# Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Spring/Summer Preparation 4-6

Getting Ready to Go 7-9

Self-Regulated Learning 10-11

How Disability Support Services Work 12-13

General Information 14-15

Transition Strategies Timeline 16

Legal Issues 17-21

Academic Resources 22-23

Typical First-Semester Issues 24-26

Warning Signs That Warrant Intervention 27

Resources 28

Appendix (General Information) 29+
Introduction

Purpose of this Transition Handbook

This transition handbook was written for students with disabilities who are about to enter Muhlenberg College, their guidance counselors, and parents. It provides basic, helpful information for students with disabilities. The purpose of this handbook is to help ease the transition from high school to college, thereby increasing the likelihood for success in the first year.

Nationwide statistics indicate the retention-to-graduation rate for students with disabilities remains low. In addition, many of those who do graduate have difficulty finding competitive employment. At Muhlenberg College, this is not the case. Our retention-to-graduation rate for students with disabilities is 92%. In a recent survey of 68 Muhlenberg graduates with disabilities, all were successfully employed or performing well in graduate school. The college works diligently to help students with disabilities succeed. This partnership begins at the end of the senior year of high school and continues beyond college graduation.

The challenge for students, parents, college managers, and faculty members is to work together while adhering to academic standards, developing the learner’s independence, and providing appropriate guidance and support. At Muhlenberg, we build collaborative partnerships that foster independence and provide equal access to the educational experience. We look forward to those relationships.
Readiness
Relationships with parents change dramatically at this transitional juncture. The high school's obligation under IDEIA (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act*) implies success and pushes for parental involvement. In college, no guarantees of success are in place and, although they are important players in the transition piece, parents are asked to cheer from the sidelines and not to remain "guides at the helm." This is a difficult step for many parents. It may mean that their son/daughter will make mistakes or experience failure, but it ultimately facilitates the partnership and dialogue between the student and his/her professors and administrators at the college.

If a parent has specific expectations regarding academic performance and behaviors, these should be discussed with the student before he/she leaves home at the end of the summer. At that time, consequences should be shared as well. It *is* realistic to assume that the student can receive a passing grade in all courses in the first semester. The college offers many resources to support its students. However, it is not necessarily realistic to expect the student to continue to maintain his/her high school GPA in the first year.

If a student with a disability wishes to find success during this first year, he/she should be motivated and ready to:
- Understand and explain the impact of his/her disability to each instructor, when necessary
• Study independently
• Manage time wisely
• Fully participate in the accommodation process by documenting and requesting appropriate accommodations in a timely fashion
• Follow institutional procedures and standards of conduct

Self-Advocacy
Advocacy becomes the student’s job in college. While it is appropriate for parents to encourage their son/daughter to talk with his/her advisor or faculty member, it is not appropriate for the parent to make the call directly. It is appropriate for the parent to call the Academic Resource Center if he/she has concerns or questions, but the student must request and document the need for services. Although it is frustrating for parents to watch their son/daughter deny the need for services, it is an important experience for the student. Often, many interventions have been selected and monitored by others in their lives; these students need time to find out for themselves what actually makes a difference. In most classes, students will have face-to-face conversations with their instructors about their particular needs. There are many well-trained staff members at the college to help students in this process. Although many students develop these self-advocacy skills after the first semester, students who have been most successful recognized the need to advocate early on.

A checklist of responsibilities:

High School Personnel:
✓ Provide a transition plan
✓ Forward all requested records to Muhlenberg College Academic Resource Center
✓ Offer helpful transition information before the first semester of college
✓ Identify the student’s strengths and weaknesses
✓ Outline the areas of potential difficulty for the student’s transition

Parent(s):
✓ Provide an “ear” for the student’s frustrations and disappointments
✓ Celebrate successes
✓ Help guide the student with his/her finances
✔ Purchase necessary equipment or assistive technology/software
✔ Help forward all necessary documents and documentation from the evaluators and the school in a timely fashion, while adhering to specific guidelines

**Student:**
✔ Disclose and understand the nature of the disability
✔ Document the need for requested accommodations
✔ Advocate for those needs
✔ Make decisions regarding course selection
✔ Use appropriate campus resources
✔ Understand the potential impact of the disability in each classroom
✔ Manage time wisely
✔ Learn good study strategies

**College Personnel:**
✔ Provide a learning environment which is free of discrimination
✔ Offer support services
✔ Assist in the navigational and decision-making processes (advising)
✔ Provide fair evaluation practices (assessment)
✔ Inform students about access, policies, procedures, and services
Getting Ready to Go

Too soon to go?
For many students with disabilities, it may be premature to enroll in college the year immediately following high school graduation. In many cases, these students have received structured support from parents, careful supervision from school staff, and individualized assignments. They often need time to mature, gain self-confidence, and develop independent coping strategies before moving into a residential setting where they become fully in charge of their learning.

Some students have worked long and hard to get into Muhlenberg College and they need a break from study to discover more about themselves. Increasingly, students with disabilities are joining their peers by deferring enrollment after they have been accepted. They use this time to travel, work, or enroll in part-time coursework at a commuter college for a year or two. These are important considerations that work well for some students.

It is common for parents to believe that a residential college will offer more positive opportunities than staying at home for another year, but this may not be the case. The first semester of college offers many new and
difficult challenges. Students have left their caring high school teachers and supportive friends and family. Students need the emotional strength, resources, and coping strategies to deal with the occasional feelings of loneliness, workload pressure, sleep deprivation, and the many other issues that accompany older adolescents in a group-living situation.

Suggestions for parents for the summer preceding college:

✓ Eliminate or adjust curfew to allow the student time to adjust to this new freedom.

✓ Set up a bank account that has limited funds and instruct the student on how to use it.

✓ Discuss mutual expectations for the first semester (grades, attendance, spending, use of drugs or alcohol, etc.) and whether a reduced unit load the first semester may be necessary. Perhaps a written contract would be appropriate.

✓ Purchase assistive technology, special alarm clocks, etc. and make sure the student has an opportunity to learn the software well ahead of the first day of classes.

✓ Discuss your family health care plan and how the student might access confidential health services.

✓ Help the student “connect” over the Internet, Facebook, or phone with another new Muhlenberg student.

✓ Share and discuss all psychoeducational test data and academic history; make sure the student understands the data and what it suggests. Help him/her articulate expected needs.

✓ If appropriate, arrange contact with a physician in Allentown to monitor any medication. Remind your son/daughter that selling or distributing controlled substances (i.e., Ritalin) is illegal. We do not encourage students to move in with more than a 30-day supply of medication. It is best to work with local pharmacists or the Student Health Center.
Avoid running interference for his/her personal/financial issues over the course of the summer.

Help the student arrange/order books-on-tape, digital texts, software, hardware (Palm Pilots, laptop, PC) etc.

Review the catalogue and other college materials with the student, highlighting what is important.

Put together a list with names and numbers of possible resources, both on-campus and off-campus, for the student to contact should issues arise.

Explore with the student the policies and procedures on Muhlenberg's Web pages and in the student handbook.

Suggestions for students for the summer before the first semester:

Contact the Academic Resource Center if you have concerns, questions, or you anticipate the need for classroom accommodations.

Set up a bank account and work out all other financial and medical arrangements.

Understand your learning strengths and weaknesses and learn to articulate them to another person.

Try to connect with another student who will be attending for the first time. This person may be a roommate or a student from your locality.

Read through the catalogue to make choices about courses that interest you (remembering to stay with courses in the 100-200 levels).

Purchase available, required reading material ahead and begin to read over the summer.
Self-Regulated Learning

Discovery
It is no secret that students learn best when they are motivated and self-directed. They must set their own goals and proceed on a path of their own choosing. Many students with disabilities lack the self-knowledge that would allow them to become successful students. They need to have the skills to plan, perform, and evaluate or self-reflect on their learning. In addition, they need individualized support, guidance, and strategic interventions and solutions.

The Academic Resource Center offers professional Learning Specialists, Peer Tutors, and Peer Learning Strategies Instructors. All are trained to help learners identify their strengths and shortcomings in the learning process and to offer strategic help. Students who become actively involved in some combination of these partnerships generally experience more success and satisfaction than their peers who struggle alone.

In addition, the Career Center is staffed with Career Counselors who are sensitive to the specific needs of students with disabilities. They can help students identify their interests, values, and strengths and lead students toward meaningful internships and network connections.

Selecting Courses
At Muhlenberg College, we offer special pre-advising to all students who have disclosed a disability or factor that may impact first-semester success. During this pre-advising session in June, a Learning Specialist will go over
the student’s record and *previously submitted* documentation and make course suggestions for the first term. This is a wonderful opportunity for families to raise concerns and questions. The student will then independently meet with a trained faculty advisor to select the actual courses. Although it is sometimes difficult to trust first-year students to make their own independent choices, it is imperative that they feel a sense of control (investment) regarding their selected classes and choice of major.
How Disability Support Services Work at Muhlenberg College

Management
The office of Disability Services works with all campus departments in the coordination of accommodations and services for students with disabilities. However, direct services are managed by one of three offices at Muhlenberg College. The Student Health Center coordinates accommodations and services for students whose disabilities are specifically related to chronic, significant health or mobility issues. The Counseling Center coordinates accommodations and services for students with mental health disabilities, and the Academic Resource Center coordinates accommodations and services for students with disabilities that impact cognition. This includes Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder, Learning Disabilities, significant hearing loss, visual disabilities, cerebral palsy, head trauma, etc. It is ALWAYS the student’s responsibility to disclose the disability, in a timely manner, to the appropriate office and provide the required documentation. The documentation policy is on the Muhlenberg College Web page: www.Muhlenberg.edu/students/acasrvcs/disablts.html.

Disclosure
Successful students disclose their disabilities to the appropriate staff. This can be very critical at the college level. This is typically done during the admission process and should ideally begin before the start of classes. Students and their parents should consult with their evaluator or school district for specific information. Some students may wish to leave their disabilities behind and reinvent themselves in college. Some parents may fear that a disclosure may somehow be detrimental to their student’s academic or professional career. Choosing NOT to disclose can potentially lead to unnecessary frustration and disappointment.

At Muhlenberg, students who disclose early are provided a special pre-advising appointment with a Learning Specialist before their regular advising appointments during the Summer Advising session in June. This appointment takes place after the student has been accepted to the college.

Documentation
In recent years, there has been a growing nationwide trend to require students with disabilities to provide appropriate, comprehensive, and current
documentation that outlines specific college-level accommodations. This allows college staff to plan and implement appropriate strategic support and interventions. Muhlenberg College’s documentation policy can be found on the web page and at the end of this handbook.

Requesting Reasonable Accommodations
All requests for accommodations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This is a collaborative effort that may include the student, the designated campus professional, advisor, and/or faculty member. Accommodations that compromise the integrity of the course or degree requirements are not appropriate requests. Equal access is provided while academic standards are maintained. At the college level, compensatory strategies are paramount; a student’s work should always demonstrate college-level achievement.

During the first weeks of the semester, after the professional has had time to review all documentation and high school records, the student and professional meet to determine whether the disability significantly impacts a major life function that compromises college endeavors. Together, they discuss what would be appropriate accommodations for each course. This review is conducted each semester, for each class, as the student’s needs change.

After the point of disclosure and documentation, it is the student’s responsibility to begin a working relationship with his/her instructor by providing a letter of recommended accommodations from the appropriate college office (Academic Resource Center, Student Health Center, Counseling Center). The student should then meet with each faculty member and describe how the disability will impact the course in question.

It is very important for students to work closely with faculty members when the disability impacts coursework. Faculty members are great resources and can usually help the student navigate the course requirements more efficiently. This first meeting between the faculty member and student should take place early in the semester, during office hours, in the faculty member’s office. At Muhlenberg College, instructors welcome this dialogue and have had many experiences working with students with learning-related concerns.
General Information

The College is committed to providing an intellectually rigorous undergraduate education within the context of a supportive, diverse residential community (College Catalog, pg. 1).

What is a liberal education?
A liberal education is not a credential for a good job; rather, it is the opportunity for a student to become educated about the world, its history, literature, art, languages, philosophy, science, math, and cultures. It offers students the opportunity to stretch their abilities to think critically, read more efficiently, and write more eloquently. In addition, the college encourages and guides students as they seek to discover their values, strengths, interests, and goals.

For some students, the requirement to select courses they otherwise may not choose offers greater intellectual and emotional challenges than they previously faced. Parents often become sounding boards for the student’s anxieties and frustrations. Although this can be a painful transition, it can also be an empowering experience for students when they sense the joy of a satisfying accomplishment in a difficult situation.

Students should explore different areas of study, recognizing that some will be more of a struggle than others. In college, students should be invited and encouraged to reach forward in order to develop their critical thinking, reading, and communication skills while they develop greater autonomy and independence.

With this in mind, understand that first-year students may become discouraged or frustrated in a particular course, or with a particular professor. Know that we have many resources in place to help them have a positive first-year experience. First, we encourage all students to begin a dialogue with the appropriate faculty member. Faculty members are often a tremendous source of support and assistance. We also recommend Peer Tutoring. Peers are closer in age and much less intimidating for some students. Tutors can show the student strategies for organizing, memorizing, planning, and performing in a particular course. Finally, we have
Master's level Learning Specialists in the Academic Resource Center who are available for one-on-one support.

Muhlenberg College endeavors to support its students in ways that do not compromise the integrity of a liberal arts degree. Students will be expected to fully meet the expectations and demands in each course and major as determined by the individual faculty member and/or the department chair. When the disability clearly and significantly impacts the performance in a particular course, students may submit a petition to the Dean of Academic Life's AD HOC Committee for Students with Disabilities, requesting an exception to academic policy if that course is not required within a major or minor area of study. The procedure for this process can be found on the Web at www.muhlenberg.edu and can also be found at the end of this handbook.
Transition Strategies Timeline

Immediately following admission or deposit

✓ Complete the Disability Disclosure Form if you plan to request accommodations or services (this form may be downloaded and copied from www.muhlenberg.edu under Disability Services)
✓ Submit the completed form and current documentation to:
  Director
  Office of Disability Services
  Muhlenberg College
  2400 Chew Street
  Seegers Union, Lower Level
  Allentown, PA  18104

During June Advising

✓ Meet with staff member in the appropriate office
✓ Explain relevant issues to your advisor
✓ Acquire textbook information for summer preview or alternative text ordering
✓ Consider a three-unit academic course load for the first term

During the first semester

✓ Evaluate the impact of the disability within each class
✓ Request letters of accommodation for faculty members
✓ Disclose relevant information to faculty members
✓ Set up regular meetings with support personnel
✓ Request tutoring services, where necessary
✓ Develop your study skills
✓ Become familiar with the campus resources
✓ Seek counseling support for emotional transition issues
✓ Work with the Career Center to determine personal interests and values
Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 1990) are the laws that define support services and access at the college level. Although Section 504 is applied in public education as well as in colleges, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) governs K-12 adaptations. Although these laws are similar in their intent to provide qualified individuals with disabilities the right to equal access, there are notable differences between the two.

Under IDEIA, the schools are responsible for identifying, evaluating, and planning for students with disabilities. Under 504 and ADA, the student is responsible for providing required documentation and requesting appropriate, supported accommodations. Section 504 and ADA further state that the student must be “otherwise qualified.” It is important to note that the status of “otherwise qualified” may change over time. For example, a student may have been able to participate fully in a residential, full-time day college upon admission but then developed significant mental health issues. He/she may no longer be “otherwise qualified” at that point.

The following information should answer questions about these differences:

High schools must:
- Identify students with disabilities.
- Provide assessment of learning disabilities.
- Involve parents in decision-making.
- Provide non-academic services.
- Structure the student’s weekly schedule.
- Modify educational programs.
- Prepare Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
• Provide a free and appropriate education.
• Help each student reach his/her potential.

**Post-secondary institutions must:**
• Protect the student’s right to privacy and confidentiality (this includes conversations with parents).
• Provide access to programs and services that are offered to non-disabled students.
• Make information available to students regarding office locations and procedures for requesting accommodations.
• Evaluate documentation.
• Determine whether the student’s disability *substantially limits* a major life activity, such as the ability to read, write, learn, hear, speak, sleep, breathe, walk, see, or care for oneself.
• Determine whether a student is otherwise qualified, with or without accommodations, and whether reasonable accommodations are possible.
• Provide reasonable accommodations.
• Provide equal access to programs available to non-disabled students.
• Make reasonable classroom adjustments that do not alter the integrity or essential components or technical standards of a course or program.
• Inform students of their rights and responsibilities.

**Post-secondary institutions are not required to:**
• Reduce or waive the essential requirements of a course or program.
• Provide disability assessment.
• Provide personal attendants.
• Provide tutorial support beyond what is available to all students.
• Prepare IEPs.
• Ensure a student reaches his/her maximum potential; success.
• Keep parents informed.
The student is responsible for:

- Disclosing his/her disability to the appropriate office and providing documentation in a timely manner if requesting accommodations/services. The college has the right to establish its own documentation policy and timeline.
- Acting on his/her own behalf as an independent adult. It is the student’s job to advocate for himself/herself, not the parent’s.
- Discussing classroom and testing accommodations with instructors in accordance with college policy.
- Arranging for personal attendants or specially designed assistive technologies.

Some of the material in this section was borrowed from North Carolina State University's Disability Services Office.

Important Things to Remember:
In high school, students with diagnosed disabilities are entitled to specific services and accommodations. In college, the severity and degree of functional impact of the disability is taken into consideration when determining whether accommodations are appropriate—a diagnosis alone does not determine eligibility. Also, these accommodations are intended to provide access, not ensure success.

Students who attend college are considered to be adults, protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). College staff cannot talk to parents about confidential information, including academic activities, without the student’s signed consent. Parents need to talk to the student directly. Students act as responsible adults when disclosing disabilities and requesting accommodations.

Documentation requirements are different at every school. It is the student’s responsibility to know and understand the college’s documentation policy. Documentation should be current, verify the disability, describe the extent/severity of the impairment, provide information on the functional impact of the disability, and offer college appropriate recommendations.

Many students with mild or moderate deficits were identified as students with special needs in primary or secondary school and received
accommodations that may not be appropriate for college level work, or they may not qualify for accommodations under ADA or Section 504.

Confidentiality
At Muhlenberg College, students are asked to sign a release of information regarding their disability. This release is for the Registrar, Faculty Advisor, and Dean of the College for Academic Life. This facilitates exchange of academic information to those who need to know. Although the college endeavors to respect the student's right to privacy, disclosure of the impact and nature of the disability to school officials, including faculty, may occur in an effort to support the student.

No information or records regarding the disability are ever released to outside interests, including parents, without the student’s consent. With this in mind, students must be ready to have a conversation with individual faculty members regarding the impact of the disability. Parents should understand that they may not learn a great deal from college staff. This is done in compliance with FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) to protect the student and to make a deliberate effort to win his/her trust. In this way, students learn to better understand and articulate their needs to others who are in a position to help and guide them.

Plagiarism
It is an unfortunate fact that college students plagiarize, some deliberately and others accidentally. It is important for students with disabilities to be fully aware of intellectual property rights and the college's policies regarding plagiarism, accidental or intentional. Most colleges have severe penalties for cheating and the consequence is often expulsion.

In recent years, we have noticed an increase in the number of students dismissed for plagiarism because of Internet abuse. Poor planning, time management, organizational skills, and self-regulatory behaviors contribute to the likelihood that a student will commit plagiarism. The Internet has made it easier for students who have poor planning skills to complete a paper in less time. In their last-minute haste, some may forget to cite the source or to add the citation in the bibliography. What students don’t always know is that it is equally quick and easy for the professor to do an Internet search to identify the source of the text. If the student is using a campus
network, it is also easy to identify the sites that the student visited. An ounce of preventive instruction and explanation can spare an allegation in the future. Again, good planning and time management, as well as careful recording of information sources, will protect the student’s hard work.

It is important for students to work with the instructor as the paper progresses so last-minute mistakes or accusations are less likely to occur. Students with disabilities that impact writing may request additional support in the Writing Center. They may also work with a reference librarian by appointment in the Trexler Library or with a Learning Specialist in the Academic Resource Center. Students should not fax work home for parental proofreading.
Academic Resources

Most of a student’s learning time in high school takes place between 7am and 3pm. In college, much of the learning time takes place outside of the classroom through textbook reading, collaborative projects, and research. Therefore, the student’s self-regulatory behavior becomes crucial. High school teachers review textbooks in class lectures and generally only test what they have taught. In college, that is not the case. Students are responsible for work not covered in class, but assigned nevertheless. Study time in high school averages 1-2 hours per night and in college that can be 3-4 hours per night. Remember that no one is reminding the student to turn off the TV or computer.

Mentors

Muhlenberg College offers many opportunities for students to develop mentor relationships. In most First-Year Seminar classes, an upper class Student Advisor and a Writing Assistant help students navigate through the first semester. In addition, first-year faculty advisors are available for support and guidance.

All Muhlenberg College Resident Advisors (students who live with first-year students) are trained to help students during this difficult transition period and they are available most weekends and evenings. Muhlenberg also has a large tutor pool of over 200 students who help their younger peers learn efficient study habits and organizational skills. Older peers are a wonderful source of support and guidance. In fact, tutors often help first-year students develop a dialogue with their faculty members because first-year students often feel intimidated by their instructors.
Other campus resources
Support for students with disabilities on the Muhlenberg campus is decentralized. This means that campus-wide opportunities are available. If a student faces issues that warrant intervention, the following resources are available:

- **Faculty Advisors** will help students choose courses, make schedule changes, balance their coursework, and negotiate the first semester registration process.

- **The Counseling Center staff** will help students with roommate issues, anxiety concerns, social, and emotional issues that face college students.

- **The classroom faculty member** will help students with assignments, test preparation, alternative resources, accommodations in the classroom, and any other academic concerns related to the course.

- **The Trexler Library staff** will help students as they begin to do more advanced research work. This may include teaching them how to use CD Rom, Internet, Interlibrary Loan, journal searches, and how to reference certain materials. Many students make private appointments with the reference librarians.

- **The Writing Center tutors** will assist students who need help with the writing process. This may include interpreting assignments, using references, outlining, developing an argument, grammar, and style.

- **The Academic Resource Center** will help students determine appropriate accommodations for each class, develop organizational and time management skills, request other services, identify learning strengths and weaknesses, and shape strategic learning skills. Students may work with a professional **Learning Specialist** or one of over 200 upper-class students who are trained **Peer Tutors**.
1. **Workload is much heavier in college for most students.** Most high school students have not experienced either the work demands or the self-regulation required for college work. Students will be required to do many hours of work outside the class each week. This may include independent reading, research, group meetings, and writing. In the First-Year Seminar, students will be writing several short papers each week and will read the equivalent of several novels over the course of the semester. Classroom participation demands that they keep up. Students should be encouraged to set up regular meetings with a Learning Specialist in the Academic Resource Center if they need guidance and ongoing support.

2. **Time management is a problem for most first-year students.** In high school, most students had curfews or they lived in households where the house was silent late at night. This is not the case in college. At 2am, the dorm is active and noisy. Faculty members do not “keep tabs” on students and course attendance may become a problem. It is best if they balance coursework throughout the day. Certainly, if medication or health issues impact the student’s readiness in the early morning, suggest later classes. If time management and organization are problematic, suggest working with a Learning Specialist during the first semester. Encourage the student to balance social, work, and home obligations in that first semester.

3. **Homesickness is predictable for some.** Actively involved parents and friends have supported many students with disabilities. The transition to a new social system, new resources, new advocates, and new sleep/awake patterns can be very stressful. While it is important for parents to listen to their discomfort and support them in many ways, it is not helpful if parents rescue the student and bring them home at a time in the semester when weekend absenteeism impacts social connections. Parents should visit the campus. If parents become concerned, they should alert the counseling office and suggest to their son/daughter that he/she
should make an appointment to speak with a counselor. Resident Advisors are a good source of support for homesick students as well.

4. **Risk-taking is common.** All students experiment in the first years of college when they are out from under the watchful eye of their parents or dorm supervisors at prep schools. Some reasonable risk-taking is part of normal development. However, if parents, friends, or relatives notice an increase in this behavior and feel alarmed, they should discuss this concern with the student and alert the Counseling Center or the Student Health Center at once.

5. **Social pressures can be significant.** The pressure to conform and adopt the culture of the college can be stressful during the first semester. The student should be encouraged to connect with upper-class students and vary the members of the groups they "hang with." In addition, faculty advisors, instructors, Resident Advisors, and coaches can provide support for these issues.

6. **Getting to know faculty and administration is difficult.** Most students have not worked closely with professional staff in their high schools. They are often slow to realize that instructors can be a tremendous source of information and assistance. When students get to know the faculty and resource personnel, it is much easier to communicate if a crisis arises later.

7. **Roommate issues are common for all students.** Most students have never lived with another person in his/her room. We offer many resources to help students resolve these issues. There are floor Resident Advisors, Head Advisors, Housing Directors, Counselors, and the Dean of Students Office. Students should be encouraged to handle these situations themselves, unless there are unusual circumstances. Students with disabilities generally gain a great deal by having a roommate the first semester. Roommates can be very helpful with technology, wake-up prompts, medication reminders, social contacts, etc. Unless there are extremely unusual conditions, first-year students are not provided single rooms to accommodate a disability.
8. **Grade expectations can be unrealistic.** Many students have become accustomed to good grades in high school and are expecting to continue their high school GPA in college. Such is generally not the case during the first semester at Muhlenberg. Transition issues and adjustment to autonomous monitoring make good grades more difficult to achieve. Some students with disabilities have been insulated from timed exams and comprehensive tests. Muhlenberg does not offer unlimited exam time to students with disabilities, although extended test time is common. Many courses require comprehensive exams that tax students who have memory or anxiety concerns. Students should learn to develop exam preparation strategies and test regulation behaviors.

**Common causes of low first-semester grades**
- Weak background knowledge
- Poor study habits (time management, prioritizing, note-taking, test preparation, critical reading skills, homework habits)
- Demanding outside interests and activities (sports, friends, theatre, instant message, Email, computer games, jobs, television, etc.)
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Poor sleep habits
Warning Signs That Warrant Inquiry and Intervention

Failing mid-semester grades are a red flag for trouble. At Muhlenberg, students and parents both receive copies of mid-semester grades. Generally, failing grades in the first semester suggest problems with time-management, class attendance, excessive social activities, risk-taking behaviors, or inadequate entering skill levels. The student should discuss these issues with staff at the appropriate campus resource, starting with his/her advisor. In some cases, the student has chosen not to use support services, despite a history of disability and academic concerns. These students will need encouragement or an incentive to do so at this juncture.

Depression or significant weight changes should be discussed with Counseling Services or the Health Center. Many students experience significant emotional difficulties during the first semester of college. Students with disabilities often have greater challenges to face and some are at higher risk to become depressed because of these challenges. This is where the student’s connection to faculty and staff is critical. At this point in their lives, students are struggling to move away from parental support into an independent world.

Daily calls/emails home or frequent visits home may indicate adjustment problems. Suggest that the student stay on campus every other week and you may come to the college to visit. When students are off campus a great deal during their “down time,” they miss out on opportunities to develop a bond with the college and to strengthen their friendships. Encourage the student to talk with his/her RA or visit the Counseling Center.

Summary

This is an exciting time full of new challenges, experiences, relationships, and intellectual adventures. We look forward to working with students with disabilities at Muhlenberg College and we hope you will find this handbook a useful resource.
Resources

www.ncset.org
National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

www.pacer.org

www.rfbd.org
Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic

www.geocities.com/lingram15/  
Publisher contacts for requesting electronic texts

www.heath.gwu.edu/SummerPreCollege.htm/  
A guide to pre-college summer programs

www.ldresources.com
Resources and information for people with learning disabilities

www.schwablearning.org
A parent’s guide to helping students with learning differences

www.pageminderinc.com
A paging system that helps organize both academic and personal life

www.frontgate.com
Source for the "Morning Reporter," a talking alarm clock/radio that announces the time, weather, and up to 8 reminders that you pre-record

www.health.gwu.edu/PDFs/financialaid.pdf

www.cruise-consulting.bigstep.com/

www.landmarkcollege.org

www.allkindsofminds.org

www.whereyouheaded.com
Advice for students and families about high school/college transition and "gap year" (time off opportunities) information

www.autism-society.org
Autism Society of America  
Can purchase brochures in bulk or view them online.

wwwefa.org
Epilepsy Foundation  
No brochures or pamphlets but provides printer-friendly information plus a separate teen website.
Appendix
GENERAL INFORMATION

Q: What types of services are available?
A: There are four main types of services offered: peer tutoring, group content workshops (Chemistry, Math, etc.), study skills seminars, and individual academic assistance with a learning specialist.

Q: Is there a fee for services?
A: No, there is no cost to enrolled students.

Q: What are the qualifications of the tutors?
A: Muhlenberg’s Peer Tutoring Program enjoys a national reputation. We are certified by the College Reading and Learning Association to the Master Tutor level and won the 2002 National Tutoring Association’s Four Year Program of the Year Award. Each tutor is nominated by a faculty member, must attend five hours of initial training, and is encouraged to attend additional training sessions as well. Peer tutors offer study strategies, support, encouragement, and content instruction in a way that cannot be matched by a professional.

Q: Why not professional tutors?
A: The Academic Resource Center believes that peers are powerful agents of change. Most Muhlenberg students can deal with the content but they need help with study strategies, organization, and application of course material. The peer tutor has recently completed the exact course, often with the same instructor. Peers are more accessible and often more credible to the student.

Q: How can a student be assigned a trained tutor?
A: Tutoring request forms are available in the reception area of the Academic Resource Center until the second week after mid-semester. Both the student and the tutor are notified by mail within one week after returning the request form. The meeting time and place is then determined by mutual agreement between the tutor and the student.

Q: What are the topics covered in the Study Skills Seminars?
A: Study Skills Seminars cover the following topics: assessing your personal learning style, time management/organization, note taking, test preparation, textbook reading, motivation, and metacognition.

Q: How can a student receive individual assistance?
A: Any student can make an appointment with a Learning Specialist by calling (484) 664-3433 or coming to the office on the lower level of Seegers Union.

Q: Is there help for students with disabilities?
A: Yes, the Academic Resource Center coordinates academic assistance for students with disabilities. Students should provide recent documentation in order to receive appropriate support.
Peer Support at Muhlenberg College

**Student Advisors**

Student Advisors are placed in First Year Seminars to provide guidance and support during orientation and throughout the first semester.

**Writing Assistants**

Writing Assistants are assigned to first year seminars and work closely with students throughout the semester to assist their transition from high school to college-level writing.

**Writing Tutors/Writing Mentors**

Walk-in tutorials are available through the Writing Center on a first come, first serve basis. Students can discuss their written work and receive advice for revisions, thesis development, organization, grammar, and citation needs. Individual, ongoing support is available in some cases.

**Peer Tutors**

Peer Tutors are available for weekly individual or small-group sessions through Academic Resource Center Services. In addition to furthering the tutee’s understanding of the specific subject area, the tutor helps to develop appropriate study skills, note taking, time management, and test-taking strategies.

**Learning Strategy Instructors**

LSIs are peer tutors who have been selected to conduct first-year study skills workshops. These collaborative, interactive workshops cover various topics including time management, memory strategies, note taking, textbook reading, test taking, and exam preparation.

**Learning Assistants**

Learning Assistants are peer tutors who have taken a course in *Adult Personal and Cognitive Development* and are then placed into classrooms that incorporate workshop-based instruction. LAs help to facilitate the learning process by offering workshops, modeling sound metacognitive practices, and working closely with the faculty member.

**Resident Advisors**

RAs are available for limited, informal counseling on personal and academic issues. They offer guidance to students who are experiencing difficulties, and make referrals to the appropriate campus professionals when necessary.
General Information for MUHLENBERG STUDENTS with Disabilities

The Academic Resource Center coordinates support for students whose disabilities may impact learning. Do you have a permanent disability that affects one or more of your daily life activities and will impact your academic work in some way? Disabilities that impact learning may include hearing, mobility or visual impairments, as well as hidden disabilities such as chronic medical conditions (arthritis, cancer, diabetes, kidney disorder, lupus, seizure disorder, etc.), significant Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, learning disabilities, or mental health disabilities. If you believe you have a disability that will impact learning, please contact this office as soon as possible.

The Academic Resource Center also works with students with temporary disabilities (illness, injury or hospitalization for more than two weeks duration) where academic accommodation or assistance may be needed. Please note that Muhlenberg’s Student Health Services in the Student Development Center (484-664-3199) should be notified of your temporary disability prior to contacting The Academic Resource Center.

Who are we?
Wendy Cole, Director
Maggie Cummings, Learning Specialist
Mary Beth Kallen, Learning Specialist
Monica Cocca, Tutorial Coordinator
Karen Dorney, Office Manager

Where are we?
Academic Resource Center
Seegers Union, Lower Level
(484) 664-3433
Fax: (484) 664-3533
TTY Relay (Pa.) (800) 654-5988
Web address: www.muhlenberg.edu

What can we do?
· Help students navigate through college, providing advocacy advice, academic counseling, and advising
· Arrange classroom accommodations, when appropriate
· Help locate readers, note takers, tutors, and other peer assistance
· Help you obtain specialized aids and equipment, tape recorders, wheelchairs, scooters, large print/taped books, etc.
· Share our resource collection of periodicals, books, articles and videos on disability-related topics

What can you do?
Stop by or call if you are interested in registering for services and/or serving as a note taker. Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., August 15 through June 15.

Our aim is to provide support services to students, faculty, and staff that encourage students with disabilities to become self-sufficient in managing their own accommodations.