



## STEPP Program

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**The Walter & Marie Williams**

# STEPP Program

**SUPPORTING TRANSITION and EDUCATION  
through PLANNING and PARTNERSHIPS**

# ABOUT US



## OUR MISSION

The STEPP Program's mission is to provide access to a college education for students with learning disabilities who demonstrate the potential for postsecondary success. By partnering with students, their families, and a variety of educational communities, STEPP's innovative model fosters a network of opportunities, resources, and supports designed to equip and empower students at East Carolina University® and across the nation.



## FAST FACTS

STEPP is a comprehensive support program serving college students with documented specific Learning Disabilities (LD), such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia.

The STEPP Program:

- offers academic, social and life-skills support to a select number of motivated and committed students who demonstrate the potential to succeed in college.
- provides intensive supports well beyond the services legally required at the university level.
- accepts 10 new students each fall semester. Both true freshman and transfer students are welcome to apply.
- does not limit a student's choice of major or charge additional fees for service.

## ADMISSION

STEPP's application process considers traditional admissions criteria and additional indicators which help us predict college success for students with LD. Students who are a good fit for the program demonstrate a readiness for college, as well as the need for and willingness to use comprehensive and specialized services for their learning disability.

## EXTENDED PROGRAM

STEPP participants take a reduced course load during their first few semesters. The program's design allows most students to complete a bachelor's degree in five years and includes optional summer support for those who desire to accelerate their timeline.

## SUPPORT NETWORK

The STEPP Program connects students with a network of professionals across ECU's campus. This support system includes advisors, mentors, tutors, counselors, professors, specialists, and other experts.

## TRANSITION

During the year between admission and entry to the university, STEPP staff partner with families and schools to help incoming students plan for the transition to college life. Prior to graduation from ECU, STEPP staff assist students in preparing to transition to a career or graduate school.

## PARALLEL CURRICULUM

In addition to their ECU coursework, participants take a series of STEPP seminar courses to help equip them with the skills necessary to succeed in college. Courses for this parallel curriculum are scheduled during key transition points during the college experience, and focus on practical strategies in areas including time management, leadership, organization, study skills, goal setting, workforce readiness, and campus resources.

## CAMPUS LIVING

Placement in a designated residence hall helps first-year students cultivate campus connections and provides opportunities to meet students outside of the STEPP Program.





# STEPP Program

## Fast Facts

### The STEPP Program

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- provides intensive supports well beyond the services legally required at the university level.
- accepts 10 new students per year for fall-semester entry to ECU. Both true freshmen and transfer students are welcome to apply.
- does not limit a student's choice of major at ECU.
- does not charge additional fees for services.

## Program Outline

### I. Incoming Transition Activities and Support

- **Monthly transition mailings** provide guided preparation in key areas of college readiness
- **Individualized consultation** offers targeted support to students, families, and schools as needed
- **Boot Camp** jump-starts the college experience for first-year students and parents with an intensive introduction to ECU held the week before the fall semester begins

### II. Ongoing Services and Requirements during the College Years

- Five STEPP Program **independent study courses**, taken in addition to ECU's academic requirements, develop skills and habits essential to academic success
- Required **study hall** hours enable each student to create a structured schedule with ample time devoted to academics within a resource-rich, supervised environment conducive to effective studying
- **Mentoring** by ECU graduate students offers support and guidance as first-year students implement new skills and access campus resources
- **Tutoring** provides assistance in selected subjects during study hall hours
- **Assistive technology** resources and support enhance learning activities
- Ongoing **advising** (including goal setting, grade reporting, and consultation) assists students in tracking their academic progress; a dual-advising model partners STEPP with advisors in each student's major
- **Campus Living connections** include placement within a designated residence hall for all first-year students
- Guidance in accessing **Disability Support Services** and other campus resources fosters establishing and maintaining connections with ECU

### III. Outgoing Transition Activities and Support

- **Internship** facilitates the transition from college to career
- Development of a **professional portfolio** identifies critical competencies within each student's field of study and showcases his/her accomplishments

#### Application Procedures

Students apply directly to STEPP and should begin the application process approximately 18 months prior to their intended date of entry at ECU.

The STEPP application is available online at [www.ecu.edu/stepp](http://www.ecu.edu/stepp)

#### Application Deadlines

If you plan to enter ECU in...	your application deadline is...
Fall 2019	May 15, 2018
Fall 2020	May 15, 2019
Fall 2021	May 15, 2020

*Please visit our website for further information if you have missed the application deadline for your intended year of entry.*





# ECU<sup>®</sup>

## STEPP PROGRAM

# Three Steps of Support

from Admission to Graduation

### Incoming Transition

**Guided preparation to bridge the gap between high school and college**

Student & Parent Newsletters

Consultation with Students, Parents, and Schools

Technology Onboarding

Pre-College "Boot Camp"

### Ongoing Services

**Wrap-around supports to equip students for success at each stage of college**

Intensive Academic Assistance

Learning Strategies & Study Skills Curriculum

Study Hall • Tutoring • Mentoring • Advising

Assistive Technology • Goal-Setting

Support Network of Professionals & Peers

Guidance in Navigating Campus Resources

### Outgoing Transition

**Individualized programming to prepare students for the next step**

College-to-Career Guidance

Targeted Experiences and Skill Development

Career Readiness Portfolio

Graduate School Preparation

## What is the Walter & Marie Williams STEPP Program?

- A comprehensive support program for college students with learning disabilities (LD)
- Provides intensive academic assistance, connections to a support network of professionals and peers, and guidance in developing life skills for college and beyond
- Services go beyond accommodations legally required at the university level.
- Serves small cohorts of ECU students with LD who are motivated and committed and have potential to succeed in college

## Who can apply to STEPP?

- Basic eligibility criteria:
  - \* Documented Specific Learning Disability (LD), such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and/or Dyscalculia
  - \* College preparatory academic track in high school or equivalent coursework at community college
- Admissions is selective. Eligibility does not guarantee acceptance.
- STEPP is designed for students who are bright and capable but will need academic support to succeed within a rigorous college curriculum. In general, to be a good fit with STEPP, a student must match up well with all of the program's supports, services, and requirements.

## Am I eligible for STEPP if I have ADHD? (or any other diagnosis besides specific learning disability)

- ADHD is considered a separate disability category from LD.
- Students with ADHD **and** LD are eligible, but students with **only** ADHD are not eligible.
- You are most likely to eligible if your diagnosis is...
  - \* Dyslexia / Reading Disorder
  - \* Dyscalculia / Math Disorder
  - \* Dysgraphia / Disorder of Written Expression
- You may also be eligible if your diagnosis is...
  - \* Nonverbal Learning Disability
  - \* Auditory/Visual Processing Disorder
- A specific diagnosis does not guarantee eligibility or acceptance.
  - \* Some students with prior LD diagnoses do not meet the specific eligibility criteria we use.
  - \* Some students with clear LD diagnoses are still not a good fit with our supports.
- We can review your psychoeducational evaluation anytime to determine if you are eligible to apply.

## When should I apply to the STEPP Program?

- Use the chart below to determine when you should apply.

If you plan to...	Application deadline is...
...go directly from high school to college	<b>May 15th</b> of your <b>junior year</b> of high school
...take a gap year between high school and college	<b>May 15th</b> of your <b>senior year</b> of high school
...transfer after two years at another college	<b>May 15th</b> of your <b>freshman year</b> of college

- Applications are posted on the STEPP website in January of each year. We recommend submitting your application during March or April if possible.
- STEPP does not offer spring semester admission. A new cohort of 10 students enters ECU each fall semester.

## What are STEPP's admissions criteria?

- Materials considered in our admissions process:
  - \* High school transcript (courses and grades)
  - \* ACT or SAT scores
  - \* Psychoeducational evaluation
  - \* IEP or 504 Plan and/or other information about academic supports
  - \* Teacher Recommendations
  - \* Essay
  - \* Interview
- Each item reviewed within the context of the overall package. Applicants are considered in comparison to the demands of an ECU education and the supports of the STEPP Program.
- STEPP has some flexibility with ECU's admissions criteria; however, strong candidates must meet most of the traditional criteria.

## **What is the timeline for the STEPP admissions process?**

- May 15 - Deadline to apply for the following year's cohort
- May & June - STEPP screens all complete application packets and invites selected applicants to interview
- June & July - Selected students participate in on-campus interviews
- August - STEPP completes in-depth review of all interviewed candidates and makes final admission decisions
- Late August or Early September - Students are notified of their STEPP admission decisions
- End of September - Students who were accepted either commit to participate or decline their admission offer
- End of September - Students who commit to joining STEPP complete their admissions process by submitting an official ECU application

## **If I'm accepted to STEPP, will I definitely be accepted by ECU's Admissions office?**

- If all the information you provided through your STEPP application process was accurate and complete, your ECU admissions process will most likely be smooth and uncomplicated.
- Admission to ECU through STEPP is always conditional and is not fully finalized until the following summer. Acceptance letters clearly describe the criteria you must meet to finalize your acceptance (e.g., minimum grades in certain senior-year courses, active participation in STEPP's transition year activities, etc.). Failure to meet these criteria will lead to having your acceptance rescinded by STEPP and ECU.

## **Will other people know that I'm in a special program?**

- ECU employees who interact with the program will generally be aware that you are in STEPP and that you have a learning disability
- Your peers and many other ECU employees (who don't interact with the program) are unlikely to know that you are in STEPP or that you have a learning disability unless you disclose to them

## **If I do well my freshman year, can I earn my way out of the STEPP requirements?**

- You must commit to the STEPP Program for the entire duration of your undergraduate education at ECU
- Some requirements and supports continue every semester until you graduate. Others naturally fade and become more individualized as you progress.
- Many of our students don't need as much hands-on support after a few semesters at ECU. However, your goal should not necessarily be to use fewer supports, but rather to succeed in college regardless of the extent of support you use each semester.

## **Will I still graduate in four years?**

- Most students graduate in five years due to reduced course load and extra STEPP academic support courses
- Some students do graduate in four years, usually by taking more courses per semester or attending summer school.

## **How does being in STEPP affect participation in extracurricular activities?**

- Getting involved is encouraged, but you must start slowly.
- STEPP Program's Extracurricular Involvement Policy:
  - \* Students may not commit to any time-consuming extracurricular activities until at least their third semester on campus. (This includes club sports, Greek Life, working 20+ hours per week, leadership positions, etc.)
  - \* Students cannot join official ECU athletics teams or marching band at any time, but may participate in intramurals and club sports in accordance with the guidelines above.

## **How much does it cost to participate in STEPP?**

- No additional cost for the STEPP Program's supports
- Pay regular ECU tuition and fees

## **How can I learn more about the STEPP Program?**

- Visit us! We hold information sessions for prospective students and families on a regular basis.
  - \* Check our website for upcoming information session dates ([www.ecu.edu/stepp/openhouse.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/stepp/openhouse.cfm))
  - \* Email [projectstepp@ecu.edu](mailto:projectstepp@ecu.edu) or call 252-737-2275 if you have questions

**More extensive FAQs can be found on our website at [www.ecu.edu/stepp/faq.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/stepp/faq.cfm)**

## Work towards becoming a strong self-advocate



A self-advocate is a person who speaks up for and supports their own needs.

Strong self-advocates...

- are able to share when they need help and give others ideas about what supports to provide.
- take charge of their own lives.
- take responsibility for their own actions and future.

Here are a few ways you can practice self-advocacy during high school:

- Attend your IEP meetings.
- Learn about your disability, your strengths and challenges, and the supports that happen “behind the scenes” to help you succeed in school. This will prepare you to be more independent in college.
- Pay attention to the things your parents do for you, and start taking responsibility for more of them.



## Get an updated psychoeducational evaluation during high school

No matter where you go to college, you will need a current evaluation that diagnoses your disability to be eligible for accommodations in your classes and any other disability supports.

Many colleges require an evaluation that is less than 3 years old, so it's best to wait until at least 10th grade or later to do this.

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## The STEPP Program at East Carolina University

The STEPP Program helps students with learning disabilities prepare for college and reach their academic goals at ECU.



[www.ecu.edu/stepp](http://www.ecu.edu/stepp)

# STEPPs Toward College



If going to college is one of your goals, it's never too soon to start planning and getting ready.

Here are 5 steps you can take during high school to make sure you meet your college goals.



## Take rigorous high school courses that will prepare you well for college

Most universities have a list of required classes you must take during high school to be accepted by their school.

Find out what those classes are at the colleges you're interested in, and sign up for them at your high school.

Do your best in all your classes, but focus above all on the core academic courses that college admissions will look for. These include English, math, science, history/social studies, and foreign language.

If you're struggling in a required class, ask for help from your teachers, parents, and other resources. Your high school might let you take a less difficult course to graduate; but if getting into college is your goal, it's important to stick with the more rigorous class if you can. Earning a C or D in a college-track requirement is usually more beneficial than bypassing the course.



## Get ready for the SAT or ACT early

Start preparing for the SAT and ACT during 9th and 10th grade. Focus on reading comprehension, math, and writing skills to boost your scores.

- ◆ Read anything and everything you can find.
- ◆ With difficult or unfamiliar topics, read one paragraph at a time. Make sure you can explain what you just read in your own words before moving on to the next section.
- ◆ When you encounter a word you don't know while reading, look it up.
- ◆ Write! In addition to writing for school assignments, keep a journal or write creatively. Practice writing for different audiences and purposes—such as to explain, to describe, to persuade, and to tell a story.
- ◆ Use the free resources on SAT and ACT test preparation websites.
- ◆ Take practice tests.

Take the SAT or ACT for the first time during the fall of 11th grade. Once you get your scores back, you will know what to work on. Study some more, and then take it again in the spring.

Some students prefer the ACT to the SAT. If you're not happy with your SAT scores, try the ACT, or vice versa.



## Research lots of colleges and learn as much as you can about each school

Think about what you want in a college, and prioritize what's most important to you. Then compare what you learn about each school with your personal preferences to select your top choices.

It's a great idea to visit the schools on your list before you apply. You can learn a lot about a college online, but there are some things—like the “vibe” or feeling a school gives you—that you can only find out by experiencing the campus firsthand.

### Questions to consider about each college:

- ◆ How big is it? ◆ Where is it located? ◆
- ◆ What does the campus look like? ◆
- ◆ What disability support services are available? ◆
- ◆ What campus resources are available? ◆
  - ◆ What majors are offered? ◆
  - ◆ How big are most classes? ◆
- ◆ What activities, clubs, organizations, and sports are active on campus? ◆
- ◆ What are the dorms and food like? ◆
  - ◆ How much will it cost? ◆

Even if you think a college might be out of reach, don't automatically assume that you won't get in! Apply to “reach” schools, “good match” schools, **and** “safety” schools.

# COLLEGE BOUND TRANSITION CURRICULUM

These resources are intended to be used by teachers and families supporting transition to college for students with learning differences. Materials are available for students in middle school and high school. All materials can be accessed on the following website: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/stepp/curriculum.cfm>

*These materials were developed through the STEPP Program at East Carolina University and are available at no cost. We only ask that you (1) appropriately reference materials that you distribute to students and others and (2) provide feedback after using the resources on the curriculum web page. We hope to continually revise these curriculum resources based on ongoing feedback.*

## CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Classroom Materials include:

- Fully developed lesson and activity plans designed to help students take one *STEPP* at a time to get ready for college
- PowerPoint slides to accompany each lesson with detailed teacher notes included
- Student activity handouts with teacher answer sheets
- Student guided notes for each module

Lessons and activities are designed to take approximately 30 minutes each, and were originally conceived as appropriate for a Curriculum Assistance class environment. Teachers are, however, encouraged to reformat or alter lessons/activities as needed.

Curriculum resources are posted in both .pdf and rich text formats. Feel free to print and distribute the files to students for educational purposes. Rich text files can be modified as needed for your unique setting and student population.

## FAMILY MATERIALS

Family materials cover the same college preparation topics as the classroom resources but in a more family-friendly format.

Modules are designed for students and parents to work through together with no advance preparation required.

Modules can be completed online or printed for use in paper format.

Modules are divided into sections that should each take approximately 30 minutes to an hour to complete so families can work through them at their own pace.



### ONE TEACHER COMMENTED:

*"My students have said that they are really gaining a lot of knowledge about the differences between high school and college that they didn't even consider before."*

*"I am overjoyed with the content and the way my students are responding to the class."*

**Please use one of the following citations when distributing materials:**

High School Classroom Resources: Johnson, E. James, M., King, L., Williams, S., & Grandy, L. (2013). College Bound: STEPP Program Transition Curriculum. East Carolina University

Middle School Classroom Resources: Sortino, R., James, M., Williams, S. & Johnson, E. (2015). College Bound: STEPP Program Transition Curriculum. East Carolina University

Family Resources: Johnson, E. James, M., King, L., Williams, S., Grandy, L., Smith, T., & Harvey, S. (2015). College Bound: STEPP Program Transition Curriculum. East Carolina University



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