

# college planning

for students with disabilities



Supplement to EducationQuest Foundation's *College Prep Handbook*

# College Planning for Students with Disabilities

Supplement to EducationQuest Foundation's  
*College Prep Handbook*

This publication is for students with disabilities planning to attend postsecondary education institutions and their parents or guardians. It supplements the *College Prep Handbook* which has more details about college planning and college funding.



*College Planning for Students with Disabilities* was created by the staff of Project NETS at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and EducationQuest Foundation.

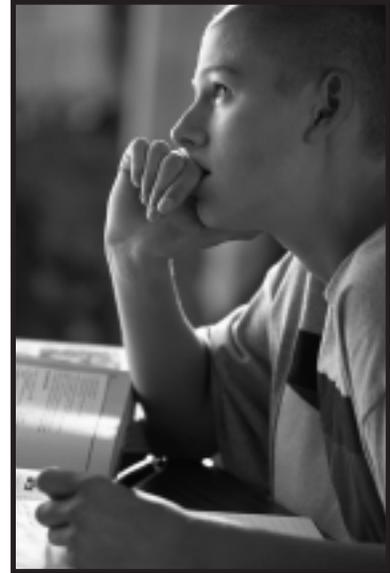
SECTION 1	Know Your Disability	Page 2
SECTION 2	Academic and Career Planning	Page 3
SECTION 3	College Selection	Page 5
SECTION 4	College Funding	Page 11
SECTION 5	Requesting Services and Accommodations	Page 13
SECTION 6	Legal Rights and Responsibilities	Page 16

# Know Your Disability

Review your case file with your parents and Individual Education Plan (IEP) team to better understand your disability and its effect on your learning. Ask the following questions:

- What is my disability?
- How does it affect how I learn?
- What are my academic strengths?
- How do I learn best?
- What strategies can I use to help me learn?

You might also consider meeting with the doctor or school psychologist who performed your assessment (testing). However, individual appointments with a doctor or psychologist can be expensive.



## Become a “self-advocate” while still in high school

A “self-advocate” communicates his or her needs with logical and positive language. To be an effective self-advocate, you must understand your disability, know how it impacts your learning, and become comfortable with describing your disability and academic-related needs to others.

At the college level, you are responsible for identifying and requesting support services. Parents aren’t automatically involved with your education at the college level, and most colleges prefer working directly with you, the student.

## Practice self-advocacy now

Participate in discussions at your IEP meetings. Understanding your learning strengths and weaknesses gives you valuable knowledge that can influence your IEP planning.

Listed below are ideas on how you can actively participate in your IEP meetings. Your parents and teachers can help you take these important steps.

### Before each IEP meeting:

- Understand the purpose of the meeting.
- Know who will be there and their role at the meeting.
- Review the report from your last IEP meeting. Understand the goals listed on the report. With another person, practice saying how you accomplished the goals.
- Establish new goals and be prepared to state them.

### At the IEP meeting:

- Summarize your past goals and accomplishments.
- State your new goals.
- Ask for ideas and feedback from other members.
- Know what support and help you will need to accomplish your goals – and ask for it.
- Ask questions if you don’t understand.

## Academic and Career Planning

### Explore career choices

Now that you're in high school, it's time to seriously think about your academic and career goals. Begin with the following suggestions:

- Discuss your four-year academic plan with your teachers and your IEP team to make sure you take necessary coursework for college.
- As you explore career choices, think about your main interests and your favorite subjects in school.
- Determine the special skills you have learned through hobbies, clubs and after-school activities.
- Discuss career plans and questions with your parents, friends, other people with disabilities and especially with people working in jobs of interest.
- Ask your guidance counselor or school transition specialist about career interest inventories and a vocational assessment to help you further explore and identify your career interests.
- Visit your school library, public library or career center for materials about post secondary programs and job and career opportunities.
- Attend college and career fairs. Ask your high school counselor about dates and locations.
- Explore volunteer work experiences in your areas of interest.
- Talk to your high school guidance counselor, career counselor or school transition specialist about job shadowing.

### Develop interests outside of school

#### Independent reading

Independent reading will help develop your interests and increase your vocabulary and comprehension skills. Read a variety of fiction and non-fiction books.

If you have a reading disability, consider books and textbooks on tape. Listen to taped lecture notes instead of reading class notes.

#### Volunteer and paid work

Volunteer and paid work can teach responsibility, reliability and teamwork. A part-time job is also a good way to earn money for college. Volunteering for organizations such as a hospital or school can help you identify career interests and goals, or help you learn which career areas you do not want to pursue.

#### Extracurricular activities

Participating in activities at school and in the community will help you explore and develop your interests and talents. Colleges are often interested in a student's involvement in activities such as school clubs, musical activities, arts, drama, athletics and volunteer work.



## Prepare academically

If you plan to attend a community college or a four-year college, the following high school courses are usually required:

**English** (4 years) should include reading, writing and speech.

**Math** (4 years) must include geometry and two courses in algebra.

**Natural Sciences** (3 years) must include at least two courses of biology, chemistry, physics or earth sciences. One course must include laboratory work.

**Social Studies** (3 – 4 years) must include a selection of American history, world history, American government or geography.

**Foreign Language** (2 – 4 years) must include two years of the same language. Some colleges require four years of the same language.

Some colleges may recommend or require additional courses. Ask about admission requirements at the colleges you are interested in attending.

In addition, successful college students with disabilities recommend keyboarding and word processing skills, study skills, assertiveness training and time management.



## College Selection

### Types of postsecondary programs

Two types of colleges offer academic programs — community colleges and four-year colleges/universities.

#### Community colleges

Community colleges offer programs that lead to a two-year associate degree or to a certificate. Certificate programs can last from three months to two years, depending on your area of study.

Many school districts offer **tech-prep programs** which are partnerships between high schools and community colleges. Students take high school classes that can apply toward a certificate or associate degree. Ask your guidance counselor about tech-prep programs offered in your school district.

Community colleges also offer **college transfer courses** in which students can transfer credits to a four-year college. If you intend to transfer, discuss transferring credits with a college academic advisor from each institution. This will allow you to know in advance the courses that will transfer. Most credits earned in a vocational program will not transfer to four-year colleges.

Community colleges may require a placement test for English and math classes. The Assessment of Skills for Successful Entry and Transfer (ASSET) program includes a series of short placement tests designed to help identify your strengths and needs. The Computer Adaptive Placement Assessment and Support System (COMPASS) test is a computer-adapted placement test.

ASSET	COMPASS
<p><b>Basic Skill Measures:</b> Writing, numerical, and reading skills</p> <p><b>Advanced Mathematics Measures:</b> Elementary, intermediate and college algebra, and geometry</p> <p><b>Additional Skills:</b> Up to five scores may be added by your institution, such as a writing sample, chemistry, or ACT Assessment</p>	<p>Takes advantage of adaptive testing technology to measure students' mathematics, reading, and writing skills on demand and to report results immediately.</p> <p>There is no time limit on this assessment. COMPASS is user friendly, so no experience with computers is necessary.</p> <p>The COMPASS is not a pass-fail test. It is a college placement test.</p>

Refer to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for more information on the ASSET and COMPASS tests.

#### Four-year colleges and universities

**Four-year colleges offer bachelor's degrees.** Earning a bachelor's degree means you have studied a broad range of subjects and studied one or two subject areas in greater depth known as your "major" area of study. Your "major" may be in English literature, history, economics, biology, music, etc. You may also earn a bachelor's degree in a specific career such as nursing, social work or teaching.

**When considering you for admission to a four-year college or university, the admissions office will review** your grade point average, high school transcripts and ACT or SAT scores. Some schools also require an essay, recommendations, and an interview. Ask about admission requirements at each school to which you are applying.

The ACT and SAT measure your aptitude in math, verbal comprehension and problem solving. The tests will also include a writing section beginning the spring of 2005. To get the best score, take the ACT or SAT in your junior year and again in your senior year. Test preparation books are available at libraries or bookstores.

## Test-taking accommodations

To receive accommodations, you must provide documentation of your disability when you register for the ACT or SAT. Appropriate accommodations can help maximize your efforts and demonstrate your abilities to their fullest.

Test-taking accommodations also apply to the ASSET or COMPASS tests. For more information about accommodations for the ACT, COMPASS and ASSET, visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org); for the SAT, visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

Accommodations may include:

- individual administration of the test,
- audiocassette tape or large print test editions,
- special answer sheets,
- extended testing time and breaks,
- an interpreter, or
- braille editions.

## Online resource for college selection

Refer to *Educational Opportunities Beyond High School in Nebraska, A Guide for All Students* at <http://edweblab.unl.edu/edopportunities/default.html> for more information on postsecondary institutions. The UNL Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders provides this online database to help all students make a choice about postsecondary education.

### Information in *Educational Opportunities Beyond High School in Nebraska*

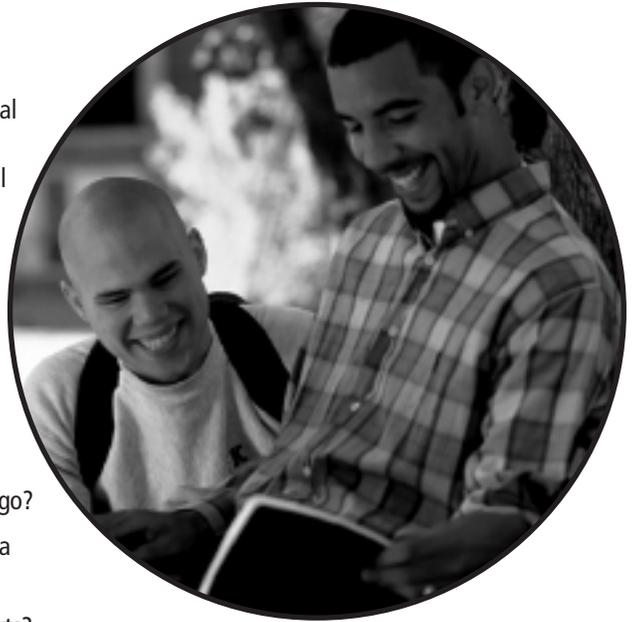
programs offered  
enrollment options  
number of students enrolled  
entrance and admission standards  
accommodations to admission standards for students with special needs  
prerequisites to admission  
financial costs to students and financial assistance available  
housing availability  
accessibility of facilities to all students  
special learning support provisions for students with disabilities

### Types of Postsecondary Programs in Nebraska

Beauty Schools  
Businesses and Trade Schools  
Community Colleges  
Nursing and Health Related Schools  
University of Nebraska  
State Colleges  
Independent Colleges

## Choosing a college

Colleges are located in a variety of settings—big cities, suburbs, and in rural areas. Some colleges enroll thousands of students - others only a few hundred. The type of college that best suits you depends on your individual needs, interests and talents.



### Follow these steps to choose a college.

- STEP 1** **Determine the criteria for potential colleges.** The following questions will help narrow your list of schools.
  - a. What program of study do you want to pursue?
  - b. Do you want to live at home or go away to school?
  - c. If you want to go away, how far from home do you want to go?
  - d. Do you want to attend a large university, a small college or a community college?
  - e. Do you want to participate in college clubs, activities or sports?
  - f. Do you meet the academic requirements of the colleges you're considering?
- STEP 2** **List colleges that meet your needs.** Use web-based college search programs at [www.educationquest.org](http://www.educationquest.org) and <http://edweblab.unl.edu/edopportunities/default.html> and talk to your school counselor for assistance.
- STEP 3** **Gather information on each school** through their website, college catalog and personal phone calls to the admission office.
- STEP 4** **Narrow your list to three or four colleges.**
- STEP 5** **Plan a visit to each remaining college** and make appointments with the admissions counselor and the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities.
- STEP 6** **Apply to colleges** that will best meet your individual needs.

## Questions to ask on your campus visit

### General questions:

- What factors do you consider when making admissions decisions?
- Is the ACT, SAT, ASSET or COMPASS test required?
- What is the minimum test score accepted? How many students with minimum scores graduate?
- Are there other ways to be admitted? Do you have special admission policies, transfer or provisional admission?
- What is the average grade point average (GPA) of the incoming freshman class?
- Is it possible to transfer credits from this school to a four-year college?

### Questions about program of study:

- Does this school have a program of study (major) in my area of interest?
- What academic skills are required for my major?
- Which high school courses would help prepare me for my major?

### Questions about financial aid:

- What are the annual costs for tuition/fees and room/board?
- What financial aid is available? What is your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filing deadline?
- What scholarships are available? How do I apply?

### Questions to ask the disability services coordinator:

- What documentation must I bring to identify myself as a student with a disability entitled to reasonable accommodation? How current must it be?
- How is confidential information handled?
- Who decides if I qualify for accommodations?
- What accommodations are available? i.e. tape recorders, taped texts, note-takers, and modified exams.
- How much advance notice is needed to have textbooks recorded on tape?
- Is tutoring provided? What is the cost?
- Are waivers or substitutions granted to students who, because of their disabilities, cannot pass certain courses, such as foreign languages or statistics?
- Are basic skills or study skills courses offered? Are they available for credit? Can they be counted as hours toward full-time status? What is the cost?
- Is there a support group on campus for students with disabilities?
- Is there an adaptive technology lab on campus?



## Questions you may be asked:

The Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities may ask you these questions. Write down your answers and review them with someone familiar with your academic strengths and difficulties such as your IEP manager, a teacher or a school counselor.

- What is your disability?
- How does it interfere with your learning?
- How comfortable are you in discussing your disability with teachers?
- What are your academic strengths?
- In what areas do you have difficulty or problems?
- What accommodations will you need?
- What kind of support services have you used in high school?
- What was most helpful?
- Are you willing to work harder than other students to be successful in college?
- How do you manage your time?

## Applying to a college

Once you decide on colleges that meet your needs, you can begin the application process. Begin the application process the summer after your junior year in high school.

### College application procedures:

- Register for and take the SAT, ACT, ASSET, COMPASS or other exams required for admission to colleges you might attend.
- Request special test accommodations, if needed.
- Request applications for admission or apply online via the college website. Your guidance counselor may also have applications available.
- Prepare your applications carefully and follow the instructions! Before you submit applications, have someone proofread them and then make necessary changes.
- If your application requires transcripts or letters of recommendation, ask your counselor and teachers at least two weeks before deadlines.
- If your application requires an interview, contact the admissions counselor to schedule the appointment.
- Submit your applications. Pay close attention to deadlines!
- Complete and turn in all necessary financial aid forms.

Responses concerning your admission status will vary with each college. Four-year colleges and universities may offer admission as early as fall of your senior year or as late as May. Students granted earlier admission may receive favorable consideration for housing and/or financial aid.



## When you have been accepted

Once you are admitted to a college, follow these steps to prepare for your first semester. The Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities can advise you on how and when to make arrangements.

- 1 Make the required deposit for the residence hall or arrange for an apartment close to campus.
- 2 Contact the Services for Student with Disabilities Office. Provide documentation of your disability. Arrange for needed services.
- 3 Become familiar with your campus environment. Register for campus orientation. The Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities may also provide a campus orientation.
- 4 Determine where to go and who to contact in case of an emergency. If you have special needs (especially medical needs) inform appropriate college personnel of any advance preparation that should be in place.
- 5 Ask the admissions office if a summer transition program is offered.
- 6 Make an appointment with an academic advisor to discuss your class schedule.
- 7 Complete your class registration process.
- 8 Obtain a copy of your class schedule and visit all buildings where your classes will be held to become familiar with locations and layout.
- 9 Visit the bookstore and purchase required textbooks and supplies.
- 10 If you require taped textbooks as an accommodation, arrange for books to be put on tape at least eight weeks in advance.
- 11 If needed, arrange for transportation, attendant care or interpreter services.
- 12 If you are commuting and will drive yourself, become familiar with parking facilities and procedures.
- 13 Consider signing a release of information so the school has permission to share information with your parents.



# 4 College Funding

## Applying for financial aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the application for state, federal and college-specific financial aid. Applying for financial aid is not difficult if you're prepared. Follow these steps to determine how you'll pay for college.

### STEP 1

#### Learn what types of financial aid are available

**Scholarships** come from private donors or from your college. Some are based on financial need, while others are based on criteria such as academics, leadership, disabilities, talents or military involvement.

**Grants\*** are based on financial need and you don't repay them. They may include:

- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
- State grants
- College-based grants

**Work-Study\***, also based on financial need, allows you to earn money while attending college. You get paid for hours worked so don't expect money up-front to pay tuition. Work-Study earnings will not affect future financial aid eligibility.

**Loans\*** are a type of financial aid you must repay. Some are in your name and some are for parents.

*\*These types of financial aid are based on FAFSA results.*

### STEP 2

#### Apply for scholarships

Use many scholarship sources including your high school guidance counselor, reference books and the Internet. *ScholarshipQuest* is a free resource at [www.educationquest.org](http://www.educationquest.org) and includes over 1,000 Nebraska-based awards.

Don't pay for scholarship or financial aid services — many free resources are available.

### STEP 3

#### Request a PIN

Request a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for you and one for your parents at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov). The PIN acts as an electronic signature for the FAFSA. Keep the PIN for future years.



STEP  
4

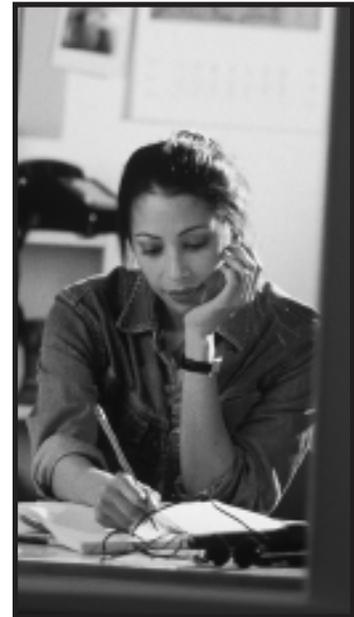
## Complete the FAFSA

1. Complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** and submit it to the federal processor. They will send the results to the colleges listed on your application. Apply before your college's priority deadline to get the best financial aid package. Complete the FAFSA every year you need financial aid.
  - Electronic processing is preferred by most colleges and expedites the process. It's available at EducationQuest or [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).
  - The paper FAFSA is also available from EducationQuest or your guidance counselor.
2. You will receive a **Student Aid Report** after the FAFSA is submitted. This acknowledges that your form was processed and can be used to make corrections to your FAFSA. You'll need your PIN to make electronic corrections.

STEP  
5

## Wrap up the financial aid process

1. Your college may request federal tax returns or other documents to **verify** your FAFSA information. Send the documents to the college financial aid office upon request.
2. Your college will send you a **financial aid award letter** detailing the assistance they're offering. Sign and return the award letter to the college by the deadline.
3. **Compare award letters** from the colleges. Some may offer more in scholarships and grants, while others rely on student loans. Calculate your out-of-pocket expenses for each school to get the whole financial picture.
4. If you need **student loans**, apply for them through your college. They will send you the necessary forms. Allow several weeks processing time.



Refer to EducationQuest's *College Prep Handbook* for more information about applying for scholarships and financial aid. It explains how colleges award financial aid and provides detailed student loan information.

## Disability-related expenses

As a student with a disability, you may face expenses that other students do not encounter.

When you apply for financial aid, inform the financial aid administrator of your disability-related expenses. Financial aid will not cover disability-related expenses already covered by assisting agencies.

Possible disability-related expenses include:

- services for personal use while on campus such as personal care attendants.
- special education equipment related to your disability and its maintenance.
- special transportation.
- medical expenses relating directly to your disability not covered by insurance.

## Seek help

This financial aid process can be overwhelming and frustrating at times so **ask for help**. Your high school guidance counselor, EducationQuest Foundation and the college financial aid staff will answer your questions and help you complete this process.

## Requesting Services and Accommodations

### How to receive services

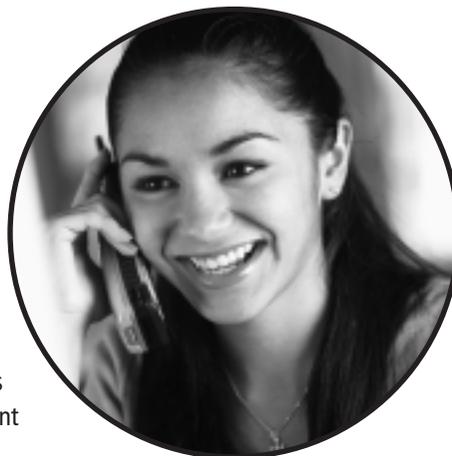
You will receive services related to a disability only if you:

- contact the coordinator of disability services.
- provide the required documentation.
- request services each term.

### Contacting disability services

Most college programs have an office that provides services to students with disabilities. If not, the school will have a person who coordinates these services. The office or coordinator (often known as a Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities) is usually located in the college's counseling center or in student services.

To request services, you must meet with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities and provide required documentation. When you make your appointment, ask the coordinator what documentation is required by that particular college.



### Documentation

All colleges require documentation of a student's disability to determine:

- eligibility for services, and
- specific services that are needed.

If you had an IEP in high school, that means you were tested by the school psychologist or a medical doctor. A copy of that assessment may be sufficient documentation of your disability.

Some colleges have a three-year time limit on accepting certain documentation, particularly if you have a learning disability or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). If you received testing in high school, work with your school to have your tests updated the last year you receive special education services.

Before you graduate, request a copy of your last IEP and a copy of an updated assessment (performed by the school psychologist or medical doctor). Most high schools only retain student records for five years. Disability testing after high school graduation can be expensive.

### Requesting services

After meeting with you and evaluating your documentation, the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities will understand how your disability impacts your learning and can determine possible accommodations. The law does not state that all students with a disability must receive ALL accommodations.

You must request services from the Services for Students with Disabilities Office each term. You will not receive services unless you make the request.

## Accommodations

It's important to know what accommodations work for you. You may not need the same accommodations for each class. For example, a history class may require a different accommodation than a math class.

Partner with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities and the course instructor to work out accommodations that work best for you. Although the college may not always agree to your request for a specific accommodation, **they are required by law to provide an effective accommodation**. Determining effective accommodations may involve experimenting and making adjustments.

### Potential accommodations are listed below:

- Notetakers, tutoring, proofreaders and editing services
- Textbooks and other educational materials in alternative form, such as Braille, large print and audio-tapes
- Access to educational materials in advance, such as class syllabus, study guides and taped lectures
- Sign language, oral interpreting and real-time captioning services
- Test-taking alternatives, such as extended time, taped tests, oral tests, alternate test site, elimination of computer scored answer sheets and use of a computer or spell-checking device for quizzes and exams
- Access to adaptive equipment such as closed caption devices, amplified telephone receivers, low vision reading aids, tape recorders, Brailleing devices and computer enhancements
- Opportunity to make up quizzes, exams or assignments if the absence was disability-related
- Preferential seating in classroom
- Extension of timelines for completion of specific courses
- Extension of timelines to complete certification or degree requirements
- Permission to take less than fulltime credit and still be eligible to receive financial aid. Ask your health insurance agent about eligibility on your parents' policy for part-time courses
- Foreign language course substitutions, for example, option to take foreign culture class instead of foreign language
- Early registration



## Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) is a state and federal sponsored agency that helps people with disabilities prepare for, obtain and retain employment. To be eligible for services, the disability must result in a substantial impediment to employment and the individual must require Voc Rehab services.

All individuals with a disability who apply for Voc Rehab services will participate in an Orientation and Employment Discussion to determine eligibility for services. The eligible applicant and a Voc Rehab Specialist together must develop an Individualized Plan for Employment that will include a job goal and the services needed to achieve that goal. The services provided are those required to prepare for and to enter employment in the job goal.



### Voc Rehab services may include, but are not limited to:

- vocational assessment, counseling and planning,
- telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices,
- postsecondary training (if a student's financial aid package does not meet the student's financial needs, Voc Rehab may provide a training allowance),
- rehabilitation technology, and
- job placement.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Offices in Nebraska

For more information about working with Vocational Rehabilitation of Nebraska

- call the nearest service office,
- call the the state office at 1-402-471-3644 or 1-877-637-3422, or
- visit the Voc Rehab website at [www.vocrehab.state.ne.us](http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us).

### Columbus

3020 18th Street Suite 2  
Columbus, NE 68601  
(402) 562-8065  
(877) 505-0866 toll free  
[vr\\_columbus@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_columbus@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### Central East

3335 West Capital Avenue  
Grand Island, NE 68803  
(308) 385-6200 V/TT  
(800) 862-3382 toll free V/TT  
[vr\\_grandisland@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_grandisland@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### Kearney

2916 West 24th Street  
Kearney, NE 68845  
(308) 865-5343 V/TT  
(800) 262-3382 toll free V/TT  
[vr\\_ Kearney@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_ Kearney@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### Lincoln

5143 South 48th Street  
Lincoln, NE 68516-2299  
(402) 471-3231  
(402) 471-6329 TDD  
(800) 472-3382 toll free  
[www.vocrehab.state.ne.us](http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### Norfolk

1212 Benjamin Avenue  
Norfolk, NE 68701  
(402) 370-3200 V/TT  
(800) 442-3382 toll free V/TT  
[vr\\_norfolk@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_norfolk@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### North Platte

200 South Silber Building 2  
North Platte, NE 69101-4298  
(308) 535-8100 V/TT  
(800) 272-3382 toll free V/TT  
[vr\\_northplatte@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_northplatte@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### Omaha

1313 Farnam on the Mall  
Omaha, NE 68102  
(402) 595-2100  
(402) 595-2107 TDD  
(800) 554-3382 toll free  
[vr\\_omaha@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_omaha@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### Scottsbluff

1517 Broadway Suite 131  
Scottsbluff, NE 69361-4939  
(308) 632-1321  
(800) 292-3382 toll free  
[vr\\_scottsbluff@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_scottsbluff@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

### South Sioux City

901 West 21st Street Suite 1  
South Sioux City, NE 68776  
(402) 494-2265  
(877) 659-7899 toll free  
[vr\\_southsioux@vocrehab.state.ne.us](mailto:vr_southsioux@vocrehab.state.ne.us)

## Legal Rights and Responsibilities

### Federal laws

Knowing your legal rights and responsibilities will increase your chances of success in college. It's important to understand the obligations of colleges and of students enrolled in colleges. By **understanding these obligations, you will know what you need to do, and what the college is required to do, for you to have an equal opportunity for success.**

Following is a description of laws and how they pertain to you as a college student with a disability. Underlined terms are explained below.

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

This civil rights statute is designed to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities, as amended in 1990. It provides that:

No **otherwise qualified** individual with disabilities in the United States shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

**This law requires that postsecondary schools be prepared to make appropriate accommodations and reasonable modifications to their college's procedures and practices, so that you can fully participate in the same programs and activities that are available to students without disabilities.**



### The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is also a civil rights law. It helps to implement and enforce Section 504, and also outlines additional protections. While Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability if they receive federal funds, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 states that **with or without federal funds, public institutions cannot discriminate on the basis of disability.** Private colleges and universities are covered under the ADA, unless they are completely owned and operated by religious organizations.

Important Terms:

#### Otherwise Qualified

As a student with a disability, you are "otherwise qualified" when you meet the same academic requirements and standards as non-disabled students. These requirements and standards must be considered necessary to maintain the integrity of a course, program or college policy. For example, some colleges require students to maintain a GPA of 2.5 to maintain eligibility for a certain program or to remain enrolled as a student. You would also be required to meet this qualification. You are also required to meet an instructor's expectations for students in regards to class participation, work standards, attendance, and ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge.

#### Academic Accommodations

These are changes that are made in the delivery of course material and/or in the assessment of your knowledge that will help you meet the standards of the course. Examples include notetakers, recorded textbooks, time extensions on course assignments, extended test time, sign language interpreter, assistive technology during class and exams, etc. Section 504 and the ADA states that students with disabilities may need appropriate accommodations or reasonable modifications in order to meet the academic requirements and standards.

#### Reasonable Modifications

Examples of modifications that may be offered include the extension of time permitted to complete a degree program (possibly due to carrying less than the required full-time credit load); or the substitution or waiver of courses that are part of the degree requirements. If a college refuses to modify academic requirements, the school must be able to prove that the change would be considerable and that the area requested to be altered is essential or necessary as offered. The college must prove the change would jeopardize the integrity of the course or program.

## Discrimination complaints

Some individual instructors are not familiar with ADA or Section 504 requirements, or with the purpose of accommodating students with disabilities. The Disability Services Coordinator can serve as a liaison between you and the instructor, and can advocate for reasonable accommodations.

Some colleges have an Appeals Committee that conducts informal hearings related to alleged violations of student rights.

If you cannot resolve your situation informally, follow the school's internal grievance procedure. **All colleges are required to have complaint or grievance procedures related to discrimination.** The procedures are formal steps outlined to resolve the issue.

The formal process usually begins with the faculty or staff member most directly involved, the student and a mediator. If satisfactory resolution is not reached, the process may continue with the person's supervisor, then the department head, a Dean, and possibly members of the college's Board of Education.

All colleges are required by law to designate at least one staff person to coordinate compliance with Section 504 and the ADA. That person may be located in the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities. If not, inquire there to find out who to contact. If you believe you were discriminated against on the basis of disability, you can receive help from the Section 504/ADA compliance coordinator.

You also have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights for investigation. You must submit the complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. You can contact the region representing Nebraska at:

U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Civil Rights  
Region VII  
10220 North Executive Hills Boulevard  
Kansas City, MO 64153-1367  
(816) 891-8026

## About Project NETS – University of Nebraska-Lincoln

This guide was completed in cooperation with Project NETS: Nebraska Educators as Transition Specialists through the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders, College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. For more information, visit [www.unl.edu/projectnets/](http://www.unl.edu/projectnets/).

## About EducationQuest Foundation

EducationQuest Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska. Through a permanent endowment, EducationQuest provides free college planning services at its location in Kearney, Lincoln and Omaha: funds need-based scholarship programs; and provides community grants for programs that enhance college access.

### Come see us!

EducationQuest Foundation is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.  
To schedule an appointment, call the location nearest you.

#### **Kearney**

2706 Second Avenue  
Suite B  
Kearney, NE 68847  
308.234.6310  
fax: 308.234.2113  
800.666.3721

#### **Lincoln**

1300 "O" Street  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402.475.5222  
fax: 402.479.6658  
800.303.3745

#### **Omaha**

Rockbrook Village  
(108th & West Center)  
11031 Elm Street  
Omaha, NE 68144  
402.391.4033  
fax: 402.391.7376  
888.357.6300

[www.educationquest.org](http://www.educationquest.org)