

# NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE SEARCH FOR STUDENTS WHO LEARN DIFFERENTLY

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***“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

- **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.
- **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.

## CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

Help students recognize and acknowledge their strengths.

# PROVIDING CONTEXT - THE NUMBERS

## **The Prevalence of Learning Differences**

- 1 in 5 students have a learning difference
- 1 in 16 have an IEP; 1 in 50 have a 504 Plan
- Millions remain undiagnosed to the detriment of individuals and society (*NCLD, 2017*)

## **Post-Secondary Disclosure Rates**

- 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 school.
- 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 graduating within six years.

**Improve the odds.**

**ACCESS AND UTILIZE SUPPORTS!**



# LEVELS OF SUPPORT IN COLLEGE

## ADA COMPLIANT

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- Meets ADA requirements for providing access
- Accommodations vary by institution
- No cost
- Small number of staff
- Student **MUST** advocate for services

## COORDINATED SERVICES

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- Accommodations **plus** some skill building services
- Universally available services
- Better student/staff ratio
- No cost
- Student **MUST** advocate for services

## STRUCTURED PROGRAMS

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- Comprehensive academic, tutoring, & skill-building support
- Weekly meeting with a learning specialist
- Full-time specialized staff
- Fee-based
- Less student advocacy required

## LD COLLEGES

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- 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

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# 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, student 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.



# HOW THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE CHANGES

SECONDARY	POST-SECONDARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)</li><li>• Success</li><li>• Schools take the lead</li><li>• Parental involvement is encouraged – parents are often the “advocate” for their children.</li><li>• All teachers and staff are aware of a student’s disability status.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)</li><li>• Access</li><li>• Students take the lead.</li><li>• Students assume primary responsibility for their education and must self-advocate.</li><li>• Only instructors a student notifies will be aware of their status.</li><li>• IEP and 504 plans have no legal weight.</li></ul>

# MAKING THE TRANSITION EASIER

- ✓ **Transition Planning** – When transition plans specify the accommodations a student will need, students are much more likely to both access and utilize them.
- ✓ A good college match means **understanding** what you **expect**, **need**, and **want** from your college years.
- ✓ **Aligning** these factors with what a college **offers** and **delivers**.

**ACCESS IMPACTS SUCCESS!**

MATCHING WHAT YOU NEED  
WITH WHAT A SCHOOL OFFERS

# 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 a student's IEP or 504 plan?
- Has the student consulted their 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

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# WHY DON'T STUDENTS DISCLOSE

## WHY DON'T STUDENTS DISCLOSE?

- Fear of stigma
- The desire to create a new identity
- A large percentage don't believe they have a learning difference.
- Unfamiliarity with disability services, what's available, and how to access
- Inadequate transition plan from high school.
- Underestimating the importance of accommodations to their success
- Lack of sufficient transition planning

# DISCLOSING: WHEN AND WHY

- **WHY DISCLOSE?**

- It's the only way to receive accommodations

- **WHEN?**

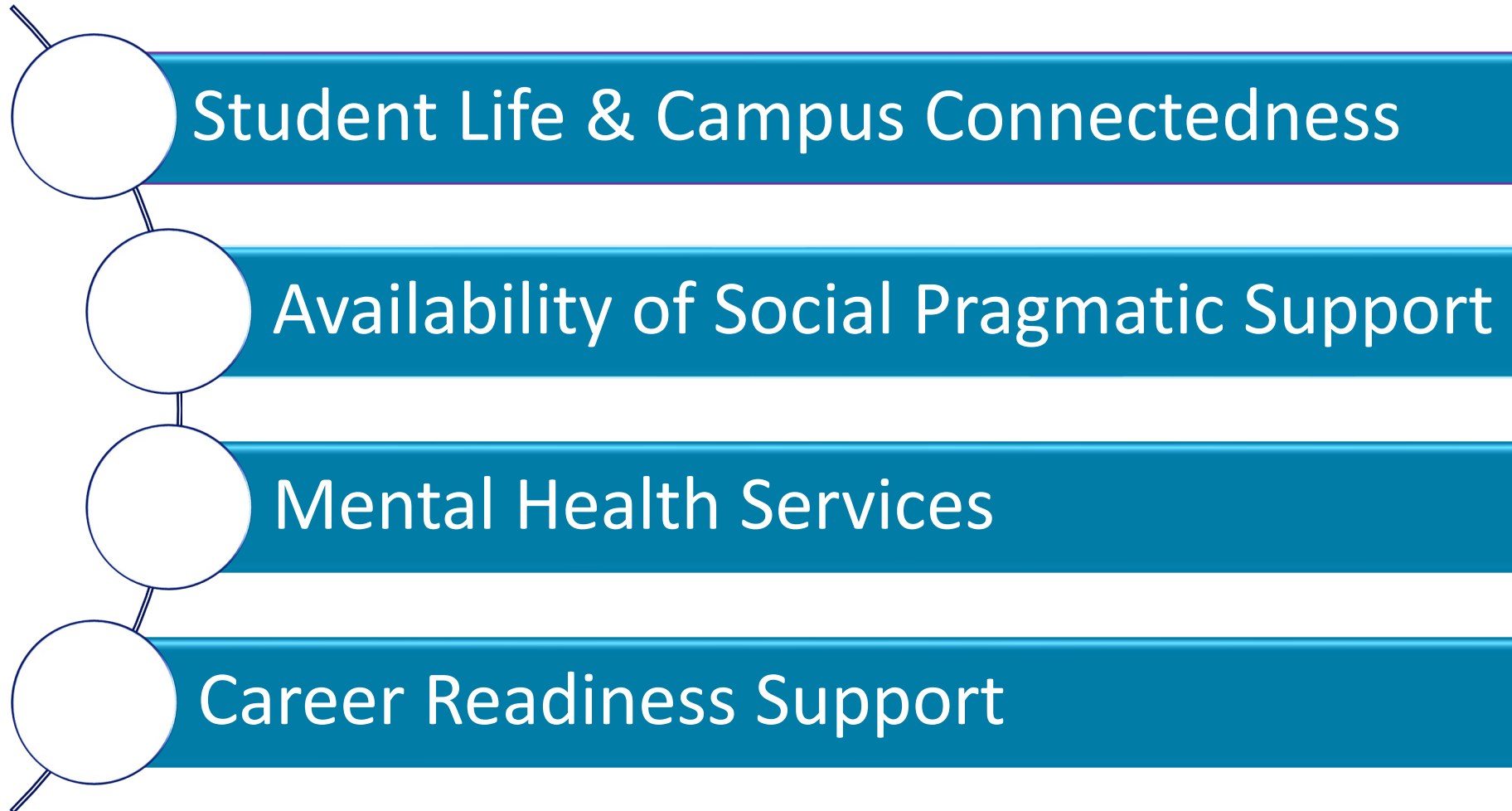
- Accommodations must be in place for the beginning of the semester
  - Options
    - During the application process
    - After an admission decision

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

# ACCOMMODATIONS: AN ONGOING PROCESS

- Every semester, your student will need to request accommodations from disability services and inform their instructors
- Students should have regular meetings to discuss the effectiveness of their accommodations
- Students should consistently monitor the extent to which their accommodations are providing access to course content.
- **If access is diminished at any point, SELF-ADVOCATE.**

# BEYOND ACADEMIC SUPPORT



# MORE 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 BEST NEXT STEP?

Transition Programs

GAP Year

Travel

Volunteer

Job Internships  
Training



# 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 from 38  
states & 12 countries

6:1 Student/faculty  
ratio  
8-12 average class

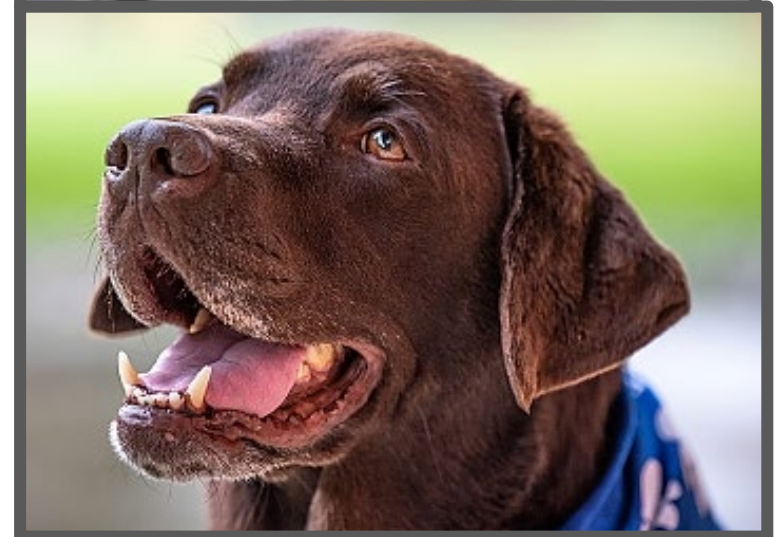
11 Associates &  
Bachelor's Degree  
Programs, +  
concentrations

50%: The number of  
students who  
transferred to LC in  
search of a better  
college experience.

87% bachelor's degree  
students are employed  
or in graduate school

# LANDMARK SUPPORT

- ✓ Wraparound, fully integrated support services
- ✓ No additional fees.
- ✓ Academic advising – weekly meetings
- ✓ Drake Center for Academic Support - Faculty-run. Executive function coaching available.
- ✓ Educational technology
- ✓ Counseling & health services
- ✓ Residential support system
- ✓ Therapy Dog Program
- ✓ Social Pragmatics Support for Students with Autism
- ✓ Career Connections





# WHY LANDMARK?



- ✓ **Multiple Paths:** Online Dual Enrollment, Summer Programs, Bridge Experience, College START & Online Associate Degrees, TaC, Associate and 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**
- ✓ **Centers for Diversity & Inclusion**
- ✓ **Activities:** Sports, Speaker Series, Clubs, Social Events, Trips off Campus
- ✓ **Study Abroad** led by LC Faculty.

# THE TRANSITION AFTER COLLEGE

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# THE POWER OF A NEURODIVERSE WORKFORCE

Over the past decade, employers have begun to embrace the benefits associated with a neurodiverse workforce.



Companies with neurodivergent employees outperform their competitors, averaging 28% higher revenue plus higher shareholder returns. *(Hyland and Connolly, 2018)*



# QUESTIONS

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[www.landmark.edu](http://www.landmark.edu)