

#5a - Navigating the Admissions Office: Advice from a Former Admissions Professional with IH

There is no better way to understand a university than by spending time on campus, and for a prospective student that often begins with the Admissions Office and the acclaimed "Campus Tour." As you journey to discover your best-fit college, let yourself be guided by the information and wisdom found in college prep basics, high school guidance counselor suggestions, and university websites. Hopefully, the information here will help you empower yourself as you make your way.

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TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND!

- **Remember that you are more than your disability**, you are an adult and soon to be college student, who deserves every opportunity to be successful in your academic career.
- **Dream big while you take small steps**, working towards your big goals; check off the small steps that you must take to accomplish your dreams over time.
- **Give yourself the gift of time** whenever possible and throughout your college career by connecting with resources and cultivating a support system to help you create and maintain flexible schedules and deadlines.
- **Communicate selectively about your disability**. Knowing how to communicate is key. I believe students with health issues are best served when they disclose to *appropriate* offices and to *specific* personnel that they are a person with a disability. Keep in mind that you are *not* required to share your disability or its details with others on campus.
- **Take a practical approach**. That makes for a good start, which I think is essential for persons with idiopathic hypersomnia. Keep the process simple – streamlined – and you will succeed.

READY, SET, GO!

Going through the Admissions process can be an exciting, albeit overwhelming, experience. Have fun but consider it a "working holiday." In addition to your Campus Tour, take time to observe the day-to-day life of students. Go to the library and see how students interact. Eat lunch in the Commons/Cafeteria. Sit down at any table and strike

up a conversation. Review a course schedule and sit in on a class (prior approval may be needed); maybe even attend a university event such as a concert, a class, or a game.

The two big questions that students need to answer are:

Where do I start? and ***How do I do that?***

HERE ARE SOME POINTERS AS YOU MOVE AHEAD:

- 1. Make a short list of strategies** before beginning the Admissions process and Campus Tour.
 - **Identify your goals:** Academic, co-curricular, professional and social.
 - **Know what you bring to the table and recognize your needs:** Identify your top three strengths AND three things that challenge your daily functioning.
 - **Let your fingers do the walking:** Contact the Admissions Offices on the campuses that interest you. At the same time, find out how to contact the staff in other offices that you want to connect with, such as the Disability Resource Center, Academic Advising, and if planning to live on campus, the Residence Hall Office and the Campus Health Center.
- 2. Schedule a Tour.** Contact the Admissions Office to schedule your Campus Tour and inquire about scheduling separate appointments with other offices mentioned above.

NOTE: A Word About Lodging. If you are an out-of-town student, inquire about campus and other local accommodation options when visiting the college. Based on availability, some schools rent dormitory space to visiting families, and on occasion, there are college visit discounts at local venues.

3. Ask “How do you support student success for people with disabilities?”

I believe this simple question will help you sort through colleges that are better suited to proactively support your needs. Ask this question of the staff in the offices you contact on campus.

- **Keep the conversations short.** At this point in the game, these do not have to be expansive conversations. However, they can offer general insight and help you make educated decisions as you weigh whether taking time out of your “beyond sleepy” schedule and investing additional efforts and resources are warranted.
- **Speak with those who can help.** Remember, it is okay if the person on the other end of the phone does not have immediate answers. The person may be a student worker or an employee who is not familiar with your specific questions. If they cannot help you and do not connect you with someone who can, step up and politely ask to be referred to someone who can help you.
- **Fee-based programs:** While students with disabilities have

accommodations available to them at no charge, some campuses also have a Learning Diagnostic Clinic, or equivalent, and may offer an additional fee-based “academic support program for college students with a learning disability, ADHD, or other diagnosis, who desire more comprehensive services than those covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).” Fee-based programs like these are not required but may be worth exploring. Here is one example: Learning and Diagnostic Clinic <https://psychology.missouristate.edu/lhc/Project-Success.htm>

- 4. Think hard about your schedule.** It will guide your daily life for the entire semester and will be instrumental in meeting your goals for the courses.

MORE TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND!

- **Do not overschedule.** The one absolute “do not” is to not bite off more than you can chew!
- **Schedule classes during your functional times.** If a desired course is offered at a time that is counterproductive to when you function best, an online class may be a viable option (and no one will mind that you are in your PJs!).
- **Prevent the “crash and burn.”** It is better to do well in a few courses than to over-extend yourself and “crash and burn.” This is like the “backlash” you experience when you push yourself too hard and then you can’t function for the next few days or week or more. Think about taking fewer courses to begin with, and see how you do.
- **Withdrawals can work!** If you find you are struggling to keep up in a class, and it is affecting other classes and your ability to be in control of your academic work, then consider requesting a course Withdrawal. It is not the end of the world. However, if a Withdrawal becomes a reality, keep in mind that the clock is ticking, so make certain you understand the time frame within which to request a Withdrawal and the details that are involved in making that happen.
- **A word about Financial Aid...** If you are receiving aid, it may be based on student status. There is a minimum of course credits that defines full and part-time status, and the number of credits determine whether you are eligible for or can keep your aid. Keep in mind that your odds of success are increased if you cater to your abilities. So, if you are a full-time student, perhaps look at taking the minimum credits required to keep your financial aid package.

COLLEGE LIFE REALITY ... SURPRISES!

While a campus tour is a family friendly event, ultimately, the college will consider the student to be the adult in charge. Echoing this, universities often leave the decisions to students. For example,

- **Whose grades are these?** One of the surprises for families is being informed – or not – about their students’ grades. Students make the decision about whether to give permission to release their grades to parents, supporters, etc. In my experience, I know how much of a challenge this can be for families, particularly for parents who are footing the bill.
- **Whose bills are these?** Another surprise for families is the matter of fees assessed beyond what the family paid, such as parking tickets, late fees for the library, change in food plan, etc. Guess who pays for these!

These are important realities of campus life. I think this knowledge can provide an opportunity for families to proactively discuss with college-bound students everyone’s needs before the First Year studies begin.

**Remember ... you are not in this alone.
Use your resources and tap into your support systems!**

**Approved by the Hypersomnia Foundation Board of Directors
Vetted by Olivia Robbins BA, who also provided Technical Assistance
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