

Use of Supports Among Students With Disabilities and Special Needs in College

DATA POINT
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This Data Point uses data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09), a national study of more than 23,000 ninth-graders in 2009. Sample members answered surveys between 2009 and 2016.

Students with disabilities in high school do not always tell their college about their disability.¹ Some reasons may be a desire for independence or views of the helpfulness of services based on type of disability. Other reasons may be poor knowledge of services or bad experiences with staff or teachers. Some college students with disabilities may not use supports that could help them graduate.² Students with disabilities or special needs are referred to as students with a disability in this Data Point.³

Figure 1 includes only students who ever had a reported disability or special need. Figure 1A looks at whether these students informed their college of their disability. Figure 1B looks at whether students who informed their college of a disability received any formal accommodation.

Figure 2 includes all students enrolled in college in February 2016. It shows whether students' use of academic supports in college varies by the simultaneous presence of a disability.

Among students who ever responded that they had a disability, what percentage informed their college about it? Does this vary by college level?

Sixty-five percent of students who ever had a reported disability in earlier years responded that the disability was not present in college (**FIGURE 1A**).

Among students who responded that they did have a disability while attending college, about one-third of students (37 percent) informed their college ([supplemental table 2](#)).

Among students with disabilities who enrolled in college, 69 percent went to 4-year colleges and 28 percent went to 2-year colleges ([supplemental table 3](#)). At both types of colleges, between 12 and 13 percent of students

FIGURE 1A. Informing college of disability: Among students who ever had a reported disability, the percentage who informed their college of their disability, by college level in 2016

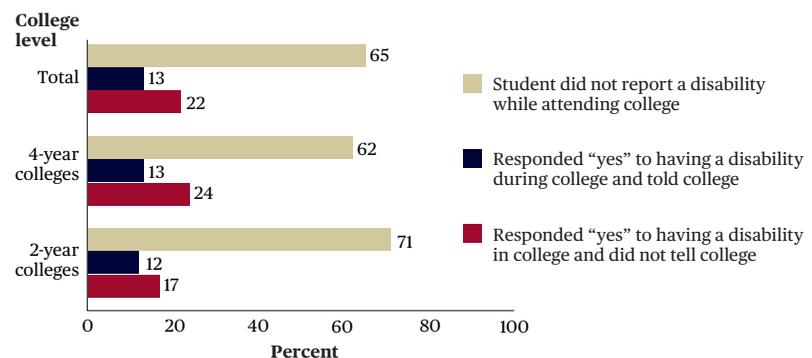
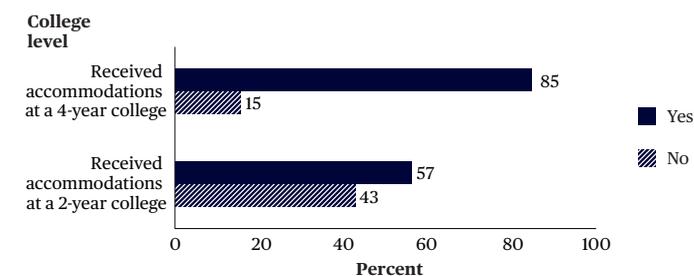


FIGURE 1B. Accommodations in college: Among students who told their college about their disability, the percentage of students who received accommodations or services, by college level in 2016



NOTE: Due to small sample size, the 3 percent of students who had a reported disability and attended a less-than-2-year college in 2016 are excluded. The category "Student did not report a disability while attending college" refers to two options. (1) Students reported having a previous disability, but did not have the disability while they were in college. (2) A student's parent or school reported a disability prior to 2009 (and the student did not report the disability in 2016). Receipt of accommodations or services refers to students who received support for their disability, like early registration, test taking accommodations, or counseling. For exact question wording, please see the [HSLs:09 student questionnaire](#). The sample is limited to students who ever reported a disability and enrolled in college in February 2016. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09) Base Year and Second Follow-Up.

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informed their college of current disabilities. However, students at 4-year colleges reported receiving accommodations at a higher rate (85 percent) than students at 2-year colleges (57 percent) (**FIGURE 1B**).

What percentage of all students used academic supports with courses in college? Does this vary by the presence of disability in college and college level?

Students may use different types of academic support during their time at college. This can include academic services from the college, like tutoring or visiting writing centers, or other types of help, like study groups or office hours. This may also mean support recommended by the college, like remedial courses. This Data Point does not include other sources of support, like health centers. Figure 2 includes two groups of all students enrolled in college

by February 2016. The first group is students who reported a current disability during college, whether or not they told their college about the disability. The second group is students who did not report a disability while in college.

Students who reported having a disability while attending college (whether they told their college or not) requested help and used academic services at a higher rate. For example, 73 percent of students with a disability requested help, compared to 65 percent of other students (**FIGURE 2**). Differences in requests for help and use of academic services by the presence of a disability were observed for 4-year college students.

Students who attended 4-year colleges used academic services and requested help at higher rates than students at 2-year colleges. This was

true for students with disabilities and students who did not report a disability in college.

Remedial courses are another source of support to help students improve skills prior to taking a college-level course. For all students with or without a reported disability in college, differences in the rate of remedial coursetaking were not significant (26 and 21 percent). Looking at differences by college level, 44 percent of students who reported disabilities at 2-year colleges took remedial courses, compared to 21 percent of peers who reported disabilities at 4-year colleges. The difference in remedial coursetaking by college level is also present for students who did not report a disability (43 and 14 percent).

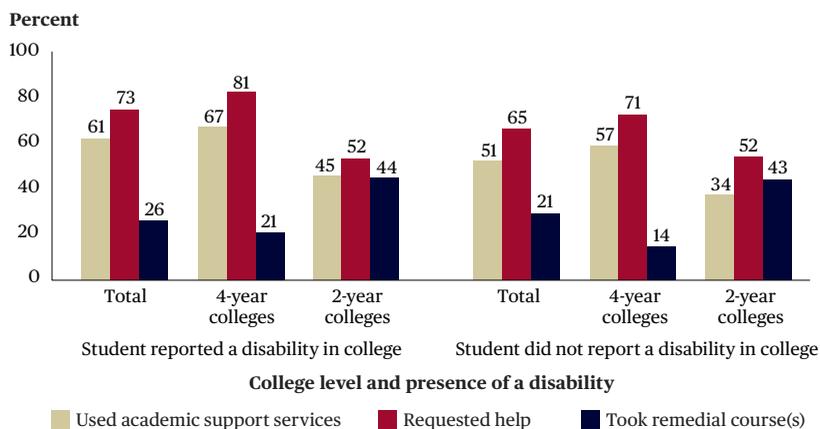
Endnotes

¹ Newman, L., Wagner, M., Knokey, A.-M., Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D., Wei, X., with Cameto, R., Contreras, E., Ferguson, K., Greene, S., and Swarting, M. (2011). *The Post-High School Outcomes of Young Adults With Disabilities up to 8 Years After High School. A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) (NCSE 2011-3005)*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

² Newman, L.A., Madaus, J.W., Lalor, A.R., and Javitz, H. S. (2019). Support Receipt: Effect on Postsecondary Success of Students With Learning Disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 42(1): 6-16.

³ Ever having a disability is based on parent, school, and student reports for the student. Students were asked directly in 2016. School reports are based on students having an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in 2009. Parents were asked if a doctor or school ever told them the student had one or more disabilities usually used to define IEPs prior to 2009. Student reports of a disability refer to student reports of having serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions or to student reports of a diagnosis by a health or education professional of disabilities usually used to define a large number of disabilities. Student reported difficulty concentrating accounts for 32 percent of reported disabilities ([supplemental table 1](#)).

Figure 2. Use of college academic support resources: Percentage of students who used academic support services, requested help for a college course, or took a remedial course(s) as of February 2016, by college level and presence of a disability



NOTE: Academic support services refer to help from a school office or department, such as tutoring or writing centers. Requested help refers to seeking help for a course such as by participating in a study group, going to office hours, or requesting tutoring. Students that reported a disability in college may not have informed their college of the disability. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HLS:09) Base Year and Second Follow-Up.

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Tara Adam and Catharine Warner-Griffin of AnLar, LLC. Data are from samples with margins of error. To see if estimates differ when margins of error are considered, statistical tests need to be done. Some apparent differences in estimates cannot be said to be different once these tests are used. All stated differences are statistically different at the .05 level. No tests were made for multiple comparisons. Efforts were also made to limit the effects of errors not related to sampling.