



Your College Community:

How People with Psychiatric Disabilities Can Make the Most of Their College Experience

Temple University
Collaborative on Community Inclusion



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Your College is Your Community

“Community integration is the opportunity to live in the community and be valued for one’s uniqueness and abilities, just like everyone else.”

- Salzer, 2006

When you first thought of going to college, you probably imagined going to classes, taking lecture notes, and reading textbooks. Maybe you also envisioned studying in the library, making friends in the dorms, or joining a student organization, but most people think of college as a place to learn and to earn a degree. While it is true that education should be the focus of your time in school, there are a wealth of opportunities for support, social and personal growth, wellness, and entertainment which many students miss out on by only showing up to classes.

Universities are more than just classrooms, dorms, students, and professors. A university is a community of people, united by the shared goal of creating an environment in which everyone can reach their full learning potential. Just like any other community, it offers many benefits, including a sense of belonging and being connected to other people. Starting college can be an overwhelming time for all students, and people with psychiatric disabilities may experience unique challenges. Beyond traditional mental health services offered at your college or university, the campus community can support a person’s engagement and success in pursuing their education.

You probably want to be a more active member of your college community, but it can be hard to know where to start, especially in a school with thousands of students. There are so many ways to get involved – and we’ve put them all in one place for you in this handbook! We let you know what’s out there, what’s in it for you, and what you can do to fully participate in your college community.

Art and Culture

Art is a great way to express yourself, and for many people, art is a valued part of their path to recovery. It can help you to cope with symptoms of anxiety and depression, build self-esteem by allowing you to create something that you can be proud of, help you to understand yourself and become more confident, and connect you to other people by sharing ideas and stories¹. Creating art is also a way for some people in recovery to reflect on traumatic experiences in a way that helps them to gain perspective and move forward². Art can also help you to feel a sense of community, and can lessen feelings of being stigmatized for your mental illness³. Art, music, and drama expose you to new ways of seeing the world, and may become relaxing hobbies to help relieve stress, providing a constructive study break.

Liberal arts colleges and universities provide a wonderful array of free or low-cost events related to theater, art, music, and dance. Keep in mind that technical colleges do not have arts programs; however, your office of student affairs may still be able to help you to find free or low-cost local arts events.

Many universities pride themselves on providing students with a chance to experience diversity by meeting people who are different from them and taking part in new traditions. Your school's cultural or religious centers offer a rich resource for learning about other cultures, which can help you develop social skills, meet new friends, and make connections in your academic work which will help you to stand out in the classroom.

Drama/theater & Cinema

Your university may have a theater or drama program which puts on regular performances during the school year. Free or discounted tickets are usually available for students with a student ID card. To find school performances, contact the theater department or access the school's website. Performances may also be advertised on bulletin boards around campus. Even if your school does not have a theater or film program, you may be able to get

¹ Lith, T.V., Fenner, P., & Schofield, M. (2010). The lived experience of art making as a companion to the mental health recovery process. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 33(8), 652-660.

² Lith, T. V., Fenner, P., & Schofield, M. (2009). Toward an understanding of how art making can facilitate mental health recovery. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 8(2).

³ Howells, V., & Zelnik, T. (2009). Making art: A qualitative study of personal and group transformation in a community arts studio. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 32(3), 215-222.

discounted tickets to local performances and movie showings. Check with your office of student affairs to find out what is available.

If you want to take a more active role in performance, most schools offer theater classes designed for non-major students; you should speak to your academic advisor to see if this is an option for you. Taking a theater class can help you to build self-confidence, reduce social anxiety, and learn skills that will help you to succeed in job interviews and class presentations.

Another way you can be part of a performance is by joining a student-led theater club at your school. Joining a theater club might be a better fit for you than taking a class, as you can be involved in a theater production without having to worry about grades and have more control over your level of commitment and involvement. It's also a great option for people who want to be a part of a theater production without being in the spotlight; even if you are not comfortable being onstage, you can still be involved in theater! Every performance requires hard work not only from the actors, but also from many people backstage, including costumers, set designers, prop directors, lighting managers, stage directors, and marketing teams.

Many universities offer special film screenings on-campus, which are often free or low-cost. These may include film festivals, where you can see a variety of video and media projects created by other students. If you are an aspiring filmmaker, you may be able to rent cameras and other recording equipment from your school to create your own videos. Take time to understand your school's rental policies in order to avoid costly fees for improper return of equipment.

Art Galleries, Programs, & Museums

Many schools have a small art gallery or museum on-campus which can be viewed for free by students. These usually showcase student art or temporary exhibitions of guest artists. Some schools also have free programs where students can be involved in art in the community – for example, working to create murals in the neighborhoods around campus, or assisting with an art program for young children.

Local art, science, and history museums, cultural centers, botanical gardens, zoos, and aquariums may also offer free or discounted admission to students with a student ID, or may be free to the public on certain days of the week or month. To find these opportunities, visit your school's website, contact the art department, or call or visit the website of the museum you are interested in. Another way to gain free admission to museums is to ask if you may volunteer there as a docent or tour guide; although you will have to commit your time, you would be provided with training and a deeper understanding of the museum's collection and goals, as well as having the chance to interact with visitors to the museum and make their time there more enjoyable.

Music & Dance

Many students find it relaxing and entertaining to listen to live music or watch live dance performances. Universities with music and dance programs typically hold student and faculty recitals, concerts, orchestral performances, opera, and master classes (interactive music lessons

by experienced players) which are open to students and the public. Many performances are free; those which require the purchase of tickets may offer a discount to students.

Individual and group dance or music lessons may also be an option at your school. Learning an instrument or participating in dance can be extremely rewarding, entertaining, and provides you with a skill that you can share with family and friends. Some of the talents you could learn include piano, guitar, violin, saxophone, singing/choir, and dance. You will need to have your own instrument to take music lessons (with the obvious exception of singing lessons!). Individual lessons can be costly, so it is a good idea to see if group lessons are offered for the instrument or dance style that you want to learn.

Most universities also have student choir or a cappella singing groups. Joining a singing group gives you a chance to take part in group performances on- or off-campus and share music with other people. Similar to a sports team, you may have to try out, or audition, in order to join. If you are nervous or uncomfortable about auditioning, you could consider starting your own singing group or band with your friends instead.

Cultural Centers

The library is a great resource for cultural events! Many college libraries host free events related to history, politics, art, literature, and diversity. They may have lectures by guest speakers or workshops. Attending these events can help you to stay current, increase your understanding of other people and traditions, bring more to class discussions and enhance your coursework. University libraries also often have a collection of popular reading materials in addition to scholarly texts, and you may be able to check out books, graphic novels, movies and more.

Your school may also have a women's center, an LGBTQ center, spiritual centers, or cultural centers. These are also wonderful places to get resources, meet new people, and attend free cultural events. Examples of events these places might host include guest speakers, coffee break hang-outs, mass/worship, rallies, meditation, film showings and book groups. They should also have resources for places you can go in your community to access services related to minority issues.

Mental Wellbeing and Stress Management

For many students, going to college is often accompanied by new challenges and stressors that can contribute to anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Students can often feel too embarrassed or too intimidated to ask for help, so it is important to combat the stigma attached to mental health by recognizing that mental health issues can happen to anyone. Thirty percent of all college freshmen report feeling overwhelmed a great deal of the time, and 30% of college freshmen also felt so depressed it was difficult to function⁴. Fortunately, there are plenty of mental health resources available on and off campus.

Campus Counseling Centers

Campus counseling centers can provide support to help manage personal and educational challenges, emotional and psychological problems, and situational crises or traumatic events that may arise throughout the college years. Counseling services are confidential and free of charge in an individual or group setting. They may offer walk-in clinic hours as well as scheduled appointments. Some common topics campus counseling centers handle include:

- Depression, Anxiety
- Relationships
- Stress management
- Eating disorders
- Self esteem
- Loss and grief
- Sexuality
- Sexual abuse
- Substance use
- Academic or career related concerns
- Trouble adjusting to college

Campus counseling centers and their websites can be an excellent source for online self-help materials and pamphlets that include helpful tips for developing coping skills and stress management. Campus counseling centers should also be able to inform students on the confidentiality policy or other policies of their college or university in the event a personal leave or accommodation is necessary. Additionally, they can offer information on additional supports in the community such as local chapters of various support groups for different topics or off-campus mental health referrals.

⁴ American Psychological Association. The state of mental health on college campuses: A growing crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/education/news/2011/college-campuses.aspx>.

The Jed Foundation and Their Campus-Based Programs

The Jed Foundation: The Jed Foundation is an organization whose mission is to promote emotional health and prevent suicide among college and university students. The Jed Foundation partners with the public and leaders in higher education, mental health, and research to advance initiatives that revolve around the importance of mental health awareness and understanding on college campuses. They provide training programs, tools, and expert guided resources to assist college and universities to enhance their campus mental health and suicide prevention programming. Additionally, the Jed Foundation has various campaigns through collaborations with other entities to provide the following on campus resources and programs:

ULifeline: ULifeline is an anonymous, confidential, online resource center that provides general information about mental health issues as well as campus specific resources. ULifeline also features an anonymous screening tool that has been used by over 250,000 students. By going to www.ulifeline.org, students can:

- Learn more about the signs and symptoms of mental health issues. ULifeline offers fact sheets on alcohol and drug use, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, eating disorders, self-harming behaviors, depression, schizophrenia, suicidal behavior, general emotional health, and stress.
- Get help now by selecting a particular college or university for specific resources available on campus and in the surrounding areas. This includes local support groups or chapters of mental health organizations. Students can further tailor this information by taking a self-evaluator that will provide specific resources depending on if the student is seeking help for themselves or friend, and the symptoms or situations they are experiencing.
- Find tips and expert advice for maintaining a healthy lifestyle by improving sleep, exercise, diet, relaxation, and managing stress.

Half of Us: Half of Us is a partnership between the Jed Foundation and mtvU that strives to decrease the stigma around mental health and encourage help-seeking by creating a public dialogue on the prevalence of mental health issues and connect students to appropriate resources. Students can hear celebrities and college students talk about their experience with mental health issues, find resources and facts about mental health, and learn how to take action to help themselves or a friend. For more information and resources, visit www.halfofus.com.

Transition Year: Transition Year is a collaboration between The Jed Foundation and the American Psychiatric Foundation that aims to provide information and tools to assist with the smooth and healthy transition from high school to college. Transition Year has developed guides for both parents and students to help with the adjustments and challenges of college life while also providing critical information on identifying, addressing, and managing the treatment of

emotional problems and mental health issues. For more information and resources, visit: www.transitionyear.org.

Love is Louder: Love is Louder is a social networking campaign and grassroots movement to encourage help-seeking and connectedness among students and across campuses. Love is Louder has been used on campus and through different social media platforms to address bullying, negative self-image, discrimination, loneliness, and depression. This campaign is based on students taking action and expressing themselves, whether it be through sharing personal stories, artwork, photos, or holding an event or fundraiser on campus. For more information, visit www.loveislouder.com.

Living On or Off Campus

After choosing a college or university to attend, the next big step is deciding to live on or off campus. Previous research has shown that students who live on campus are more engaged in personal development and learning, and have more opportunities to get to know peers, faculty, and resources the campus has to offer⁵. Experiencing residential dorm life is associated with promoting a variety of desirable academic outcomes by enhancing students' involvement and engagement within their colleges or universities⁶. On the other hand, more and more students are taking the non-traditional route and not living on campus. This has prompted colleges and universities to offer programs or resources to accommodate students who may choose to commute or live off campus to help them succeed just as well⁷. Whether you pick a residential hall or an off campus apartment to call home, it is important to consider what is most important to you as well as the pros and cons to make the best and most informed decision for you.

Living On-Campus

If you do decide to live on campus, your first step is to look into the different residence halls and what requirements your college or university has. Some require incoming freshmen to live on campus, while others may not allow off campus housing until the junior or senior year. Depending on the college or university, they may have separate type of living arrangements for each residence hall. Some may be communal style with shared bathrooms while others may offer private bathrooms, and some may have housing based on programs or majors. Colleges or universities may have a roommate matching program where they try and select a roommate for you based on personality and shared interests. It is particularly important to pay attention to submission deadlines for housing selection since most colleges and universities will allot preferred housing on a first-come, first-served basis once a student submits a deposit. It is equally important to inquire about any disability housing accommodation requests at this time. At this time, you may also want to look into purchasing a meal plan to make eating easy and convenient since most dorms will not have fully equipped kitchens.

Once you move into the residence hall, there will be a variety of welcome week activities to get you acquainted with your new home, resources that are available, rules and regulations of your dorm, and an opportunity to meet new people. Welcome week activities and events held in your residence hall are great opportunities to make new friends. These friendship are considered

⁵ National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. (2006). What matters to student success: A review of the literature. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/kuh_team_report.pdf.

⁶ Turley, R. N. L., & Wodtke, G. (2010). College residence and academic performance: Who benefits from living on campus?. *Urban Education*, 45(4), 506-532.

⁷ Jenkins, R. (2014). The new traditional student. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/The-New-Traditional-on/135012/>.

“natural supports” which are relationships that occur in everyday life outside of formal supports like your typical mental health providers such as counselors and therapists. These natural supports help to make up a solid support system that can have a significant impact in a person’s life as well as help to develop a sense of social belonging, dignity, and self-esteem⁸. You will be introduced to your resident assistant who will serve as a liaison between residents and the university or college. They are responsible for upholding the rules and regulations of the dorm, facilitating community and a cohesive residential hall through meetings and activities, and will be your go to person for any concerns or questions you may have. If you move into your residence hall and find yourself unhappy with your living arrangements, most colleges and universities have dates throughout the academic year for room change requests. If you feel it is in your best interest to move before the room change requests are available, you should review your school’s cancellation and release from housing policies.

Living Off-Campus

If you decide that living off campus is the best choice for you, you are certainly not alone in that decision. As of fall 2011, of the 17.6 million people enrolled in college, only 15% were attending a four-year college and living on campus. Some students decide to live off campus at home with family to save money, while others may prefer to rent an apartment or house with roommates. Living off campus affords you more independence and freedom, privacy and personal space, and a sense of responsibility as living off campus includes more bills, cleaning, grocery shopping, and cooking. Many colleges and universities may have off campus housing options that are associated with the school that only offers housing to current students. If you are looking for a roommate, campus bulletin boards and organizations are a great source to find other students who are looking for off campus housing.

Whether living on campus is right for you, or you ultimately decide to move off campus, it is essential to set up strategies to manage your mental health recovery during this time of new freedoms and responsibility. You should build a support network by taking advantage of what your school has to offer. You can do this through joining study groups, attending different organization and meetings, and making new friends with students who have similar interests or hobbies. It is also important to set goals for yourself and create structure by sticking to daily schedules that dedicate time to homework, studying, physical health, and social life to keep you on track throughout the college years.

⁸http://tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits_Monographs_Guidebooks/relationships_family_friends_intimacy/Natural_Supports.pdf

Academic Support and Accommodations

Some students may find college academically challenging as college coursework can be much harder and different than classwork experienced in high school. It is important to consider creating a balanced semester course schedule, developing learning and study skills, and becoming familiar with the resources and accommodations available at your college or university. Luckily, there are many options available on campus to help you achieve academic success.

Academic Advisors

Academic advising is an essential part of every college and university campus. Academic advisors are people who are there to help you navigate the ins and out of your educational path. They can help you decide which major is right for you, and make sure you are taking all the appropriate courses to fulfill program requirements to graduate on time. They can help you troubleshoot any issues with your course schedules, missed deadlines, or decisions to change majors. Academic advisors are also great sources to provide insight on the institutional policies, procedures, and programs at your school as well as resources, services, and accommodations that may be available to you.

Resources on Campus

Colleges and universities offer a variety of additional academic resources, centers, and programs to help students achieve their academic goals and continued success. Campuses offer centers to help build different skillsets such as writing centers to help students structure papers throughout the semester and quantitative centers that offer support with math, science, and economic courses. Tutoring services per major are also available on most campuses, and many offer peer-led tutor study groups for specific classes. Throughout the semester, your school may offer different labs or workshops to help you build their organization and time management skills, as well as hone their learning strategies to succeed throughout your college career.

Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are intended to protect people with disabilities from discrimination in higher education and ensure that essential supports and accommodations are offered so that students with disabilities can be as academically successful as students without disabilities. Students who request accommodations obtain more than twice the number of supports than those who did not⁹. Some reasons students decide to disclose their mental health condition is to obtain information about available supports and services, discuss academic

⁹Salzer, M., Wick, L., & Rogers, J. (2008). Familiarity with and use of accommodations and supports among postsecondary students with mental illnesses. *Psychiatric Services*, 59(4), 370-375.

requirement and practical accommodations during your college career, and ensure that faculty members are receptive to the accommodations to allow you to be successful in your courses¹⁰. However, it is ultimately your decision whether or not you disclose your mental health condition.

If you decide to disclose your mental health condition, it is important to consider how much information you are comfortable with disclosing and what type of accommodations would be helpful for your success in college. A good place to start this conversation is with your school's Disability Resource Center. They can help you decide the best time point to disclose your mental health condition, inform you of the types of supports and accommodations are available to you, and assist you in understanding the policies and necessary documentation for your school. For more information about your rights and disclosing your mental health condition on campus, please visit www.goo.gl/G7ctvP. This guide, provided by the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, provides a wealth of information for college and university students to know your legal rights when seeking mental health services and accommodations on campus.

¹⁰ National Alliance on Mental Illness. The why, when, what, and how of disclosure in college. Retrieved from http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Check_Out_Resources&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=146790.

Health and Recreation

Supporting your physical health is one of the most important steps toward recovery. Many people underestimate the connection between the mind and body, yet it is important that both are taken care of in order to promote overall wellbeing: vigorous physical activity is connected to better mental health and less stress for college students¹¹. However, in a college environment, it may be difficult to find time to exercise, eat well, cope with academic stress, and maintain healthy relationships. Luckily, there are lots of resources on campus to support your healthy lifestyle – or to get you started with one if you aren't already! Best of all, exercise is great for your brain, and helps you to study more effectively¹² and succeed academically¹³.

In addition to staying healthy, it's also important to take time to have fun. There are lots of exciting ways to stay active on-campus. Besides intramural and club sports, many campus recreation centers also sponsor special events for students, such as fitness challenges, laser tag, or camping trips.

Gym/Fitness Center

Universities usually have gyms/fitness centers which can be accessed for free by full-time students. Facilities differ by school, but typically include: cardio equipment (e.g. treadmills, elliptical, stationary bicycles); weight lifting equipment, including free weights and resistance machines; basketball courts; tennis or racquetball courts; an indoor or outdoor running track; and swimming pool. Often, special equipment and programming are available to accommodate students with disabilities. If you need any kind of accommodation, you should ask the fitness center staff.

Most university fitness centers also offer free group fitness classes. Group fitness classes are led by a fitness instructor, who can help you to stay motivated, stay safe, and have fun with your workout. If you attend the same class regularly, you may meet people with similar fitness interests or goals. Usually, you can drop-in to group classes without registering, but some may require you to register and may cost a small fee. Equipment for group fitness classes is usually provided for free, but you should check in advance with the fitness center staff to make sure that you arrive prepared. Some examples of group fitness classes include yoga, Zumba, cycling, boot camp, circuit training, step class, and Pilates. If you need any special accommodations, plan to arrive for the class a few minutes early so that you can speak with the instructor. Fitness

¹¹ VanKim, N. A., & Nelson, T. F. (2013). Vigorous physical activity, mental health, perceived stress, and socializing among college students. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 28*(1), 7-15.

¹² Change, Y. K., Labban, J. D., Gapin, J. I., & Etnier, J. L. (2012). The effects of acute exercise on cognitive performance: A meta-analysis. *Brain Research, 1453*, 87-101.

¹³ Trockel, M. T., Barnes, M. D., & Egget, D. L. (2010). Health-related variables and academic performance among first-year college students: Implications for sleep and other behaviors. *Journal of American College Health, 49*(3), 125-131.

instructors should also offer modifications or options during class so that you can participate at your own fitness and ability level.

Some university fitness centers will also rent out sports equipment to students for free or for a small fee. This could include basketballs, volleyballs, tennis racquets, jump ropes, yoga mats, hand wraps, bikes, and camping equipment. Make sure that you return rented equipment on-time and in good condition in order to avoid extra fees.

Your campus fitness center might also offer personal training. Personal trainers can help you to set realistic fitness goals, learn fun new ways of working out, and inspire you to keep going. They offer individualized assistance to help you reach your goals, tailored to your unique experience and fitness level. Personal training can be expensive, but most facilities offer partner discounts, so you may want to find a friend and sign up for a few sessions together. Working out with a friend is one of the best ways to have a good time and stay motivated!

Intramural & Club Sports

There are many opportunities to get involved in sports on a college campus. Some examples of college sports include:

- Basketball
- Football
- Soccer
- Dodgeball
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Baseball/softball
- Field, ice or floor hockey
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Martial Arts
- Swimming
- Equestrian (Horseback riding)
- Rock climbing
- Bowling
- Lacrosse
- Rugby
- Snowboarding
- Fencing
- Cycling
- Badminton
- Paintball
- Gymnastics

Intramural sports are played with and against other students from your school, and are typically more casual than club sports. There are two ways to join an intramural sport: 1) as a free agent or 2) as a member of a team. If you have friends who want to participate in the same sport, you can register together as a new team (there may be a fee). If you want to sign up by yourself, you would register as a free agent. A free agent is someone who wants to play intramural sports but is not yet part of a team. After registering with the campus recreation department as a free agent, you could petition to join an existing team or be placed onto a team with other free agents.

If you want to compete with people from other schools, club sports are a good option. Club sports may require a sign-up or registration form to join. Typically, you pay dues to be part of the club; keep in mind that this is in addition to the cost of uniforms and equipment, which can be very expensive for some sports, such as football or equestrian. If you are new to a sport,

you will need to contact the local club to see if they accept people without previous experience. Many club sports members are happy to spend extra time with a new member who is interested in learning more about the sport! Joining a club sport is a good way to keep active, feel like part of a team, and share in accomplishments such as tournaments or matches against other schools.

Varsity/NCAA Sports

If you prefer watching sports over participating in them, enjoy creating school spirit and cheering on a team, or are just looking for something exciting to do after studying, you could go to one of your school's varsity sports games. Examples of varsity sports include basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, tennis, cross-country, and gymnastics. Tickets are generally free for students. Varsity sports events are often televised, and schools sometimes encourage students to attend by giving away free school-spirit gear, such as t-shirts, at games.

Campus Wellness Center

In addition to the fitness center, many universities have a wellness office where you can access information and programs related to health. Your school's wellness center can help you to learn more about nutrition, alcohol and drugs, stress reduction, and sexual health (some wellness centers offer free STI testing and condoms). The wellness center is a great place to start out when you want to learn more about living a healthier lifestyle, and has resources to help support your mental health, such as stress-reduction or self-care workshops. Although they may not provide the health service that you request, they should be able to refer you to a service or program either within the university or in the greater community that will fit your needs and budget. If you have questions about healthy eating, relationships, coping with stress, or any other health issues, the campus wellness center is a good first stop.

Clinics & Health Centers

Many schools have clinics which offer health services to students. Depending on your school, these may be limited to minor health services such as vaccinations, screenings, and minor illness, or may be similar to the services which a family doctor performs. Most student health centers are paid for by your private insurance, by a fee included in your tuition, or on a sliding-scale rate based on your income, making them an affordable and convenient choice. Some campus clinics can also provide birth control; however, conservative or religiously affiliated schools may not offer this service. Be aware that many campus clinics are limited in the services they offer, and are best used for minor health care needs such as immunizations and colds; you should still go to your primary care physician when necessary, especially for serious or chronic healthcare needs. Additionally, be aware that campus clinic fees do not cover the cost of hospitalizations, so you should still maintain your regular health insurance.

Clubs & Student Organizations

College presents incredible opportunities to join in or start social groups with your peers; indeed, students who are more involved in student organizations tend to be more satisfied with their college experience!¹⁴ Student clubs or organizations are groups of students who have a similar hobby, interest, or goal. They are groups of students who volunteer together, watch movies together, play games together, share their culture with each other, rally together for political causes, and any other social activity you can think of. Many people are unsure about how to make friends and meet people on campus; joining a club makes this easier by helping you to meet people who have things in common with you, and gives you events and structured social activities that you can go to, which can be a lot of fun. Studies have shown that individuals with a greater diversity of relationships and involvement in a broad range of social activities have healthier lives and live longer than those who lack such natural supports¹⁵. Additionally, student organizations provide opportunities to practice leadership¹⁶ and get involved in the community through campaigning to change local or school policies, writing for the school's newspaper, or hosting fundraising events. Sometimes, it is even appropriate to put your student organization involvement on your resume!

Student Activity Board/Student Government

Universities typically charge a student activity fee along with, or included in, tuition. This fee is used to plan events for students, such as festivals, Homecoming, concerts, games, speakers, comedy shows, workshops, free food, and more. Some universities allow a student group to help determine how money from the student activity fee is used; typically, this group is the student government association, but it may be a separate student activity board in other schools. For more information about how you can get involved with events on campus, check with your office of student affairs.

The student government is a group of students who are elected by other students to make decisions about school events, policies, and resources. Students hold campaigns to be voted into student government positions (for example, head of academic affairs) by other students. Running for student government office provides you with leadership and political experience and a sense of responsibility. A position in student government requires a lot of hard work and can be a big time commitment, but it is a great addition to your resume and can help

¹⁴ Montelongo, R. (2002). Student participation in college student organizations: A review of the literature. *Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association*, 50-63.

¹⁵http://tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits_Monographs_Guidebooks/relationships_family_friends_intimacy/Natural_Supports.pdf

¹⁶ Veronesi, M. C., & Gunderman, R. B. (2012). The potential of student organizations for developing leadership: One school's experience. *Academic Medicine*, 87(2), 226-229.

you to meet new people. If you are not interested in running for student government office, but you would still like to be involved in governing the student body, you may be able to get involved with a student government committee. Committees oversee the organization of special events such as school spirit weeks. For more information on how you can be involved in student government, contact your office of student affairs.

Army ROTC

The Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps is a college elective program you can enroll in as an addition to your regular course curriculum. It is a special leadership program which prepares students to become Officers in the U.S. Army. You can take the Army ROTC Basic Course without any commitment to serve in the U.S. Army. If you then choose to take the Advanced Course, you will have to commit to complete an eight-year period of service with the U.S. Army. An ROTC program can help you to develop leadership skills, which can boost your self-confidence and make your resume more appealing to future employers, particularly for managerial positions.

One of the benefits of Army ROTC is the availability of scholarships and stipends for living costs and other college expenses. If you meet the application requirements and are willing to make a commitment to serve in the Army for eight years, you may be able to receive a full tuition scholarship through the Army ROTC. However, although this is an amazing opportunity and valuable experience for many people, you should think long and carefully about whether you are willing to serve in the U.S. Army for eight years after graduation. If you are having problems financing your education, check out the financial section of this guide (under *Jobs and Internships*), or visit your university's office of financial services. For more information on the Army ROTC, visit www.goarmy.com/rotc.

Student Organizations

Universities provide financial support (often through charging a student activity fee with tuition) to a wide variety of student-led social groups. These clubs, organizations, and special-interest groups are typically structured groups formally overseen by the university but administered by students. A student organization usually has a faculty advisor (a professor overseeing the organization) and a student leadership board elected by its members, including a president, vice-president, and treasurer. Organizations and clubs hold regular meetings for their members, usually weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly; although you do not necessarily have to attend meetings to be part of the organization, the more you attend and get involved, the more benefits you will gain. Many organizations also host special free or low-cost events for students which may be open to non-members.

Larger schools often support hundreds of different kinds of student organizations, so you should be able to find one that fits your interests. A few examples of student organization types include:

- Academic & Professional
- Arts & Entertainment

- Cultural or International
- Governance
- Honorary
- Club and Intramural sports
- Media & Publication
- Political or Advocacy
- Recreation & Leisure
- Religious
- Community service

Generally, signing up and attending meetings is all that is required to join a student organization. However, some organizations require an application, and others may require you to pay dues to participate. You can learn about what organizations are accepting members and how you can join by attending involvement fairs, checking school bulletin boards, or chatting with members when they are tabling on-campus. There may also be a listing of student organizations on your school's website.

Although student organizations are a great way to meet new people and gain social support, they are not self-help groups. If you want to talk to peers about mental health issues, it is probably more appropriate to join a group sponsored by your university counseling services office – unless, of course, the student organization you join focuses on mental health issues! Active Minds is a national nonprofit organization with chapters at schools across the country which encourages students to speak openly about mental health issues on campus; for more information, visit www.activeminds.org.

Greek Life

Fraternities and sororities (Greek letter organizations) are student groups which require you to complete a pledge process and be accepted by the group in order to join. Unlike most other clubs and student organizations, which are generally free to join, fraternities and sororities typically charge dues to members. Unless they are designated as co-ed, fraternities only accept male members and sororities only accept female members. Because of their more rigorous membership requirements, Greek letter organizations may be more close-knit than other student organizations, and many members experience a strong sense of connection to each other. Greek letter organizations have a focus on philanthropy, with each fraternity or sorority championing a specific non-profit organization or cause, and many requiring their members to complete community service hours. Other benefits of being involved in a Greek letter organization include developing leadership skills and gaining a lifelong source of friendship and support.

The process for joining a Greek letter organization varies. Often, it includes a recruitment period at the beginning of the academic year or semester, during which interested students “rush,” or attend formal recruitment events, for the fraternities or sororities they are interested

in. At the end of the recruitment period, organizations offer “bids,” or invitations to membership, to selected students. If you are offered a bid and accept membership, there may be a pledge or probationary period before you can be initiated as a full member. Depending on the school and organization, members may live independently or together in a special residence owned by or associated with the organization.

Being involved in a Greek letter organization can have a positive effect on your academics, including a higher GPA score¹⁷; fraternities and sororities usually have minimum GPA requirements for membership, and often support their members’ academic success with events such as group study sessions for members. However, students who join Greek letter organizations may be more likely to drink heavily¹⁸, which is linked to lower GPA scores for fraternity and sorority members¹⁹. For more information on drug and alcohol use in college, see the section on *Staying Safe* in this handbook.

Student Media

Getting involved with your university’s newspaper, yearbook, radio station, or television network is an exciting and rewarding way to be an active member of your campus community. You could have the chance to write articles about or report on important events on campus, such as festivals, athletics, new school policies, and news about the greater community. You do not have to be a journalism major to get involved in student media; many students who contribute are interested in current events, music, sports, art, advertising, entertainment, culture, and production. Your school newspaper or radio station is one of the best ways to share your thoughts and experiences with other students. Depending on your school, you may be able to earn money by writing commissioned articles.

Working on the student newspaper or yearbook primarily involves photography, and writing and editing articles, which are usually published both in print and online. Student editors also help to oversee the layout and design of articles, photos, and other content. Typical article topics include current events, sports, lifestyle (including food, health, and events), arts and entertainment, and opinions. Student radio or television presents an even larger variety of ways to get involved: volunteers can help with music, programming, news, advertising, engineering, promotions and events, and production.

¹⁷ DeBard, R., & Sacks, C. (2012). Greek membership: The relationship with first-year academic performance. *Journal of College Student Retention, 13*(1), 109-126.

¹⁸ Cashin, J. R., Presley, C. A., & Meilman, P. W. (1998). Alcohol use in the Greek system: Follow the leader? *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, 59*(1), 63-70.

¹⁹ Long, L. D. (2012). A multivariate analysis of the relationship between undergraduate fraternity/sorority involvement and academic performance. *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 7*(2), 37-48.

Staying Safe

Feeling that you have a safe environment in which to learn, study, and work is important for your mental health and academic success. Because college is a time when many people are exposed to new places and may have more independence and responsibility than ever before, it presents new risks and challenges. For some students, it can feel scary and overwhelming to navigate a college campus by themselves. College also presents unique hazards and new social situations, including the use of alcohol and drugs and higher rates of sexual violence. Knowing how you are protected on campus, understanding your rights, and learning how to address an emergency while you are at school can give you peace of mind and allow you to respond more quickly and successfully if a crisis arises.

It is also possible that, during your time at school, you become the subject of an investigation by the university for alleged misconduct. We discuss what to expect if you are contacted by campus police or called for a disciplinary hearing.

Campus Safety/Security

Your school has a campus security office which is dedicated to keeping you safe while you are on campus. Some of the ways that they might do this include: monitoring the campus via discreetly placed video cameras; having trained security officers conduct patrols by car, bike, or foot; requiring a student ID be shown by anyone entering campus buildings; providing campus chaperone services; placing emergency call boxes around buildings, walkways, and within restrooms; and offering safety workshops and programs. Under the Clery Act, all U.S. colleges and universities are required to create a publically available annual safety report of all crimes which occur on or near campus. It's important to remember that most schools only offer these security features on university property, so as soon as you walk off-campus, you will no longer be protected in the same way.

Chaperone & shuttle services: Campus security often provides a free chaperone service to help students travel safely on campus. The type of service differs by campus, and may be a walking chaperone service (where you are accompanied by a security officer while you walk) or campus police car pick-up service. You can use a chaperone service to get around campus at night, if you live in a residence hall and stay out late, if you are taking a night class, or if you are in any type of situation where you feel unsafe traveling alone, and you may use the service as often as you need. Typically, these services are only offered within the campus perimeter, so you would not be able to use them when traveling to and from a location not located on university property. Additionally, schools with multiple campuses will often offer a free shuttle service to help students to safely travel between classes. If you have any questions or concerns about how

to get around campus safely, you can speak with someone at your campus security office about the services they offer.

Reporting a crime: If you experience a crime on- or off-campus, or are in a situation which leads you to feel unsafe, campus security can help. It is important to report crimes on campus so that steps can be taken to keep you safe and so that perpetrators can be held accountable. Different states have different laws about when you have to report a crime. In most states, you will not be charged for witnessing a crime take place and failing to report it, and choosing whether or not to report a crime is up to you; however, you may be held responsible in some states for failing to report certain crimes. For example, it is typically illegal to fail to report known or suspected abuse of a child.

Be aware that you have options regarding how you report a crime, including the level of confidentiality of the report and how much you are willing to disclose to campus police. Some schools permit *anonymous* reporting of crimes; this means that your identity cannot be connected to the crime report in any way (e.g. you never give your name or any other identifying information when making the report, such as in a report submitted online). *Confidential* reporting may also be permitted, which means that your name will be connected to the report, but that information regarding your identity is only known to select people (i.e., campus security officers). Under federal law, certain crimes must be reported by campus police to the public, such as sex crimes, burglary, and assault. Which crimes are reported, the level of confidentiality available to people who wish to report a crime, and how crime reports are created varies by school and by local laws.

Depending on your school, you may be able to report a crime through an online form or email; however, if it is an emergency, it is always best to call. You should find out the phone number for your campus security office and carry it with you at all times in your wallet or purse, or saved in your phone's contact list. You can also go to the campus security office in person to report a crime or get help. This may be the best option if you are not dealing with an emergency but someone is making you feel unsafe. Campus security may also ask you to come to the security office in person to make a report if you witness a crime.

When you report a crime, the campus police officer will ask you questions about what happened. They will want to know what time the crime occurred, where it happened, and will probably ask for the name or a description of the person who committed the crime (if applicable). The questions which you may be asked could be extremely triggering; you should know that you have the right to disclose only as much as you feel comfortable. You can also request to speak with a security officer of a different gender. If you require medical attention of any kind, campus security should provide you with transportation to receive care.

Depending on the nature of the crime you are reporting, your campus police officer may encourage you to file a second report with the local police department. They should provide guidance and support for this process. Remember that reporting a crime to your local police department is completely optional, and you do not have to do so if you do not want to. If the offense you are reporting involves another student, you may be asked to testify at a hearing as

part of the judicial review process. The judicial review process is used to determine what kind of repercussions will occur for the student who committed the crime.

Disciplinary action: If you act in a way which is against the school's policies, you may be called before your school's judicial review board for disciplinary action. The process of judicial review varies from school to school, and repercussions for breaking school policy are generally determined on a case-by-case basis, so it can be difficult to know what you can expect. Some of the actions which your school may take include: fines; community service; suspension or expulsion from the university or from university housing; reprimands; or mandatory counseling.

If you are called for judicial review, keep in mind that you are not required to disclose your disability to anyone. However, if you are being disciplined for something that you think happened because of your mental illness, you may be able to ask for accommodations to be made. For more information on this, see this resource by the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law: www.goo.gl/G7ctvP

Alcohol & Drugs

College is a time when many students are first exposed to alcohol and drugs. Drinking is common at many college social events, and students often have less structure and supervision than they were used to before starting college. This can lead to a lot of students learning that they have drug or alcohol problems while they are in school. Some of the signs that you or a friend may have a drug or alcohol problem include:²⁰

- Neglecting responsibilities at school, work, or home because of drinking or drug use.
- Using alcohol or drugs in dangerous situations, for example, when driving
- Getting into legal trouble related to alcohol or drug use
- Continuing to use or drink even though it's causing problems in your relationships
- Building up a tolerance (needing to drink or use more than before to get the same effect)
- Feeling that you've lost control, or trying to stop using but being unable
- Giving up other activities that used to be enjoyable because of alcohol or drug use
- Spending a lot of time and energy thinking about, using, recovering from, or trying to get drugs or alcohol

If you have any questions or problems regarding alcohol or drug use, you should be able to talk confidentially to someone at your university counseling center. Many school counseling centers host, or can refer you to, self-help groups such as AA or NA, which provide peer support for people dealing with alcohol and drug problems. If you live in a residence hall and have concerns about a roommate's use of alcohol or drugs, your resident advisor (RA) can help you to talk to them; be aware that the RA will likely have to file a report with the university about your roommate's problem.

²⁰ <http://www.helpguide.org/topics/addiction.htm>

Many schools have a medical amnesty or good Samaritan policy, which means that students who contact campus security to get medical care for someone who is dangerously intoxicated, may have alcohol poisoning, or has gotten hurt while drinking will not face disciplinary action by the university. The intoxicated student may still be required to take a course on drug and alcohol safety or attend mandatory counseling sessions. Medical amnesty laws vary by state, and each school has its own policy regarding drugs and alcohol, so you should check with your school's office of health and wellness to learn more about what to do in the event of an emergency. No matter what, you should *always* call 911 if you think someone is in serious danger of physical harm. It is more important to save a life than to worry about potential disciplinary consequences.

Some people use alcohol or drugs to help them to feel more comfortable in social situations, but there are better ways to make friends at school. Although many social events in college include alcohol or drugs, there are lots of other ways that you can have fun, be social, and meet new people without using substances. If you want help coping with social anxiety, your university counseling center can help you with strategies for interacting with people without using or drinking, and the office of health and wellness can direct you to sober social events on campus. Joining a student organization is also a fun way to meet people and go to enjoyable events that are drug- and alcohol-free.

Environmental Safety

Although a ceramics class might not seem like a dangerous environment, it is one of many situations on campus where you will need to take extra precautions in order to protect your health. As part of your coursework in an art or laboratory class, you may be exposed to harmful chemicals. In order to keep you safe, your school should have special policies regarding how dangerous chemicals are handled and how you should behave in the spaces they are kept in. Often, students are not permitted to eat or drink in classrooms which contain chemicals or certain kinds of art supplies. Because of this, you may need to arrange in advance with a professor to leave the classroom if you need to take medication during class time if your classroom has any such special guidelines intended to protect you from harmful substances.

You should also be aware that your employer (which, if you have an on-campus job, is your university) has the legal responsibility of informing you about harmful chemicals in the workplace and taking every effort to reduce your exposure under OSHA regulations (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Labor). For more information about your right to a safe workplace, visit www.osha.gov.

Legal Services

Dealing with legal issues can be confusing, stressful, and may interfere with or become a barrier to your academic success. Some universities offer free or low-cost legal advice to students. Sometimes, universities may offer legal services which are provided by law students, or they may be able to refer you to an attorney in the community. If your school does not have

an office of student legal services, you should contact the dean of students office for assistance with any legal problems, which could include:

- Landlord, tenant or housing issues
- Routine traffic violations or automobile accidents
- City/township ordinance violations
- Misdemeanor criminal offenses and small claims actions
- Family issues, including divorce and custody
- Immigration issues
- Leases and business contracts
- Insurance problems

Jobs and Internships

Most people go to college in order to learn new things, better themselves, and – most importantly – to help them get a new job or to advance their career. Many students hold part-time jobs in addition to their classes in order to gain work experience and improve their financial situation. However, there are many barriers, which prevent people with psychiatric disabilities from finishing their degree or finding fulfilling employment. It can be overwhelming trying to finish school and also worrying about finding jobs, internships, volunteer work, and other opportunities. Nonetheless, jobs and internships provide important experiences, which help your resume to stand out, and can be a source of mentorship and financial support, which can allow you to overcome other barriers to your desired career.

Career Advising

If you are unsure about your major, or want to find out more about what career options are out there, your first stop should be your university career center. The career center can help you explore what majors are available to you, what jobs relate to which major, and which careers are the best fit for your personality, interests, and work style. Many universities also have alumni networks which can connect you with graduates who are willing to share information about their field or act as mentors to students from their alma mater. Alumni mentors are a great resource and can provide you with additional support and realistic guidance to help you achieve your personal career goals.

The career center should also have resources specifically tailored to the needs of students with disabilities. If you are concerned about finding a job or career that provides the accommodations you need to succeed, the career center should be able to help. They can also help you develop skills to manage your disability in the workplace, such as how to disclose a disability to a prospective employer or request accommodations. Keep in mind that disclosing your disability to the career center is optional; they should still be able to provide you with general career advising services which will help you succeed even if you choose not to disclose your disability to them.

Many career centers have a wealth of online resources, including guides to interviewing, professional attire, networking, resumes, and more. Some schools allow you to submit resumes or conduct mock-interviews online. For more in-depth, personalized coaching, you will want to make an appointment to meet with a career advisor. All career center resources and advising services are typically free for students, but many schools place a limit on the number of advising sessions you can use after you graduate, so it is best to take advantage of the career center well in advance of graduation.

On-campus Employment

It takes a lot of people to run a university smoothly, so many schools hire students to work as receptionists, tour guides, technical support, and program staff. Most schools have an online application portal through which you can apply for student jobs. Generally, these positions are part-time, allow more flexibility for your academic schedule, and may offer higher pay than similar positions in the broader community. Best of all, on-campus jobs are usually located near to your classrooms, which can reduce your commute and give you more time for schoolwork. Applying for an on-campus job can help you to better manage your finances and balance your work and school time; however, you may want to speak to an advisor about how a job might affect your academic performance before you apply.

Work-study: You may qualify for a federal work-study program. This means that the federal government subsidizes your pay, which is intended to help you to cover educational expenses. Work-study is a type of financial aid for which you must apply and be approved. You apply for work-study by filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) online at fafsa.ed.gov. If you are approved for work-study, you must apply through your university for an approved work-study position, even if the job is off-campus. You can do this through your university's website.

Internships

An internship is a temporary position in a professional setting, sometimes paid and sometimes unpaid, created with the understanding that the worker will learn skills to succeed in a particular field or career. You may be able to get course credit for an internship; you should speak to an academic advisor for more information about this. Internships last for a fixed period of time, typically several months to a year; at the completion of an internship, some employers may offer a full-time position to an intern who has performed exceptionally well. However, you should not take an internship with the expectation that you will be offered a job upon completing it. Even if an internship is unpaid, there are many benefits that you should keep in mind when considering applying for an internship:

- Gaining professional experience and improving your resume
- Networking with people in your field who can help you with references, recommendations, or career advice
- “Trying out” a career you are unsure of to see if it is a good fit for you
- Hands-on learning to complement your work in the classroom

Your school's career center should be able to help you find and apply to internships, which are often posted online. The time commitment varies by internship; some may require you to work only a few hours a week, while others may be similar to a full-time job (35-40 hours a week). Many students use their free time during summer break to complete an internship; this is a good way to avoid becoming overwhelmed by the responsibilities of having both an internship and coursework at the same time. Just as with a job, your internship should be able

to provide you with reasonable accommodations for your disability; your office for students with disabilities or your campus career center should be able to help you to negotiate accommodations.

Volunteer Work

College also presents wonderful opportunities to participate in volunteer work. Volunteering can be incredibly rewarding. It can give you a sense of ownership over your community, help you to feel connected to others, and feel that you are using your time in a meaningful way. Volunteering is a way to give back, and it can boost your self-esteem by making you feel important and looked-up to.

One of the best parts of volunteering is that you have so many options! There are tons of non-profit organizations which rely on the help of volunteers. Although some organizations may have lots of people willing to donate their time, many others are in great need of people like you to help them out, which makes it much easier and less competitive to find volunteer work when compared to the process of finding and applying for a job. Because there are so many options, you should be able to find an organization with which to volunteer that is willing to help you with any reasonable accommodations you might require. You can find a way to volunteer doing almost anything you can imagine; a few examples include:

- Working at a summer camp with children or teens
- Helping out with an after-school program
- Managing social media for a local organization
- Peer counseling or support
- Fundraising and event planning
- Working in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter
- Helping out at a wildlife reserve or animal shelter
- Community clean-up
- Assistant/companion for senior citizens
- Volunteering for one of your professors in their research lab

A great way to find volunteer work is through the website idealist.com, which allows you to search for volunteer positions by location, time commitment, type of work, and level of experience required. Some universities have an office of community service which can help place you in a volunteer position. You can also find volunteer work through your university's career center, a student organization dedicated to volunteer work, billboard postings on campus, talking with your professors, or by directly contacting the local volunteer organization which you would like to work with. Volunteering has many of the same great benefits of internships, allowing you to gain work experience and meet references and mentors.

Study Abroad

Participating in a study abroad program is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It is a chance

for a totally immersive learning experience taking place in another culture. Studying abroad can help you to learn a new language, travel the world, gain new perspectives on your studies, and gain skills which you can use to market yourself to future employers. Depending on the program and on where you plan to study, you may not need to have any knowledge of a foreign language in order to have an amazing experience studying abroad. Most students study abroad in their junior or sophomore year, but seniors and freshmen can also study abroad at many schools. Study abroad programs may last a week or two, a whole semester or term, or an entire academic year. Some of the places that you could study abroad include:

- Australia
- Japan
- Italy
- France
- China
- Spain
- Brazil
- Germany
- Korea
- Ghana

The places that you can go to for a study abroad program may be different from this list, as they vary by school. If there is a particular location where you wish to go for study abroad, you should check in with your school's study abroad office, as they may be able to help you to find an opportunity at the location you are interested in through another university. Generally, you must apply for a study abroad program and be accepted in order to take part; the application may require you to write a short essay or obtain a letter of recommendation from one of your professors who knows you well. Studying abroad can be expensive, as there is typically a program fee in addition to your regular tuition, and you usually have to pay for travel-related expenses such as airfare, food, and housing. Luckily, there are many scholarships available to support students who wish to study abroad. Your school's study abroad office and financial services office should be able to assist you in finding ways to pay for your study abroad program.

Continuing your recovery abroad: Studying in a foreign country for an extended period of time can present unique challenges to your recovery, but you should not let this discourage you from going! Before your trip begins, you should arrange to meet with the professor leading the trip in order to develop a psychiatric emergency plan (your office of study abroad should be able to help you contact them). Even if you are confident in your recovery, it is still critical that you plan ahead and that the people in charge of the study abroad program know how you would like them to respond in the case of an emergency. Your emergency plan should include how to get in touch with the people who support your recovery back home, how to handle a hospitalization abroad, and arranging for any accommodations you might need to succeed in your studies. If

you need help with this, or are uncomfortable disclosing your disability to the trip leader, you should talk to someone at your university's office of disabilities or university counseling center to make sure you are prepared to continue your recovery abroad.

If your time abroad will last more than a few weeks, you will probably need to make special arrangements to continue medication or therapy while abroad. This may mean making plans to receive mental health services at your temporary learning institution abroad, or using a phone or internet program (such as Skype) to continue with your services back home. You will want to discuss your needs with your school's study abroad office and your current mental health provider well in advance of your trip in order to find out what your options are. If you take medication, it is important that you arrange to store it in a secure location – just as you would your passport – while you are traveling to avoid it being lost or stolen.

Financial Services

One of the biggest barriers to education for people with psychiatric disabilities is financial constraints.²¹ Higher education is increasingly difficult to afford, and changes to your financial situation may arise which could make it challenging to complete your degree. It is easy to feel anxious about money and overwhelmed by the cost of tuition and other life expenses, but you don't have to handle everything alone! There are many services universities offer in order to assist students with understanding and managing their finances. In addition to helping you figure out how to pay your tuition, your school can help you to budget your money, understand how to build credit, and deal with an unexpected financial emergency.

Your first stop for any financial questions should be your office of student financial services. They can help you to understand what financial aid is available to you, help you to apply for financial aid, direct you to grants and scholarships, and assist you in applying for and managing loans. The office of student financial services should also be able to help you with filling out your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The FAFSA is an important source of financial aid for most students, and is filled out online after January 1st. For more information about the FAFSA, visit www.fafsa.gov.

Dean of Students Office: If you experience an unexpected financial crisis, such as difficulty with housing or covering the costs of medical care, the dean of students office may be able to assist you in finding services in your community. They are also the first office you should contact if you need to take a leave of absence from school for any reason.

Finding financial aid: There are lots of great free resources online which can help you to understand loans, grants, and financial aid applications, and to locate scholarships which are available to you. A great place to start is www.studentaid.gov, which provides basic information about different types of federal financial aid and who can receive it. Another good resource is

²¹ Schindler, V. P., & Kientz, M. (2013). Supports and barriers to higher education and employment for individuals diagnosed with mental illness. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 39*, 29-41.

the Federal Student Aid Information Center Hotline, 1-800-4-FED-AID. Finally, the free website www.finaid.org has information about a wide range of student financial concerns, offering answers to many common questions about financial aid, listing ways to find scholarships, and offering personalized advice from volunteer financial advisors at no cost.

Textbooks & supplies: The average yearly cost for textbooks and other class supplies at a four-year public college is \$1,200²², but there are a lot of ways that you can save money in this area. One way that you can save money on course materials is to get in touch with your professors before classes start, in order to find out if older editions of textbooks may be acceptable to use; buying an older edition could save you \$100 or more for some books! You should also read the syllabus carefully before purchasing your books, as some texts may be supplementary or recommended. You may be able to check the book out from your school's library, or ask the instructor to place a library copy on reserve. Other students can also be a great resource, as they may be able to lend you the required textbooks if they have taken the same course before; however, be aware that different sections of a class (usually meaning different class times or different instructors) may have different required texts.

You can also save a great deal of money by buying used textbooks online through sites like amazon.com. Although your campus bookstore may be the most convenient place to buy textbooks and supplies, it is also almost always more expensive to buy new books from the school bookstore than to buy used books online and have them shipped to you. Another way to save money is by renting textbooks. While you must return your rental textbook at the end of the rental period to avoid extra fees, you are often allowed to use the rental textbook just as you would use a textbook you owned, including making notes and highlighting passages (you should check before you sign the rental agreement). You may also be able to get a cheaper copy of the text you need by purchasing (or renting!) an eBook; you will need a computer or other electronic device, such as an eReader, to view the text.

Finally, there are many scholarships available specifically to cover the costs of books and other course materials. The office of student financial services is a great resource for any questions you have about how to find and apply for scholarships and other financial aid.

²² The College Board. (2014). Quick guide: College costs. Retrieved from <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/college-costs/quick-guide-college-costs>

Your College Recovery

Going away to college can definitely be a stressful time as you learn to navigate your way through new challenges and experiences. It is essential to create a healthy environment and build skills and support to ensure your continued success and recovery. Along with the supports mentioned throughout this guide, there may be other resources available to you. You should continue to work with your provider to explore other options specific to your community and/or university to decide what is right for you throughout your college experience.