

Adaptive Technology Lab

STCC's Adaptive Technology Lab (AT Lab) provides a variety of services to students with disabilities. Current advances in adaptive technology, when best utilized, can work to maximize student access and improve learning. Students are referred by their Disability Counselor to the Assistive Technology Technician for individualized evaluation and training.

Available Technology

Following is a partial listing of available equipment and services within the lab:

- Six desktop PC stations running Windows 7 and MS Office 2013
- Kurzweil 3000
- ZoomText Screen Magnification
- JAWS Screen Reader
- Dragon Naturally Speaking, voice recognition software
- Closed circuit television
- Alternative keyboard and mouse devices
- Braille translating Software

**Springfield Technical Community College
Adaptive Technology Lab
Building 27, 2nd Floor
Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

(413) 755-4082

HIGH SCHOOL VS. COLLEGE: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

What are the differences? What can I expect?

The transition from high school to college is a difficult one for all students, but it can be especially difficult for students with disabilities. Here are some of the differences you may encounter as you begin your education at Springfield Technical Community College.

Who's responsible for what?

HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school is mandatory and usually free. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College is voluntary and there is a financial commitment to attend.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your time is structured by others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are responsible for managing your own time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can count on your parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and help you prioritize your time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must balance your activities and set your own priorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You proceed from one class directly to another, spending about 6 hours a day in classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically you will spend about 12 – 15 hours a week on campus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of your classes are arranged for you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your advisor. You are expected to keep track of all dates for registering, adding, dropping or withdrawing from classes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are usually told what to do and when your behavior is out of line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students are expected to take responsibility for their behavior and abide by the Student Code of Conduct.
HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES	COLLEGE CLASSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school year is 36 weeks long and you usually keep the same classes the entire time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The academic year is divided into two semesters, each 15 weeks long. You will take different classes each semester.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying outside of class usually is about 15 hours a week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying outside of class is usually about 30 hours a week.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You seldom read anything more than once and sometimes listening in class is enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You need to review your class notes and text material regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be assigned large amounts of reading and writing which may or may not be discussed in class.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance policies may allow 15 absences a year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors set their own policies and it can be as few as 3 absences before being withdrawn from class.
TEACHERS	PROFESSORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers usually ask you to hand in your homework and then grade it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors may not always check completed homework, but they assume you have done it and can be prepared to take a test on the material.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers remind you of your missing or incomplete assignments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors may or may not remind you of missing work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers ask you if you need assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors are usually open and helpful, but will leave it up to you to see them after class or during their office hours for assistance with class material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers often write information on the board for you to copy down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some professors lecture non-stop, expecting you to know what notes to take and when to just listen.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers remind you of important dates and assignments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors may or may not remind you of important dates. You should look at your syllabus regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers carefully monitor attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors may or may not take attendance but each one usually has their own attendance policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers break down material so you can understand it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors encourage you to visit tutors or the Writing Center for any help with difficult material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers are aware if you have a disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors only know you have a disability if you tell them or they receive an academic accommodation plan from the Office of Disability Services.
GRADES IN HIGH SCHOOL	GRADES IN COLLEGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grades on tests, assignments and assigned papers usually provide most of the course grade.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra credit projects are often given to raise a low grade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra credit assignments are not usually given.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may graduate as long as you have passed all the required courses with a grade of D or higher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may graduate ONLY if your average in classes meets the departmental standard which is usually a 2.0 GPA or better.
TESTS IN HIGH SCHOOL	TESTS IN COLLEGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are frequent tests in high school which usually cover small amounts of material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing is less frequent and often covers large amounts of material. You are responsible for organizing the material to study for the test. Some classes have only 2 or 3 tests in a semester.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make up tests are often available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make up tests are seldom an option.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers frequently conduct review sessions or give students outlines from which to study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant and come with questions about material you don't understand.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students receiving extended time for tests, usually take them in the "resource room." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are responsible for making arrangements with the Office of Disability Services or the Testing and Assessment Center and their instructors for time extensions for their exams.

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Student with a Disability

September 2011

More and more high school students with disabilities are planning to continue their education in postsecondary schools, including vocational and career schools, two- and four- year colleges, and universities. As a student with a disability, you need to be well informed about your rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities postsecondary schools have toward you. Being well informed will help ensure you have a full opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the postsecondary education experience without confusion or delay.

The information in this pamphlet, provided by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U. S. Department of Education, explains the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities who are preparing to attend postsecondary schools. This pamphlet also explains the obligations of a postsecondary school to provide academic adjustments, including auxiliary aids and services, to ensure the school does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

OCR enforces Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504) and Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*(Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Practically every school district and postsecondary school in the United States is subject to one or both of these laws, which have similar requirements.*/

Although Section 504 and Title II apply to both school districts and postsecondary schools, the responsibilities of postsecondary schools differ significantly from those of school districts.

Moreover, you will have responsibilities as a postsecondary student that you do not have as a high school student. OCR strongly encourages you to know your responsibilities and those of postsecondary schools under Section 504 and Title II. Doing so will improve your opportunity to succeed as you enter postsecondary education.

The following questions and answers provide more specific information to help you succeed.

As a student with a disability leaving high school and entering postsecondary education, will I see differences in my rights and how they are addressed?

Yes. Section 504 and Title II protect elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students from discrimination. Nevertheless, several of the requirements that apply through high school are different from the requirements that apply beyond high school. For instance, Section 504 requires a school district to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each child with a disability in the district's jurisdiction. Whatever the disability, a school district must identify an individual's educational needs and provide any regular or special education and related aids and services necessary to meet those needs as well as it is meeting the needs of students without disabilities.

Unlike your high school, however, your postsecondary school is not required to provide FAPE. Rather, your postsecondary school is required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability. In addition, if your postsecondary school

provides housing to nondisabled students, it must provide comparable, convenient, and accessible housing to students with disabilities at the same cost.

Other important differences that you need to know, even before you arrive at your postsecondary school, are addressed in the remaining questions.

May a postsecondary school deny my admission because I have a disability?

No. If you meet the essential requirements for admission, a postsecondary school may not deny your admission simply because you have a disability.

Do I have to inform a postsecondary school that I have a disability?

No. But if you want the school to provide an academic adjustment, you must identify yourself as having a disability. Likewise, you should let the school know about your disability if you want to ensure that you are assigned to accessible facilities. In any event, your disclosure of a disability is always voluntary.

What academic adjustments must a postsecondary school provide?

The appropriate academic adjustment must be determined based on your disability and individual needs. Academic adjustments may include auxiliary aids and services, as well as modifications to academic requirements as necessary to ensure equal educational opportunity. Examples of adjustments are: arranging for priority registration; reducing a course load; substituting one course for another; providing note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, extended time for testing, and, if telephones are provided in dorm rooms, a TTY in your dorm room; and equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition, or other adaptive software or hardware.

In providing an academic adjustment, your postsecondary school is not required to lower or substantially modify essential requirements. For example, although your school may be required to provide extended testing time, it is not required to change the substantive content of the test. In addition, your postsecondary school does not have to make adjustments that would fundamentally alter the nature of a service, program, or activity, or that would result in an undue financial or administrative burden. Finally, your postsecondary school does not have to provide personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature, such as tutoring and typing.

If I want an academic adjustment, what must I do?

You must inform the school that you have a disability and need an academic adjustment. Unlike your school district, your postsecondary school is not required to identify you as having a disability or to assess your needs.

Your postsecondary school may require you to follow reasonable procedures to request an academic adjustment. You are responsible for knowing and following those procedures. In their publications providing general information, postsecondary schools usually include information on the procedures and contacts for requesting an academic adjustment. Such publications include recruitment materials,

catalogs, and student handbooks, and are often available on school websites. Many schools also have staff whose purpose is to assist students with disabilities. If you are unable to locate the procedures, ask a school official, such as an admissions officer or counselor.

When should I request an academic adjustment?

Although you may request an academic adjustment from your postsecondary school at any time, you should request it as early as possible. Some academic adjustments may take more time to provide than others. You should follow your school's procedures to ensure that the school has enough time to review your request and provide an appropriate academic adjustment.

Do I have to prove that I have a disability to obtain an academic adjustment?

Generally, yes. Your school will probably require you to provide documentation showing that you have a current disability and need an academic adjustment.

What documentation should I provide?

Schools may set reasonable standards for documentation. Some schools require more documentation than others. They may require you to provide documentation prepared by an appropriate professional, such as a medical doctor, psychologist, or other qualified diagnostician. The required documentation may include one or more of the following: a diagnosis of your current disability, as well as supporting information, such as the date of the diagnosis, how that diagnosis was reached, and the credentials of the diagnosing professional; information on how your disability affects a major life activity; and information on how the disability affects your academic performance. The documentation should provide enough information for you and your school to decide what is an appropriate academic adjustment.

An individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan, if you have one, may help identify services that have been effective for you. This is generally not sufficient documentation, however, because of the differences between postsecondary education and high school education. What you need to meet the new demands of postsecondary education may be different from what worked for you in high school. Also, in some cases, the nature of a disability may change.

If the documentation that you have does not meet the postsecondary school's requirements, a school official should tell you in a timely manner what additional documentation you need to provide. You may need a new evaluation in order to provide the required documentation.

Who has to pay for a new evaluation?

Neither your high school nor your postsecondary school is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document your disability and need for an academic adjustment. You may, therefore, have to pay or find funding to pay an appropriate professional for an evaluation. If you are eligible for services through your state vocational rehabilitation agency, you may qualify for an evaluation at no cost to you. You may locate your state vocational rehabilitation agency at <http://rsa.ed.gov> by clicking on "Info about RSA," then "People and Offices," and then "State Agencies/ Contacts."

Once the school has received the necessary documentation from me, what should I expect?

To determine an appropriate academic adjustment, the school will review your request in light of the essential requirements for the relevant program. It is important to remember that the school is not required to lower or waive essential requirements. If you have requested a specific academic adjustment, the school may offer that academic adjustment, or it may offer an effective alternative. The school may also conduct its own evaluation of your disability and needs at its own expense.

You should expect your school to work with you in an interactive process to identify an appropriate academic adjustment. Unlike the experience you may have had in high school, however, do not expect your postsecondary school to invite your parents to participate in the process or to develop an IEP for you.

What if the academic adjustment we identified is not working?

Let the school know as soon as you become aware that the results are not what you expected. It may be too late to correct the problem if you wait until the course or activity is completed. You and your school should work together to resolve the problem.

May a postsecondary school charge me for providing an academic adjustment?

No. Nor may it charge students with disabilities more for participating in its programs or activities than it charges students who do not have disabilities.

What can I do if I believe the school is discriminating against me?

Practically every postsecondary school must have a person—frequently called the Section 504 Coordinator, ADA Coordinator, or Disability Services Coordinator—who coordinates the school's compliance with Section 504, Title II, or both laws. You may contact that person for information about how to address your concerns.

The school must also have grievance procedures. These procedures are not the same as the due process procedures with which you may be familiar from high school. But the postsecondary school's grievance procedures must include steps to ensure that you may raise your concerns fully and fairly, and must provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints.

School publications, such as student handbooks and catalogs, usually describe the steps that you must take to start the grievance process. Often, schools have both formal and informal processes. If you decide to use a grievance process, you should be prepared to present all the reasons that support your request.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's grievance procedures or wish to pursue an alternative to using those procedures, you may file a complaint against the school with OCR or in a court. You may learn more about the OCR complaint process from the brochure *How to File a Discrimination Complaint with the Office for Civil Rights*, which you may obtain by contacting us at the addresses and phone numbers below, or at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/howto.html>.