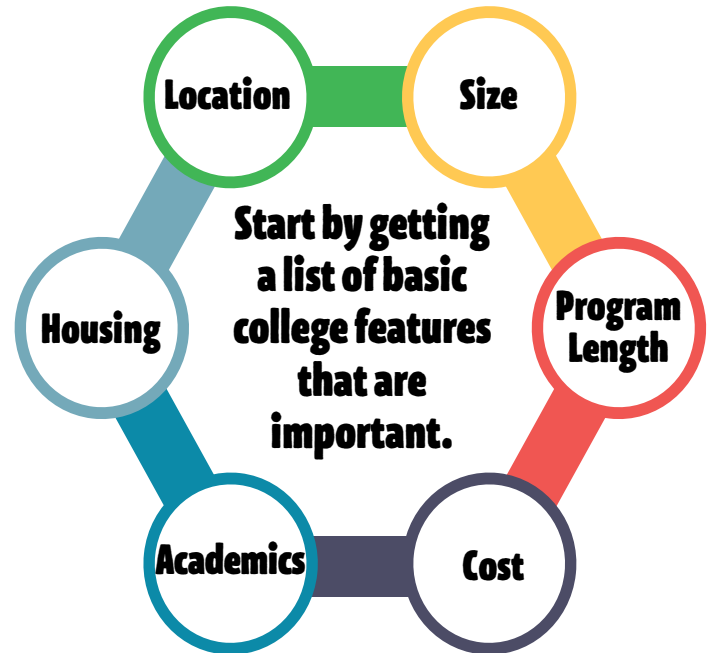


Conducting a college search is a daunting task for every family and every potential college student. All students need to think about factors such as the size of the college, its location, and whether or not to live on campus or at home (see Figure 1).

For students with intellectual disability (ID), there are some additional aspects to consider beyond the details you can learn in Think College Search. This resource provides questions, suggested by parents and students who have been through the college search process.

These questions may be answered by closely reviewing the college program websites, attending an Open House, or calling the program director. A great place to identify possible options is Think College Search, a searchable database of college programs on the Think College website. There you will find basic information on over 270 college programs for students with intellectual disability. Learn more about it on page 2.

Figure 1. Sample College Features



This guide shares questions about important aspects of the college program, and are offered to help students and families learn as much as they can about program operations so they can make an informed choice about which college is best for them. Several questions are suggested in each of the ten areas below.

|           |                                |                                     |                    |                  |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|           |                                |                                     |                    |                  |
| Admission | Fees, Tuition, & Financial Aid | Inclusion with the Campus Community | Academics          | Housing          |
|           |                                |                                     |                    |                  |
| Supports  | Program Administration         | Communication with Parents          | Career Development | Program Outcomes |

Use Think College Search to create a list of colleges that offer what you want. Think College Search is an online listing of postsecondary education programs for students with ID that are affiliated with an accredited institute of higher education.

### ADVANCED SEARCH AND FILTERS

Search by program, keyword, location and program features. Filter by disability, type of school, and length of program.

### UP-TO-DATE LISTINGS

272 college programs listed\*. More are added as they open.



\*As of June 2019

### CREATE A LIST OF FAVORITES

Click Save on any program you're interested in.



### COMPREHENSIVE

Find detailed program information, including deadlines, acceptance rates, career development activities, and more.

### QUICK LOOK

Find basic information fast with the click of a button.



### DOWNLOADABLE DATA

The listing that is generated can be emailed or downloaded as an Excel file.



| State*  | College/University            | Program name                         | Program Contact Person        | Program Contact Email | Program Contact phone | Program website | Program length              | Housing available? | Is program a CTP? | Application deadline   | Tuition costs  |
|---------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Alabama | University of Alabama         | Crossing/Intro Summer Bridge Program | Amy Wilkinson                 | awilkinson@ua.edu     | (205) 946-3388        | Program website | 4 weeks, student to student | Yes                | No                | January 2019   | Approximately \$1,200 per semester   |
| Alabama | Auburn University             | EMILES                               | Dr. Jerry S. Phipps, Director | jphipps@auburn.edu    | (252) 424-4924        | Program website | 2 years                     | Yes                | Yes               | April 5, 2019 for Fall 2019                                    | \$1,404 Student fee, as of Fall Semester 2018. \$14,820/Year. Includes Housing, as of Fall 8 |
| Florida | University of Central Florida | Inclusive Education Services         | Adrian Meyer                  | adrianmeyer@ucf.edu   | 407-622-2271          | Program website | 2 years                     | Yes                | No                | Varies each year, website website for latest dates and details |  |
| Florida | Florida International         | K12 Bridges PLUS                     | Sharon Williams               | shwilliams@fiu.edu    | 305-348-3270          | Program website | 2 years                     | Yes                | Pending           | Fall 2019  |  |

### COLLEGE COMPARISON

Compare your favorite programs on 6 key features:

- Program length
- Housing availability
- Accepts out of state students
- Financial Aid availability (CTP)
- Application Due Date
- Cost

# ADMISSION



**Admission requirements and deadlines for these programs vary widely – be sure to note these as you review the program information.**

- » **How many students apply each year? How many are accepted? How many students are you interviewing?**
- » **Do you accept out of state students? Do you have any out of state students currently?**
- » **What are your admission criteria? What testing is required, if any?**
- » **Are students who are under guardianship accepted?**
- » **What are the timelines/deadlines for the application process? When will students be notified of your admission decision?**
- » **What do you suggest admitted students do over the summer to prepare for a successful transition to campus life in the fall?**
- » **My questions regarding admission:**

---

---

---

---



# FEES, TUITION, AND FINANCIAL AID

Look for this icon in College Search to find the programs that offer access to federal student aid.



**If college programs become an approved Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP), students have access to federal student aid, even if they don't have a regular high school diploma and are not seeking a degree.**

- » **What is the total cost to attend your program, per year?**
- » **Is your program an approved CTP and able to offer access to federal student aid for your students?**
- » **How do students pay to attend? Do students use vocational rehabilitation funds, community agency funds, personal funds, federal financial aid, scholarships, or other resources?**
- » **If a student is accepted, when will payment be due? Is there a payment plan available?**
- » **My questions regarding fees, tuition, and financial aid:**

---



---



---



---

# INCLUSION WITH THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY



**Although students may enter these programs through an alternate admission process, once on campus they should have a very typical experience.**



- » **Aside from program faculty and staff, who is your program's biggest advocate on campus?**
- » **What are some campus activities that your students have participated in? Are Greek life, intramural or club sports, and other student activities open to students in your program? Are there any campus services or activities that students in the program are not allowed to access?**
- » **How, if at all, is your program included in the university's overall diversity and inclusion efforts?**
- » **How important is full inclusion to your program?**
- » **How do you support students to be fully included in college life?**
- » **Do the students participate in a typical college graduation?**
- » **Are students in your program considered enrolled students in the university? Do they have alumni benefits when they complete the certificate program?**
- » **My questions regarding inclusion with the campus community:**

---

---

---

# ACADEMICS

**Participation in typical college courses should be a key element of any inclusive college program.**



- » **What are the required courses and learning activities (i.e. internships, community service, etc.) that students must do to earn a certificate?**
- » **How many special or separate classes are there for students with ID? Who teaches the separate classes?**
- » **How many typical college courses do students take per semester?**
- » **How much choice do students have in the courses they take each semester?**
- » **Are students from the program able to take a wide range of typical college courses?**
- » **What supports does the program provide to the professors of typical college courses that students take?**
- » **Do students have the option of taking courses for credit?**
- » **Do students get a transcript?**
- » **How are accommodations and modifications set-up?**
- » **My questions regarding academics:**

---

---

---

---

# HOUSING

Look for this icon in College Search to find the programs that offer access to student housing.



**Even at residential colleges, housing may not yet be available for students in these programs.**



- » **Where do students live? Is it all in one house or dorm, or all over campus? Are there different arrangements for first year students?**
- » **How are roommates selected?**
- » **Can students in the program choose a roommate?**
- » **Do students with and without disabilities live together?**
- » **What supports does the program provide students living on-campus?**
- » **Is support always available? If not, is there a plan for emergencies?**
- » **How are the RAs and other Resident Life staff trained and supported by the program?**
- » **Are there special rules for students with ID that do not apply to other students, for example, a curfew?**
- » **How is safety and security for the students in campus housing balanced with freedom?**
- » **Are there rules that only apply to students in the program?**
- » **Are there additional staff or residence hall assistants or just the same ones that work with all students in the dorm?**
- » **Is there a summer orientation or other strategy to teach skills needed on campus to be safe?**
- » **Are students held to the same Code of Conduct as other students on campus?**
- » **My questions regarding housing:**

---

---

---

---

# SUPPORTS



**Types of support and hours of availability can vary quite a bit from program to program.**

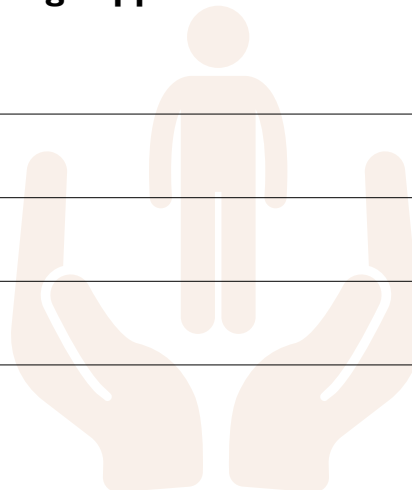
- » **What supports are provided to students to help them attend classes, take part in activities, and become more independent?**
- » **Do you provide peer mentors? How are they trained and supervised?**
- » **How are students matched with peer mentors and support staff?**
- » **Can you provide examples of natural supports on campus available to students?**
- » **Is there always access to support as needed, or are there times of the day/week when students do not have access to support?**
- » **Are students required to have a support person or mentor with them at all times?**
- » **My questions regarding support services:**

---

---

---

---





# PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

**Knowing what kinds of staff the program employs can help you assess the priorities of the program as well as the level and kinds of support the student can expect.**



- » **How many full-time and part-time employees are there?**
- » **What kind of experience and training do the program administrators and staff have?**
- » **Are program staff employed by the college? If not, who do they work for?**
- » **What hours are program staff available?**
- » **Who is the best contact person when family members have questions or concerns?**
- » **My questions regarding program administration:**

---

---

---

---

# COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS



**Colleges need to follow the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.**

- » **How do you handle FERPA requirements while communicating important information with families?**
- » **What role, if any, do the parents have in the development of the student's individualized program and support?**
- » **Are there any limitations on which college staff parents can communicate with?**
- » **What communication strategies are used with parents?**
- » **My questions regarding communicating with families:**

---

---

---

---

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- » What types of part-time work do students in the program have?
  - » What are the qualifications of the staff working with students on career development?
  - » What supports do you have to help students find a paid job while attending college?
  - » My questions regarding career development:
- 
- 
- 

**Data show that paid work in college leads to better employment outcomes after college.**



# PROGRAM OUTCOMES



**College programs for students with ID nationally are reporting close to 70% employment rate for graduates one year after graduation.**



- » What certificate or credential do students earn when they graduate from the program? Has it been approved by your college or university?
  - » What are the graduation rates?
  - » What types of careers have your graduates gone on to?
  - » What are employment rates for your graduates?
  - » Where do your graduates typically live after they graduate?
  - » My questions regarding program outcomes:
- 
- 
-



Explore these additional resources on the Think College website to get more information about the college search process.



### Families Think College

The Families Think College Facebook page is a closed group designed for families to communicate easily with one another about preparing for college.



### Family Resources

The Family Resources page includes answers to some frequently asked questions and guidance to different areas of the Think College website that families might find useful.



### Innovation Exchange

Learn more about how to pay for college on this [Innovation Exchange page](#). Find an archived webinar from financial experts, links to scholarship opportunities, and helpful ways to save for college without jeopardizing your child's disability benefits.

Learn more @ [www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

#### HOW TO THINK COLLEGE, ISSUE NO. 1 (UPDATED 2019)

HOW TO THINK COLLEGE is a publication of Think College, a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education (Grant No. P407B15002). The opinions contained in this document are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders.

Recommended citation for this brief: Weir, C. (2019). Conducting a College Search: Questions to Ask College Programs. How To Think College, Issue No. 1 (updated). Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CATE WEIR is the Project Director for the Think College National Coordinating Center and has worked in the field of inclusive postsecondary education for over 15 years. One of the most rewarding aspects of her work is supporting parents and students to make informed choices about college options.

[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

[www.facebook.com/thinkcollege](https://www.facebook.com/thinkcollege)

[www.twitter.com/thinkcollegeICI](https://www.twitter.com/thinkcollegeICI)