Western Carolina University's University Participant Program: Lessons Learned

North Carolina PSE Capacity Building Summit: Leading the Way
UNC-Greensboro
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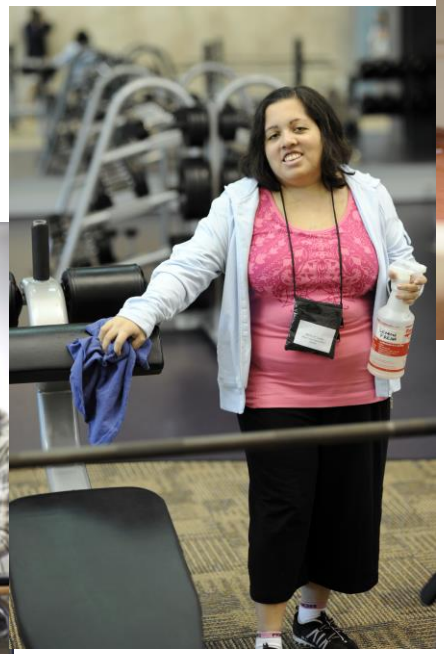
Our Values

- Person-centered planning
- Use of natural supports
- Full inclusion
- Self-determination
- Interagency collaboration
- Procedures parallel university procedures

Learning Areas

- Personal Development
- Community Participation
- Vocational Preparation
- Social Participation
- Academic Development



Desired Outcomes

- Community living as independently as possible
- Community employment
- Enhanced quality of life

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED SINCE 2007

UP
UNIVERSITY
PARTICIPANT
PROGRAM

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1. Begin with Values

- Our program was initiated with a few simple values and these have guided our actions. When we have to make administrative or practical decisions, we always refer back to our values.

2. Family Support is Essential

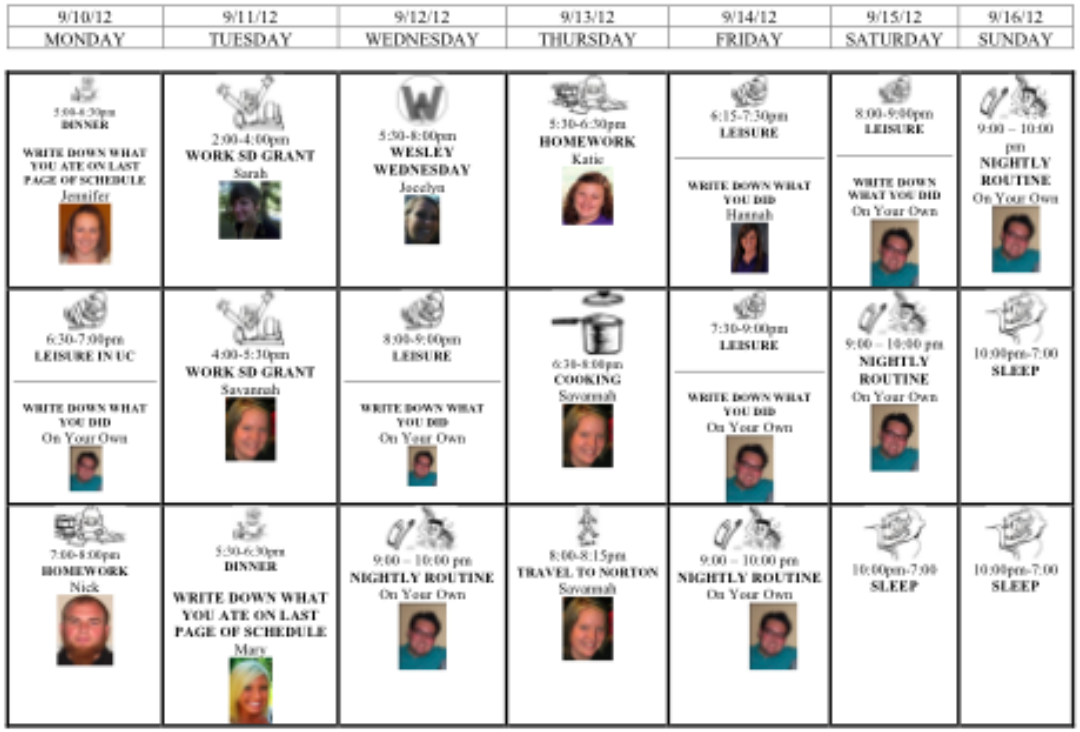
- Parents must be active supporters who value the program experiences, but also want the program outcomes for their adult children.

3. Pre-UP Inclusive Experiences = Success

- Participants who have had more inclusive living and learning experiences seem to adjust better to living and participating on campus.

4. Required Supports Vary and Change

- In planning supports, different participants will require varied supports. As time passes, the amount and type of support will likely change.



5. Behavior Issues will Occur

- Nearly everyone who goes to college changes their behavior and this can be expected from participants. Expect mountains and valleys. The only question is if changes can be managed so they don’t adversely impact the participant or program.

6. Natural Supports are Necessity

- Participants cannot have meaningful, inclusive, natural on-campus lives without the involvement of many natural supports. This is a scheduling headache, but it is essential.

7. Interagency Collaboration is a Must

- Interagency collaboration also requires negotiation. PSE programs don't fit into the traditional service system for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Involving various agencies requires understanding their roles and eliciting their cooperation.

8. Faculty will be supportive…gradually

- Many faculty will be cooperative from the start, but some will have doubts. Work constructively with those who are willing, and support those who might try something new when they are ready.

9. Administration will be Hesitant… at First

- The administration may be cautious…until you have success. Every college administrator touts their institutions success and will raise an eyebrow about anything unusual. Starting slowly and showing success will overcome doubts.

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10. Students will be Your Allies

- It is still true that most college students want the world to be a better place. When they learn that participants with intellectual disability are trying to succeed, they will be very supportive of your program.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
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