

NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE SEARCH FOR STUDENTS WHO LEARN DIFFERENTLY

Ferne Bork

Assistant Director of Admissions

Landmark College



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COLLEGE

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DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO STUDENTS WHO LEARN DIFFERENTLY



“The barrier to accessing education is not intrinsic to the student but is created by a mismatch between the student and the educational environment.”

Shea, Hecker, Lalor, “From Disability to Diversity” (2019)

LEVELS OF SUPPORT IN COLLEGE

ADA COMPLIANT

- Meets ADA requirements for providing access
- Accommodations vary by institution
- No cost
- Small number of staff
- Student **MUST** advocate for services

COORDINATED SERVICES

- Accommodations **plus** some skill building services
- Universally available services
- Better student/staff ratio
- No cost
- Student **MUST** advocate for services

STRUCTURED PROGRAMS

- Comprehensive academic, tutoring, & skill-building support
- Weekly meeting with a learning specialist
- Full-time specialized staff
- Fee-based
- Less student advocacy required

LD COLLEGES

- Accommodations & beyond access supports embedded
- Comprehensive academic, social pragmatic, & executive function support
- Full time support staff
- No additional fees
- Often used as a springboard.



THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

HOW THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE CHANGES

- K-12, the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) vs. the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Post-secondary
- Success vs. Access
- K-12, schools take the lead. Post-secondary, student take the lead.
 - The importance of self-advocacy
 - Students must understand and be able to articulate their learning difference
- IEPs and 504 Plans have no legal weight after high school
 - All students have the same course requirements and homework
- K-12, all teachers and staff are aware of a student's disability status. Post-secondary, only those instructors a student chooses to notify will know. This information is considered confidential.
- Parental involvement encouraged K-12. In post-secondary, student assumes primary responsibility.

DISCLOSING

DISCLOSING: WHEN AND WHY

- **WHY DISCLOSE?**

- It's the only way to receive accommodations

- **WHEN?**

- Accommodations must be in place for the beginning of the semester
- Options
 - During the application process
 - After an admission decision

My Recommendation: Disclosing early provides the best opportunity to evaluate services and attitudes and experience how easy or hard it is to access the services that will foster success.

THE IMPACT

Post-Secondary Completion Data (young adults out of high school for 6 years):

- In the general population, only 51% completed a post-secondary school.
- Among neurodivergent students:
 - 38% of students with learning disabilities
 - 35% of students with autism
 - 34% of students with other health impairments (includes ADHD) completed a post-secondary school.
- In one study at a large state university, students who waited until after their first year to request accommodations had 3.5 times the risk of not graduating within six years.

Improve the odds.

ACCESS AND UTILIZE SUPPORTS!

MATCHING WHAT YOU NEED
WITH WHAT A SCHOOL OFFERS

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF KNOWLEDGE

- Who am I and what do I want from my college experience?
- What type of learner am I?
- In what environment do I learn best?
- What are my strengths & weaknesses?
- What accommodations and supports will best ensure my chance of success?

THE PROCESS

- **WHAT DO YOU NEED?**

- What supports are in a student's IEP or 504 plan?
- Has the student consulted their counselor, teachers, and family for input?
- Develop a list of accommodations and supports you're looking for.

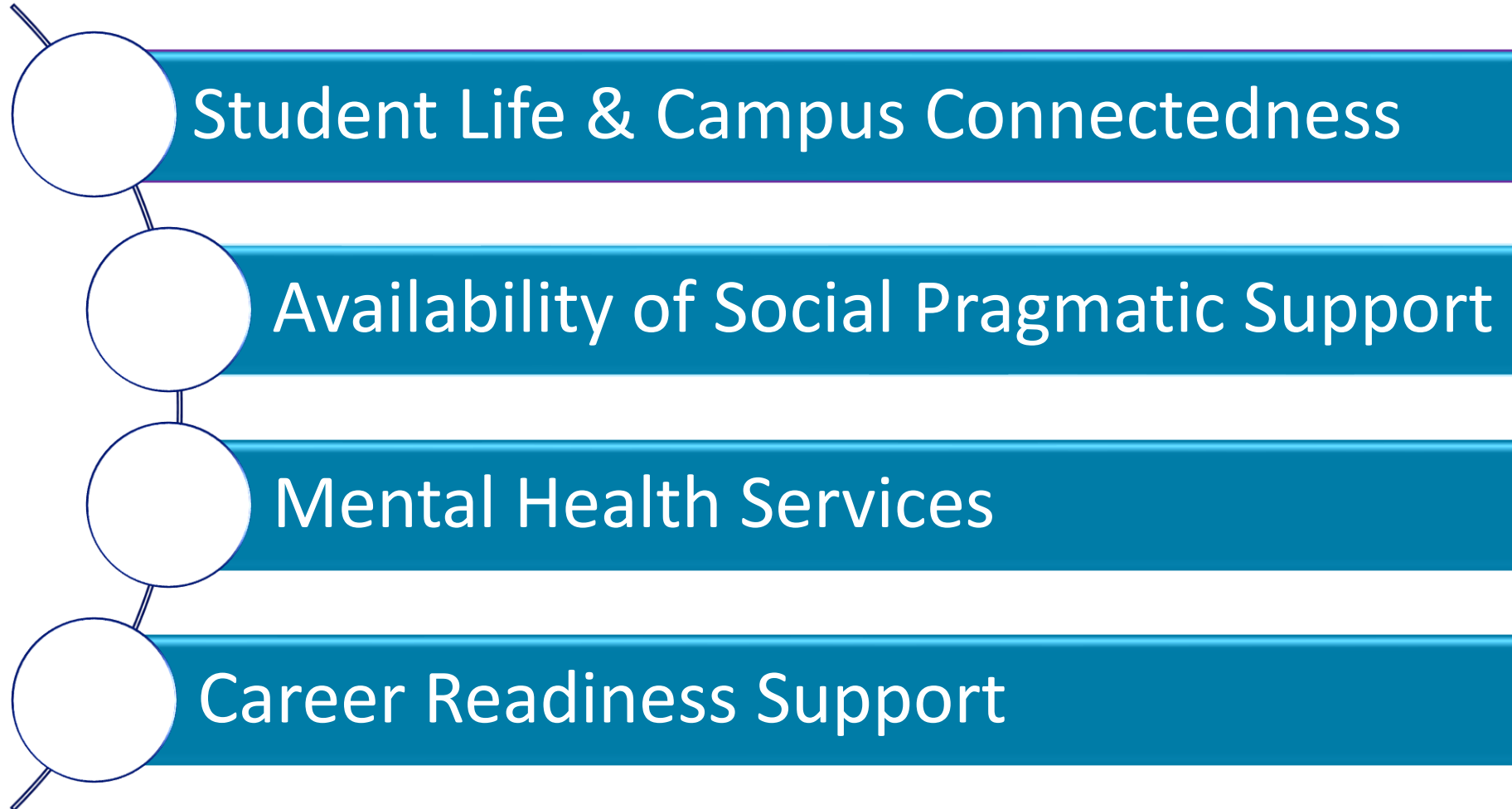
- **WHAT DOES A SCHOOL OFFER?**

- Work with your advisor to start the list of schools.
- Explore college websites: - disability services & universally available services
- *K&W Guide to Colleges for Students With Learning Differences*
- Call/email Admissions or Disability Services
- Determine location of Disability Services
- Talk to students and parents. It's not just about what a college promises. What do they deliver?

ACCOMMODATIONS: AN ONGOING PROCESS

- Every semester, your student will need to request accommodations from disability services and inform their instructors
- Students should have regular meetings to discuss the effectiveness of their accommodations
- Students should consistently monitor the extent to which their accommodations are providing access to course content.
- **If access is diminished at any point, SELF-ADVOCATE.**

BEYOND ACADEMIC SUPPORT



MORE QUESTIONS

- ✓ Is assistance 1:1 or in a group?
- ✓ Who does the academic advising for students who have LD's?
- ✓ Can students take a reduced course load?
- ✓ Is the college test-optional?
- ✓ What are the college's retention, graduation, & placement rates for students with LD's?

IS COLLEGE THE BEST NEXT STEP?

Transition Programs

GAP Year

Travel

Volunteer

Job Internships
Training

QUESTIONS



Ferne Bork

Assistant Director of Admissions

Landmark College

(802) 387-7117

fernebork@landmark.edu

www.landmark.edu