

# College Planning For Students with Learning Differences



Dr. Christine Mecke  
Director of Student Disability Services  
and  
Alli Gatta  
Associate Director of College Support  
Kinney Center

# Steps To Be Taken



- **Decide**
- **Explore**
- **Select**
- **Apply**
- **Enroll**

# How Services Differ

K-12	College
IEP and 504 Plans	Only 504 Plans
Parents heavily involved	Students rule!
Covered under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ADA
Laws require support and services	Laws require equal access
School pays for evaluations	Families must pay for evaluations
Services can be extensive	Services are somewhat limited

# How Do I Start the Decision-Making Process?

Consider answering the following questions:

2-year or 4-year college?	Entrance exams required?
Commute or live on campus?	Work experiences and/or internships?
Are there programs for SWD?	Career planning opportunities?
Average class size?	School location- (urban/suburban)?
Tuition costs? Scholarships?	Program strength of my major?

# Explore: Do Your Research

Research various schools to determine what services they provide.

The level of support and services available to students may vary from school to school.



## Select: Contact Schools

- Every college/university must have some type of Office for Disability Services.
- Must present current documentation to the office.
- Documentation is reviewed and if appropriate, a Accommodation Plan will be developed.
- The university is responsible for granting the academic adjustments and will seek input from student and other professionals who have worked with the student.

# Other Things to Consider...

- Choosing courses
  - How many courses must a student take to be considered F/T
  - Balance of classes, especially if not particularly strong in a particular area
  - Required courses and elective courses
  - Course modalities (online or on ground)
- Clubs, Extra-curricular activities, Work-study opportunities
- Living arrangements
- Car on campus
- Social-Emotional Needs



# Application Process

- Colleges do not have separate admissions requirements
- Students do not need to disclose they have a disability on their application
- Students will be held to same requirements as all other students
  - Waivers: some allow for waivers; others do not
  - Reduced course loads
  - Specific classes in order to graduate from the college





# Disclosure of a Disability

- Often asked if student should disclose they have a disability or not -
  - Advantage is that services and supports can be set up at the beginning of the semester as opposed to waiting until later. This is much more proactive.
  - Some prefer to follow a “Wait-and-See” approach. (Just remember: accommodations are not retroactive.)
  - Really no best answer but more depends on the individual student’s preference.
  - No services will be automatically set up; student must contact the Office of Student Disability Services in order to initiate services.
  - A FERPA form must be signed by the student in order to release information to faculty or staff members. Must be updated annually.

# Suggestions...

- Teach students to self-advocate and encourage independence
- Help students learn how to use study skills strategies and note-taking
- Make sure documentation is current
- Be knowledgeable concerning strengths and weaknesses
- Discuss what types of accommodations may be needed – may want to “wean” students from some of the services provided
- Research various colleges
  - Academic and graduation requirements
  - Available programs, services, and resources
- Tour campuses and meet with Office of Student Disability Services

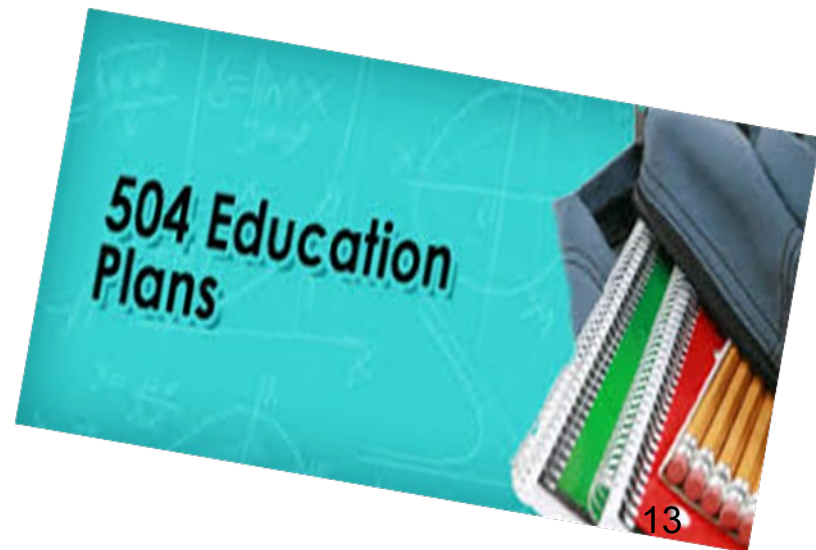
# QUESTIONS?

# What Happens When We Meet?

- We can meet anytime after a decision is made to attend SJU
- Bring your documentation. We will review it and discuss appropriate accommodations.
- Accommodations may differ from what you received in high school.
- You will sign a Release of Information form (FERPA) which will allow us to send your accommodation plan to your professors.
- Professors are not privy to the documentation; only the plan.
- The FERPA form is good for 1 year, so you will need to re-sign each year in order to keep accommodations in place.
- The Accommodation Plan is electronically sent to all your professors and you will receive a copy as well.
- Accommodations may be revised at any time.

# Types of Accommodations

- Accommodations are specific and individualized to the student
- Some typical accommodations may include:
  - Extended time for tests and exams
  - Separate location in distraction-reduced environment
  - Digitally-formatted books
  - Note-taker
  - Use of technology such as Smartpen, word processor, digital recording devices
  - Captionist or sign language interpreter



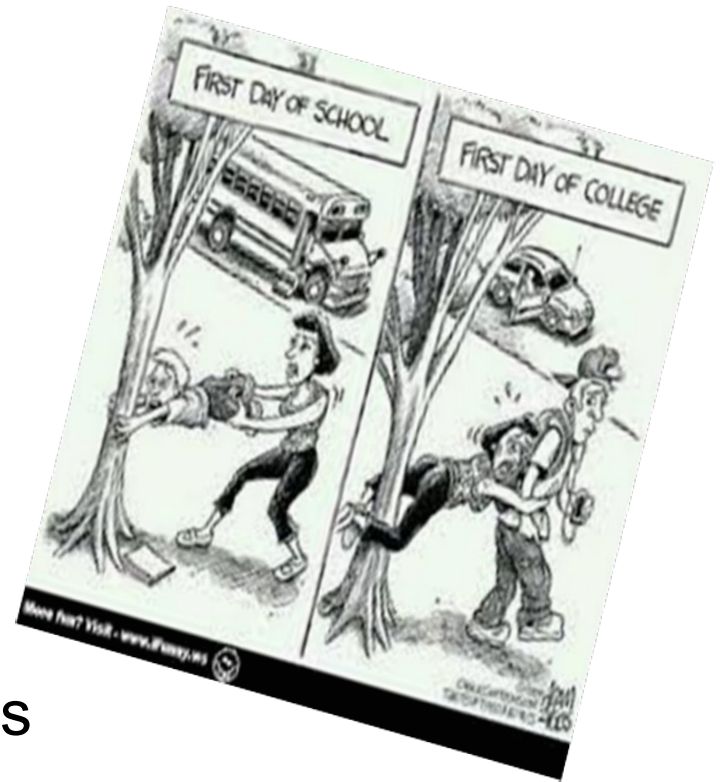
## Areas of Difficulty: Students

- Feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work required
- Knowing how to manage, prioritize, and organize time appropriately
- Amount of writing and reading required for each course
- Knowing how to appropriately take class notes: what is important and what is not
- Study skills and preparation for test taking
- Changes in eating and sleep habits
- How to choose courses
- Where to go to get help



## Areas of Difficulty: Parents

- Letting go! No longer in charge!
- Much less communication between student and parent
- Not being informed of what is going on. Not knowing who or when to contact someone at the school
- Student not following YOUR rules
- Worrying about your student's eating, sleeping, and studying habits
- Trying to problem solve long distance



# Other Support Services

- Learning Resource Center
  - Individual meetings with students
  - Peer tutoring
- Writing Center
- Counseling Services
- Professors' Office Hours
- Student Success Office
  - Rebound program
- Academic Transition Coaching Program and ASPIRE Program
- Summer programs
  - Early Move-In Programs





# ASPIRE College Support Program

**Kinney Center for Autism Education and Support**

- Case Management - coordination between student, campus supports, family members, faculty members
- College Success and Career Readiness Skills Classes
- Peer Mentoring
- Supported Employment
- Study Hall
- \*Supported Residence Hall - optional for students, increased support in independent living and community building



\*opening Fall 2022

To Learn More, Visit:  
[sju.edu/kinney](http://sju.edu/kinney)



## Fast Facts:

- Program Began in 2011
- Currently have 41 students enrolled
- 82% Success Rate (retention and graduation)
- 86% of graduates are employed or in graduate school within 6 months

## Resources

- <http://www2.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>
- Hamblet, E.C. (2014). How school counselors can help to prepare students with disabilities for college. *ASCA School Counselor*, May/June issue.
- Hamblet, E.C. (2011). *7 steps for success: High school to college transition strategies for students with disabilities*. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.