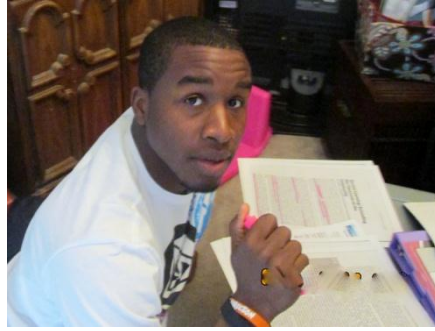


Generalization Article – Have a Great Freshman Year



For me, my first year of college was very different than high school. For example, in college, I had more responsibilities and work than I did in high school. Also, in college I had to find the help I needed. In high school, I had a whole group of people to help me, including my physical therapist, occupational therapist, and speech therapist. I am sharing what I learned my freshman year so that you can have a great freshman year, too.

First, start early. I started visiting colleges in my sophomore year of high school. Make sure to get an appointment with the disability services office to discuss what they have to offer you. The disability services office (or the person in charge of disability accommodations/access) can make or break your choice in colleges.

I can have a great freshman year.

Second, create a plan. Once you decide on a college, schedule another meeting with the disability services office to discuss the plan for your accommodations. Meet with the Campus Life Office to talk about dorm life and whether or not you will have a roommate. It is very important to meet with the Head of Safety to come up with a plan in case of fire or drills, tornado, or medical issues

Third, find the support you need. If you have to hire a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), hiring a good PCA is essential to a successful year. I was fortunate; my disability coordinator suggested I place an advertisement on the school's website.

Fourth, have a social life. Almost as important as going to classes is going to social events. It is important for people to get to know you because one day you may need to ask them for assistance or support.

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Fifth, get to know college staff. It is very important to get to know the staff at the college. Not just the professors, but also the security officers, housekeepers,

secretaries, and cafeteria workers. I am on a first name basis with many of the workers in the dining hall.

Sixth, meet with your professors. Meet with your professors by yourself so they can get to know you. Your note taker can sit with you or anywhere in the room. Make sure your professors get a copy of your 504 plan (or other college plan/paperwork describing your accommodations). Remind them that there are many ways for you to participate in class. You can raise your hand. You can be an active listener. You can even laugh at the instructor's jokes.

During the first days, most freshmen are looking for the same things - friends. My number one piece of advice is to get involved. Also, stay determined, keep up with your studies, and follow these tips. If you do, your first year in college will be great.

I can have a great freshman year.