

Executive Function (EF) Support at Landmark College

Executive functions are the cognitive processes that regulate an individual's ability to sustain self-directed action toward a goal. They include areas of the brain responsible for planning, cognitive flexibility, rule recognition, initiating appropriate actions, inhibiting inappropriate actions, and regulating emotions.

How does Landmark College support students with EF challenges?

By the very nature of its infrastructure and operational mission, Landmark College delivers an immersive EF support experience for students who learn differently. Our overall educational and residential model provides EF support in teaching and learning as well as in student life. EF supports are integrated within Landmark College's unique approach to:

- ▶ **Academic** advising as a proactive and student centered model.
- ▶ **Instruction** as anchored in principles of universal design.
- ▶ **Campus experiences** that actively promote student self-determination.
- ▶ **First year learning courses** geared towards metacognitive awareness.
- ▶ **Coaching** that is non-directive, neutral, accountable, and facilitative of independence.
- ▶ **Transitions** from high school to college to work.

How is EF support at Landmark College different from supports at other institutions?

Traditional colleges are not engineered to manage EF challenges in students. They lack LC's focused, integrated, yet global approach to student learning and operating differences.

A common challenge among college students—and of course students at Landmark College—is effective deployment of executive function skills and abilities. Landmark College provides EF support through advising, coaching, universal design-based pedagogies, and integrated technologies. Outside the classroom, LC provides EF support through our robust student life curriculum, which includes highly trained residence hall deans (RDs) who understand the challenges related to still-developing EF skills.



Ways that Landmark College supports executive function challenges

EF Coaching

Students meet with nationally board-certified coaches to develop EF related skills around self-determination and self-advocacy.

EF coaching is individualized and promotes EF skills such as self-management, organization, motivation, and overall independence.

Proactive Advising

The Landmark College advising model is a hybrid of an advisor-guided and a student-directed proactive approach. The advising curriculum is student-centered and follows a developmental approach.

Advisors at LC are experts at building students' self-confidence and self-esteem as a precursor to strategies for academic success.

Instructional Practices

Faculty at LC are content experts and also have expertise in implementing principles of universal design.

The principles of UD include multiple means of representation of information, multiple means of engagement, and multiple means of expression. These principles provide a range of options and opportunities for teaching and learning, including ways of presenting information so that it is accessible to **all** students, and assessing learning and mastery through traditional and non-traditional means.

First Year Seminar Courses

A cornerstone of EF support, these courses engage students in activities that promote metacognitive awareness and individual insight into learning. Students learn about neurodiversity and their own strengths and challenges, and strategies for accomplishing academic and non-academic goals.

Campus Life

The residence life model at LC is particularly conducive to EF support. RDs and RAs receive extensive training in supporting the EF needs of students.

Specific Student Services

In addition to coaching services, LC also offers student support programs that are specifically sensitive to the needs of students with EF challenges. These include our Transfer, Career & Internship Services; the Drake Center for Academic Support; Counseling Services; and Athletics.

While each of these service programs is not focused on EF alone, each is staffed by professionals who understand EF challenges and apply EF-supportive practices.

Faculty and Staff Perspectives

Some faculty and staff responses from a campus-wide EF survey conducted in Spring 2016

Advisor: I ask students what their own organizing system is, whether on an iPhone or a physical organizer, and then work with them to use/access it effectively to schedule and manage their own time. It is about student ownership.

Faculty: I avoid shaming students for lack of EF skills; I help them move from contemplation to activation to self-monitoring by talking with them about obstacles to success and strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Faculty: I have students review all of the tasks they need to do in a set time, and map out the time that they need in order to do them. I also have them enter in discrete tasks with start-prompts in their devices or on paper, so that they have a visual (and potentially auditory) calendar.

Residence Staff: When I was an RD, I would work with students on a weekly schedule, making sure there was balance among work, play, and health. Now I work a lot with alumni to make sure they have access to new tools and trends.