



Navigating The College Search for Students Who Learn Differently

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College & Career Pathways 2025

Agenda

- **Definition of Terms**
- **What We Can Learn From the Data**
- **Levels of Support in College**
- **How the Legal Landscape Changes**
- **Finding the Right Fit**
- **All About Disclosing – Why and When**
- **Landmark College – Unique Support and Programming**



**“Everybody is a genius.
But if you judge a fish by its
ability to climb a tree, it will
live its whole life believing
that it is stupid.”**

- Albert Einstein

Key Terms

- **Neurodiversity** is ALL of us.
 - All brains function differently
 - This diversity is natural and beneficial for our species
 - Differences should be accepted and valued, not viewed as a set of pathologies to be cured
- **Neurotypical** - what society considers “typical” brain development and cognitive/intellectual functioning
- **Neurodivergent** - what society considers “atypical” brain development and cognitive/intellectual functioning, e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, autism, ADHD, etc.

Change The Conversation:

Recognize and acknowledge your strengths!

Providing Context – The Numbers

Did you know?

1 in 5 students (20%) have a learning difference

How many students are disclosing this to their post-secondary institutions?

- 24% of students with a learning disability
- 25% of students with “other health impairments” (the category that includes ADHD)
- 63% of autistic students

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 education
- 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 completing their post-secondary education

**You CAN improve the odds:
Access and Utilize Support!**

Levels of Support in College

ADA Compliant

- Meets ADA compliance for providing access
- Accommodations vary by institution
- No cost
- Small number of staff
- Students MUST advocate for services

Coordinated Services

- Accommodations PLUS some skill building services
- Universally available services
- Smaller student/staff ratio
- No Cost
- Students 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, students 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

Finding The Right Fit

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 your IEP or 504 plan?
- Have you consulted your 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?

Disclosing

Why Don't Students Disclose?

- Fear of stigma
- The desire to create a new identity
- “I don't have a learning difference”
- Unfamiliarity with disability services, what's available, and how to access
- The invisibility of the support and accommodations you're receiving now
- Underestimating the importance of accommodations

Disclosing: When and Why?

Why Disclose?

- It's the only way to receive accommodations

When?

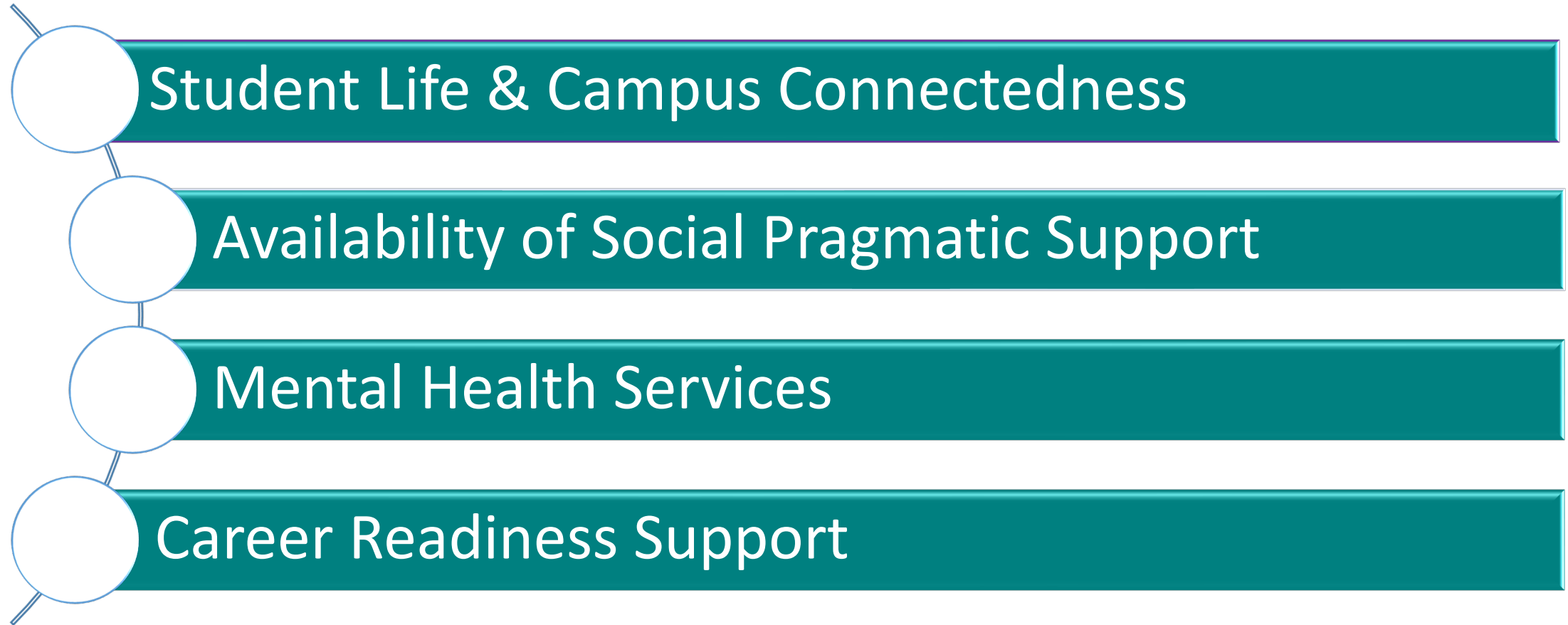
- Accommodations must be in place for the beginning of the semester
- Options
 - During the application process
 - After an admission decision

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

Accommodations: An Ongoing Process

- Every semester, you will need to request accommodations from disability services and inform your instructors
- Schedule regular meetings to discuss the effectiveness of your accommodations
- Be vigilant. Consistently monitor the extent to which your accommodations are providing access to course content.
- **If access is diminished at any point, SELF-ADVOCATE.**

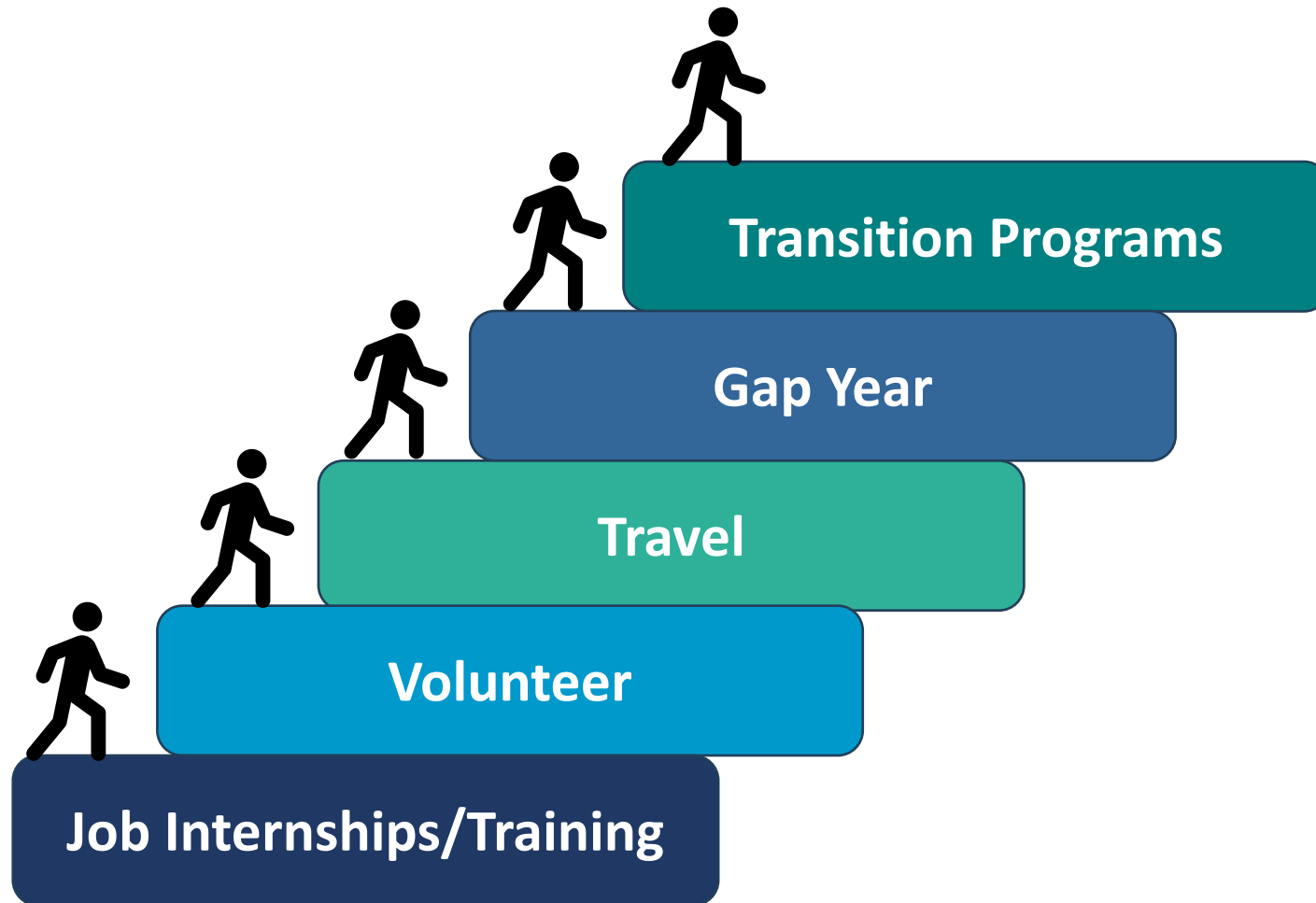
Beyond Academic Support



Ask Lots of 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 Right Next Step?



Landmark College

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)



Landmark Fast Facts

**Location:
Putney, VT
125 Acres**

**450 Students
Representing 28 States
and 12 Countries**

7:1 Student/Faculty Ratio

**11 Associate & Bachelor's
Degree Programs &
Concentrations**

**50% - Number of Students
who Transferred to LC in
Search of a Better
Experience**

**87% of Bachelor's Degree
Recipients are Employed
or in Graduate School**

Landmark Support

- ✓ Wraparound, fully integrated support services
- ✓ No additional fees
- ✓ Academic advising with weekly meetings
- ✓ Drake Center for Academic Support, providing faculty-run executive function coaching
- ✓ Cutting-edge educational technology
- ✓ Counseling & health services
- ✓ Residential support system
- ✓ Therapy Dog Program
- ✓ Social Pragmatics support for Students with Autism
- ✓ Career Connections, building pathways to successful careers



Why Landmark?



- ✓ **Multiple Paths:** Online Dual Enrollment, Summer Programs, Bridge Experience, College START & Online Associate Degrees, TaC, Associate & Bachelor's Degrees
- ✓ **Universal Design for Learning**
- ✓ **Perspectives in Learning:** Students Learn how they learn
- ✓ **Community**
- ✓ **Landmark College Institute for Research and Training (LCIRT)**
- ✓ **Center for Neurodiversity**
- ✓ **Activities:** Sports, Speaker Series, Clubs, Social Events, Off-campus Trips
- ✓ **Study Abroad** led by LC Faculty

Questions?

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