really difficult. Here are a few questions you might want to ask yourself:

- What do I want to study?
- Do I need more than 5 minutes between classes?
- How will I meet my personal care needs? (For some of you, this is the first time living without family nearby)
- What academic accommodations might I need? (If you've ever had an IEP in middle or high school, it would be good to reference this)
- What financial resources might I need?
- What resources for people with disabilities are available in my state?

2. SCHEDULE A CAMPUS TOUR- Getting a tour of your campus is really important. This will allow you to become acquainted with your classroom locations and the nearest restrooms, as well as your library and dining halls. While on your tour, you should schedule appointments with all of the offices that you might have questions for like the office for students with disabilities, the financial aid office, and the tutoring center.

3. GET FAMILIAR WITH THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES- The office for students with disabilities on campus is a good place for you to get familiar with. This office will be able to help with quite a lot, from letters of accommodations to transportation around campus. I would highly recommend that you have questions with you to get a better understanding of how their office can meet your specific needs. I started a conversation with this office before

stepping foot on campus to see what help I might need. This is something that you might want to consider doing to see what steps need to be taken before you arrive to ensure your success.

4. GET INVOLVED IN CAMPUS ACTIVITIES ASAP- Getting involved in your campus community can help you get comfortable with your new surroundings. Find clubs on campus that interest you, and you might also want to consider the work study program. This is something that I did while at K-State. I worked as a community assistant and was able help out a lot of my fellow students. Activities like this will also be good to include on your resume. It's also important to remember that the friendships you create at college will last a lifetime.

5. DO NOT LET FINANCIAL CHALLENGES STOP YOU- A lot of students, both with and without disabilities, have concerns about how they can afford college. There are plenty of organizations that can help you afford college. Applying for the FAFSA is a great place to start (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>). There are also organizations like Vocational Rehabilitation (www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/Employment-Services.aspx) and many others. This is another thing that you will definitely want to research.



This handout was created by Hilary Garrett, Ms. Wheelchair Kansas '20-'21. Hilary currently attends Kansas State University and is majoring in social science. She has learned a lot in the past 5 years of attending college and wanted to share her wisdom based on personal experience.

To learn more about Ms. Wheelchair Kansas, visit www.mswheelchairkansas.org. To learn more about Hilary, click on the Current Titleholder page.