

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

A Great Match for Students, Families, Colleges, Communities

When students with intellectual disabilities (ID) attend college, it offers them the chance to have the same opportunities as students without disabilities, in an inclusive learning environment. Everyone continues to develop between high school and adulthood, and skills gained in this time period propel learners to increased self-sufficiency, career success, and a higher quality of life. Regardless of intellectual ability, college alters life prospects and opportunities. The student with ID who participates in the choices and challenges offered in a college setting acquires key skills to make goals a reality. While a standard college degree may not be the end goal, the learning that is possible in college goes well beyond that one measure. In recent years, one of the most innovative, inclusive, collaborative, and outcome-oriented movements in the field of supports for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been the development of postsecondary education (PSE) opportunities.

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from all North Carolina high schools. While this number reflects a broad range in types and levels of disabilities, as well as varying interests and goals on the part of these students, it is clear that the need for postsecondary education options far exceeds the supply. This shortage is worsened by the fact that some state agencies with responsibility for long-term support for young adults with disabilities, such as the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, are currently operating at capacity and have extensive waiting lists for services. When other realities are considered, such as the growing number of young people identified with disabilities, the demographics of aging parents and caregivers, and the increasing limitations on public funding, it is evident that PSE is a welcome addition to the range of recommended

TIMELINE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSE OPTIONS IN NORTH CAROLINA

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The first university-based program for students with ID in NC established at UNC Greensboro	Western Carolina University develops its model program	US Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Act, provides funds for 27 model demonstration programs and a national coordinating center.	One model demonstration program funded in NC at Western Carolina University. Carolina Institute of Developmental Disabilities at UNC-CH establishes the NC Postsecondary Education Alliance	Appalachian State University establishes a PSE program	NC Community College System supports ongoing development of inclusive PSE programs

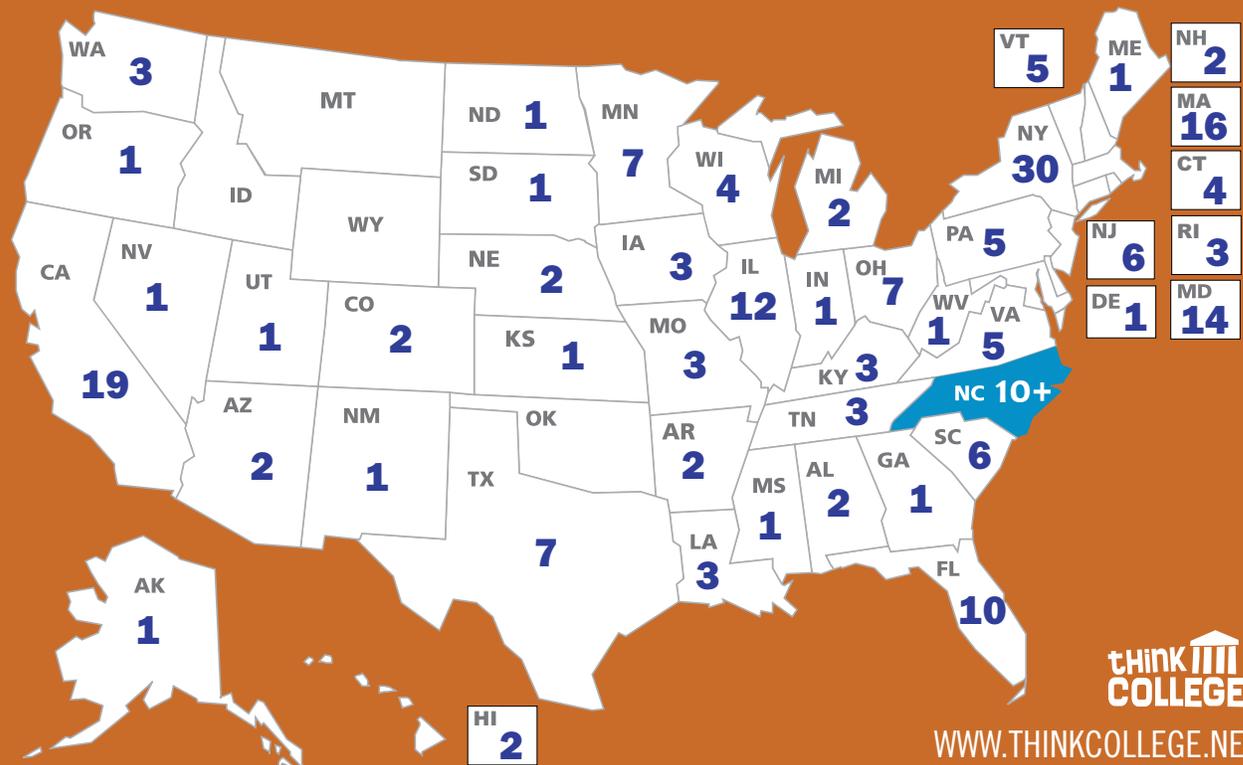


UNC
CAROLINA INSTITUTE FOR
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



North Carolina
Postsecondary Education Alliance

COLLEGE OPTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES, JULY 2014 (N=219)



practices. A wide variety of education, advocacy, and planning organizations including Public Schools of North Carolina, the NC Institute of Medicine, the Division of MH/DD/SAS and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities have recognized this need by highlighting PSE in their findings, policies, and proposed solutions.

There are several programs for students with ID in NC and others in development. They access a variety of public and private support including:

- Direct and in-kind support from the host schools
- Tuition and fee payments from families
- Start-up grants from NC General Assembly, US Dept. of Ed, and NC Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Existing state appropriations and Medicaid funds administered by state agencies such as the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Natural or unpaid supports from community organizations and students without disabilities

IMPACT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

A recent national longitudinal study on the transition of young adults with ID after high school graduation found some discouraging outcomes:

- » Low employment rates
- » Lower wages
- » Almost non-existent residential independence
- » High levels of social isolation
- » Increasing dependence on aging parents or siblings

While the movement toward PSE for persons with ID is still relatively young, and the number of graduates is relatively small, preliminary findings document that this approach has exciting potential for reversing such long-term trends. Process and outcome studies focused on students with disabilities, their peers on campus, their family members, and faculty at two NC universities illustrate several positive results from attending college.

Increased Employment

- » Western Carolina University (WCU): all current UP students had a paid work position in 2013-14 academic year
- » UNC-Greensboro: 71% of graduates secured paid employment compared with
- » 38.8% of students with ID in the National Longitudinal Transition Study

Residential Independence

- » UNC-Greensboro: 90% of graduates living independently compared with
- » 36.3% of students with ID in the National Longitudinal Transition Study

Decreased Social Isolation

- » UNC-Greensboro: 86% of students involved in volunteer/community service
- » National Transition Study: 18.95%
- » UNC-Greensboro: 79% of students were members of community organizations compared with
- » 36% of students with ID in the National Longitudinal Transition Study
- » WCU: students participated in 82 different courses with 107 different professors

Decreased Dependence on Family and Public Support

- » UNC-Greensboro: after four years of participation in the program, student use of public and/or parental paid support had declined by 56%
- » WCU: Following one year of participation daily average support needed by students fell by 20.9%
- » WCU: Use of independent behavior scale ratings showed average age equivalent increased by 3 years, 2 months over a one-year period

Note: WCU data based on students enrolled in 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years

UNCG data based on graduates through 2013

Recent national studies reinforce NC experiences:

An analysis of data related to Vocational Rehabilitation clients with intellectual disabilities who attended college found that these students achieved a 58% employment rate with average weekly earnings of \$338 as compared to those with no college experience who had a 32% employment rate and average weekly earnings of \$195.

Another study found that 67% of students whose education included high school special education plus postsecondary education were employed without public or private support, while those with only high school experience achieved this goal at a rate of 29%.

When students and their families begin to consider college, they can ask a few key questions to determine if the program is inclusive and focused on positive employment outcomes. These are both important considerations.

- Are there opportunities for academic learning with other college students?
- Is competitive employment after college a focus of the program?
- Do students participate as full members of the campus community?
- Are students allowed to make their own decisions and grow as young adults within the college structure?
- How much time do students with ID spend only with one another?

Perhaps the best way of discussing outcomes is the accomplishments of some North Carolina college students.

David Maennle – graduate, Western Carolina University, University Participant Program

David successfully completed internships and inclusive coursework related to emergency medical care and athletic injuries, helped in university research projects, presented at conferences and became a friend and mentor to other students with and without disabilities while attending WCU. Since graduating he has achieved two of his life goals- working at the county emergency medical services department and building his own log cabin.



Morgan Fink UNCG/Beyond Academics Student

Morgan graduated in 2012 from UNCG through the Integrated Community Studies program and now lives independently in her own apartment in Greensboro. She works as a Zumba instructor and has a full life in her community outside of work, which includes volunteering as an assistant music therapist at a senior living facility, clogging with friends and being an active member of her church.



Maranda Seagle-graduate, Western Piedmont Community College, Accessible College Experience Program

Maranda successfully completed nine fully inclusive, modified curriculum courses and an internship with a concentration in Human Services while attending WPCC. Her career goal is to work as a Human Service aide. She says:

“Going to college has helped me to grow, and become a better person by learning to overcome my fears, and be more independent and self confident.”



To learn more about the options available in North Carolina, please refer to the website for the North Carolina Postsecondary Education Alliance at the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Visit www.cidd.unc.edu/psea/

Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts, Boston maintains a comprehensive website that shares a variety of resources on this subject.

Visit www.thinkcollege.net