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20 Incredible Colleges for Students With Special Needs

Posted on Wednesday September 21, 2011
by [Staff Writers](#)

While it might make things more challenging, a disability shouldn't stand in the way of getting a [college degree](#). These days, it's easier than ever for special needs students to find the help they need, as more and more institutions work to [understand their disabilities](#). Doing so allows them to provide better programs that can make the transition into college life much smoother. Students with a wide range of special needs, from learning disabilities to hearing impairment, can find schools with amazing programs that offer support, tutoring and special courses designed to make everything less stressful for enrollees and parents alike.

Here, we've listed some of the colleges that currently offer comprehensive or specialized programs for students who may have special needs. They range from schools focusing solely on special needs students to those incorporating specific classes and support programs into everyday coursework. This isn't a comprehensive list, and many more schools out there offer assistance to special needs students as well. We've just highlighted some we think stand out.

1 UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



The University of Iowa offers students with intellectual, cognitive, and learning disabilities access to the REACH program. Through it, participants get help with everything from coursework to life on campus, allowing them to build career skills, perform better academically and learn to live as independent adults. During their first two years at U of Iowa, students live together in designated residence halls, complete community-based internships and put together a portfolio of work marking their transition into college life.

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2 WEST VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE



access to just about every resource that could help them be more successful.

Through The Learning Center on the West Virginia Wesleyan College campus, students with learning disabilities, attention disorders and other special needs can find a wide range of support options. It offers tutoring through the Mentor Advantage Program, a foundational initiative that offers help transitioning into college, test and study labs and even assistance in academic goal setting and organization. While many of the services are fee-based, students have easy

3 DAEMEN COLLEGE



wilderness program.

For students with an autism spectrum disorder, OCD, Tourette's Syndrome or ADHD, Daemen College may be a good choice. The school offers a program called The Gersh College Experience, which gives students a nurturing, supportive environment in which to develop the skills necessary to succeed socially and academically. Participants do not only receive help with school, but are also taught how to live as independent adults through social outings and a one-of-a-kind

4 BELLEVUE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



and become more confident adults.

This community college outside of Seattle made headlines for its pioneering education program for developmentally disabled adults. Tailored to the needs of students with high-functioning autism, Down Syndrome and other disorders, the school's Venture Program for Unique Learners offers them a chance to earn an associate's degree with guidance from an attentive and supportive staff. Enrollees read great works of literature, practice math and gain skills that will help them find work

5 GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

This [liberal arts](#) academy caters to special needs of a different kind, opening admissions largely to deaf and hearing-impaired students — though the hearing are also admitted. It is the only university in the world to specifically target and serve the needs of the deaf, and all courses are taught in



both spoken and signed English. The school offers all the benefits of a traditional university, including athletics and a Greek system, while providing students with a supportive community and learning environment sensitive to their needs.

6 **LANDMARK COLLEGE**



Located in Vermont, Landmark College was designed with the needs of learning disabled students in mind, and is one of only a few in the country that cater exclusively to those with dyslexia, ADHD and other learning disabilities. Class sizes stay small, so everyone gets more individual attention. A number of assistive technologies are available on campus, and enrollees are given help with time management, academics and other skills. It offers associate

degrees in [general studies](#), liberal arts or business administration, and many grads move on to four-year degree programs.

7 **UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA, TUCSON**



Special needs students at the University of Arizona, Tucson are served by the Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques Center, usually called — quite simply — the SALT Center. With over 500 individuals taking advantage of the services it offers, the center is a busy place and caters to a wide range of needs. Students can access tutoring and computer labs as well as workshops, to help with the transition. They are assigned a Strategic Learning Specialist, who will

create a unique learning plan designed to help them succeed at a higher level in their college coursework.

8 **DREXEL UNIVERSITY**



Students with autism should check out Drexel's specialized support program, which offers a number of different services. They can use the Self Advocacy and Social Skills program to find support, learn social skills and improve their approach to academic work, or engage in peer mentor training and learn from the experiences of other autism spectrum students. Additionally, the special needs enrollees at Drexel will find helpful reading materials, tutoring, seminars, meetings and more, all with the goal of making college a

more friendly and accessible place for a diverse crowd.

9 **MERCYHURST COLLEGE**



Created only a few short years ago, the AIM program at Mercyhurst College is already making strides in helping the school become a better choice for special needs students. The program focuses on assisting those with Asperger's and other high-functioning forms of autism adapt to campus life. Mercyhurst also offers support to students with other special needs through its [Learning Differences Program](#). This program gives participants access to special

accommodations, which can help them better cope with any learning disabilities they might have — from offering aid with physical impairments to getting additional tutoring.

10 **MARSHALL UNIVERSITY**



Marshall University is another school reaching out to students with autism. The university is home to the West Virginia Autism Training Center, which offers a college program to individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. Through this program, grad students help special needs participants improve their time management, complete assignments and develop better social and independent living skills. Students keep in touch with their advisors throughout the day, as well as

get checked up on by professors and other professionals. While there is an additional fee for these services, it may be more than worth it for bright enrollees who just need a little extra assistance.

11 **BEACON COLLEGE**



Beacon College is another one of the very few schools in the U.S. that cater specifically to special needs students. This private institution is fully accredited, and offers both associates and bachelors degrees in a few choice fields. The Beacon benefit is that students receive individual academic mentoring and full-time access to support services. Class sizes are small and everyone receives structured, individualized attention that can make tackling even difficult subjects much easier for anyone with learning disabilities.

12 **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, CARBONDALE**



Students who enroll at SIU will have full access to on-campus disability support services. Through the program, they can take advantage of various services, including study tables, tutors, professional help, taped lectures, note takers, assistive technology and supplemental materials. Students can also make use of the school's Achieve Program. Achieve is a free academic support program for those with learning disabilities, employing specialists, grad students

and volunteers to help with any needed accommodations, tutoring and counseling. Unlike many other college programs of this kind, it does not charge, nor does it limit the amount of help students can receive.

13 **DEPAUL UNIVERSITY**



The Chicago chapter of this Vincentian school wants to ensure that all students, even those with special needs, get the help they need to excel. Participants can seek out help at the Office of Students with Disabilities, but for additional support, the school's PLuS Program is a must. The Productive Learning Strategies Program is designed to assist with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, Asperger's, OCD or bipolar disorder. Throughout the school year,

students in the program will get support, tutoring, advocacy and counseling time with an LD specialist.

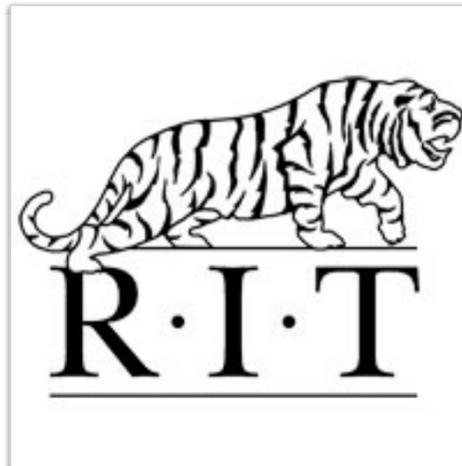
14 HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY



Hofstra's program for special needs students is called PALS, or Program for Academic Learning Skills. It helps students with learning disabilities or attention deficits by pairing them up with a learning specialist, who will aid them throughout their college career. Individual plans are created for each participant, molded to his or her unique needs, and they work with their specialist for 90 minutes each week. In addition, the school offers study skills workshops and online programs to

help students develop skills that will serve them better.

15 ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Special needs students who want a top-notch tech education should check out RIT. The school offers LD and ADD students access to a learning development center and disability and learning support services, all of which provide assistance to any who need it. Participants will meet with a learning specialist several times a month to check in, improve organization, study skills and time management, and learn to become a better self-advocate. In addition to these programs, students

can also take workshops teaching them to improve test-taking skills, deal with procrastination and generally get more out of their college experience. If that isn't enough, there's also the advantage of free tutoring.

16 UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



The Disability Services Office at U of Denver offers special needs students with two different programs for help and support. The Learning Effectiveness Program provides a wide range of academic services and accommodations, including one-on-one support, tutoring, writing workshops, student activities, leadership projects and help with developing organization and time management skills. There is a fee for the LEP program. For students who can't afford additional

costs, there is also a gratis option through disability services. This program ensures that all special needs students get appropriate test accommodations, alternate

17 **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**



Special needs students who want to be amongst the political action in our nation's capital will be well-served by this university, which offers a wide range of disability services. In addition to the standard accommodations, American University also offers a Learning Services Program for college freshmen. This program is designed to help special needs students better transition by building academic and social skills. These enrollees will get focused assistance with writing and math, as well as any other learning accommodations they might need. After freshman year, students can seek out the Academic Support Center's offerings, with free tutoring and more.

18 **UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT**



Special needs students interested in the U of Connecticut should check out the Center for Students with Disabilities. There, they can see the full range of services the school offers. Along with basic accommodations for those with learning disabilities, it also provides a number of other great programs for other types of special needs students. One is the Beyond Access Program, which offers courses (for a fee) that will train students on how to succeed in college with their disability. Focused workshops for those with learning disabilities, autism and those who need additional tutoring are available. Students still in high school can prepare early with the college's UCPREP summer course, a six day camp that will help them build studying, learning and independent living skills.

19 **MARIST COLLEGE**



MARIST

The Learning Disabilities Program at Marist is designed to help students develop skills that will help them not only do better in college courses, but also achieve greater independence and become an effective self-advocate. Individuals work with an LD specialist for as long as they feel necessary, getting assistance adjusting to the college environment and socializing with their peers. They will also have a chance to participate in events throughout the year, which raise

awareness about disabilities on campus.

20 MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY



One of the best resources for special needs students at Misericordia is the Alternative Learners Project (ALP). It aims to provide comprehensive on-campus support to students with learning disabilities, serving more than 60 each year. In their first year, LD pupils will take part in the BRIDGE Program to better adapt to campus life. After that, they will get help with a variety of learning strategies and work with a professional to develop an individual

accommodation program. The program offers many other forms of support, and while it does come with a fee, it may be more than worth it for many students.

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