

Preparing for Albright: Questions and Answers for Students with Disabilities

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and applicable federal and state laws, Albright College ensures that people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in its programs and activities. Students with disabilities are considered for admission on the same basis as all other applicants and must meet the same academic requirements.

At Albright College, disability services are coordinated through the Academic Learning Center, which handles all requests for academic accommodations and makes referrals to other college units as needed. **The ALC is committed to providing timely, individual assessment of student needs and promotes self-advocacy and intentional learning among all students, especially disabled students.**

All entering students with disabilities are encouraged to take time to reach a better personal understanding of their disability and specifically how it affects learning for them—talk with parents, teachers, doctors, psychologists, counselors, or others. Understanding your disability will help you develop better strategies to overcome limitations and better self-advocacy.

Below are common questions asked by students with a disability and their parents. Answers incorporate information from the federal pamphlet *Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education*.

Q: As a student with a disability leaving high school and entering Albright, will I see differences in my rights and how they are addressed?

Yes, legal requirements differ from those in force during high school. For instance, while Section 504 requires school districts to identify an individual's education needs and provide any necessary special education and related aids and services, Albright is not required to identify you as having a disability or assess your needs, and it must provide accommodations that ensure equal access to programs and activities only to those who make properly documented requests.

Q: Do I have to inform Albright that I have a disability?

No, only if you want the school to provide accommodations in response to your disability. While your disclosure is voluntary, keep in mind that requesting necessary accommodations may better your chances of succeeding in college. Once out of high school, you are considered an adult whose privacy is to be respected and who is responsible for understanding and making your own decisions. Even your parents will have limited access to your information, and if you want them to know certain things about your career at Albright, including the process of determining accommodations for you, you will need to sign a waiver allowing that information to be shared with them.

Q: What must I do to request an academic accommodation at Albright?

You must inform the Academic Learning Center at Albright that you have a disability and are requesting academic accommodation by submitting official forms the ALC can provide you. You will be responsible for knowing and following Albright's policies and procedures, which can be found in the forms you receive or at our website, www.albright.edu/alc. Although you may request an academic accommodation from Albright at any time, you should request it as early as possible. Some accommodations may take more time to provide than others, and it is up to you to ensure you request services in time for them to be available when you want them.

Q: What academic accommodations does Albright provide?

The answer will depend on your disability and individual needs, all with the goal of ensuring equal educational opportunity. Determining specific accommodations is an interactive process that relies on several things: the clinical documentation you provide, your preferences as to what the accommodation should be, and the ALC's determination of what reasonably satisfies both your needs and the nature of the academic course or program. Some common examples of accommodations are priority registration; reduced course load; extended time for testing; and adaptive software. Note that in providing accommodations, Albright is not required to fundamentally alter essential academic requirements or the nature of a service, program or activity, or to make changes that would result in undue financial or administrative burdens. Also, Albright need not provide attendants, devices, or services for personal use.

Q: Do I have to prove that I have a disability to obtain an academic accommodation?

Yes. Albright asks you to provide documentation of a disability by a credentialed professional, for example a licensed psychologist, who is familiar with the history and functional consequences of the disability. A student's past IEP may be helpful, but cannot be the basis of accommodation decisions in college, and even clinical evaluations may sometimes be too old to be of current use. Please see our website for more complete documentation standards, including tests we accept and use. Disability documentation used to request accommodations must both *establish* disability and provide adequate information on the *current functional impact* of the disability, so that it can be understood in relation to the college's course and program requirements, testing methods, etc. Documentation of a specific disability does not translate directly into specific accommodations.

Q: Who has to pay for a new evaluation if I need one?

Neither your high school nor Albright is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document your disability and need for accommodation. If one is required, you will have to pay or find funding to pay for an evaluation by an appropriate professional. If you are eligible for services through your state vocational rehabilitation agency, you may qualify for an evaluation at no cost. You may locate your state vocational rehabilitation agency through the following Web page: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM>.

Q: Once Albright has received the necessary documentation from me, what should I expect?

Albright will review your request in light of the documentation and the essential requirements for the relevant program and will contact you to come meet with the staff to discuss your needs. The Academic Learning Center strives to complete this process as soon as possible, usually within a week, but keep in mind that at peak times of the semester—especially around orientation and the beginning and middle of the semester—the process may take a little longer.