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*Article*

## **BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY**

**Joshua N. Baker**

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**K. Alisa Lowrey**

University of Southern Mississippi

**K. Ryan Wennerlind**

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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**Abstract:** Since the reauthorization of The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) in 2008, postsecondary programs that include individuals with intellectual developmental disability have seen a phenomenal increase. In 2015, a National Coordinating Center along with 52 Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) were created and funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education. Currently, 267 programs are listed on the National Coordinating Center's website. This is an increase in programs by 500% compared to the number in 2008. As more programs are created with many of them being grass roots initiatives, a basic framework to beginning and supporting these endeavors has been identified. The purpose of this article is to provide a framework to assist those interested in beginning their own inclusive program at an institution of higher education for students with intellectual developmental disability.

**Keywords:** *postsecondary education; inclusive college opportunities; intellectual disability; transition; developmental disability*

## Introduction

College campuses across the United States are becoming more diverse and seeing an increase of first generation students. This increase could be related to the ever changing and competitive workforce. To better prepare employers, preliminary research seeks to understand how to better support those from underrepresented groups (Lozano & Escrich, 2017; Storlie, Mostade, & Duenyas, 2016). In one specific study, Storlie, et al. used qualitative methods to examine the career development of first-generation Latina students. The participants in the study described themselves as “cultural trailblazers.” This description was used because they did not adhere to past cultural traditions and were the first to break family and cultural traditions of going to college and pursuing a different type of career. Similar to the findings from Storlie et al., it can be argued that many of our young adults with intellectual developmental disability can be called “cultural trailblazers.” They are not necessarily breaking a family tradition; however, they are breaking the cultural barrier that always said young adults with intellectual developmental disability could not go to college.

Due to the past barriers, many staggering statistics on employment can be found. In fact, in 2016, the employment rate of individuals with a disability was 17.9% while the rate of those without a disability was much higher at 65.3% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The unemployment rate of those with a disability was 10.5% while the rate of those without a disability was half that at 4.6%. One of the most startling statistics is that 34% of individuals with a disability are employed part time versus 18% for those without a disability. Greater differences in employment exist within categories of disability. In the past, this workforce neglected to include individuals with intellectual developmental disability. In fact, some research shows that only 15% of individuals with intellectual developmental disability are employed and of that 15%, just over half are earning less than minimum wage (Anderson, Larson, Wuorio, & Lakin, 2011). In addition, the competitive employment rate for young adults with autism can be as low as 4% with a majority working in sheltered workshops (Taylor & Selzer, 2011).

While employment statistics are grim for individuals with disabilities, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that between both groups (i.e., those with and without a disability), individuals with higher levels of education are employed at higher rates than those with less education (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a). Also, data show unemployment rates are lower the more education one has attained (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). These findings are not new. Over time, higher levels of educational attainment have presented higher employment rates and lower unemployment rates. Often, college is associated with a brighter future, primarily centered around employment. Many young people every year graduate high schools and land on college campuses looking for further education to prepare them for future careers. Until recently, even though data have supported improved employment rates for individuals with intellectual developmental disability with higher levels of education, college attendance was not an option for the vast majority of individuals with intellectual developmental disability. Additional postsecondary education (PSE) opportunities are needed for young adults with intellectual developmental disability to prepare them more effectively for future careers.

To address the need for PSE, the number of colleges and universities that are creating programs to help support those with intellectual developmental disability has increased by 500% over the

past 10 years. The National Coordinating Center ([www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)) shows there were only 49 PSE programs for students with intellectual developmental disability in existence in the United States in 2008 and now there are 267 college programs. With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 a number of important revisions (e.g., access to financial aid, eligibility for work study) were added to allow young adults with intellectual developmental disability to have better access to the PSE environment (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). In addition to students being eligible for financial aid and work study, the HEOA also allowed for the establishment of a National Coordinating Center and, thus far, 52 Transition and Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs). Both the National Coordinating Center and the TPSIDs were funded in 2010 and 2015 (i.e., 27 TPSIDs in 2010; 25 TPSIDs in 2015). Of the 52 awards, five of the recipients received the award during both funding cycles. Many of the 47 two- and four-year PSE programs funded have assisted other programs across their state with startup funds. For example, on the *thinkcollege.net* site, it shows that five 2015 grantees created consortiums across the state. These consortiums have extended efforts and options across the states.

Not only have the TPSID programs helped increase the number of opportunities, they have also help to pave the path in research and innovation for the entire field of PSE for students with intellectual developmental disability. These additions allow faculty to conduct research across many areas. Research has been done in technology, academics, and peer mentorships. Studies focused on technology have included topics such as navigation paired with visual prompts (Kelley, Test, & Cooke, 2013), augmented reality paired with prompts (Smith, Cihak, Kim, McMahan, & Wright, 2017), and the use of mobile applications, or apps (McMahon, Cihak, Gibbons, Fussell, & Mathison, 2013). Studies on academic needs within PSE programs has increased with specific explorations of note-taking instruction strategies and strategies to teach specific academic content vocabulary (Reed, Hallett, & Rimel, 2016; McMahon, Cihak, Wright, & Bell, 2016). The use of peer supports has been suggested as an important component for successful transitions (Biggs & Carter, 2015) however, little research is available on how to effectively include peer mentors into PSE programs. The Western Carolina UP Program has provided an effective example of support roles, recruiting efforts, training, and evaluation of both paid and unpaid natural supports (Kelley & Westling, 2013).

According to the National Coordination Center, TPSID research demonstrated an increase in academic access, career development and employment, self-determination, and campus membership for participating TPSID students. In the 2014-2015 TPSID annual report, TPSIDs reported 784 students attended 5775 college or university courses; just under half were inclusive courses continuing the trend in academic access (Grigal, Hart, Smith, Domin, & Weir, 2017). The annual report also found that nearly all TPSID programs offered a credential that was conferred by the Institute of Higher Education, the TPSID program, or by a partnering local education agency based on recognized standards. In year five of the TPSID program (2014-2015), the national coordinating center reported nearly 75% of students participated in career development activities and 39% of students held paid employment. Most important, the percentage of TPSID students employed was similar to the percentage of typical college students employed. Campus membership has also increased in that TPSID data showed the majority of students participated in campus events. Students demonstrated increased self-determination

through the use of person centered planning where they took an active part in, often times leading, the planning of their college experience.

The continuing development of PSE programs has created a need for shared experiential information. Those in the beginning stages may benefit from the experiences of those who have already begun the process. The authors of this paper have experienced frequent requests to share their experiences when creating programs. The purpose of this paper is to provide a step-by-step start up framework to building an inclusive PSE program for young adults with intellectual developmental disability (Figure 1). This framework is based on the experiences of the authors in beginning or assisting in the beginning of four PSE programs at different universities and regions in the United States. This is meant as a suggested framework and the authors acknowledge that all steps may not apply to a specific situation and that other situations may require additional steps. Finally, it is suggested that this framework only be used as a quick guide for application as needed. The framework is divided into the three parts of (a) understanding the philosophical foundations, (b) program design, and (c) getting off the ground. Within each part there are a number of suggested tasks that will be important to consider and/or complete.

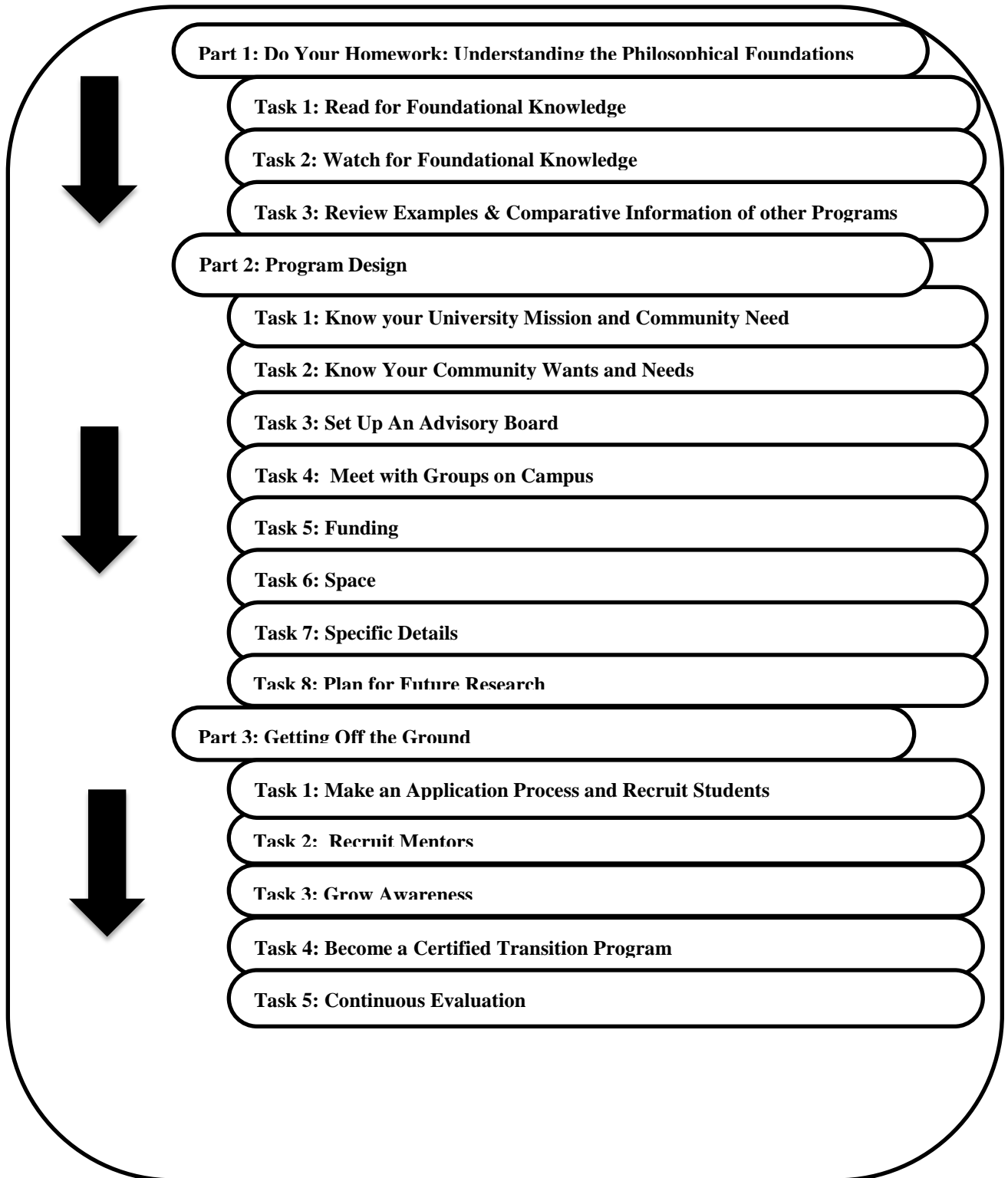
## **Part 1: Do Your Homework: Understanding the Philosophical Foundations**

### **Task 1: Read for Foundational Knowledge**

When considering starting a PSE, it is important to understand the philosophical foundations and historical work supporting these programs. Your first task will be to thoroughly explore *thinkcollege.net*. Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston, serves as the National Coordinating Center for PSE programs for students with intellectual developmental disability in the United States. As part of their federally funded mission, Think College warehouses most of the philosophical and historical information you will need to consider in the initial stages of planning. They provide publications; training materials; and access to past, current, and future topics in post-secondary education. Think College will not only be a resource for you, but it will also be a resource that you can provide to teachers, transition specialists, families, and peers. By subscribing to the Think College mailing list, you will be informed of upcoming events and webinars. This is your first step.

Second, in addition to the current and latest research, you will want to read the following: (a) Hart, Grigal, and Weir (2010); (b) Grigal and Hart (2010a); (c) Grigal and Hart (2010b); and (d) Thompson, Weir, and Ashmore (2011). These readings not only provide an in-depth analysis of PSE but these selections also set the tone for why college is important and beneficial for students with intellectual developmental disability. As you delve into the research, you will begin to see that programs are highly varied and that PSE programs typically fit into three categories: (a) mixed/hybrid model, (b) substantially separate model, or (c) inclusive individual support model (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006). Before you take action steps to plan, it is important for you to identify the alignment of your philosophy with the type of program you plan to create.

Figure 1. Building an Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Program



### **Task 2: Watch for Foundational Knowledge**

In addition to the great readings, there are a few webinars that will give you a closer look at the excitement of starting a PSE program. *Rethinking College: The Film*, produced by Think College (2014), provides a 26-minute snapshot into the benefits of PSE programs. Another film is *Getting Started: Developing Inclusive College Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities* by Giffin and Papay (2012). Also browse YouTube for other great videos that have been posted from current PSE programs. These independent videos range from focusing on inspiration to information surrounding PSE programs and should be viewed with that in mind.

### **Task 3: Review Examples and Comparative Information of other Programs**

As stated earlier, there are currently 267 programs across the country (Think College, 2017). All of the programs on the Think College website are searchable. Browse through several examples and read about specific details of each program. These programs are as varied as the university systems with which they are affiliated. All colleges are different; for example, you will not find marine biology research focus at a school located in the desert. Colleges have different missions, different programs, some are private, and some are public. You may review programs or colleges that are similar to yours and/or you may look at a variety of programs that have been established. The more programs you review, the more knowledgeable you will become when it is time to design your own program. You may find that you like and dislike some aspects of many programs.

One last reading provides a monograph of five program profiles. This monograph (found at [https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/site%20visit%20monograph\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/site%20visit%20monograph_final_web.pdf)) provides a more detailed description of selected programs in regards to academic access, campus membership, inclusive higher education, career development, and self-determination (Weir, Grigal, Hart, & Boyle, 2013). In addition, Think College has many webinars comparing programs and other useful resources available at <https://thinkcollege.net/tc-events-upcoming>.

By doing a thorough review from the start you can take the bits and pieces of what you like to create one that is unique to your university/college setting. Some example programs that the authors have collaborated with can be found in Table 1. It is important to note that the programs in Table 1 are all at various points of progress with some in infant stages while others are fully developed programs and have or are currently TPSID funded.

## **Part 2: Program Design**

Now that you have the philosophical foundation, it is time to consider your program design. Before you can plan your program, it is important to triangulate all of the information that you have read and compare that to your community needs and resources. Remember that the main outcome of your program is to build a meaningful credential, degree, and/or certificate that all graduates earn. Papay and Griffin (2013) suggested we (a) understand and document the need, (b) work with a range of stakeholders, (c) learn from model programs, (d) develop a shared vision, and (e) make a pitch. Though the following tasks are not necessarily in the same order as suggested by Papay and Griffin, the reader should see the relationship to their suggestions and to

Table 1

*Example Programs*

<b>Program Name (TPSID funded)</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Website</b>
Project F.O.C.U.S (No TPSID)	The University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Las Vegas, NV	<a href="http://www.unlvcoe.org/focus">http://www.unlvcoe.org/focus</a>
Path to Independence (No TPSID)	The University of Nevada, Reno	Reno, NV	<a href="http://www.unr.edu/nced/projects/nced_p2i">http://www.unr.edu/nced/projects/nced_p2i</a>
Up Program (TPSID 2010)	The Western Carolina University	Cullowhee, NC	<a href="http://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools-colleges/ceap/stl/special-education-programs/university-participant-up-program/index.aspx">http://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools-colleges/ceap/stl/special-education-programs/university-participant-up-program/index.aspx</a>
Inclusive Education Services (TPSID 2015)	The University of Central Florida	Orlando, FL	<a href="http://ies.sdes.ucf.edu/">http://ies.sdes.ucf.edu/</a>
CarolinaLIFE (No TPSID)	The University of South Carolina	Columbia, SC	<a href="http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/education/partnerships_outreach/carolinalife/index.php">http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/education/partnerships_outreach/carolinalife/index.php</a>

the ultimate goal to develop a shared vision with key stakeholders. One of the most important things is to have a “sales” pitch. What is your elevator speech (Gelb, Nord, Migliore, & Butterworth, 2012) about your program? Most often used in supported employment settings, an elevator speech is a brief pitch that summarizes what your program does, who it serves, and what you need. It should be deliverable in 20-30 seconds. This pitch will be refined as you design the program, but the initial pitch is essential to craft during the beginning stages. Therefore, establishing your philosophical foundation is critical to do as a first step. You will need to identify the core components of your program and then you will need to sell this program to others. It needs to be broad enough and have limited jargon so that it is understood by students, families, university personnel, and community members. The pitch may need to be tailored to the audience. For example, when trying to recruit volunteers you will want to include not only what the program is but also what the benefits are to volunteering. On the other hand, if you are pitching the program to university administrators, you will need to discuss the needs, how it can be successful, and the research currently published on similar programs. This is especially important when taking time to master Part 1 of these suggested steps. The authors of this piece have given their elevator speech at least 100 times in the past year and will continue to do so every time someone says ‘tell me about your program.’

**Task 1: Know your University Mission and Community Need**

What is the mission at your college or university? Many people may work at a university for years and never know the mission. In the design process, this is a critical first step to establishing a PSE program at your school. Your program must fit into the college mission as a whole. In fact, this could be part of your sales pitch and could later be worked into your program's mission statement. Once you read your university's mission, you will see that it is inclusive to all students including students with intellectual developmental disability. The authors have yet to read a university mission that is not inclusive to everyone.

**Task 2: Know Your Community Wants and Needs**

The next task in Phase 2 is to know your community wants and needs. Programs should not be developed without examining one's own community culture. It is important to understand the structure of services provided for students with intellectual developmental disability in your PK-12 schools (public, charter, private). For example, are there already transition programs in place? Are there local non-profits in town that provide services? Many school districts will have work programs designed for students with intellectual developmental disability until they are 21-22 years old. These options are appropriate however; the goal is to provide more options and choices for this population. It is also important to identify if your community wants or needs college as an option for young adults with intellectual developmental disability. You can ask these questions by planning and hosting small town hall meetings at your university and/or conducting a community needs assessment. Most likely you will find your community wants this option and it will be most beneficial to document this community need. The more data you have supporting the start of your program the better. Utilizing consortium groups is one way to collect this information. In many states, statewide post-secondary consortium groups have been created to plan and discuss creating more inclusive PSE programs. When planning these meetings think about inviting politicians, university administrators, campus department leaders, representatives from local state agencies (e.g., regional centers, vocational rehabilitation), school district personnel, teachers, parents of students with intellectual developmental disability, individuals with intellectual developmental disability, advocates, leaders of local/state non-profits, and other community leaders. The more people that you have attend the better. Be systematic and structured with an agenda for each meeting. Always identify the function of the meeting. What do you plan to share? What do you plan to gather? Finally, include a sign-in sheet to record attendance, role of the person attending, and contact information. This will provide you with evidence of interest, topics addressed, and can be used to identify those who may have interest in serving on an advisory board, networking services, or contributing/participating in the program.

It is also important to examine the basic types of programs in reference to the best fit for your university and community culture. During the first consortium meeting, you could present the three main types of PSE models found in Hart et al. (2006). You may also utilize any of the program exemplars found through Think College. Although the authors of this guide strive for an inclusive individual support model as the gold standard, other teams may advocate more for a mixed/hybrid model. The type of model you choose should reflect the needs identified in your community and the mission of your university. In addition, you will want to discuss with the local school districts the possibility of dual enrollment. In your review of programs, you should



identify programs within all three models (i.e., mixed/hybrid, substantially separate, or inclusive individual support) and also dual enrollment programs. You can find excellent examples of the different models as well as effective dual enrollment partnerships. In the experience of the authors, a least restrictive inclusive individual support model will take more time to plan; however, it addresses a more progressive model that is aligned with a typical college experience. As you begin your program, it is possible to begin with a hybrid/mixed model and work towards a fully inclusive support model utilizing a 5-year plan.

### **Task 3: Set Up An Advisory Board**

Throughout the process described above, you will find likeminded people who either are motivated to begin a PSE program or will have a stake in the program in a leadership or participatory role. Invite these people to attend a meeting to learn more about this initiative. Listen to their expressed needs and interests. Offer them ways to be involved throughout the development of the program. As you progress, you will want to create a project board or advisory committee. It is important to define the role and function of the advisory board prior to convening, so do not create this committee too soon. You may want to have several (2-3) town hall meetings before finally asking people to serve on the board or advisory committee. You will need to decide if the committee will function more as a Board of Directors or as a typical Advisory Board that reviews plans, policies, and makes suggestions but does not govern or make decisions. When asking for participation, you should clearly define the roles of members in terms of time commitment and the purpose of the board. You should also explain the program's role in working with the board (e.g., information dissemination, invitation to events). You should review these roles during the first meeting of the advisory board. Committees should be established for identified needs. Some of the roles for advisory committees may be as fundraising leader, community liaison, a disability college advocate, treasurer, etc. As you form your board and committees, keep size and function in mind. Some committees with fewer members may be more directed and are better suited to accomplish a task quickly while larger committees may be more adept at securing diverse viewpoints and information.

### **Task 4: Meet with Groups on Campus**

Establishing a presence on campus may arguably be the most important step in building a program that is embedded within the university system. There are many different organizations on campus that you should meet with. Figure 2 provides a checklist of suggested campus organizations to meet with as you begin planning a program. While Figure 2 is an extensive list, you may identify other organizations specific to your campus that may be important to meet with in developing your program. Meeting with specific groups on campus is important because it will alert them to the upcoming program, work out challenges in systemic policies or procedures, and allow you to be responsive to any concerns they may have. The more people and/or organizations you enlist in the development of your program the better.

The Office of Admissions may be the most natural organization on campus to meet with first. When beginning the process of starting a program, you must think about enrollment or admission into the school. While some PSE programs have created an alternative route to the traditional admissions process, these separate systems may lead to difficulties in student use of university

<b>Department</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Check</b>
Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Adjustments to general admission form</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Ensure typical registration process</li> <li>• Ensure participation in new student registration activities</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bursar's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Establishing program fee and payment options</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Gather club or activity information for UL Life students</li> <li>• Solicit information regarding possible volunteer/mentoring opportunities</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
UL Student Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Disability awareness activities</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
UL Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Discussion of behavior code</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
UL Police Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Disability awareness training</li> <li>• Developing emergency plan</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Office of Disability Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring accommodations for students in program</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical/First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide informational profiles about students with medical concerns</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alumni Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcase upcoming program</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
President/Provost Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Initial program support</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deans/Department Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcase program at Dean's Meeting (provide successful examples from around the US)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Success Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Plan for academic counseling</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First & Second Year Seminar Program Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence on campus</li> <li>• Establish volunteer/mentoring/service learning opportunities</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 2. Campus meetings checklist

supports and services. Meeting with admissions and collaboratively developing the initial application process is the most logical. Applications can be modified to denote students as PSE students. This also promotes inclusion when the students are filling out the same application for typical admission. Along with Admissions, meeting with the Registrar's Office is also most naturally one of the first steps. You will want to ensure the students are able to go through the regular registration process. This regular process can be supported through a PSE advisor. This PSE advisor should meet with students to help organize initial registration and coordinate various registration activities. As part of the orientation and registration process, many schools have mandatory activities such as club/activity fairs or campus tours where students become familiar with the student ID process, resources, extracurricular events, clubs and activities on campus. By working with the registrar, you can create entrée into all of those activities that make up so much of university life. Some universities have specific advising centers develop and manage these activities. It is important to identify what office on campus is responsible for developing these activities to help promote an inclusive environment.

While planning your program you must decide on a program fee. This program fee is in addition to any registration fees. The purpose of this program fee is primarily to hire the appropriate staff to provide the necessary supports for your program. Depending on the funding support you receive, additional funds will be required to pay for additional staff to ensure quality and efficiency within your program. The Registrar can set up all payments through the Bursar's Office. As decisions are made regarding fees, the Bursar's Office should be informed.

Student government leaders are important to meet with as well. At these meetings, it is helpful to request the opportunity to present the program to the various student organizations on campus. This will give you knowledge of potential groups your students can take part in but also inform various groups on campus of your program and volunteer/mentorship opportunities within your program. Meeting with student government leaders also may give them an opportunity to plan activities around disability awareness.

A meeting with the university legal team (i.e., general counsel) is also important. The legal team can assist in identifying potential issues and creating solutions for those issues. There are many on campus who may be completely unaware of PSE programs and have limited experience with students with intellectual developmental disability. It is important that the legal team is aware of your presence on campus. Reassuring this group that students in your program will follow the same undergraduate guidelines and handbook that every other undergraduate student is expected to follow, while addressing any concerns they may have, is critical to a successful launch. The legal team's job is to anticipate issues. Work with them in problem solving through those identified concerns in order to lay a strong foundation on campus for your PSE program.

Much like the university legal team, the university police department should also be a collaborative part of your initial development. Making the police department aware of your program's presence on campus is critical. Additionally, providing the reassurance that PSE students follow the same university behavior code as every other student will be important to secure police department support. When meeting with them you should offer disability awareness training within their department. As often as possible with all organizations, reciprocal offers should be made to provide training that increases awareness of disability or to

participate in activities that will be inclusive of your students. Building this relationship with university police will also give you an opportunity to develop an emergency plan in case a student gets lost, needs assistance, etc. If there is a medical/first aid group on campus, you should provide profiles of your students. Many times, the medical/first aid group on campus may be associated with the university police department as they are most likely the first responders on campus. Similarly to the university legal team, the university police department may be able to identify potential issues and be able to work through many of those issues.

Another critical group on campus is the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Some PSE programs are managed through this office but collaborate and develop strong partnerships. Partnering with this group will allow you to ensure that ODS provides the same accommodations to PSE program students as they do for typically enrolled students with a disability. There is precedent for this in the AHEAD white paper (Thompson, et al., 2011) recommended earlier. You will want to work with this office to deliver accommodations in typical classes as much as possible. Additionally, if there is a separate lab or testing services for students with disabilities, you will want access to those for your PSE students as well.

Building this program without the support of your dean is futile. As you develop this program, keeping your dean abreast of the planning stages, inviting his/her participation in advisory board meetings, and listening to any concerns voiced regarding the program's presence on campus will be critical for your future support. The department chairs in your college are also essential. As you develop the program, it is strongly recommended that you attend a university dean's meeting to showcase the program. Your dean's support at this meeting will be critical so be sure he/she is not surprised by anything shared there. You will want to make sure you have the foundational program aspects decided prior to a meeting with deans as they will have many questions and will expect clear answers. If you meet before the basic foundation is clear, you risk one disapproving dean derailing your momentum. It is important to share with them the purpose of this program and facts about successful programs around the U.S. Many at the meeting may have concerns about faculty obligations, students' abilities, and liability. Your dean will be able to help you anticipate these questions. Share support plans for students in typical classes and contact information for your PSE program faculty/staff. Share a research brief with findings from other programs and potential research and/or funding opportunities on your campus. Think College has easily shared fact sheets and insight briefs that can provide quick research based information and knowledge to clearly lay out your program foundation. Other key leadership figures such as the president or provost are also significant in initial support. Once again, having your basic facts identified prior to a meeting with either or both of these people is critical to your continuing success.

Finally, there may be an Academic Success Center (ASC) on campus. If present, it is important to meet with them. You may have PSE students who are academically ready to take all classes for credit. If those students are not previously enrolled as typical students, an ASC can provide academic counseling to guide the student. In this same vein, it is a good idea to contact first and second year seminar program coordinators across your campus. Most universities have first and second year seminar undergraduate requirements that frequently include a service-learning component. Recruiting volunteers through this service-learning component is one way to develop a strong network of peer mentors and program volunteers with same aged peers.

This is an extensive list of suggested meetings. However, it cannot be emphasized enough that establishing a solid network of support on campus is critical for establishing and maintaining a PSE program. The more comprehensive your planning is in the early stages, the easier it is to adjust smaller details after the program is off the ground. Being in tune with the organizations on campus that direct university systems and experiences is most important. There may be people or organizations unique to your campus not included on this list that should be added for your program.

### **Task 5: Funding**

Arguably one of the most important parts of initial start-up of a program is funding. If you do not have money you do not have a program. There are many ways to fund a program, all of which are not easy. Funding can be the biggest deterrent to starting and sustaining a program. It is important to have a strategic funding plan before starting your program. This may mean you need to start with one student (or a few) and build to scale while implementing a fee. It is imperative you have a funding plan and are following it strictly.

Grants can be pursued on the federal, state, and corporate level. Since there are not an abundance of federal grants, it may be more appropriate to look at the state and corporate level to help fund the initial start-up of a program. Grants are competitive and will require you to present a thorough plan that is ready to implement if awarded monies. Your state's Developmental Disabilities Council may have funds to put towards initial development. Foundations and/or corporations like Shell frequently offer competitive grant programs. Various state and local partnerships may also provide funding. Dual-partnerships with the local school district may provide the per pupil expenditure to allow for program staff (e.g., coordinator, educational coach, career specialist, community outreach/fundraising specialist). State partnerships with the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) may provide funds to cover student tuition costs or program fees. In many states across the U.S., the BVR has determined set amounts specifically for tuition for PSE programs. You should study those models to present to your state BVR if you live in a state that does not provide support for PSE programs on an inclusive college campus. In almost every TPSID PSE, the local BVR has played an important role, not only with tuition resources, but also direct services, consultation, and participation on advisory committees (Grigal & Smith, 2016). Developing a partnership with your local BVR is advantageous. When preparing a letter for support from your local BVR, study *Vocational Rehabilitation Partnerships with Higher Education Programs Serving Students with Intellectual Disability* (Grigal, & Smith, 2016). Grigal and Smith have prepared a Fast Facts issue that can be used in a supporting letter to potential partners in your local BVR.

Private funding is also a way to support the funding needs of your program. Private funds typically come from donors who contribute substantial amounts of monies to support program staff and materials. With limited private monies, this may also include program fundraising events to cover the remaining program costs.

An important conversation you must have with your university and staff is sustainability after the grant monies are gone. Much like the concept of generalization, your end goal should be to create a program that will be maintainable through naturally occurring systems and supports.

Planning for this from the beginning is critical. You will need to have a plan in place to apply for future grants or be ready to implement a comprehensive program fee applied to each student attending the program. Sometimes, a combination of both may be necessary.

As mentioned in Task 3, you may need to consider a per student program fee if you do not have full funding through grants, state agencies, or private sources. This program fee is on top of university tuition. These fees should be calculated to cover program costs. Program fees are not uncommon when you examine many of the 267 programs across the country; however, charging a fee often prohibits students from lower socioeconomic status.

### **Task 6: Space**

You will need to establish space for the program. With the idea of an inclusive individual support model, you do not need classroom space. You should be able to use the library, the student union, or other typical tutorial spaces for one-on-one work with students. However, you will want an office space. This office space will also function as a basecamp space. Most programs establish a basecamp where students can check in with staff if needed, receive tutorials, etc. For example, many programs across the country fall under the umbrella of University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (UCED). These centers often carve out small space for the program that serves as a basecamp. Space should be easily accessible and preferably, centrally located on campus. Be aware; students should be allowed to navigate campus in the same way typical students do. Supports should be individualized and should not resemble a special education classroom. Consider graduated assistance based on each student's individual needs. For example, during the first two weeks of school a peer-support may be with the PSE student almost 100% of the day. Your goal should be to make this 0% as quickly as possible. Obviously, everyone is different so it will take each student a different amount of time to reach that goal.

### **Task 7: Specific Details**

As you start initial plans for a program, there are several foundational pieces you want to put in place. Correlate your program mission statement with your university's mission statement. In addition, you will want to begin to plan specific internal and external objectives. The external objectives refer to the duties needed for program foundation purposes (e.g., collaborations, payment procedures, admissions) whereas internal objectives are the goals designed for the students (e.g., daily living, academic, employment). Identify the name, application procedures, acceptance procedures, program assessment procedures, cost, scheduling procedures, completion procedures, and completion certificate prior to beginning. You can look at many different programs for comparative data. Return to Task 3 in Part 1 and examine each of the programs suggested there to determine how they operate in these areas. Many programs have shared their admission forms, mentoring procedures, etc. and have been uploaded to the Think College resource site. These are going to be separate forms and you may want to include more documents such as IEP, assessment information, checklists, etc. Choose the pieces that fit best for your university. Modify or create a better support if necessary. These procedures become your plan for your PSE program. Create a consumable way to share this (e.g., a handbook). Develop this plan collaboratively with your Advisory Board. Once all of these pieces are in place, it is time to put your plan to work.

Find a good person-centered program to use as a template and make sure to focus on individual behavior and academic goals. The Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education has a template and module available for anyone to use (<http://fcihe.com/resources/fcihe-online-learning-modules/star-person-centered-planning/>). Remember, these programs are not one size fits all. Just like for typical students, it is highly unlikely that students' schedules in a PSE program are identical. Utilize person centered planning to individualize programs to meet the needs of each student.

### **Task 8: Plan for Future Research**

When starting a program, conducting research may be the last thing on your mind; however, by triangulating the research into your program design discussions it will not only set you up to have a program based on best practice but it will also help build clout to your university administrators. From the authors' experiences, deans, provosts, and other administrators want to hear about the research that the program will produce. It is not that they do not appreciate the community service aspect but they want to see that faculty members are being parsimonious in their community service, research, and teaching responsibilities.

## **Part 3: Getting Off the Ground**

### **Task 1: Make an Application Process and Recruit Students**

As noted in Part 2 you will need to create a separate application for your program. It is suggested that the application will provide you enough information about the students. You may ask for videos, talents, have a checklist, charge an application fee and only accept those applications that are complete. Some applications may look similar to published adaptive behavior scales. It is important to let the community know that you are not assessing their student, but only looking for a quick snapshot of their academic and functional capabilities.

Once the application process has been completed, an interview process should be created. Ideally you should have clear rubrics for application review and the interview process. This process should be created with the help of and approved by your advisory board. Throughout the application review and interview process, you should consider including an outside reviewer. As you combine clearly defined rubrics and an outside reviewer you create a fair process and eliminate personal bias any team members may have. The outside reviewer may be a member of your advisory board or member of the community.

### **Task 2: Recruit Mentors**

Once you have determined students and the supports they will need, you will need to recruit mentors. There are several ways to set up a mentoring program. You can have mentors who support both academic and social progress. You can have paid or unpaid mentors. You can set up mentoring as a service-learning program or as course credit. You can learn more about mentoring and access modules at <https://thinkcollege.net/think-college-learn/educational-coaching-and-mentoring/coaching-and-mentoring-supporting-students>.

**Task 3: Build Awareness**

Remember that elevator speech? It is going to be extremely important once the shell of the program has been created. You will need to build awareness at the department level (to help recruit mentors), at the university level, and in the community. A great way to build awareness is to work closely with first- and second-year seminar programs as previously stated. Many, if not all of these programs, have a service-learning component within the course. At many universities, the seminar courses are undergraduate requirements all freshman and sophomore students are required to take in order to fulfill graduation requirements. This can be a large network where younger college students have the opportunity to volunteer early in their college career. They may share this experience with fellow undergraduate students and it may increase the likelihood they continue to volunteer as they progress in their undergraduate studies.

**Task 4: Become a Certified Transition Program**

Early on, begin your application to become a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). This will allow access to financial aid and will allow the program to be accredited. You will want to make sure you set up your program aligning it to standards provided by Think College which provides many resources, including a webinar (<http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/think-college-standards>). Think College also has a module for becoming a CTP (<http://www.thinkcollege.net/think-college-learn>).

**Task 5: Continuous Evaluation**

It is important to have a planned evaluation technique in place. Initially, unless utilizing external funding, you may not be able to afford an outside program evaluation; however, you will still need to plan to continuously evaluate the program. During the design phase, you should have created both internal and external objectives for the proposed program. Make sure that these objectives are operationalized and task analyzed if possible so that evidence can be collected to make informed decisions about the progress of the program. Designing and updating a logic model and examining the inputs, outputs, and outcomes could also assist to make formative and summative decisions.

**Important Implications for Practice and Policy to Promote Inclusion**

There are many learning curves ahead when starting an inclusive PSE program. Everyone's experiences are going to be different because every university/college is different. Based on the authors' experiences a few themes should be considered when creating a PSE program.

**Bigger is Not Always Better**

You may encounter many difficult decisions around the acceptance process of students. It can be a difficult decision not to increase admissions and even harder to decline students of admission to the program; but bigger is not always better. It truly is important to think about the quality over the quantity of the program that is being created. As with any innovative program it is always better to start small.



### **Practice What You Preach**

In addition to their involvement with PSE programs, the authors are also instructors of courses in intellectual developmental disability. Having an inclusive program on campus can provide opportunities for internships, tutoring, and/or other service related opportunities. This gives professors and instructors opportunities to use the strategies and techniques they teach future teachers in the field each semester. As professors and instructors share first-hand experience, it can lead to increased credibility among students in the course/program.

### **My Way is Not the Only Way**

Be open to other ideas; learn from others. There is no need to recreate the wheel. With the TPSID projects and the creation of the National Coordinating Center, there are already a lot of resources available to access. In addition to the TPSID projects, there are many other programs out there. Do not hesitate to send an email or call others to ask questions. You will actually find that everyone wants to build these opportunities and help others and few pretend to have all the answers (including the authors of this article).

### **Get the Campus Community Involved**

Figure 2 refers to the people that you will or should contact as you begin to plan for your program. Remember, the more the better. From the authors' experiences, you will be surprised the number of people that will step up and help take charge in a number of initiatives. They may get involved because they have a family member with intellectual developmental disability or they realize it is the right thing to do. Either way, it helps to build a community within your campus.

### **Your Biggest Enemy Can be Your University**

It is a bit hypocritical to say this after just stating that it is important to get your campus community involved, but as you explore the previous considerations, you may encounter this roadblock. The heading is not meant to sound negative because every profession has difficulties implementing new ideas; however, it is important to know that the university and/or college systems are not always easy to navigate. There may be high turnover, employees who are unmotivated, employees with the wrong answers, employees that tell you what you want to hear, and (unfortunately) employees that do not agree with what you are trying to accomplish. Avoid confrontation at all costs and, when you hit roadblocks, rethink your plan. Do not get frustrated and do not give up. Remember there are 267 colleges that have done it. You may not be able to design your program identical to the others due to these roadblocks, but there are always going to be compromised alternatives.

### **Keep it Inclusive**

These programs were created in order to provide an inclusive college experience for young adults with intellectual developmental disability. In high school, young adults with intellectual developmental disability see their peers and friends go off to college and they are told that they

are not allowed. That is no longer the case. Make sure you do not go backwards in time. Keep it inclusive. If your program has a separate room, separate classes, separate curriculum then the students might as well stay at their separate schools. It is difficult to design a fully inclusive program; however, the results will be worth the time and effort.

### **Conclusion**

This article has indirectly addressed a number of implications for practice to promote the inclusion of individuals with intellectual developmental disability. To borrow again from Storlie et al. (2016), the past decade has brought numerous cultural trailblazers in the form of nervous young adults with intellectual developmental disability that have taken that step to fulfill their long-time inclusive college dreams. Many lifelong educators of students with disabilities have refocused their careers to help pave the path to postsecondary education. It has not been an easy path; however, as more PSE programs are established, it becomes easier and more typical. The programs across the country not only provide a great opportunity to young adults with intellectual developmental disability but also create a more inclusive community. These programs more closely connect colleges and universities to their missions of lifelong education and education available for everyone. The framework offered here is meant to facilitate attempts to build inclusive programs successfully within your university, community, and state. Utilize this framework as a support tool on the pathway to creating your own inclusive PSE program for students with intellectual developmental disability.

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**Authors' note:** Address correspondence concerning this article to Joshua Baker, PhD at [josh.baker@unlv.edu](mailto:josh.baker@unlv.edu).