Welcome!

RIVESP Pathways is a newsletter of the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities for parents, students, teachers, and anyone interested in what is going on with services and activities for students with visual impairments in RI.

This newsletter will keep you connected and informed about the latest innovations, research, and best practices related to the education of our students with blindness and visual impairments.

Reader comments and suggestions are welcome. Send an email to cirwin@ric.edu.

Life after High School - Strategies for a Successful Transition from High School to College

The transition from high school to college can be a challenging experience for many young adults and their families. Making the decision to apply to college is only the first of many decisions as a student transitions from high school to the college of his choosing. For a young person with visual impairment, additional considerations may be necessary to ensure a successful experience before and after starting college. In this issue of RIVESP Pathways you will learn of various tips and resources to help with picking a college, requesting academic accommodations, and planning for living arrangements. Additional information and resources are available on the Sherlock Center website at www.sherlockcenter.org. Click the link for Life after High School: A Guide for Students with VI.

Before You Decide on a College

Begin the search early! Start researching which college you may want to attend as early as your junior year of high school. Your high school guidance counselor can be an important source of information on college requirements and the application process. Make room in your schedule to attend college information sessions and fairs held at your high school or local community. Schedule an appointment to speak to college representatives about your interests and concerns as a student with visual impairment.
As a student with visual impairment you may face unique issues pertaining to course selection, academic accommodations, and living arrangements. **For your first semester as a college student, you may want to consider a lighter course load to make this adjustment without overwhelming yourself academically.** Most colleges have a disability services center or office with staff to assist students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of their courses. Prior to your first semester you will want to make an appointment to learn more about the academic and residential supports available to you and any requirements to request supports. If you plan to live on campus, consider meeting with the campus housing authority and introduce yourself to the Dining Hall manager and staff. Will you need Orientation and Mobility training to navigate the campus? If you plan to commute, determine if you will you be able to use public transportation to get to and from campus or if will you need to use a door-to-door service such as RIDE. Carpooling may also be a viable option.

### Your First Few Weeks as a College Student

- **Meet with all of your instructors prior to the start of classes or during your first week.** Relationships with your instructors will be critical to your success in college. It will be important that they understand your specific visual impairment and how it impacts you academically. The majority of professors will be supportive of you and your specific needs, but you will need to be your own best advocate. Be certain your professors understand the accommodations you require to be successful and politely address any questions or concerns they may have as well.

- **Get Involved.** Typically, early in each semester, colleges will hold extra-curricular activity fairs to introduce students to the variety of clubs and interest groups on campus. Find an area that you will enjoy and become part of a group of students with the same interest. The more involved you are, the better your chances of enjoying the social aspects of the college experience. Get to know students who are planning the same major as you. These are the people you will most likely see throughout your college career, as they will be taking many of the same courses. Building friendships early on will be helpful should you need a study partner or group, or have to miss a class and need to get notes and find out what you missed.

- **Keep Up with Academic Requirements.** Don't fall behind on reading assignments and class work. In college, you will be expected to complete most of your work independently outside of class time. Follow the syllabus and go to class prepared, having completed all assigned readings and assignments. It can be difficult to catch up once you fall behind.

### Tips from Rhode Island Students and Graduates

**Tips from a recent Providence College graduate:**

- Talk to the Department Heads of majors that interest you prior to declaring. Specifically ask them about obstacles you may face finding/keeping employment based on your visual impairment.
Make maximum use of Career Services during Junior and Senior years for resume development and employment opportunities.

**Tips from a student who attended CCRI and an out-of-state college:**

- Self-advocacy is a top priority.
- Understand that professors are not there to hold your hand. Some will be really helpful, while others will not. Good communication with your professors is your responsibility.

**Tips from a student who attended CCRI and lives on-campus at URI:**

- Develop a good relationship with your Residential Advisor (RA) if you live on campus. Mine has been really, really helpful!
- Find study groups to get involved with really early in the semester. It's a good way to make friends as well as make you feel better to know other students may be struggling in a subject too!

**Transition and College Resources**

- **Perkins Scout: Postsecondary Education for Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired**
  http://www.perkinselearning.org/scout/postsecondary-education-students-who-are-blind-or-visual-impaired

- **American Foundation for the Blind: Preparation for College**
  http://www.afb.org/info/education/k-12/college-prep/235

- **Transitions? Reflections of a Blind College Student**

- **Transition: A Guide for Parents and Students**
  http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5100.pdf

- **Life after High School: A Guide for Students with Visual Impairment**
  http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/viguidestudent.html

**Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities @ RI College**
Promoting Membership in School, Work and Community
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