Developing and Implementing a Postsecondary Education Program for Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Processes and Procedure

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Abstract

Postsecondary education programs (PSEs) for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in colleges and universities expand opportunities for these young adults and result in positive outcomes, including employment and improved social networks. Although participating in postsecondary education results in numerous benefits for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, professionals are often unsure how to conceptualize or develop programs. This manuscript provides a step-by-step description of the development and implementation of a PSE at a Midwestern public university. Implications for high school and university professionals are discussed.

Hazel was thrilled when she received an offer to work as a Student Support Specialist at a postsecondary education program (PSE) for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities at a large public university. She was especially excited because the program was only one year old- what a great opportunity to be part of something new and innovative! Hazel met with her new co-workers before the beginning of the year to learn about the program. Her feelings of excitement started to shift to uneasiness when she learned of barriers staff experienced last year, including difficulty establishing supportive relationships with campus

departments, trouble helping faculty determine and deliver appropriate classroom accommodations, and concerns managing hyper-focused parents struggling to support their young adults from a distance. As a former special education teacher, Hazel was also surprised by the degree of autonomy expected of the young adults, as well as university policies that prevented PSE staff from sharing information with parents.

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have significant limitations in the areas of intellectual functioning (e.g., learning, application of information) and adaptive behavior (e.g., social skills, daily living skills, self-management; American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, n.d.). These individuals are significantly less likely to gain employment, live away from their families, and attend college following high school (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). However, PSEs in colleges and universities expand opportunities for these students (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012) and are found to increase rates of employment, independent living, social networks, self-determination, self-esteem, and meaningful community participation (Moore & Schelling, 2015; Thoma et al., 2011).

In general, PSEs are designed for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to gain social, academic, and employment skills to enhance independence and self-sufficiency (Griffin, McMillan & Hodapp, 2010). Successful PSE programs include access to academic opportunities, career development activities, participation in campus organizations and activities, and development of self-determination skills (Lynch & Getzel, 2013). However, PSEs vary widely in size, enrollment, activities, requirements, and other program characteristics (Grigal et al., 2012; Plotner & Marshall, 2015). As a result, and in spite of organizations such as Think College (http://www.thinkcollege.net) designed to provide information and support related to

PSEs, professionals are often unsure how to conceptualize and develop PSEs at their home institutions (Mock & Love, 2012). In this manuscript, we describe steps taken to develop a two-year, residential PSE for students aged 18-25 with intellectual and developmental disabilities at a Midwestern public university; pre-academic year procedures; and academic year procedures. We also discuss implications for high school and PSE professionals.

Steps to Program Development

Hazel's co-workers held a meeting to inform Hazel about how the PSE was developed to help her better understand the program's foundation. The Director of the program identified a total of five steps taken to develop the PSE: (1) form a program development committee; (2) learn from other PSEs; (3) develop relationships on campus; (4) solicit community feedback and petition university leaders; and (5) hire program staff.

Development Step #1: Form a Program Development Committee

An Associate Dean from the Department of Continuing Studies developed an interest in creating a PSE and forged a relationship with the Vice President of Support Services and Director of Family Supports from a community disability service agency to discuss initial development plans. The Associate Dean also recruited the university's Director of Residential Life, the Assistant Dean of Students, and an Assistant Professor of Special Education to join the program development committee. Consistent with the evidence-based transition practice of interagency collaboration (Kohler, 1996; Tatnall, 2014), the contributions of committee members representing diverse university departments enhanced the development process, as they were able to answer questions and provide information specific to their areas of expertise (e.g., campus enrollment polices, disciplinary procedures, best practices to support students with disabilities).

This committee brainstormed possible program designs (e.g., student requirements, inclusion of students in the residence hall), student support needs (e.g., academic support, compliance with taking prescribed medication), residence hall configurations (e.g., roommate matching), and staffing needs. Once the committee decided on the basic elements of the program (e.g., students would attend for two years, live on campus, take at least one university class in addition to three classes developed by the PSE each semester to reduce tuition costs), they realized that learning from other programs would help them enhance or reconsider aspects of their initial plan.

Development Step #2. Learn from Other PSEs

In order to develop a robust program structure, including program philosophy, policies, and evaluation methods (Kohler, 1996), the program development committee used the Think College website to locate two nearby PSEs to visit. During these visits, the development committee met with PSE staff at the universities, visited with students in the PSE programs, and met with their institutional counterparts at the university (e.g., the Directors of Residential Life at each university met) to learn about the nature and function of the programs. The development committee also sought to learn how the programs implemented evidence-based practices such as student- and family-centered planning (Test, Smith, & Carter, 2014) and inclusive opportunities (Grigal et al., 2012). In addition, the development committee phone-conferenced with additional programs around the nation to learn how to address barriers identified by the programs they visited (e.g., disruptive behavior, resistant faculty). With information provided by other PSE programs, the literature on evidence-based practices, and resources such as Think College, the development committee determined the mission of the program would be "to provide an opportunity for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to develop the skills

necessary to become participating members of their community through inclusion in university life and, in so doing, to enrich the diversity of the university." Based on this mission statement, the committee created the following goals and anticipated student outcomes:

- Financial independence: Students who complete the program are expected to be better prepared to financially manage their lives, including increases in money management and budgeting skills.

- Personal development: Students who complete the program are expected to experience improvement in their personal development, including identifying and assessing personal strengths and needs, developing personal goals, and developing a stronger sense of identity, self-awareness, and recognition of how they can contribute to their own quality of life.

- Independent living: Students who complete the program are expected to develop independent living skills, including time management, self-care, personal responsibility, respect for social boundaries, development of social networks, and meaningful utilization of leisure time.

- Access to resources: Students who complete the program are expected to identify and explore resources that will allow them to grow personally, professionally, academically, and socially, including disability-related services and supports, employment opportunities, varied means of transportation, and community activities and events.

Development Step #3: Develop Relationships on Campus

Recognizing the importance of interagency collaboration and buy-in from other university personnel, the committee took care to develop partnerships across campus to ensure that the program was well-supported and received. During these meetings, committee members

provided information about PSEs, prospective students, and anticipated roles and responsibilities (e.g., PSE staff will collect tuition and route it to the Cashier's Office for processing). They also dispelled common myths about intellectual and developmental disabilities (e.g., people with intellectual and developmental disabilities need around-the-clock support), discussed instructional and behavioral strategies (e.g., universal design, visual aids, redirection), and encouraged university personnel to ask questions to proactively address concerns or negative perceptions about PSEs or students with disabilities. As to be expected, the program initially experienced growing pains (e.g., students not showing up for class, inappropriate behavior in the dining hall). Therefore, it was essential that PSE representatives immediately addressed these issues not only with the students but also with university personnel to hear their concerns, brainstorm solutions, and mitigate negative perceptions about the program.

Development Step #4. Solicit Community Feedback and Petition University Leaders

In order to ensure the program met the needs of all stakeholders, the development committee scheduled several focus groups with parents and students recruited from a local disability service agency. The committee gained valuable information about parent and student needs, expectations, and fears related to college from these conversations. The committee used this information to inform the program structure (e.g., resource allocation, family involvement strategies). In some cases, focus group information suggested the potential for a disparity in the expectations of parents and PSE staff (e.g., some parents expected 24-hour care, whereas the mission of the program promoted engaging students in supported decision-making and allowing them the opportunity to learn from failure). This led to the development of documents clearly describing the values and expectations of the program to prevent misconceptions (See Table 1).

Table 1

Expectations for vocational experiences. This figure is an example of how the PSE shares expectations with students and their family members to prevent misconceptions.

Vocational Experiences

Mission Statement: Vocational Experiences will provide students an opportunity to explore and investigate employment goals, interests, and passions to guide student decisions post-graduation. Specific hours, schedules, and duties are flexible and take into consideration the needs and employment goals of the student and the needs of the employer.

Student Role: Work independently and/or within a team, self-advocate, and communicate with coworkers and [PSE] staff about experiences	*[PSE] Role:* Facilitate and foster a vocational pairing for students that matches personal interests and future employment goals	*Parent Role:* Support and encourage independence in the workplace, student choice of work, and provide advice to student
Student Responsibilities:	*[PSE] Responsibilities:*	*Parent Responsibilities:*
• Learn to take public transportation • Listen to and utilize advice from coworkers and [PSE] staff • Work independently • Learn to self-advocate in the workplace • Use appropriate workplace hygiene • Create and maintain a work schedule • Self-evaluate work experience • Communicate progress • Engage in workplace problem-solving and critical thinking • Be on time and respect workplace rules and policies • Explore post-graduation employment services and opportunities	• Support student choice • Teach work skills and etiquette, including proper hygiene and attire • Encourage independent decision-making and taking initiative • Support students to use public transportation • Provide midterm and final feedback to students • Provide on-site resources and education to students and employers • Work with students and employers on identifying support needs and establishing sustainable, least intrusive supports • Explore post-graduation employment services and opportunities with students	• Encourage independent decision-making through critical thinking conversations and supporting student interests • Share personal stories and strategies about work experiences with students • Support student problem-solving skills and allow natural consequences to occur • Explore post-graduation employment services and opportunities with students

The development committee then presented a proposal to a university panel led by the Provost of Academic Affairs. The proposal included a statement of need, a program description and goals, application and admissions processes, a program reporting and organizational chart, a program budget, a program marketing plan, and a plan for sustainability (e.g., student tuition

covering costs of staff). Two young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the community also prepared speeches to demonstrate support from the community.

Development Step #5. Hire Program Staff

Based on the program structure developed in steps 1-4, the development committee hired a PSE Director, Student Support Specialist, Coordinator of Instruction, Coordinator of Vocational Experiences, and an office support staff member. Table 2 provides a general description of roles and responsibilities for each PSE position. The program also allocates a portion of student tuition to pay for the room and board of two degree-seeking university students who live in the residence hall to serve as program "Mentors" by providing advice to students in the program (e.g., how to meet new people, ideas for things to do on the weekend, who to talk to about issues or concerns). Program staff collaborate with Residential Life staff to interview, select, and train the program Mentors.

Table 2.

PSE positions. This figure lists and describes each position at the PSE program.

PSE Position	Primary Position Responsibilities
PSE Director	- Manage day-to-day program operations - Provide general program oversight - Lead parent support practices - Hire, train, and support PSE staff - Ensure adherence to all university and PSE policies - Monitor disciplinary procedures, as needed - Develop collaborative relationships with university and community partners - Seek external funding to support program initiatives and student scholarships
Student Support Specialist	- Collaborate with students to engage in person-centered planning and goal attainment - Collaborate with students to resolve social conflict - Collaborate with students to identify and engage in social activities - Collaborate with students to develop and maintain personal schedules and identify courses

	• Provide annual trainings to Residential Life staff, campus police, and other university staff on how to communicate with and accommodate students in the program
Coordinator of Instruction	• Design PSE program courses • Oversee PSE program instructors • Monitor student grades across all courses • Collaborate with students to identify needed academic accommodations and supports • Collaborate with university faculty to effectively implement academic accommodations and university design for learning
Coordinator of Vocational Experiences	• Investigate potential workplace experiences for PSE students at the university and in the community • Conduct work-related assessments and evaluations • Collaborate with students to identify needed vocational accommodations • Create vocational accommodations and scaffold-needed supports (e.g., use of public transportation or paratransit) • Collaborate with students to create and update resumes • Collaborate with students to locate long-term employment opportunities • Teach workplace skills and inform students of relevant antidiscrimination laws and policies
Office Support Staff Member	• Provide clerical and administrative support for the PSE office

Pre-Academic Year Program Procedures

Equipped with a better understanding of how the program was developed, Hazel formed many questions about other logistical aspects of the program, such as admissions and where students live. The PSE Director described six program procedures that occur prior to students taking classes: applications and interviews, a family orientation workshop, a program meet and greet, university new student orientation, person-centered planning meetings, and residential hall move-in.

Applications and Interviews

Students retrieve a program application from the PSE office or the university's website. Once program staff receive an application, the Director reviews it to ensure applicants meet basic program requirements (e.g., age, disability diagnosis, reported ability to self-administer medication) and distributes invitations for applicants and their families to participate in an on-

campus interview. Program staff interview both students and their parents because parents play an intensive role in providing lifelong support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and, in some cases, maintain conservatorship over their children (Boehm, Carter, & Taylor, 2015). However, staff interviews the student and his or her family members separately because they found that students were more candid about their interest in the program (e.g., some students only applied because of their parents) and parents were more candid about their desire for the program to provide intensive support and student oversight (e.g., provide 24-hour support, prevent students from engaging in sexual activity) when interviewed separately. After interviews occur, staff convene to discuss if the student is motivated to participate in the program and if the expectations of students and parents align with program expectations. For students accepted into the program, the Director mails an acceptance packet for the family to review together that includes documents outlining program components, roles, responsibilities, and expectations (See Table 1). The packet also includes student and parent contracts that they both must sign and return before students may enroll in courses (See Figure 1 for an example of the parent contract). Staff found that the student and parent contracts were an excellent way to reinforce expectations and served as a useful tool to refer back to, as needed.

Figure 1

PSE parent contact. This figure displays the parent contract that parents and/or caregivers must sign prior to students enrolling in courses.

[PSE] Parent Contract

Our common goals are the development of student independence and exercise of student choice. In order for us to work towards those goals, these are the commitments we ask parents to make.

I_____, agree to the following:

Please initial before each statement to indicate you have read and you understand each element of this contract

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— I understand and agree with the common goals of student independence and student choice as well as the value systems outlined in the [PSE] procedures.

— I understand and will encourage my student to follow the [University] Student Standard of Conduct.

— I will effectively communicate family expectations to my child (e.g., budget, bedtime, sexual activity) and recognize that these expectations may not be shared by [PSE] or [University].

— I understand it may take 24 to 48 hours before communication is answered by [PSE] staff.

— I understand if my student fails to attend class and complete coursework, he/she could be placed on Academic Recovery and/or suspended from the [PSE] program.

— I understand if my student fails to attend vocational experiences, he/she could be placed on the Vocational Performance Improvement Plan and/or suspended from the [PSE] program.

— I understand that my student is ultimately responsible for their course schedule, time management of time, and attendance.

— I understand that my student will make decisions that I may disagree or feel uncomfortable with, but I also understand that these choices will help my student grow and learn.

— I will allow my student autonomy in determining his/her class schedule and vocational experiences.

— I understand that my student may independently utilize public transportation.

— I understand my student is responsible for their physical and mental well-being and that it is the student's responsibility to (a) take medication as prescribed, (b) attend and schedule medical and counseling appointments, and (c) exercise personal hygiene.

— I understand it is my student's responsibility to utilize available supports.

— I understand that [PSE] is not responsible for securing employment for my student after graduation.

— I will participate in my student's creation of his/her person-centered plan and will respect and support the goals and next steps created in this plan to the best of my ability.

I acknowledge that I have read all the terms of the [PSE] Parent/Caregiver Contract and that I understand these terms. Signature: _____

Family Orientation Workshop

Program staff host a full day orientation workshop for parents and other family members of incoming students. During this workshop, staff describe the program, including expectations of students, staff, and families. For example, staff describe how they support self-determination by honoring student decisions unless they are in violation of program or university policies (which may or may not align with the wishes of their parents). Staff also collaborate with an alumni parent to help family members (a) move from a "caretaker" (doing for students) to an "advisor" (doing with students) (See Table 3); (b) learn about available resources, services, and

supports to help students achieve goals; (c) foster the self-determination and advocacy skills of

students; (d) engage in family-to-family support; and (e) learn how to cope with fears and

anxieties associated with their changing roles as parents transitioning their students to adulthood

(Francis, Fuchs, Johnson, Gordon, & Grant, 2016).

Table 3

Caregiver to advisor example. This figure displays an example of a resource PSE staff use in role-play activities to teach parents how to transition from caregivers to advisors. This and other examples are included in the PSE family handbook.

Scenario: Sam is not satisfying expectations of self-care and hygiene. His vocational experience is at risk and his roommates have complained about the bad smell in the dorm room as a result of Sam's poor hygiene.	
- Caretaker Response: Doing For -	**+ Advisor Response: Doing With +**
"That is it! I am coming up there right now with my cleaning supplies, laundry baskets, and a set of clean clothes. After we clean, you're going to come home and shower."	"I get that college kids don't always take showers, but you are seriously hurting your relationships and future employment. Let's take a look at your schedule and figure out a time for you to shower at least every other day."
"I will call the program director and tell him that he has to make you shower!"	"Do you feel comfortable talking to the program director about showering? Maybe you guys can come up with a plan."

Program Meet and Greet

Program staff host an informal program meet and greet for incoming and current students

in the program and their family members. During the meet and greet, 1-2 program staff and

students assemble at the campus residential housing complex and participate in fun "get to know

you" activities. Staff solicit roommate requests (which may not necessarily include students in

the program) after the students have an opportunity to get to know one another. In the meantime,

current and former parents of students in the program meet with family members new to the PSE

at a local restaurant to encourage new family members to get to know each other, exchange

contact information, and participate in group discussions about the program and college life.

University New Student Orientation

Family members of students enrolled in the program participate in the university New Student Orientation with other families of incoming university students. However, while degree-seeking students and their family members attend sessions about degree-specific information (e.g., the number of credits needed to graduate, study abroad information), students in the PSE and their family members attend information sessions hosted by program staff designed to answer family questions, inform them about program specifics, and alert them to available university resources. Because students tend to ask more questions when separated from their families, students attend sessions with the university police and technology staff to ask questions and set up student accounts while families attend a concurrent session with university police, as well as sessions about financial aid options and meal plan information. This separation of students from family members also introduces student independence in a safe and supportive environment.

Person-centered Planning Meetings

The program uses person-centered plans (Rasheed, Fore, & Miller, 2006) to guide and evaluate student progress. Prior to the semester, students facilitate their own planning meetings with the support of the Student Support Specialist, by inviting participants (e.g., family members, faculty, agency staff), identifying goals and next steps, determining needed and available supports, and soliciting support (e.g., assigning individuals responsibilities). The person-centered plans serve as comprehensive transition portfolios that include supporting documents collected over two years in the program (e.g., revised plans, goal monitoring data, an updated

résumé, letters of reference, academic and workplace evaluations, disability resource information).

Residential Hall Move-in

Students in the PSE move into the university residence hall three days prior to general campus move-in. Early move-in provides an opportunity for students in the program to move at their own pace, practice using meal plans in the dining hall, learn their schedules and campus shuttle routes, and get to know Residential Life staff and program mentors without the chaos of several hundred other students moving in at the same time.

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Academic Year Program Procedures

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As a former special education teacher, Hazel identified with many of the experiences described by the PSE staff team, including the benefits of communicating with students and their family members separately before meeting as a team. She also effectively used behavior contracts as positive behavior support strategies with her students, but she never considered developing contracts with families. She also witnessed the need for families to learn how to support the self-determination of their children and cope with the stress and anxiety associated with their children gaining independence and taking more risks. However, Hazel wondered about the day-to-day functioning of the program. The Director explained that the program focused on three major areas each semester: academic, vocational, and residential and student life procedures.

Academic Procedures

Students in the PSE make an appointment each semester with the Student Support Specialist to review their person-centered plan goals and available classes to develop course schedules. During the first year, students take a minimum of three program-specific courses

(courses designed specifically for students in the PSE), as well as one university catalog course of their choice each semester. During the second year, students take two program-specific courses and two university catalog courses in order to increase student autonomy and enhance program inclusivity. Students who seek to matriculate into degree programs typically select catalog courses that fulfill general education requirements, whereas students seeking competitive employment after graduation commonly select courses that expand skills and experiences in their desired career fields. Students complete catalog courses with accommodations and modifications provided by university faculty, support from PSE staff, and one-on-one tutoring provided by College of Education students who receive internship credits toward their degree in education.

Program-specific courses reflect courses offered by the university (e.g., Greek Mythology) but designed to provide students with information and skills necessary to achieve the anticipated outcomes of the program (e.g., students explore and address their "Achilles' heel"). These courses do not count for college credit but do count toward program completion. In an effort to move toward a more inclusive environment, degree-seeking students from the College of Education may elect to fulfill degree internship requirements by participating as full members in program-specific classes and engaging in classroom activities and discussions alongside students in the program.

Vocational Procedures

All students in the program complete a minimum of three vocational experiences on or off campus among individuals without disclosed disabilities. Students typically engage in vocational experiences for approximately 10 hours a week for an average of 10 weeks each semester. Using student person-centered plans as a foundation, the Coordinator of Vocational

Experiences collaborates with students to determine interests and strengths, develop résumés and request letters of recommendation, identify vocational opportunities on or off campus and connect with potential employers, develop interview skills, discuss responsibilities and rights afforded to employees with disabilities under antidiscrimination laws, enhance workplace social skills, and plan and learn methods for transportation.

Residential and Student Life Procedures

All students in the program live in the university's residential hall, among approximately 400 degree-seeking students. Initially, students only roomed in suites with other students in the program. However, negative student behaviors (e.g., frequent verbal arguments) escalated as time advanced because the students did not have the skills needed to resolve conflict, and they were spending too much time together. As a result, staff addressed social problem-solving skills in PSE courses, developed opportunities for students in the program to live with degree-seeking students to increase inclusivity and peer models for social skills, and collaborated with Residential Life staff to provide communication training and discuss students' needs, accommodations, and modifications with staff. Residential Life staff indicated that these changes resulted in fewer student complaints and rule violations (e.g., breaches of roommate contracts). In addition, they reported that placing students inclusively throughout the residence hall led to increased understanding, acceptance, and social awareness of disability as a part of human diversity.

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Program Evaluation Procedures

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Hazel was aware of the benefits of attending PSEs such as enhanced social networks and rates of employment, but wondered about the outcomes of this program. The Director described

on-going evaluation techniques to determine student outcomes during the program and

explained follow-up survey procedures to collect data on alumni outcomes.

Staff collect data related to financial independence, personal development, independent living, and access to resources through successfully completed coursework and vocational experiences, sustained and positive experiences living in the residential hall, goal creation and obtainment, and observations of students leading their person-centered planning meetings and directing their educational, vocational, and social endeavors. Staff use surveys to collect post-graduation data including employment, continued education, and place of residence. As of spring 2017, 21% of PSE graduates reported continuing their education at a community college, technical school, or university; 75% reported gaining competitive employment within one year of graduation; and 54% reported living outside of the family home within one year of graduation. These outcomes are encouraging, considering increasing rates of unemployment and underemployment of college graduates in the United States (Davis, Kimball, & Gould, 2015) and the dismal unemployment rates of individuals with disabilities (Butterworth et al., 2015). In addition, staff distribute pre-post surveys before and after family orientation workshops. According to these surveys, approximately 90% of family members who participated in the workshop agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop was relevant, stimulating, and helped them transition from a "caregiver" to an "advisor" to better support their young adult with a disability (Francis et al., 2016).

Implications for High School and PSE Professionals

Hazel and the PSE staff team began to brainstorm how to enhance the program for the coming year. They began by reviewing the primary "lessons learned" from the previous year (e.g., the benefits of inclusive student housing) and discussed how they might proactively uncover

and address future barriers. As the new Student Support Specialist, Hazel wondered aloud if the family workshop could be expanded to a student workshop series that would complement the self-determination and coping strategies taught to their families. The Coordinator of Instruction enthusiastically agreed and suggested meeting with program instructors to develop a course that covers these topics. Hazel added that perhaps it could be co-taught by a PSE and university instructor and made available to all students on the university's course catalog to increase campus inclusivity. As a former teacher, she also questioned how the PSE could collaborate with high school professionals to better prepare students and their families for college.

Professionals seeking to develop a PSE for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities may consider the development steps and program procedures described in this manuscript to begin the process of including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their home institutions. Specifically, the documentation of barriers encountered (e.g., dorm room arguments, conflicting expectations between professionals and parents) and strategies to address barriers (e.g., integrating PSE and non-PSE students in the dorms, creating contracts outlining program expectations) can assist in the development process. In addition, including high school educators on PSE committees could enhance program development, as educators may help recruit students for the program and share evidence-based instructional and transitional strategies (e.g., direct instruction, audio prompting, task analysis, student-centered planning; Richter, Mustian, & Test, 2012; Taylor & Colvin, 2013; Uphold & Hudson, 2012) with the PSE. Further, participating on a PSE committee may better inform high school educators on how to prepare students and their families for college, as committee members share information about gaps in skills needed for success in college such as recognizing social cues, self-advocacy and decision-making skills, communication skills, and self-care skills (Dente & Coles, 2012;

Taylor & Colvin, 2013). For example, high school educators and PSE staff may collaborate to share materials that they can adapt for use in their classroom or co-develop curriculum or workshops designed to enhance emotional intelligence skills among students and their families so they are better equipped to cope the with stress of transitioning out of high school and into college (Francis et al., 2016). Further, PSE staff may attend student Individualized Education Program meetings to share information about PSEs, available resources to support a college education, and essential skills students need to experience success in college.

Several barriers, including low expectations and poor transition planning in high school, result in the underrepresentation of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in university settings and the competitive workforce (Corby, Cousins, & Slevin, 2012; Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). However, attending PSE programs has been shown to increase employment rates by approximately 25% and weekly income by over 70%, compared to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who did not attend a PSE (Migliore & Butterworth, 2008). As a result, professionals should consider facilitating experiential learning opportunities during high school to enhance expectations and functional skills, resulting in positive behavioral change and improved post-school outcomes (Migliore, Butterworth, Nord, & Gelb, 2011). High school and PSE staff may also collaborate to implement experiential opportunities such as university overnight summer camps for high school students with disabilities in which they live with roommates in residential halls (including utilizing a university meal plan, doing laundry, etc.), attend college classes with accommodations and modifications, manage leisure time, and navigate the campus and surrounding community. For institutions looking to develop faculty support for PSEs, starting with a small summer camp may facilitate positive experiences for students while also increasing the investment and capacity of higher

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education faculty and staff to effectively accommodate and include students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Conclusion

Research indicates that gaining a college education increases positive post-high school outcomes (e.g., college, employment, independent living, community participation) for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Moore & Schelling, 2015). This manuscript addresses a gap in the literature on PSEs by describing the development of a PSE and providing a rich description of program procedures (including barriers encountered and strategies for addressing barriers). High school and PSE paraprofessionals may use information provided in this manuscript not only as a base from which to develop a PSE but also to spark ideas on how collaboration between these two entities may ultimately benefit student outcomes.

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