What is Self-Determination?

• Self-determination begins with the ability to identify and understand one’s needs, interests, strengths, limitations, and values.
• Self-advocacy refers to the ability to express one’s needs, wants, and rights in an assertive manner.
• Self-efficacy is commonly referred to as self-confidence—the expectation of achieving one's goal.
• Decision-making is the complex skill of setting goals and actions, identifying information to make decisions, and choosing the best option to implement one’s plan.
• Independent performance is one’s ability to self-assess one’s performance and determine when a goal or task has been satisfactorily completed.
• Adjustment is the process of revising goals and plans to improve one’s performance or success.

Why is Self-Determination Important for Students in Post-Secondary Education?

Self-determination is a critical skill for success in higher education, because once students with disabilities graduate from high school, they are no longer entitled to the individual services detailed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In the post-secondary setting, people with disabilities must disclose their need for accommodation to the Office of Disability Services, which determines their eligibility for accommodations. Students with disabilities may need to explain their accommodations to others (i.e. instructors), and advocate for accommodations not readily offered.

Furthermore, all of the elements of self-determination described above are essential skills for one to achieve any goal. Thus, a college student must believe that he or she can be successful, be able to make logical decisions, act independently, and evaluate and adjust their actions as necessary to meet their goals and objectives.

Adapted from http://www.lehigh.edu/ Wake Technical Community College

Why Facilitate Self-Determination?

Because Self-Determined Students:

• Capitalize on their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses.
• Are proactive and experience less stress.
• Are persistent and focused on goals.
• Use support systems to creatively problem solve.

Source: http://studentaffairs.lehigh.edu/content/parents-and-families-0#What%20is%20Self%20Determination
Parents’ Role within the Self-Determination Model

1. Listen. Be there to provide support and consultation, but give your son or daughter the space to figure it out independently. Resist the urge to “take over” the problem.

2. Encourage your student to make connections. Direct your son or daughter to talk with his or her Disability Services Coordinator, his or her professors, his or her advisor, and other individuals who can assist while at Navarro College.

3. Don’t be afraid of mistakes. Mistakes are part of the learning process. Let your student learn from his or her experiences.

4. It’s a different world. Students live in a different world than when we were their age. They need to set their own goals and take ownership of their education.

5. Working Together. Disability Services department welcomes parents’ appropriate involvement. Recent studies suggest that active parental support fosters the development of self-determination. However:
   - Be aware that because of FERPA, post-secondary professionals cannot share information with parents without that student’s written permission.
   - Be mindful of “triangulation”. Direct and honest communication with your son or daughter is the most effective way to teach responsibility.

6. Trust the Process. Our role is to guide the students through this developmental process in order to become independent and responsible adults.