

Preparing for College Challenges



Michele Oelking, MSW, ACC, PCC, serves as director of the Academic Success Center at Tulane University, an umbrella of academic support services for college students. As a professional certified coach with the International Coach Federation, she believes students achieve success through a comprehensive, individualized approach based on exploring beliefs, interests, values, needs, and goals.

CHADD: How can I begin to give my high school student more responsibility?

OELKING: Take an assessment of the roles and responsibilities that your child is responsible for and what you as a parent handle. These responsibilities can include waking up in the morning, medication management, finances, laundry, appointment reminders, and more. Start by scaling back support with one responsibility. For example, let them take control of waking themselves up rather than having you wake them up each morning. They can set their own alarm and manage their time so that they can get ready in the mornings.

How can I help with my child's initial transition to college?

It's tricky. College is a place where students begin to find a lot of autonomy. On the one hand, if you provided a lot of support during your student's high school years, you don't want to leave him or her with no support. You might want to mimic supports that you provided during high school throughout the first semester of college.

You can help your student establish points of contacts

within the different offices on the college campus and find support within the surrounding community. Have an honest conversation about when he or she might want you to reach out to someone on campus. Let your student know you are there to provide support, but also help him or her to build his or her own support system on campus so that over time you can step back.



How can students receive accommodations on college campuses?

Students have to self-identify their needs to the office of disability services or the office of accessibility. This means disclosing their diagnosis of ADHD and providing documentation. While the exact documentation varies from college to college, often they are looking for an evaluation in the last two years and a copy of the student's IEP or 504 plan from high school.

Accommodations are then individualized to each student and are very discretionary at each institution. Sample accommodations might include:

- Extended time on tests
- Testing in a distraction-reducing environment
- Note taking assistance
- Use of assistive technology such as audio recording lectures or using a computer in class

Once a plan is in place, students have to advocate for their own needs. They choose when and how to use them and have to discuss their accommodations with professors.

Would it be helpful for my college student to not take a full course load?

The structure of academics is one of the main differences between high school and college. College students are expected to ask for help from a professor if they feel like they are falling behind. Professors also usually assign work and tests without regard to the other responsibilities or assignments a student might have.

Students have to learn how to manage their academic course load. For some students, taking a full course load helps them be effective. They like being really busy which helps in structuring their days and time. For other students, this transition to more academic responsibility is over-

whelming. Taking twelve hours instead of fifteen hours can really help students learn to manage the transition better. Sometimes even dropping to part-time status can help students be successful. 🎯

Robyn Maggio, MSW, is the Education and Training Coordinator at the National Resource Center on ADHD: A Program of CHADD. You can watch or listen to the entire webcast, "Your Student Was Admitted, Now What?" in the Ask the Expert Archives at www.help4adhd.org.

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