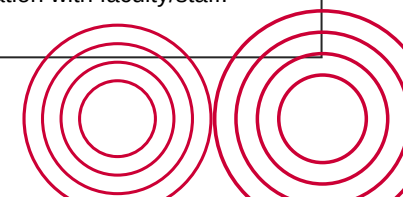


Start Smart: What's New in College and How to Handle It



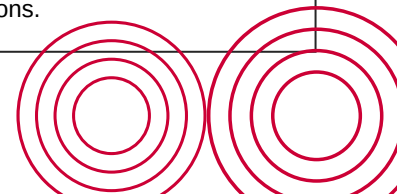
	In high school	In college	Why is this important	SMU-Specific Action Steps for Support
Academic Planning	Counselors guide course selections.	Student-led; many choices and electives to decide upon	You must take initiative in shaping your academic path and graduation timeline, considering your own strengths and weaknesses.	Use Degree Planner in my.SMU, meet with your academic advisor each semester, and visit the Hegi Career Center to explore majors and careers.
Assignments	Teachers assign daily assignments.	Students follow a semester syllabus and manage long-term coursework.	Independent time and task management are critical for academic success.	Use A-LEC time management tools to plan major assignments and break them into smaller tasks; DASS coaching can help you with this.
Behavioral Expectations	Inappropriate behavior may be addressed by school staff or behavior plans.	All students are expected to follow SMU's Code of Conduct.	Community standards apply to everyone, and poor behavior can have formal consequences without consideration of student's diagnosis.	Learn the Code of Conduct, speak with your RA/RCD if you need help navigating social situations, and submit an online Caring Community Connections form for support.
Behavior Support	Teacher-monitored plans or check-ins	Independent self-management of behavior	There's less supervision at college, and students must self-monitor and seek support when needed.	Meet with your DASS Coordinator, use coaching, counseling, or speak with your RA when overwhelmed.
Class Size	Small, daily contact with teachers	Large lecture sizes are common in introductory classes; professors expect students to reach out.	You may need to advocate for yourself and build relationships proactively.	Sit where you stay engaged, introduce yourself to professors, join study groups, or visit A-LEC for help.
Communication	Teachers initiate, and parents are contacted.	Students initiate all communication.	Building adult-level communication skills is vital for college success.	Practice professional email writing. Use DASS coaching to role-play communication with faculty/staff.



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	In high school	In college	Why is this important	SMU-Specific Action Steps for Support
Daily Structure	Fixed schedule, same classes daily	Schedules vary daily; more personal planning is required.	Lack of structure can lead to missed deadlines and poor habits.	Build a personal routine using class blocks, meals, downtime, and study sessions.
Dining	Set menus, familiar environments	Multiple dining halls have varying hours and menus.	Sensory overload or food preferences may impact comfort and focus.	Tour Umphrey Lee and Arnold dining halls, use the SMU Dining app, meet the on-campus dietitian, and plan meals around quieter hours.
Disability Office	Services are coordinated by special ed team in a parent-driven process.	Students must self-disclose their disability needs and apply through DASS in a student-driven process.	Without disclosure, you won't receive accommodations or legal protections.	Submit your request and documentation early to DASS and renew each semester. Accommodations are individualized, not guaranteed based simply on a diagnosis.
Instruction	Teachers guide learning, modify assignments, and offer reminders.	Professors expect independence, analysis, and self-regulation.	Success depends on your ability to follow syllabi, manage your time well, and study independently.	Use office hours, visit A-LEC, check Canvas daily, and get familiar with long-term planning.
Legal Protections	Legal protections for disability are mandated by IDEA/504 and school-initiated.	Legal protections for disability are mandated by ADA/504 and self-initiated (by the student).	Protections still exist - but only if the student takes action.	Register with DASS early - before classes begin.
Residence Life	Students often live at home with parents, family, or other caregivers.	Most SMU students live on campus in residence halls.	Living with others and managing your space can be challenging without support.	If needed, apply early for a single room through DASS, or consider commuting, if possible; Speak with Residence Life staff for options.



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	In high school	In college	Why is this important	SMU-Specific Action Steps for Support
Social Engagement	Adults support peer connections. Teachers may assign groups in class.	Peer engagement is voluntary and student-driven. In class, professors often expect students to form their own working groups, when assigned.	Making friends and finding support systems takes initiative.	Join clubs via SMU360, explore neurodivergent-friendly spaces, and attend welcome events and mixers.
Stress Management	Parents and teachers provide structure, teachers give reminders, and students are allowed to leave class.	Students must monitor and manage stress independently.	Unchecked stress can lead to burnout and poor academic or social outcomes.	Use SMU Counseling Services, attend mindfulness workshops, and schedule breaks throughout your week.
Support Plans	The school arranges services based on an IEP, 504, or accommodation plan.	Students must self-advocate and renew accommodations regularly.	Without ongoing communication, accommodations may lapse.	Actively participate in your DASS Intake meeting - listen and make note of instructions. Every term, renew your accommodations and contact professors to confirm how your accommodations will be implemented.
Testing Accommodations	All accommodations and services are built into IEP/504 and implemented by the school.	Students authorized for testing accommodations make testing arrangements with each instructor.	Students must consult with their instructors and confirm their testing arrangements or risk missing out.	Schedule exams 1 week in advance with your instructor and/or the University Testing Center, depending on your instructors' preferences.
Time Management	The school manages routines, schedules, and reminders.	Freedom requires personal planning and discipline.	Time can slip away without external structure.	Use Google Calendar, Notion, or a planner to map classes, breaks, and assignments. Meet with a DASS Coach or attend an A-LEC time management workshop.

