### Summary of Legal Differences Between Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Secondary Education</th>
<th>Postsecondary Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal Laws</strong></td>
<td>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”); the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)</td>
<td>Section 504 (particularly subpart E) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of Legislation</strong></td>
<td>To ensure that all eligible students with disabilities have available a free appropriate public education (FAPE), including special education and related services (IDEA). To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity (504/ADA)</td>
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<td><strong>Eligibility</strong></td>
<td>For special education services All infants, children, and youth (0 through 21 years) with disabilities (as defined by the state Administrative Rules for Special Education, and/or the ADA)</td>
<td>For disability services Anyone who meets the entry level-age criteria of the college and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by Section 504 and ADA</td>
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<td><strong>Documentation</strong></td>
<td>School districts are responsible for providing trained personnel to assess eligibility and plan educational services</td>
<td>Students are responsible for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their particular disability</td>
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<td><strong>Receiving Services</strong></td>
<td>School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities, designing special instruction, and/or providing accommodations</td>
<td>Students are responsible for providing documentation to DSS demonstrating that they have a disability, and for requesting accommodations for each class. Accommodations (not special education) are provided so students with disabilities can access the educational programs or courses used by other students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Advocacy</strong></td>
<td>Students with disabilities learn about their disability, the importance of self-advocacy, the accommodations they need, and how to be a competent self-advocate</td>
<td>Students must be able to describe their disability, identify strengths and weaknesses, and identify any accommodations needed. They are expected to be their own advocates.</td>
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Increase in Complexity and Unpredictability

The typical college environment is more complex and unpredictable than the high school environment in terms of daily schedules, course selection, course expectations, and access to resources.

**Daily Schedule**

- Classes vary in length and number of days. e.g., 2 days for 90 minutes or 3 days a week for an hour.
- There are no bells. Students must know when they need to be at class and monitor the time.
- One class might be right after the other as in high school, or students may have a block of time between classes.
- Students choose when they stop for coffee, use the restrooms, take a break, and when to go to class, or study.
- Classes may be in multiple buildings.
- All classrooms may not be equally accessible, so students may need to register early to request an accessible classroom location.

**Course selection and expectations**

- College course format, instructional strategies and expectations may be different than in high school courses.
- There are more choices of instructors, courses and course requirements.
- Students need to know how they learn best, what type of instructional formats and styles work best for them, and how to use this information in selecting courses.
- There is no one person who ensures students complete the right courses and are on the path for earning credits toward graduation; students need to do this themselves or seek advice from academic or department advisors.
- Instructors rarely teach directly from the text and often lecture for the entire class period.
- Instructors often plan their courses so that students do a lot of their learning outside of class including acquiring knowledge and facts from outside reading and library research.
- Most successful students expect to spend 2-3 hours of studying for each hour they are in class, and students with disabilities may need to plan on spending more time.

**Resources**

- Students need to identify and access any necessary support services.
- Services on a college campus are often more expansive than in K-12 system (e.g., health center, bookstores, women's centers, and mental health counseling).
- Students need to know what supports they require and in what office they might find them.
- Services are located in different buildings and often have different names than in high school.

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**Change in Student Responsibilities**

The type of high school a student attended, the expectations that their families placed on them, and the type of postsecondary program they choose to attend, may influence the differences the student will experience. Consider the following areas:

**Student freedom**

- Students are expected to be responsible for their choices and, thus, need to have good problem solving, self-advocacy, decision making, and communication skills.
- Faculty often will assist students if the student initiates the contact.
• Support systems are available in college (e.g., academic advising, supplemental instruction, academic learning centers, resident assistant, disability services staff), but the student must seek those out, ask for the help, and follow through.

Life skills

• Students who begin college after high school may not only be adjusting to a new learning environment but very possibly, even a new city and friends.
• It may be the first time they are living on their own. They may need to learn to budget their money, cook, maintain an apartment, and learn how to live with a roommate.

Peer network

• If peers do not attend the same college, students may be without a support system of friends.
• During high school students often depend on their family and peers for support in problem solving, decision making and day-to-day activities, thus they may need a new support network.
• College activities, organizations, and support groups can help to build new networks.

Source: The University of Oregon, Information - High School and College: What are the Differences?