Expanding Opportunity, Building Capacity, and Finding Champions

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Think College National Coordinating Center

Federally funded since 2010 to provide coordination, training and technical assistance to any college or university who wants to establish or improve postsecondary education opportunities to students with intellectual disability on their campus.

[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)
If we want to build an inclusive and sustainable program, what should we be thinking about?

Inclusive Campus Communities: What do they look like?

All students are members of a heterogeneous student body in a college of their choice. They are welcomed campus members, active participants in academic instruction, experience expanded social relationships, learn academic and life skills outside of college courses and develop skills necessary for living an inclusive life in the community through learning experiences on campus. Supports are provided to students and faculty to enable everyone to be successful.

As new postsecondary education options for people with ID are developed, errors of the past may be repeated, as segregated practices are developed that succeeding generations will have to struggle to alter. Postsecondary environments are highly valued, and many individuals and their families are urged to strongly be allowed on campus. This sense of gratitude may lead to the acceptance of segregation at colleges, and slow or halt the advancement of authentic inclusion (Edvalson and Hignson, 2012)
Guiding question #1:
What do you want students to earn when they complete the program?

Think about:
- The credential that students will earn from your college/university – the overall purpose for students to enroll in the program
- Existing credentials that could be awarded to students with ID – might need modifying or bringing back to life. Check the catalog
- The academic approval process for establishing a new credential

- This is one of the MOST IMPORTANT questions to answer!
- Use the Think College credential action planning tool
- Use Think College College Search to find models that you want to replicate/avoid
**Guiding question #2:**
What is already available on your campus that you can capitalize on?

Think about:
- Existing courses that could be taken by students to meet the goals of the credential
- Existing supports available through the Disability Supports, Student Affairs, and Career Services offices

Look for existing EVERYTHING
Guiding question #3:
Who needs to be involved and when?

Think about:
- Finding champions on campus
- Involving members of the community
- Campus organizational structure and politics
- Where the program will be housed
- Find the right people who need to approve your program and bring the right people to meetings
- Remember that some people may have had no prior experience with people with ID

Key Departments
- Financial Aid
- Bursar
- Registrar
- Health and Counseling
- Residence Life
- Student Advising
- Career Center
- Continuing Education
- Local police
- Campus security or police
- Disability services
Value your champions

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP49IG_6M7I&feature=youtu.be

Guiding question #4:
Is everyone at the table who needs to be – are we all on the same page?

Think about:
• Putting together a written proposal early on
• Have you talked to all relevant offices/people on campus?
• Consider establishing an advisory board
• Is inclusion at the forefront of your vision?
Authentic, Inclusive College Experience*

- Separate is not equal
- Support high expectations
- It’s a civil rights issue
- Increases diversity in higher education
- Reinforces use of universal design for learning
- Impacts peers who are future neighbors, coworkers, family, friends

*Think College Insight Brief #26 Building Inclusive Campus Communities: A Framework for Inclusion

College Course Access

Students with intellectual disability participate in inclusive college courses at least 50% of the time.

Key quality indicators
High Expectations
Choice
Wide array of course topics and types
Meaningful participation
Individualized Supports
Tips for Inclusion

• Align with existing IHE resources & infrastructure
• Collaboration
• Office space only – NO classrooms!
• Staffing: 1 director & job developer – don’t overstaff!

Tips for Inclusion

• Curriculum is the course catalogue
• Keep to Natural Proportions
• What do students without disabilities do — typical
• Whenever possible use existing IHE credential
• Priority registration for courses
Tools to Keep it Inclusive

- **Insight #26: Building Inclusive Campus Communities**
- **Insight #10: Think College Standards**
- **Measuring Quality in Inclusive PSE**
- **Foundation Skills for College and Career Learning Plan**

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**How far have you strayed from the norm?**

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<th>Exactly the same</th>
<th>Harmonious adaptation</th>
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*Adapted from O’Brien, Bowman, Chesley, Hughson, & Uditsky

Guiding question #5: How do you fund the program?

Think about:
• Your specific program budget
• Budget approval processes at your college/university
• Funding sources available in your state, such as:
  - Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid Waiver, State Scholarship funds
• The financial needs of your students
• Establishing your program as a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP)
• Paid supports vs. volunteers
• The number of students you need to enroll to make the program sustainable
Sustainability

- Infrastructure—the more aligned and embedded the better
- Financial Aid
- Diverse Funding Streams
- Statewide Planning
- Transitioning from planning to oversight
- Communication, Marketing and Alumni

Guiding question #6:
What is the benefit to the college or university?

Think about:
- Connecting the mission of the program to the college/university’s mission statement, especially around diversity
- Be wary of the appearance of “charity”
- Opportunities to share and promote the purpose of the program and the benefit to students with ID as well as others
Why? Implications for the university’s academic activities

• Research and scholarship:
  • Research in socially relevant areas
  • Hands-on teaching opportunities
  • Model for state-of-the-art practices
• Teacher training: Connecting theory to practice
  • Learn that students can attend college
  • Learn the supports required to make students successful
  • Learn to prepare own students to attend college
• Student life:
  • Increase diversity (a stated goal of the university)
  • Learn to participate in activities and include with people with different abilities and interests
• Financial:
  • Opportunity for grant and foundation funding once established
  • Attractive to alumni and other donors

Guiding question #7

How will you know if the program is working?

Think about
• Program goals (attainable, measurable, reportable)
• Data collection (on what, by who, how often, what for?)
• 360°- not just students and instructors — peers, other departments, leadership, community, employers
• How to use data to engage future students, partners, research, funding
• Follow up data on outcomes and goal attainment
Lessons Learned

- Get to know your IHE administrators
- Growing a program takes time
- Establish clear communication procedures with families
- Take charge of your own PR
- Funding is challenging:
  - Get to know your state VR and I/DD funding sources
  - Develop your program to meet CTP requirements
LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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