

A Planning Guide for New Inclusive Programs and Initiatives Serving College Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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INTRODUCTION

This guide was created to support the development of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs that are aligned with [Program Accreditation Standards](#) developed by the Think College National Coordinating Center and that meet the requirements to be approved as [Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary \(CTP\)](#) programs by the US Department of Education. It provides a framework for conceptualizing and developing IPSE programs that allow for equitable access, membership, rights and privileges for college students with ID. The framework outlined in this guide also recognizes and affirms the value of a diverse community that provides the support necessary for all individuals to engage, learn, and develop to their full potential. Informed by previous work in supporting and evaluating postsecondary education for students with ID, this guide raises issues and challenges faced by programs across the country, and encourages users to give careful, intentional thought to all aspects of program development.

Note: Throughout this guide, we use the terms “students with ID,” and “students” interchangeably to refer to students who meet the qualifications for intellectual disability as defined in the Higher Education Act.

CHAPTER I:

MISSION AND STRUCTURE—CRITICAL ISSUES

As you explore how your institution of higher education (IHE) will work to include and support students with ID, you will consider the potential of different support models and administrative and logical structures for your initiative. Evaluation of these alternatives will be easier if you begin by identifying a mission and vision for your program grounded in a commitment to build and sustain a quality IPSE student support infrastructure and compatible with your IHE mission. Ultimately, the mission and operational framework will impact nearly every facet of an IPSE initiative, including student support provision, program and student expectations and requirements, as well as outcomes realized by all stakeholders. Thus, program staff may want to have preliminary conversations about these core foundations in advance of designing the academic, social, employment, and independent living components, and continue these conversations during the development of the policies and practices within those components. This section explores the following issues to help you develop your preliminary vision:

- What is the core mission and philosophy of your IPSE initiative?
- How will the program or initiative fit within the structure of the IHE?
- How many students will your program support initially? How many students do you hope to serve in 5 years? In 10 years?
- Is there an age limit for students in your program?
- How many years will the program of study be? Will the annual calendar for the program align with that of the IHE?
- How will you address campus culture so that all students feel included in all aspects of campus life?
- What will the staffing structure of the program be for the first year? And the next 5 – 10 years?
- Who will provide program guidance in implementation, growth, and evaluation?
- How will the disabilities services office (DSO) provide support to the students enrolled in the IPSE program and collaborate with the program staff to facilitate student success?
- What are the anticipated outcomes for the students and how will they be measured?

CORE MISSION AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

A mission statement is essential for guiding policy and practice, for addressing new and ongoing programmatic challenges, and for driving program vision. IHEs are strongly encouraged to review the [Model Accreditation Standards](#) and explore the benefits of designing their initiative to meet the requirements of becoming a [CTP](#). To qualify for CTP approval and for accreditation, the mission statement must be consistent with the Higher Education Act (HEA) requirements that the program is a “degree, certificate, or non-degree program at an accredited institution that is designed to support [students with intellectual disabilities \(ID\)](#) who are seeking to continue academic, career, technical, and independent living instruction” in order to obtain competitive integrated employment. In addition to consideration of the accreditation and CTP standards, a primary objective of your mission is the prioritization of the interests and benefits to IPSE students.

The mission of the program should also align with the mission statement and strategic goals of the IHE, including the IHE's goals for diversity, equity and inclusion. Accreditation standards require that the program mission "is communicated to prospective and current students, families, staff, faculty, and the public, and is reviewed at least every third year or sooner if there are significant changes to the program." Development of a program mission statement should be considered a foundational process in program development that is revisited and revised on a regular basis.

Related Resources:

Defining and Documenting ID

Information on definition of intellectual disability from the Higher Education Opportunity Act and the US Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education

Program Accreditation Standards

An introductory guide to program accreditation standards that provides a general sense of the kinds of issues and overall concepts that are addressed in the standards

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

With your mission in place, your team will need to create an institutional and personnel structure to realize your vision. The structure you adopt will be shaped by pragmatic concerns such as funding, existing university policy and structures, as well as current administrative and personnel realities at your institution. The structure of the program – both how the program and staff are situated within the existing hierarchy of the institution and how staff members are situated within the program – will have

Students with ID should have access to and be integrated within every facet of campus life.

an impact on how the program is viewed across the campus and how effective and efficient team members will be in meeting students' needs. Because students with ID should have access to and be integrated within every facet of campus life – including academic courses, student life, student housing, athletic clubs and events, career development, advising, health services, and security – it is helpful if the team working to develop the program structure, policies, and practices includes voices from across campus.

In developing the program structure, IHEs should consider the following questions:

How will the program or initiative fit within the structure of the IHE?

Accreditation standards indicate that the program must be an official part of a department or unit of the institution, with a recognized place within its administrative structure. However, IHE goals and philosophies, administrative structures, and personnel vary from campus to campus precluding a one-size-fits-all recommendation for any particular administrative location for the IPSE program. You will want to consider a number of issues, including whether your IPSE program will operate as a new program or an expansion of existing student service infrastructure, whether the program will fit within an academic school or department or within a division of student services, and what administrator(s) will oversee the program.

Program placement may affect others' (faculty, peer mentors, staff) ability and willingness to become

involved with the program. It is therefore essential to consider how its placement aligns with that of other campus-wide programs (e.g., Honors College, Continuing Education), as well as how its placement will affect the growth and development of the program and the outcomes for students. If it is placed within a specific department or school, will that positively or negatively influence the perception of the program and the students across campus and/or limit options and outcomes for students with ID? IPSE programs need strong advocates who will collaborate with partners across campus to promote and ensure full student engagement, participation, and belonging. In some cases, individual staff, faculty, or department heads are hesitant or resistant to accept students with ID as full campus members (common examples include student government, study abroad, Greek life), so it may be important to identify an upper level administrator who is an effective champion for the program across campus.

How many students will your program or initiative support initially? How many students do you hope to serve in 5 years? In 10 years?

There are advantages to starting with a small number, such as 5-7 students, including lower staffing needs, smaller program budget, and an improved likelihood that your team will have the capacity to test and refine program policies and practices. Starting small also allows programs to focus on developing support capacity, such as developing and growing a peer mentor program, building relationships with both on-campus and off-campus employers, and teaming with campus training initiatives to provide professional development on topics such as Universal Design. Starting with less than 5 students may also present disadvantages or vulnerabilities. It may be challenging to find and retain students initially, and the disenrollment of even one or two students could present financial, logistical, and public perception challenges.

As your program develops, it is important to consider whether and how you may want to grow your program. Some larger programs across the country currently serve between 25 and 50 students. However, the “right size” number of students you serve will depend on many factors, including for example, the total size of the student body on campus and your ability to increase your program staff. Perhaps most significantly, the number of IHEs serving IPSE students is still relatively low (just over 300) in comparison to over 5,000 IHEs serving students without ID, and demand for these offerings is growing. At present, many IPSE programs are turning away more students than they are able to serve as demand outpaces campus capacity. In addition, a larger cohort of students with ID provides a wider variety of student strengths and expectations, creates more flexibility in living arrangements, offers more peers to learn with and from, and creates greater, more natural options for friendships and relationships.

Is there an age limit for students at your college or university?

While some programs have limited IPSE enrollment to students who are between the ages of 18 – 25 or 26 years, there may be potential issues with this choice, particularly setting an upper age limit. An upper age limit may be designed to prevent pairing of young students (e.g., 18 yrs) with much older adults (e.g., 40 yrs.) in residential housing. However, consider any age limit carefully, as historically college has not been an option for students with ID. Setting an age limit may prevent an older student from ever enrolling in postsecondary education and enjoying all the benefits that come with it. If there are no age limits for other students on campus, consider carefully your rationale for setting a limit for students with ID.

How many years will the program of study be? Will the annual calendar for the program align with that of the broader IHE?

Both CTP and accreditation standards require that the program aligns with the college calendar, and that the program describes the number of weeks of instructional time and number of clock hours required for a credential. IPSE programs vary in length, typically from 2 to 4 years. One determinant of program length will be the credential that students earn. Another question to consider is how the length of your program compares to the program of study for typically matriculating students. If the length of the program of study is different for students with vs. without ID, what is driving those differences? Does the length align with your overall mission for students with ID and the work necessary for a meaningful credential?

How will you address campus culture so that all students feel included in all aspects of campus life?

Accreditation standards require that “students in the program have access to services and social and recreational activities...as well as institutional facilities, equipment, and supplies consistent with other students with the same student status.” Even with a strong champion and full administrative support of the inclusion of all students on campus, many IHEs have experienced challenges. It may take some ingenuity to find ways to support students with ID to access some campus units (e.g., campus health/counseling, residence life, advising). It is also important that the rights and privileges of students with ID align with those of all students. In addition, efforts to educate, train, and involve all members of campus in inclusive practices will prove beneficial.

What will the staffing structure of the program be for the first year? And for the next 5 – 10 years?

Regardless of how you structure your program, accreditation standards mandate that “staff and other professionals who work directly for the program have education and training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities and participate in ongoing professional training and development.” Duties and responsibilities should be clear for all individuals who support IPSE students, including program staff, faculty, peer mentors, and campus-wide stakeholders. Clear and specific delineation of duties will enhance function and performance for all.

At a minimum, programs need a designated director who oversees the various facets of the program, including admissions and orientation, academics, employment, residential living, peer support, program budget and funding, and community outreach. Decisions about who will lead the program (e.g., a faculty member or college staff) can be influenced by the goals and mission of the program (e.g., whether the program will include a research emphasis, whether external funding is a priority) and where the program is located in the IHE structure. Beyond the program director, many programs also dedicate one or more (depending upon program size) staff who are responsible for (a) academic differentiation and faculty training, (b) career development and coordinating internships, (c) recruiting, training, supporting and coordinating peer mentors, (d) supporting students in social engagement and development of independent living skills, (e) program promotion, admissions, and policy development, (f) program and student and evaluation, (g) liaising with other units on and off campus, and (h) research and development. As you consider whether and how you will increase student enrollment over the next five to ten years, it will be important to plan for changes in the number and structure of the staff as well.

Who will provide program guidance in implementation, growth, and evaluation?

Many programs benefit from establishing an advisory board or committee that includes university personnel (e.g., administrators, faculty, staff, students) as well as community partners (employers, support agencies, alumni, parents). If you do develop an advisory group, carefully consider and define the roles, rights, and responsibilities of that group and define those clearly from the outset. Advisory boards/committees can offer guidance for program mission, strategic planning, and fundraising. Accreditation standards require that programs “seek and consider input on program development, policies, and practices from a variety of stakeholders that includes students, alumni, and parents.” While input can be collected in a number of ways, an advisory group is one way to seek ongoing input to guide the program. Because students enrolled in IPSE programs should have access to and be integrated within every facet of campus life and will ultimately live, work, and engage in the broader community, it is helpful if the team working to develop the program policies and practices includes voices from across campus and beyond.

Advisory boards/committees can offer guidance for program mission, strategic planning, and fundraising.

How will the disability services office provide support to the students enrolled in the IPSE program and collaborate with the program staff to facilitate student success?

Support for students should be intentional and include individualized support for social engagement and campus-based activities, career preparation and work-based experiences, differentiation and modification of academic coursework, and development of independent living skills, in addition to academic accommodations. The DSO is a natural support on campus and should be available to all students including students with ID. It is also a resource and source of collaboration for the program staff. At some institutions, programs that serve students with ID are partnered with (or situated within) the DSO. This type of placement offers important benefits but can also pose challenges. With such a partnership, students with ID naturally and authentically have access to all the support and resources offered by the DSO. Furthermore, because the DSO serves students across campus in a variety of majors and disciplines, IPSE students are not perceived as belonging to only one school (e.g., Education). That said, many DSOs are understaffed and under-resourced in serving students without ID, and so a program that supports students with ID cannot simply be an “add on” to the DSO office. There can also be challenges when an IPSE program is not associated with an academic department, as it may be necessary to have an academic department aligned with the IPSE credential.

What are the anticipated outcomes for the students and how will they be measured?

Determining in advance the program of study and primary goals for students will help shape the nature of the program, the supports offered, and the resources needed to execute the program successfully. Delineating outcomes will also be essential for marketing your program to prospective students, gaining support for student enrollment from such services as Vocational Rehabilitation, and developing a donor base. Once you identify the anticipated outcomes for students, a next step is determining how those outcomes will be measured and tracked. Goals should be set at both the program level (e.g., student retention, career skills, employment rates, and graduation rates) and the student level (e.g.,

post-graduate employment), and a formal system should be established for tracking progress toward those goals. Accreditation standards require an evaluation of “program components, student assessment practices, student services, policies, activities, student learning outcomes, and program outcomes at a minimum of every three years.” As discussed in the section on Communication, Collaboration, and Evaluation, it will be essential to establish an evaluation plan for both program components and student progress as you develop your program.

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Related Resources:

[Building Inclusive Campus Communities](#)

This resource provides a framework for campus wide inclusion of students with intellectual disability. A series of reflective questions are provided for practitioners and administrators to consider when designing new IPSE programs, or evaluating existing programs, at their institutions of higher education.

[Driving Inclusiveness in Higher Education](#)

A 5-minute video highlighting the growth in postsecondary options for students with intellectual disability (ID) over the last 15 years.

[Seven Steps for Disability Services Offices and Programs for Students with ID to Work Together](#)

This table outlines seven critical areas where Disability Services and program staff need to work together, and lists appropriate roles and responsibilities for each office.

[AHEAD White Paper on Students with ID and Campus Disability Services](#)

This resource from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) provides an introductory statement on the organization’s perspective on higher education for students with intellectual disabilities and addresses key disability services issues.

CHAPTER II: ADMISSIONS, ORIENTATION, AND STUDENT-CENTERED PLANNING

This section explores decisions needed regarding the admissions process for your program, as well as factors to consider when planning for student orientation and person-centered planning. These questions include:

- How will students and families learn about your program?
- How will you evaluate and select students who are a match for your institution?
- Will some or all students be dually-enrolled?
- What will the timeline be for the admissions process that aligns with the campus-wide admissions process?
- What student status will the IPSE students be assigned?
- Once students are accepted and have committed to the IHE, how will you orient them to campus?
- How will you communicate the policies and rules for students in an accessible way?
- How will you explain FERPA rights to students and their families?
- How will students register for classes and engage with the broader college community clubs and activities?
- How will you individualize support provision for IPSE students so that they receive the appropriate support (and independence) they need to succeed?

ADMISSIONS

Accreditation standards require that the admissions policies and practices “ensure that all students who are admitted meet the definition of a “student with an intellectual disability” in the HEA. IPSE programs should carefully consider how many students with ID they will enroll each year, how many they will need to accept to yield their desired cohort size, and what their criteria for admissions will be. Students in IPSE programs typically enter college through an alternate pathway, where students with ID are not required to provide SAT or ACT test scores or read at a college level. This alternate pathway is most often a non-degree, certificate program with a separate admissions process. These programs may require additional admissions materials and information (e.g., psychoeducational evaluations, information from students, information from parents) as well as in-person interviews. To the greatest extent possible the application process and deadlines should align with those for degree-seeking students.

Admissions processes and applications vary widely across programs, and it may be worth investing in discussions with other IHEs regarding evidenced-based measures used to evaluate prospective students and determine fit for the program. Regular “open house” sessions for prospective students and their families, along with regular communication with the local education agencies (LEA) and participation in transition fairs are good practices to increase awareness and understanding of the PSE opportunities available to students with ID. Because the admissions process for students with ID can be more lengthy than that for students without ID, particularly if in-person interviews are an integral part of the process, programs will want to consider carefully the full timeline of the admissions process.

In developing the admissions process, IHEs should consider the following questions:

How will students with ID and their families learn about your program?

Many programs partner with local educational agencies (LEA), transition coordinators, vocational rehabilitation (VR), college fairs, etc. to get the word out to students and families. In addition, many programs also host a semi-annual open house so students and families can learn about the options for students with ID. Partner with campus-wide marketing/communication to highlight and advertise your program and help others across campus understand and recognize the value of the program. It may be beneficial to request to be added to the Think College directory of IPSE programs, develop a strong website, and consider national conferences/college fairs when establishing a recruitment plan. When possible, it will be advantageous to include students attending your program when raising awareness of and recruiting new students.

How will you evaluate and select students who are a match for your institution?

As noted earlier, to qualify for CTP approval and for accreditation, programs must serve [students with intellectual disabilities \(ID\)](#). You will want to consider carefully your process for determining whether students meet the definition for ID and can find helpful information for developing this process in the Related Resources section below. In addition, you will want to recruit and admit students who are the best fit for your program, and will need to consider what materials, questions, and assessments you might use to measure those factors effectively and fairly. Sample materials are also provided in the Related Resources section. As you consider the admissions process, it will be important to identify which team members will be involved in admissions. Finally, you should develop an evaluation plan to understand the efficacy of your admissions materials to determine what information and processes are most successful in identifying and selecting students that are the best fit for your program.

Will some or all students be dually-enrolled?

Dually-enrolled students are transition-aged students who are still receiving IDEA services through an IEP and also take courses at an IHE. Some IPSE programs serve dually-enrolled students, while others require that students with ID complete their high school experience and exit the K-12 system before enrolling in college. Historically, dual-enrollment has been more common at community colleges than at four-year IHEs, though there are successful models of dual-enrollment at both two-year and four-year institutions. It is up to each IHE to determine if dually-enrolled students are a good fit for their program. Sample schedules and models for dual-enrollment can be found in the Related Resource section.

Some IPSE programs serve dually-enrolled students, while others require that students with ID complete their high school experience and exit the K-12 system before enrolling in college.

What will the timeline be for the admissions process that aligns with the campus-wide admissions process?

To the greatest extent possible, the calendar of events for IPSE students should align with the regular college calendar. That said, the admissions process for IPSE students is often longer and more involved than that for typically-admitted students. This may require admission timeline adjustments so that

IPSE students can receive their acceptance notifications at or around the same time as other high school seniors, and can participate in campus-wide celebrations like “Accepted Students Day” in the spring. Families may need to start the process very early to gather the necessary documentation (e.g., a current psychoeducational evaluation, last IEP). A “suggested timeline” for prospective students and their families on the program’s website admissions page is a good addition to a program’s promotional materials.

What student status will the IPSE students be assigned?

Accreditation standards require that students have access to the same campus resources, activities and facilities as other students of the same status. That said, student status can vary on some campuses (e.g., degree seeking vs. continuing education), and student status can affect access to some campus resources (e.g., housing). Thus it is important to give careful consideration to the student status granted to IPSE students when planning your program.

Related Resources:

[Sample Student Admission Interview Questions](#)

Examples of questions and format used by programs during the admission process - can be used by those developing admission procedures as an example or starting point.

[How Inclusive College Programs do Admissions: Tips and Insights](#)

In this webinar recording, three established inclusive college programs share tips and insights for how they manage the admissions process.

[Sample Application for Admission](#)

This sample application for admission was developed by the REACH Program at the University of Iowa and can be used as an example for those developing admission procedures.

[Sample Admissions Questionnaire for Parents](#)

This parent interview sheet offers questions to ask the families of potential students to help guide program staff in developing a plan for the incoming student. It was developed by the Western Connection Program at Western Connecticut State University.

[College-based Transition Services](#)

This resource page offers information about college-based transition services, which are often referred to as dual-enrollment or concurrent enrollment. Links include sample schedules, funding information, and tips for interagency team building.

ORIENTATION

Once students have been admitted and have committed to the IHE, the next step is on-boarding students in their first year. For many students, living away from home and/or learning in inclusive settings may be new. Many programs begin the orientation process well in advance of students’ arrival on campus for the fall term, using online modules, summer orientation sessions, or early arrival for a bootcamp orientation. Many IPSE students may need additional support and information when making the transition to college. Families as well need to attend orientation and will need written information for their own transition from parent and advocate to advisor.

In developing the orientation process, IHEs should consider the following questions:

Once students are accepted and have committed to the IHE, how will you orient them to campus?

Accreditation standards indicate that students and families should be included in the general orientation programs and that additional orientation may be provided as needed. It will be important to consider not only the type of individualized support that students might need to fully engage and benefit from the general orientation programs, but also what supplemental orientation they might benefit from as they transition to campus. What written information, support, and guidance will you provide to families?

How will you communicate the policies and rules for students in an accessible way?

For some students, the academic, social and independent living aspects of campus life may be new, and it is important that students and their families have a clear understanding of the rules, regulations, amount or level of support that will or will not be provided, and social norms associated with campus life. All policies and regulations, including the student code of conduct, should be provided in plain language that is clear and understandable to students. Students and families will also benefit from a strong understanding of the grievance process before they come to campus. Accreditation standards require that programs establish relationships and formal policies with institutional offices responsible for student complaints and discipline, that the grievance procedures are clear to students and families, and that there is an established process for student support throughout the grievance process. Proactively addressing these issues before students arrive on campus can reduce stress and complications significantly when issues arise. Student and Parent Handbooks are an effective strategy to share clear and definitive information about goals, policies, practices, and level of support. Review of these handbooks with stakeholders during orientation is another effective strategy. Sample handbooks are linked in the Related Resources section.

All policies and regulations, including the student code of conduct, should be provided in plain language that is clear and understandable to students.

How will you explain FERPA rights to students and their families?

A related issue concerns the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a law that states that parents of students in K-12 have rights to their child's education records, but that right ends when a child turns 18 or is going to college. Parents are not allowed to see grades or learn other details about a student's experiences in college without the student's permission, even if the parents are paying the student's tuition. FERPA rights should be explained in plain language to students so that they fully understand FERPA and can make informed decisions about whether and when to waive some or all of those rights. Students should not be forced or coerced to waive their FERPA rights, but should be counseled on the benefits and challenges of involving family members (or other members of their extended support team) in their educational journey if they wish.

How will students register for classes and engage with the broader college community?

Ideally IPSE students will engage in the same advising and registration processes used by other students at the IHE, and in the college-wide first-year experiences that are used to orient all students to campus

resources and social opportunities. Students may also benefit from additional support in understanding the process for course registration, access to clubs and organizations, use of the dining, health, and athletic facilities, support offered by IT and DSO, as well as code of conduct, safety regulations and protocols. Finally, students may benefit from support in navigating campus to locate classes, dining halls, resource centers, and other campus hotspots. Some IHEs offer additional orientation sessions through a summer “preview week,” while others build in sessions around the general orientation program. When possible, it will be advantageous to include students with experience in your program as part of the orientation staff so that incoming students can learn from their peers.

Related Resources:

[Sample Online Orientation for Parents of New Students](#)

“Parent College” is a brief 7-step module, developed by Project Access at The College of the Florida Keys to support parents to transition their students with ID to college, orient parents to The College of the Florida Keys, and provide information for parents to understand the expectations of the program.

[Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#)

Official guidelines for the Plain Language Act of 2010, developed to help organizations write clearly for their users. This can be used as you create your own program policies and rules to ensure the language used is accessible to students and family members.

[FERPA Explained in Plain Language](#)

This publication, intended for students and families, can be used to acclimate families to the changes in rights that occur between high school and college.

[Sample Student and Parent Handbook \(Appalachian State\)](#)

This Student and Parent Handbook from The Scholars with Diverse Abilities Program (SDAP) at Appalachian State University provides examples of key goals, policies and practices of their postsecondary education program.

[Sample Student Handbook \(Central Florida\)](#)

This Student Handbook from the Inclusive Education Services program at University of Central Florida provides examples of key IPSE program components, including the program course of study and the satisfactory academic progress policy.

[Parent Involvement, Expectations, Communication, and FERPA Requirements](#)

This webinar, recorded in 2018, examines family engagement in postsecondary education programs from a parent perspective. Parents and program staff explore strategies for effective family engagement practices in light of FERPA requirements, self-determination, and evidence on the importance of continuing parental involvement for young adults with ID.

[Think College Family Resource Page](#)

This resource provides tips and strategies to students and families who are considering college as an option, with suggestions for how to prepare, apply, select, and pay for college. It can be a great resource for families just starting to consider your program.

It will be advantageous to include students with experience in your program as part of the orientation staff so that incoming students can learn from their peers.

PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING (PCP)

To identify the student-centered and individualized academic pathway that students will follow and to identify the individualized support students need, programs must establish and utilize a person-centered planning process. Accreditation standards require that the individualized support provided to students for academic, employment, social, and independent living success are “based on the student’s interests and person-centered plan” and are provided “in collaboration with existing institutional services.” Programs should engage in this process with students at least once each academic term.

In developing the person-centered planning process, IHEs should consider the following questions:

How will you individualize support provision for IPSE students so that they receive the appropriate support (and independence) they need to succeed?

Ideally, the campus units (e.g., tutoring, counseling, career center, student health, wellness, residential housing) that provide support for all students on campus will provide the foundational support for IPSE students, and programs will supplement these supports as needed on an individualized basis. Accreditation standards mandate that the support needed for each student should be determined for each student through a student-led planning process, often called person-centered planning, that identifies personalized interests, goals, and needs for support. The person-centered planning process is the forum in which students meet with other stakeholders (e.g., program staff, friends, family) to discuss personal interests and ambitions, set goals, understand their needs for support, receive feedback regarding their progress toward personal and programmatic goals, and establish a plan for moving forward. Students are supported to take the lead in this process to increase their agency, self-determination, and self-advocacy, thus preparing them to make decisions and set goals for themselves during their program and after graduation. There are many different models of person-centered planning available, and the program will need to establish a formal process, determine timelines for the person-centered planning process, and keep regular records of the meetings.

Related Resources:

[Foundational Skills for College and Career Learning Plan](#)

The Foundational Skills for the College and Career Learning Plan (CCLP) is a goal setting and assessment tool that can be used to structure college experiences, including coursework, employment, internships, on campus activities, volunteer and service learning experiences, and more.

[STAR Person-Centered Planning Process](#)

This webinar recording shares the vision and goals of the Students Transitioning to Adult Roles (STAR) Person Centered Planning Process process as well as describes the participant roles, steps, and related documents used throughout the process. The STAR PCP was designed to ensure students with disabilities who are transitioning into postsecondary programs have the opportunity to plan their own future with the support and encouragement of other adults in their lives.

[Circles of Support](#)

This webinar recording features one college student who shares his experience using the Circles of Support model.

CHAPTER III: ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

This section explores decisions related to the students' academic coursework, including issues related to curricular requirements, academic benchmarks and supports, modifications, and program credentials.

These questions include:

- How many courses will students take each term, and how will they select their courses?
- Are IPSE students able to participate in a wide array of inclusive courses from multiple disciplines and departmental units?
- How will students register for their courses?
- How will the coursework within the inclusive courses be differentiated or modified?
- Who will be responsible for identifying learning expectations within each course and differentiating the coursework?
- What kind of training will be provided to faculty who teach inclusive academic courses, and who will provide the training? Will the training be required?
- What information will be given to faculty about IPSE students who enroll in their courses, and when will that information be provided?
- What types of support will be offered to IPSE students?
- How will academic feedback be conveyed to students?
- Are roster (tenure-track) faculty involved in the inclusive instruction, or is your program relying heavily on adjuncts?
- What portion of the program (if any) will be offered online?
- What program of study will the students follow to earn their credential?
- What credential(s) will students earn?
- How will students be included in the graduation ceremonies?

Please note that the full program of study required for a credential must not only include academic coursework, but also career development, internships or other work-based learning, social development, and self-determination. This section focuses on academic coursework, and considerations for the other components are addressed in other sections of this guide.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Accreditation standards require that programs offer an inclusive program of study that aligns with the statutory and regulatory requirements for a CTP program in the Higher Education Act and is consistent with the program's mission and outcomes. Regardless of the type of credential offered by your program, to meet accreditation standards your program must develop a formal course of study that affords students choice in course selection, offers inclusive academic courses from an array of disciplines and departments, and delineates metrics for satisfactory academic progress.

The full program of study required for a credential must not only include academic coursework, but also career development, internships or other work-based learning, social development, and self-determination.

In developing the academic curriculum, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How many courses will students take each term, and how will they select their courses?

Just as IHEs offer structured yet flexible requirements for degree-seeking students that delineate the number and type of courses necessary for degree completion, so too should they establish curricular requirements for IPSE students who are working toward a meaningful credential. IHEs should consider what the program of study will entail (e.g., pre-set requirements, individualized programs, core requirements with electives) and how they will ensure participation in inclusive coursework. IHEs will also need to establish metrics for satisfactory academic progress, delineating the number of courses students should complete each academic term so that students can use these metrics to plan and select their courses. As noted earlier, students should engage in a periodic person-centered planning process in which they identify interests, goals, and ambitions, and that process should inform course selection. In addition to the person-centered planning process, students should also engage in the regular advising process offered to all students. Training may be necessary for advising staff to feel competent and successful in this process.

Are IPSE students able to participate in a wide array of inclusive college courses from multiple disciplines and departmental units?

Academically inclusive courses are defined as “typical college courses attended by students with ID and other college students without ID,” and participation in inclusive coursework is a hallmark of excellence for IPSE programs. Accreditation standards mandate that IPSE programs offer inclusive academic classes and that students have choice in those classes, with offerings across different disciplines and departments. The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires that students have AT LEAST 50% of the program in inclusive learning opportunities. This is the minimum requirement, and data show that the more inclusive a program is, the better the outcomes for students. The requirement of providing “independent living instruction” in the HEA should not be interpreted as a need to develop specialized courses for the IPSE students. Specialized, non-inclusive courses are not the most effective way to offer this instruction to students in your program. While many programs offer these courses, in an inclusive postsecondary education program, they should not be part of the required curriculum. Such independent living skills instruction should be identified, individualized, and student-determined during the person-centered planning and advising meetings and can be worked on through students’ self-driven goals and experiential learning. For instance, students can develop career skills via workshops offered to all college students, through hands-on campus experiences, and in internship and employment experiences. Independent living skills can be supported with individual instruction, and naturally occurring learning opportunities in the residence halls, college classrooms, and campus clubs and activities.

For students to gain the experiences and skills they need to live meaningful, self-determined lives and maintain competitive paid employment, students need to be taught independent living skills (e.g., nutrition, travel, resourcefulness), academic foundational skills (e.g., time management, study strategies, supportive technologies and apps), and employment skills (e.g., interview, interpersonal, technology, persistence, problem solving and self-initiative skills) in natural and inclusive settings. See Related Resources for more information.

How will students register for classes?

For IPSE students to enjoy equitable access to academic courses, IHEs will need to invest forethought and attention to the registration process. Although IPSE students may need additional support in selecting courses, and faculty may need additional training or support to successfully include and educate these students, these concerns should not create barriers to registration and enrollment. If IPSE students do not register at the same time as other students, and/or if they are required to seek permission of an instructor before enrolling, they may find it difficult to compete for seats in popular courses with limited space. Prioritization regarding course enrollment should be similar for all students, so IHEs will want to consider how student status might affect the registration process for IPSE students.

Related Resources:

[“More Dynamic, More Engaged”: Faculty Perspectives on Instructing Students with Intellectual Disability in Inclusive Courses](#)

This qualitative research study summarizes findings from faculty and instructors teaching inclusive courses regarding perceived benefits and challenges, and what they need to provide the best instructional experiences for students. It is referenced here to provide some insight into roadblocks that may need to be navigated as students with ID begin enrolling in courses at your institution

[Inclusive Class Decision Tree](#)

This flow-chart can be used to determine if a course attended by students in college programs for students with ID is a fully inclusive class.

[Foundational Skills for College and Career Learning Plan](#)

The Foundational Skills for the College and Career Learning Plan (CCLP) is a goal setting and assessment tool that can be used to structure college experiences, including coursework, employment, internships, on campus activities, volunteer and service learning experiences, and more.

[A Model for Intentional College and Career Learning inside and outside the Classroom](#)

This resource provides a set of strategies for students to develop self-determined skills and goals to achieve while in college as well as documentation of the achieved skills and goals.

[College and Career Learning Model Student Form](#)

This form can be used with the College and Career Learning Model in documenting student achievement in their self-determined skills and goals.

ACADEMIC BENCHMARKS AND SUPPORTS

Establishing a process to support the success of the students in college courses and the professors teaching those courses is an important step to enabling the students to access the content and participate and learn in their college courses. Programs will need to consider how individualized learning objectives and supports for students are established within the inclusive academic courses. Encouraging students to meet with their professors during office hours is a good first step in engagement with the professor by the student and employment of student agency. A cornerstone of learning is the collaboration between program staff, the professor or course instructor, and the student to identify what the student is expected to learn, how the student will be evaluated, and what supports, strategies, modifications, and accommodations are needed for the student to succeed. Course instructors must consider these issues for all students when designing and developing a course, but may need support in knowing how to modify learning objectives on an individualized basis for students with ID. Thus, IPSE programs should focus on

preparing faculty to succeed in inclusive education by providing training in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and offering ongoing support. Finally, IPSE programs should carefully consider the additional academic support necessary for students with ID, including tutoring, study skills, supportive technology apps, and time management. Facilitating communication and collaboration among students, faculty, and academic support services is a critical component of success.

In developing the academic benchmarks and supports, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How will the coursework (e.g., assignments and assessments) within inclusive courses be differentiated or modified? Who will be responsible for identifying learning expectations within each course and differentiating the coursework?

Fair and objective measures for evaluating student learning need to be established before the start of each course. Students should be accountable for specific learning objectives beyond attending the course. An essential aspect of this process is that it is individualized for each student, as some students may be capable of meeting a number of the learning objectives and standards for a given course with appropriate accommodations (e.g., extra time, note taker), while others may need to have the assignments and assessments modified (e.g., reduction in the density of the material or change in the nature of the assignment) in order to succeed. Students will engage more and optimize their learning outcomes when they are challenged at their individual level.

One important question is who will be responsible for setting the learning objectives and differentiating the coursework within inclusive college classes. At some IHEs, IPSE program staff take on these responsibilities while at others, the individual faculty who teach the inclusive courses set the learning objectives and differentiate the coursework. Finally, there are the program staff who support faculty to differentiate and set the learning objectives, building their capacity to do so. There are several advantages of having faculty differentiate the assignments and assessments within their own courses, provided they receive the training and support necessary to do so. Faculty, rather than program staff, are content experts within their disciplines and as such are best equipped to identify core information within their own courses. Most program staff are not experts in all the diverse fields that IPSE students may choose to explore (e.g., psychology, communication, business, computer programming, education), and may find it difficult to differentiate coursework (e.g., develop assessments and assignments) across an array of disciplines. Building capacity in the faculty to take responsibility for differentiation results in a more sustainable model, and creates a culture in which faculty understand that they are responsible for educating all students in the classroom. Faculty will need to work closely with program staff and with students to develop appropriate learning expectations and to identify the necessary supports, accommodations, and modifications for individual student success. See Related Resources for tips for faculty.

Whenever possible, partner with the campus-wide efforts to support excellence in pedagogy by offering training in UDL to benefit all students (with and without ID).

What kind of training will be provided for faculty to teach inclusive academic courses, and who will provide that training? Will the training be required?

Accreditation standards require that training and support be provided to faculty and staff, with an emphasis on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Whenever possible, partner with the campus-wide efforts to support excellence in pedagogy by offering training in UDL to benefit all students (with and without ID). Information related to UDL is included in the Related Resources section.

What information will be given to faculty about IPSE students enrolled in their courses, and when will that information be provided?

Regardless of who is responsible for setting learning objectives and differentiating coursework, faculty and students with ID may both benefit if the IPSE program staff team with the faculty teaching inclusive courses to ensure student success. Disclosure of a specific disability should always be a student's choice. Faculty can be informed, and students can inform faculty about students' strengths and needs for support (e.g. during faculty-student appointments or regular office hours). Accreditation standards require that "information and support about the impact of an individual student's disability on learning, and strategies to support, instruct, and assess the student, are offered to the institution's faculty and staff to improve and optimize the student's learning."

What types of support will be offered to IPSE students?

In addition to accommodations and modifications of coursework, many students with ID benefit from additional academic support (e.g., tutoring, time management, study strategies, technology instruction). IPSE students should have access to all of the campus academic supports (e.g., disability services, tutoring, writing lab). A hallmark of successful IPSE programs is access to and use of all resources available to other students. It is important to recognize that, at least initially, optimal access to and use of campus resources will likely require some guidance and support or training for individuals who provide those resources.

In addition to these institutional supports, a majority of IPSE programs offer peer mentoring as an essential mechanism of academic support for students with ID. For peer mentoring to be appropriate and successful, strong coordination, communication, and collaboration must be established between the student with ID, the peer mentor, the faculty instructor, and the program staff. Clear policies regarding coordination, accountability, and processes for levels of support and resolving problems must be established and communicated to all. More details about the essentials for a successful peer mentor program are discussed in the Peer Mentor section of this guide.

How will academic feedback be conveyed to students?

Students must understand that they are responsible for their learning and progression towards the credential, and thus must have an accurate sense of their academic performance. Students with ID may need assistance in understanding course feedback, particularly in establishing strong study skills, managing their time and prioritizing assignments, identifying their needs for support, and advocating for those needs.

Student feedback will likely go beyond grades earned in their courses. Accreditation standards call for programs to establish student learning outcomes and develop a plan for assessing those outcomes and communicating progress to students on a regular basis. The Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy for IPSE students must include criteria for evaluating student progress in academics,

socialization, independent living, and career development. Additionally, students should receive a “written report at the end of each ‘academic unit’ that clearly indicates evidence of student progress” in all of the above areas. An SAP resource is identified at the end of this section.

Are roster (tenure-track) faculty involved in inclusive instruction, or is your program relying heavily (or exclusively) on adjuncts?

In IHEs that embrace the inclusive mission of an IPSE program, inclusive courses are taught by all faculty, both roster and adjuncts. Roster faculty may offer an advantage in terms of program sustainability, as they have a voice in campus governance whereas adjunct faculty often do not. Thus, roster faculty have a strong impact on campus-wide programs and policies, are more likely to serve on student conduct and grievance boards, and be involved in student advising. They also, by nature of their contracts, tend to have greater longevity at an IHE. Over-reliance on adjunct faculty to teach inclusive courses may pose challenges for program sustainability.

What portion of the program (if any) will be offered online?

Accreditation standards indicate that the inclusive program of study should be offered primarily to students attending the IHE in person, with some distance learning “allowable if it is applicable to and benefits students with ID.”

What program of study will students follow to earn their credential?

As stated earlier, accreditation standards require that IPSE programs have a formal program of study that “aligns with the statutory and regulatory requirements for a Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program (CTP) in the Higher Education Act (HEA) law and regulations and is consistent with the program’s mission and program outcomes.” The program of study must include academic coursework (for credit, audit, or otherwise participating in courses for which the student does not receive regular academic credit), internships or work-based experiences, and additional learning experiences that promote social development, self-determination, and independent living skills. Although the program of study may include required courses, the formal program of study should offer students some choice in their coursework and work-based experiences, and an individual student’s course of study within the program should be determined through a person-centered plan. IHEs should strive to create programs of study in which IPSE students are integrated with non-disabled students to the maximum extent possible, and at a minimum must ensure that at least half of students’ time focuses on academic coursework or work-based experiences in settings that include individuals without disabilities.

Related Resources:

[Sample of Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) Policy](#)

An SAP is important to ensure there are expectations for students to be engaged and learning in their academic classes. One example of SAP is provided that was submitted as part of an approved application for become a CTP.

[How One University Supports Inclusive Coursework](#)

This webinar shares details on the strategies used by University of Kansas’ Transition to Postsecondary Education staff who offer training and support to course instructors to facilitate inclusive and challenging college experiences, collaborate with the disability services office to identify accommodations, and provide individualized coursework adaptations as needed.

[Postsecondary Education and Universal Design for Learning](#)

A free online learning module from the Florida Consortium for Inclusive Higher Education on Universal Design for Learning, with a focus on its use in college classrooms.

[Universal Design in Higher Education](#)

A website with resources and tools for implementing UDL in postsecondary settings.

[Tips from Faculty: Engaging Students with Intellectual Disability Enrolled in College Courses](#)

This webinar focuses on how faculty support students with intellectual disability enrolled in their college courses. Two professors share their experiences in supporting students with intellectual disability enrolled in college success and leadership classes and the importance of having a support system in place to aid our students inside and outside the classroom. Adjusted assignments and assessments that support students' development are discussed.

[Satisfactory Academic Progress Rubric Template](#)

This worksheet from the University of Central Florida is an example of a form providing a visual accounting of how a student is meeting program requirements for the semester and documentation of Satisfactory Academic Progress. A PDF is provided with an example of a completed form. An Excel version is also provided so you may update the form to fit your needs.

MEANINGFUL CREDENTIAL

Both accreditation and CTP standards call for programs to offer a meaningful credential to students who complete the IPSE program. IHEs must delineate the number of weeks of instructional time and the number of clock hours in the program, including the equivalent clock hours that fulfill requirements of the program credential. The credential offered by an IPSE may include a degree, certificate, or employment-related credential. As noted earlier, the program of study required for a credential must include academic coursework, career development, internships or other work-based learning, social development, and self-determination. The elements here beyond academic coursework are discussed in subsequent chapters.

In developing the meaningful credential, IHE's should consider the following issues:

What credential(s) will students earn?

Currently, there is no national standard for a meaningful credential offered by an IPSE program, though there is a Credential Action Planning Tool that can be used to develop a credential for students with ID (see Related Resources at the end of this section). The credential offered represents a significant milestone for students and a mark of achievement and accomplishment to employers and community members.

How will IPSE students be included in your graduation ceremonies?

Because IPSE students may earn a different credential than other students within the IHE, they may not be an obvious fit within traditional graduation ceremonies that often recognize students by the degree they are earning. It is important to consider these issues in advance, and plan for IPSE students to have a meaningful place within the regular IHE graduation celebration.

Related Resources:

[Credential Development in Inclusive Higher Education](#)

This Insight Brief from Think College shares strategies and processes that can be used by programs when they are developing the credential that students will earn.

[Credential Action Planning Tool](#)

A checklist to support postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the development of a meaningful credential that can be earned by students attending your program.

[Credential Guidance Brief Series](#)

The Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education developed the IPSE Credential Guidance Brief Series as a set of six stand-alone briefs to guide IPSE faculty, program staff, and secondary educators in the development of an IPSE credential and the supporting program of study. Of note is guidance on exploring existing credentials at your institution.

[Industry Recognized Credentials for Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs](#)

This Think College Insight Brief reviews the importance of industry recognized credentials for IPSE programs.

[Student Credentials: Annotated Bibliography](#)

The resources listed here include reports, briefs, peer-reviewed journal articles, and federal guidance on the topic of credentials. These resources can be used to contextualize credentials for students with ID within the larger, national credential landscape.

[Think College's Student Credentials Resource Page](#)

The resources on this page provide information and insights about credentials for students with ID, and also offer context about the credential landscape nationally.

Academically inclusive courses are defined as “typical college courses attended by students with ID and other college students without ID,” and participation in inclusive coursework is a hallmark of excellence for IPSE programs.

CHAPTER IV: CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

This section explores decisions you need to make related to career development for students enrolled in your program, including issues related to employment readiness and career exploration, job development, support for employees/employers, and evaluation. These questions include:

- What are the goals of your career development component?
- How will you assess students' employment skills? Who will be responsible for that assessment?
- How will you educate students about different job options, and help them align their strengths and interests with employment options?
- How will you cultivate relationships across your IHE so that students with ID can begin their employment with a position on campus?
- How will you cultivate relationships within your community so that students have a wide variety of employment options?
- What role will paid/ unpaid internships play in your career development component?
- What type of training and support will be provided, not only to students but also to employers, so that you maximize the likelihood of success? Who will provide that support?
- How will you measure progress in career development?
- How will students receive feedback about their job performance?
- How will you track employment success after graduation?

Career development is an integral part of postsecondary education for students, and competitive integrated employment is the goal after graduation. In a recent report on employment outcomes for individuals with ID, those who had engaged in postsecondary education were more than twice as likely to be employed and earned \$400 more each month than their counterparts who did not. Accreditation standards require that the program of study “includes instruction, internships, apprenticeships or other work-based learning, and other career development activities necessary to enable students to achieve and sustain competitive integrated employment (CIE) aligned with person-centered goals.” Successful career development often involves the coordination of a variety of stakeholders, including on-campus and community employers, Vocational Rehabilitation, job coaches, peer mentors, and program staff. Accreditation standards require that programs coordinate “services and supports between program and staff and other professionals who do not work directly for the institution but serve in a support or instructional capacity for the students.”

CAREER EXPLORATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Students will come to college with diverse employment experiences, as some will have no work experience while others may have worked in at least one paid job. Some will have a general sense of what kind of work they want to pursue, and others will be naïve about their employment options. Determining employment goals for students, regardless of their work experience, is an important first step in developing a career component to your program. Ideally, as students progress through your program they will acquire a range of job-related skills, including how to identify career interests and personal strengths, apply and interview for a job, request support needs or assistance from an employer, follow directions and take

criticism from a supervisor, and learn the specific skills needed for the job of their choice, as well as the soft skills (e.g. perseverance, problem solving, self-initiative, interpersonal skills) necessary to obtain and maintain a competitive paid position. Important first steps in developing your career component include understanding your goals and assessing students' skills for employment.

When developing the employment component, IHE's should consider the following issues:

What are the goals of your career development component?

Given that competitive, paid employment after graduation is a primary metric of success for IPSE programs, it is important to consider what the employment goals will be for the students in your program. Establishing these goals at the outset will be important for driving policy, practice, and evaluation. For example, when will students get their first paid job and how many hours will they work in that first semester? Will they stay in one paid position or move to a new one if they wish? What seminars will career services be giving each semester, and which ones might be most important for incoming students? Understanding your program goals will help you establish practices and policies that can meet the individualized needs of your students.

How will you assess students' employment skills? Who will be responsible for that assessment?

Students will come to college with different levels of work experience. Some have never had a job, others have done volunteer work, and still others have had at least one paid position. Thus, students will vary in both their technical skills (e.g., calling in when late, checking in with supervisor when finished with a task) and soft skills (e.g., punctuality, appearance, work ethic). How will you assess students' employment-related skills? Some programs partner with community-based agencies (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation) for these assessments, while others evaluate these skills in house. Regardless of who executes the assessments, it is important to gauge students' employment skills so that students are provided the appropriate support for success in the workplace, and to enable tracking of student progress.

How will you educate students about different job options, and help them align their strengths and interests with employment options?

Many students have limited knowledge about career options, in part because opportunities for individuals with ID are ever-expanding. In addition, some students may have unrealistic expectations about their careers and a lack of understanding of their individual strengths and talents. Career exploration may be an important component in your program that educates students about employment options, both within the program and after graduation. Career exploration should be included as a primary topic of discussion for person centered planning meetings as well as meetings with counselors in career services.

Related Resources:

[Who Does What? Optimizing Employment Services and Supports through Individual Planning for College Students with Intellectual Disability](#)

This recorded webinar and supporting resources provides information on potential employment services students may access beyond IPSE programs. The presenters provide an overview of the potential partners, how they relate to each other, and the questions program staff need to ask to ensure planning for employment services and outcomes is effective.

[From the Field: Strategies on Career Development and Employment for Students with Intellectual Disability](#)

In this handout, six IPSE programs share strategies they use to support their students with ID who are looking for employment opportunities.

[Customized Employment Grab and Go Practice Series](#)

This series of publications is designed to help students, parents, teachers, and job developers create customized employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

[Customized Employment - Discovery](#)

[Customized Employment - Career Exploration](#)

[Customized Employment - Employer Research](#)

[Customized Employment - Developing an Employer Network](#)

[Customized Employment - Job Development Planning](#)

[Customized Employment - Informational Interview & Observational Tours](#)

[Customized Employment - Employer Negotiation](#)

[Customized Employment - Post Employment Supports](#)

[Situational Assessment Fact Sheet](#)

This document provides guidelines for performing a situational assessment, which can be used to assist students to make choices about the types of jobs and work environments that they would enjoy, using real work and community settings.

[Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies in Finding and Maintaining a Job](#)

Topics covered in this webinar include identifying and effectively using personal and professional networks for job development, creating a placement plan for an organized and efficient job search, and performing targeted job development based on information learned through career exploration activities.

JOB DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Data convincingly demonstrate that individuals with disabilities can be excellent employees that contribute significantly to an employer's bottom line. Job development and coaching efforts include supporting employers to understand and support each student employee. A strategic approach to job development involves collaboration with local employment agencies (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation), chambers of commerce, local employers, and extensive networking.

When developing the employment component, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How will you cultivate relationships across your IHE so that students with ID can begin their career development with a position on campus?

Many programs across the country encourage students to begin their career development with a position on campus, as this allows close collaboration with the employer, eliminates the need for transportation, and makes it easy for peer mentors to provide support as needed. If you pursue this option, you will need to cultivate relationships with different units on campus so that students have a diverse array of employment options. You will also need to establish a strong communication plan so that the employment experience is positive for all stakeholders, as sustaining these partnerships will be essential for the health of your program.

How will you cultivate relationships within your community so that students have a wide variety of employment options?

Because competitive integrated employment is a benchmark of success for both students and the program, a primary goal should be employment in the community while students are enrolled. Community-based employment poses several challenges, including job development, transportation, scheduling, and support. As with on-campus employers, you will need to cultivate relationships with a variety of employers so that students have choice in their employment options, and will need a formal plan for employer and student communication and evaluation to ensure success in the workplace. It is important that each employer has a point of contact within the IPSE program so that challenges are addressed quickly and effectively. Community-based resources (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation) can be useful in assisting with vocational assessment, job development, and job coach support, so be sure to connect with your local agencies as you develop the career component.

What role will paid/ unpaid internships play in your career development component?

Will students be paid for the work experiences on and off campus? This is a critical consideration, especially if students without disabilities are paid for the same work. Payment for work is the gold standard, as students with ID need to understand that their efforts are valued and valuable and they should feel accountable for their time and effort on the job. A paycheck not only provides an incentive to work, it also provides opportunities for students to become more independent and to work on money management. That said, it is not uncommon for students (with and without ID) to gain valuable work experience through an unpaid internship. Ultimately, research supports paid work. Students who are in competitive employment while in college are more likely to obtain competitive employment after college.

What type of training and support will be provided, not only to students but also to employers, so that you maximize the likelihood of success? Who will provide that support?

Historically people with ID have experienced high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Because many of the students who enroll in your IPSE program may have little or no job experience, they may need additional support as they learn the skills necessary to be successful in the workplace and as they acquire the skills needed for a specific job. It is important to develop a system that will allow the support to fade as students gain mastery in their job. There are a variety of models of success, including braided support from VR, job coaches, peer mentors, program staff, and employers. It is important to remember that, as with other support and services on campus, students with ID should have access to the career support offered to other students. They may also benefit from additional support provided by the program. Accreditation standards require that individuals who work with students, such as peer mentors and other professionals, are trained and supervised.

In addition, many employers may need guidance in learning to support and developing natural support for employees with disabilities. Employers may

Students who are in competitive employment while in college are more likely to obtain competitive employment after college.

need guidance to set appropriately high expectations, and to provide constructive, candid feedback to employees with ID. Clear expectations about the roles and responsibilities that the student must fill, along with strong, reciprocal communication about the student's needs for support and ongoing performance feedback are essential. Regular and formal mechanisms for feedback are recommended.

Related Resources:

[Employment Support Service for Students with ID](#)

This study outlines the results of a survey on what employment supports are frequently offered to students in IPSE programs.

[Sample Worksite Training Agreement](#)

This resource from ACHIEVE at Highline College provides an example agreement between a business/ worksite, the college program, and the student. It outlines roles and responsibilities for each party as the student engages in career exploration.

[Exploring Barriers for Facilitating Work Experience Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Enrolled in Postsecondary Education Programs](#)

This article from the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability explores barriers faced by IPSE program staff when facilitating work experience engagements. It can be used by programs in development to prepare for potential roadblocks.

[What is Inclusive Higher Education, and How Does it Connect To Vocational Rehabilitation?](#)

This Practice Brief shares examples that illustrate ways in which Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is collaborating with and supporting IPSE programs. Details from six states are provided.

[The What, Where, and How of Good Collaboration with VR](#)

These webinar slides review the what, where, and how of good collaboration between VR and institutions of higher education serving students with intellectual disability (ID), with regard to accessing pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).

[Exploring Employment Supports](#)

Many people with disabilities benefit from working with professionals and programs who specialize in supporting people with disabilities on the job. This resource explores what services are offered and how to access them.

[Supporting Individuals with ASD: Quality Employment Practices](#)

This Institute for Community Inclusion Institute Brief describes quality employment practices for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The brief discusses considerations for placement planning and assessment, environmental demands placed on an individual with ASD in the workplace, organizational demands, job development strategies, applications, and recommended areas of practice.

Failure is a natural part of the learning process for many students, and it is essential that programs expect and plan for some instances of student failure.

EVALUATION

Evaluation and constructive feedback are essential ingredients in students' growth and development. The students' job performance should be assessed twice a semester by the employer and the employment program staff person. Receiving feedback is a critical skill for the students to learn and this is the opportunity to do that. Programs should also solicit feedback from employers at least twice a semester regarding the efficacy of the support provided to students, the communication from the IPSE employment staff, and feedback about the student's progress. Maintaining positive relations with employers is essential for program sustainability and longevity.

Evaluation and constructive feedback are essential ingredients in students' growth and development.

When developing the evaluation policies and practices, IHE's should consider these issues:

How will you measure progress in career development? How will students receive feedback about their job performance?

Many of the skills needed for success in the workplace are soft skills, like punctuality, hygiene, communication, and work ethic. Programs will need to consider how they will assess students' development with these skills, as well as the specific skills needed to execute a particular job (e.g., office assistant, childcare worker, hotel clerk). Accreditation standards indicate that students should receive a written report at the end of each academic unit that clearly indicates their progress in all areas, including employment. Students who work and have a designated supervisor should also receive direct feedback from that supervisor, regardless of whether the position is paid or unpaid, on or off campus. As noted earlier, programs must establish a Satisfactory Academic Policy that includes specific criteria for evaluating student progress in career development and show the impact of that evaluation on student advancement towards program completion. How will you measure progress in career development? What policies/consequences will you have if a student fails to meet those criteria? For example, what consequences will a student face if they are fired from a job? Failure is a natural part of the learning process for many students, and it is essential that programs expect and plan for some instances of student failure. The system should not be designed so that students cannot fail.

How will you track employment success after graduation?

As noted earlier, post-graduate employment rates are a key metric of IPSE program success. Programs will want to develop a formal mechanism for tracking student employment after graduation for at least five years. It is important to communicate that expectation with students and families at the time of enrollment to facilitate data collection after graduation.

Related Resources:

[Sample Student Progress Tracking Form](#)

This form, developed by ASTEP at Minot State University, can be used to monitor student progress in multiple domains including academics, community living, employment, and in social settings.

[Collecting Outcome Data for Student Success and Program Improvement](#)

This guide can be used by staff and administrators at institutions of higher education to develop procedures for collecting data on the outcomes of students with intellectual disability after they graduate from higher education programs.

CHAPTER V: PEER MENTORSHIP AND STUDENT SUPPORT

This section explores decisions you need to make related to peer mentorship and student support, including the kinds of support mentors might provide along with mentor recruitment, training, and retention. These questions include:

- What kinds of support will mentors provide?
- Who will recruit and train peer mentors, and provide ongoing support throughout the year?
- How many mentors will you need, how will they be recruited, and will they be paid?
- How will you match mentors with mentees?

Peer mentors play an integral role in the support process.

The vast majority of IHEs that include students with ID offer support from peer mentors, who in turn receive training and support from program staff. Peer mentors can assist with academic, employment, independent living, social, and self-determination components of the program. Peer mentors may be paid or unpaid, depending upon their roles and responsibilities, hours worked each week, and the nature of their engagement with students with disabilities. See the Mentor Models resource in the Related Resources at the end of this section.

In developing the peer mentor program, IHE's should consider the following issues:

What kinds of support will mentors provide?

Mentors can support students in many facets of campus life, including academic coursework, employment, social skill development, integration into campus life, and life skills. Programs will want to consider how to structure the support system to meet these needs, being careful to provide enough support to facilitate student success, but not to over-support and thus hamper self-determination. Peer mentors play an integral role in the support process. Many programs have different types of peer mentors, including those who serve as paid academic tutors or job coaches, and those who volunteer to provide social and independent living support. Programs will need to determine how to best integrate peer mentor support, and to clearly define the roles of each type of peer mentor. Peer mentors can not only provide direct support for students, but may also assist with tracking student progress. As noted earlier, programs must define and track satisfactory academic progress of students with ID, to include not only progress within their courses, but also progress towards social, employment, and independent living goals. Because peer mentors work so closely with students with ID on a daily basis, they can play an integral role in the goal-tracking progress, provided they receive clear metrics for monitoring progress and an effective, efficient process for documenting progress.

Who will recruit and train peer mentors, and provide ongoing support throughout the year?

Experience suggests that many college students are eager and successful in serving as peer mentors and providing significant support for IPSE students across a variety of domains. That said, few college students are fully prepared to navigate the complex issues that can arise (e.g., sexuality, depression, gender identity, roommate challenges), and/or may need guidance in establishing appropriate expectations and boundaries with mentees. In addition, peer mentors need training

on how to provide the appropriate level of support, and how to fade that support over time. Accreditation standards require that peer mentors are trained and supervised, and receive consistent, ongoing support. When possible, including experienced students in your program as trainers for new peer mentors may be particularly helpful, as mentors need to learn directly from the individuals with whom they will collaborate.

How many mentors will you need, how will they be recruited, and will they be paid?

Programs are wise to consider the number of peer mentors they will need and the number of hours each peer mentor will work before they begin recruiting. They will also want to consider a strategic approach for recruiting mentors. Some IHEs recruit from targeted units and disciplines on campus (e.g., School of Education, professionals-in-training like counselors, speech pathologists, physical therapists) while others cast a broader net and recruit across all schools and disciplines. Similarly, some programs pay some mentors, particularly when the expertise and/or commitment required of mentors may merit compensation (e.g., academic tutors who work 10+ hours/week providing differentiated support; residential housing support mentors who are on call nights/weekends). In other cases, payment of mentors may pose a barrier to the development of natural support and relationships (e.g., when mentors are paid to engage in social activities with mentees, it can hamper the development of genuine friendships). As you consider your recruiting strategies, it may be helpful to keep a few things in mind:

- Consistency and reliability are critical to the success of mentor-mentee relationships, so it will be important to create clear policies and practices that foster that reliability, and to select individuals who are committed to the program for at least a full term.
- Peer mentors are generally undergraduate or graduate students, and are themselves emerging adults. In addition to advanced training and preparation, they will need ongoing support and strong communication with IPSE program staff.
- Generally speaking, there are more males than females enrolled in IPSE programs. That is an important factor to keep in mind when considering staffing, particularly for programs that provide residential support.
- Sustainability must be a consideration in determining whether or not some mentors will be paid. Sustainability factors include retention and reliability of mentors, budgetary limitations, and mentor recruitment.

How will you match mentors with mentees?

Mentees should have a strong voice in their pairing with mentors, and should have the option of changing mentors if the match does not prove effective or beneficial. When possible, it may be beneficial to consider including experienced students in your program as part of your peer mentor team.

Related Resources:

[Mentor Models and Practices for Inclusive Postsecondary Education](#)

This document outlines three mentor models used by different IPSE programs: 1) a volunteer/friendship model at a private university, 2) a hybrid volunteer/service-learning model at a public state university, and 3) a primarily paid model at a community college.

[Establishing a Peer Mentor Program](#)

This guide provides information for how to establish your mentor program, including strategies for recruitment, retention, and training of peer mentors.

[Sample Peer Mentor Handbooks](#)

These peer mentor handbooks, from 4 different IPSE programs, provide ideas for information to share, policies and procedures to adopt, code of ethics for peer mentors, training topics and more. Handbooks were provided by: Garden State Pathways Program at Camden County College, University of Vermont, PASSAGE at University of South Alabama, and Eagle Connections at Tallahassee Community College.

[Sample Mentor Application](#)

This Mentor Application, developed by Vanderbilt University's Next Step program for students with intellectual disabilities, provides an example of how one program recruits and screens student applicants wishing to be peer mentors.

[Sample Educational Coach/Mentor Agreement](#)

This chart can be used by a student and their educational coach to decide areas where students will need help, and what type of support an educational coach can provide for each area of need.

[Peer Mentor Training Videos](#)

This video series can be used as part of a comprehensive peer mentor training program. The videos were designed to provide strategies for peers providing academic support, and were developed by Megan Goldfarb, when she served as an academic coach for the Virginia Commonwealth University ACE-IT program.

[Peer Mentoring: It Can Change Your Life](#)

In this Think College Story, a peer mentor at Vanderbilt University describes her experience mentoring students in the Next Steps program. This is provided as an example of how you can highlight mentors in your own programs, and the benefits of mentorship for all.

[Growing Self-Determination while Fading Supports](#)

This profile highlights the positive outcomes that can be achieved from collaborative planning and fading supports.

[Predictors of Self-Determination](#)

This study analyzed data on the self-determination status of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities completing their first year of a postsecondary education program. A discussion is provided on how programs can assess and plan for increasing student self-determination while in IPSE programs.

[Supporting Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum Setting and Pursuing Self-Determined Goals](#)

This toolkit is designed to help people who support young adults on the autism spectrum as they set and pursue self-determined goals.

CHAPTER VI: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INDEPENDENT LIVING, AND SELF-DETERMINATION

This section explores decisions to be made related to students' social development, independent living skills, and self-determination. These questions include:

- How will you work with students to identify their social needs and preferences?
- How will you support students in reaching their goals for social development?
- How will you educate students about issues related to health, hygiene, sexuality, and relationships?
- What steps will you take to ensure that students fully understand the student code of conduct and the grievance process?
- How will you support students in their development of independent living skills, including nutrition, transportation, laundry, time management, etc.?
- Will you offer campus housing to IPSE students?
- If you do offer campus housing, will the rules for IPSE students be the same as the rules for other residential students?
- If you do offer residential housing, how will students be supported?
- How will you foster self-determination through the person-centered planning process and your program policies?

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social growth and development, independent living skills, and the ability to lead a self-determined life are important elements of focus for postsecondary programs that support students with ID. In some cases, students may experience full inclusion for the first time on a college campus, and consequently may experience new challenges in making friends, maintaining relationships, and understanding how to navigate different social settings. Support may be necessary for the students as they develop their social skills, particularly for students whose disability includes social challenges. Accreditation standards mandate that both social development and independent living skills be included in the course of study for the program, with a plan for measuring satisfactory academic progress in those non-academic aspects of the program. It is also important to recognize that for many college students without disabilities, having peers with ID in their classes, dormitories, and social clubs is new. Thus students on campus may benefit from some guidance and support as students with ID engage in different social arenas (e.g., Greek life, Student Government, intramural sports) for the first time.

When focusing on students' social development, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How will you work with students to identify social needs and preferences?

Expectations for social growth and development, like those for all components, should be individualized for each student. One person's desire and need for social engagement may look very different from another's. Programs should determine how they will work with students to identify and understand their social needs and preferences, and to set goals for social growth. These can include a wide spectrum

of activities, including participation in clubs and campus activities, use of social media and technology, involvement in the greater community, dating, friendships, roommate relationships, etc. One important mechanism for exploring social preferences, setting goals, and identifying the self-determined skill the student wants to learn is the person-centered planning process. Students can also use this planning process to learn to balance social engagements with academic coursework and employment obligations.

How will you support students in reaching their goals for social development?

There can be a gap between students' desires to be good friends, roommates, romantic partners, teammates, etc. and their understanding of how to do so. Such self-determined social goals should also be identified in the person-centered planning process. Support in navigating social relationships can come from direct instruction, individualized staff support, circles of support, faculty advisors, and peer mentors. Knowing how to provide appropriate support and guidance for the social component can be challenging for mentors, so explicit training for social peer mentors is important.

How will you educate students about issues related to health, hygiene, sexuality, and relationships?

For many students with and without ID, college is a time of social and romantic exploration and experimentation. Students with ID may be behind the curve in terms of their experience and education about human sexuality, and instruction regarding these issues will be important, not only so that students can engage in positive, healthy relationships but also to avoid inappropriate behaviors (e.g., stalking) and violations of student conduct codes.

What steps will you take to ensure that students fully understand the student code of conduct and the grievance process?

Accreditation standards mandate that students with ID (and their parents) fully understand and agree to the campus code of conduct before they participate in the program, and receive training and support in complying with that code. Student codes of conduct for a college campus are often written in language that is not fully accessible to some IPSE students and so the code should be provided in plain language and reviewed with students to ensure understanding. Programs should work closely with the IHE's grievance office in advance to establish protocols of support should a complaint be lodged against an IPSE student, or if an IPSE student wishes to file a complaint against another student. Students need to not only understand the code of conduct, but how to file a complaint if they so desire and the steps they should take if a complaint is filed against them. Students should also have an avenue for receiving support outside of program staff/peer mentors if they wish to lodge a complaint about the program.

Related Resources:

[Facilitating Social Connections on Campus](#)

A resource for educational coaches with quick tips and tricks on how to help mentees foster friendships and develop relationships with other students on campus.

[Building Inclusive Campus Communities](#)

This resource provides a framework for campus wide inclusion of students with intellectual disability. A series of reflective questions are provided for practitioners and administrators to consider when designing new IPSE programs, or evaluating existing programs, at their institutions of higher education.

Friendship Experiences

This study examined the nature of friendships of 14 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities participating in a university-based transition program in the United States. Discussion and recommendations are provided that may be helpful when planning social components of your program.

Sexuality Education: Ethics and Consent

This chapter from *Sexuality Education for Students with Disabilities* examines the ethical responsibility that families, adult service providers, and educators have to provide effective sexuality education for people with disabilities to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge to consent to a healthy sexual relationship.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Accreditation standards call for IPSE programs to include the development of independent living skills as part of the program of study for students. A goal for many students with ID and their families is that students will be prepared to live as independently as possible after graduation, so it is important that programs intentionally foster independent living skills, (e.g., personal finance, nutrition and cooking, health and wellness, use of public transportation, personal care, time management, self-determination, and self-advocacy). It is also important that students are given the agency to choose the skills that they are motivated to learn and the goals they wish to achieve. Such choice in independent living skill growth and goal attainment should align with the students' person centered planning goals. Instruction in these goals and skills is most effective through intentionally planned experiences in natural settings, and through direct instruction, peer mentor support and/or circles of support, and reflection. A particularly effective intentional experience is to enable IPSE students the same residential options afforded to all students. For IHEs that provide residential living opportunities, inclusion of students with ID in those opportunities is important for aligning with the accreditation standard that requires that students in the program have access to institutional facilities consistent with other students with the same status. Beyond adhering to this requirement, IHEs are advantaged by offering residential living to IPSE students as the opportunity to live on campus provides a natural and authentic way to teach independent living skills like laundry, personal care, cooking, time management, and living in community with others.

It is important that students are given the agency to choose the skills that they are motivated to learn and the goals they wish to achieve.

When focusing on students' life skills, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How will you support students in their development of independent living skills, including nutrition, transportation, laundry, time management, etc.?

Students may need additional support in mastering various aspects of independent living, including things like nutrition, health, hygiene, laundry, transportation, time management, use of social media, etc. The person-centered planning process is an ideal mechanism for identifying the independent life skills students wish to work on each semester. It is important that students set goals and choose the life skills they are motivated to learn, rather than engaging in a curriculum of life skills courses taught in a separate classroom whether or not the students need or want to learn the skills being taught. Accreditation standards require that progression in independent living skills be part of students' satisfactory academic progress. If mentors are used to support the development of these life skills,

training and ongoing support should be provided to mentors so that they understand how to provide appropriate support, and if needed, how to help track progress in a systematic way.

Living on campus is one of the most transforming experiences for all students.

Will you offer campus housing to IPSE students?

As noted earlier, one organic way to foster independent living skills is by offering a residential experience for students in your program. While the residential component is challenging, it is arguably one of the most transforming experiences for all students.

When students live on campus, they often experience for the first time opportunities to make their own choices and to realize the good and bad effects of their choices regarding personal care, time management, nutrition, and fitness. They begin to navigate roommate relationships and form natural friendships with others in their campus housing. They have access to campus resources and activities like the fitness center, student health center, social clubs, tutoring, and afternoon and evening campus social events and activities, including sporting events, concerts, speakers, and late-night pizza runs. They are full participants in campus life.

If you do offer campus housing, will the rules for IPSE students be the same as the rules for other residential students?

The inclusion of students with ID in campus housing poses interesting questions and challenges. Programs will need to carefully consider the IHE's rules and policies all students must follow and how any additional rules the program may set for students also align with campus policies. For example, will IPSE students have access to all the housing options on campus, or will they select from a smaller menu of options? This decision may be influenced by the type of residential support provided. That said, anecdotal evidence suggests that when all students (with and without ID) live together throughout a dorm or dorms, there is more opportunity for diversity in friendships and experiences, enabling all to grow in supporting each other. By contrast, when IPSE students are grouped in the same segregated hall or halls, there are more issues and arguments and less diversity in experiences to work through problems. Will the rules (e.g., alcohol policy, visitation limitations) be the same for all students? While it may be tempting to set stricter rules for IPSE students in the interest of safety, it is more crucial for all students to be allowed the opportunities to choose and learn from their choices or behavior.

If you do offer campus housing, how will students be supported?

This is an important area in which programs can be proactive with families and students in clearly establishing clear guidelines regarding how students will and will not be supported in the dorms, that students will not have 24/7 supervision, and that students are not only allowed but expected to make informed choices when choosing activities in their 'down time'. A parent and student agreement, signed by all, is a good beginning in establishing staff, student, and parent boundaries and expectations. Students are traditionally supported in dormitories by resident assistants (RA). IPSE students receive the same support from RAs, though some programs may provide additional RA training and support. Housing support provided by the program should be clearly documented and provided to students and families during open house sessions, upon acceptance and enrollment, and again during orientations. Clear documentation about the type and amount of support on campus, in the dorms, and after hours as well as when students will not be supervised is crucial to everyone's success.

Related Resources:

[Developing Inclusive Residential Living on College Campuses](#)

This guide can be used by programs interested in developing inclusive living opportunities for students with ID on college campuses. It offers suggestions on weighing potential benefits and risks, minimizing liability concerns, connecting with campus partners, and conceptualizing how to proactively meet the individualized student support needs in college residence halls.

[Developing Partnerships for Successful Inclusive Campus Housing](#)

This webinar and accompanying slides introduces the inclusive living component of the University of Missouri - St. Louis Succeed Program and how it was developed.

[A Tiered Approach to Promoting Safety and Security](#)

This publication describes three tiers of support employed on a college campus to promote safety and security for fully included students with ID in an IPSE program. It provides strategies other programs may adopt. Four case examples are provided to show how the tiered approach was used to prevent or mitigate against the occurrence of risks to safety or security.

[Living and Learning in a Campus Community](#)

In this Think College Story published in 2016, a student at Utah State shares his experiences living on campus in a Living/Learning Community.

[Use of Medicaid Waivers to Support Students with Intellectual Disability in College](#)

An increasing number of states allow students with ID to use Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers to support participation in postsecondary education programs. This Insight Brief explains what Medicaid Waivers are, what PSE services they can be used for, and how to access waiver services. It is included here as it discusses use for housing supports.

[Healthy Relationships and Sexuality](#)

This recorded webinar, slides, and resources, by Katherine McLaughlin from Elevatus Training, explores tips and tools for addressing sexuality one-on-one with the individuals you work with.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination provides an essential foundation for an inclusive life, and it is incumbent upon the program to establish effective practices, such as person-centered planning, that support students to identify their own interests, set goals, and make and learn from their choices in academic coursework, social life, living arrangements, and employment.

When focusing on students' self-determination, IHEs should consider the following issues:

How will you foster self-determination through the person-centered planning process and your program policies?

Self-determination is a core concept that refers to each person's ability to make decisions and choices that impact their life. At its core is the revolutionary tenet that people with disabilities, rather than the professionals who support them, are in charge of their lives. Self-determination affords a sense of control and thus benefits individuals' psychological health as well as their motivation. For many students with ID, college offers the first opportunity to make decisions for themselves – including big questions like what classes they want to take and what sort of job they want to pursue as well as everyday questions like

what they want to eat for dinner, what time they want to go to bed, and when to find time to do laundry. Although some students may need initial support in learning to manage their lives, it is important that IPSE programs set policies and practices that allow for individualization of those supports and that afford students choice and self-determination in their daily lives. Unless students are given ample opportunity for self-determination and self-advocacy while in college, they may struggle to manage their own lives after graduation.

Related Resources:

[Evaluating Self-Determination Skills](#)

This research study provides an example of how staff might evaluate their ability to teach self-determination to students in their program.

[Keys to Self Determination](#)

This webinar provides an orientation to self-determination. The speaker discusses how their program provides training on self-determination to coaches and peer mentors at the Postsecondary Support Project (PSP), based at the University of Hawai'i.

[Embracing Dignity of Risk in Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs](#)

In this webinar recording, the presenters discussed the access to Dignity of Risk that students with intellectual disability should have when in college and provide recommendations and principles that might guide programs as they consider and assess risk.

[What Does the Dignity of Risk Mean to You?](#)

People with developmental disabilities have the right to dignity of risk. Max Barrows from Green Mountain Self-Advocates describes the concept of dignity of risk in this Youtube video.

CHAPTER VII: COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND EVALUATION

This section explores decisions required to facilitate cross-campus collaboration and communication as well as student and program evaluation. These questions include:

- How and when will general information about the program be communicated with parents, families, and other stakeholders?
- How will you forge collaborations on campus to encourage disability-related pedagogy, research, grants, and other initiatives?
- How will you solicit feedback from all stakeholders, including students, families, staff, faculty, peer mentors, administrators, and employers, in a way that allows for candid, anonymous responses?
- What are the metrics and processes you will use to evaluate the components of your program on a regular basis?
- How will you use the data from your regular evaluation process to create a strategic plan for program sustainability, development, and enhancement?

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

IPSE programs, by their very nature, involve close collaboration with all units on campus (and typically beyond campus) so that students have access to and support within academic, social, employment, and recreational services and activities. This collaboration relies on open and reciprocal communication, with regular efforts to evaluate and improve program policies, practices and procedures. All stakeholders (students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, employers, community partners) should have the opportunity to provide candid, formative feedback regarding the program, and a systematic process should be in place for program review and improvement.

It may be helpful for programs to provide support for parents as they transition to new roles with their adult students.

In establishing policies for communication and collaboration, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How and when will general information about the program be communicated with parents and families?

Accreditation standards require that “general information regarding the institution and the program is communicated to students and families on an ongoing basis.” Programs should have an explicit, formal process for “family engagement and communication that reflects clearly defined roles and responsibilities for students, family, and staff.” Bearing in mind that all marketing and promotional materials must respect students’ privacy, programs should develop a strategic communication plan to keep stakeholders informed of program updates and successes. The plan might include newsletters, social media, student blogs, etc. Programs will benefit from published student handbooks (given to

students and parents) that clearly delineate policies and practices, such as levels of support, student and parent expectations, supportive guidelines for students, and link to a calendar of important dates.

It may be helpful for programs to provide support for parents as they transition to new roles with their adult students. College offers an important opportunity for the parent-child role to evolve, and some parents (and students) struggle with that evolution. The goal is that students develop as independent, self-determined adults. Under FERPA, all students have the right to decide what personal information (e.g., grades, job performance, social activities) to share (or not share) with parents. That said, general program information (e.g., academic calendars, news about program initiatives) can be communicated with parents, and parents generally appreciate regular updates. In addition, programs should recognize that many if not most students with ID will need some support after graduation, and parents and families are generally the ones to provide that support. So although student/caregiver roles are evolving, programs should support students in engaging with their support providers and caregivers to create updated perceptions and expectations about student's strengths, abilities, and responsibilities.

How and when will general information about the program be communicated with other stakeholders?

Beyond parents and families, strong communication is essential with all stakeholders for many reasons. As is true for any new program on a college campus, IPSE programs will benefit from raising awareness across campus (and beyond) about their mission and vision and finding ways to partner with other units on campus and partners in the community. Stakeholders also offer important insights into the function of their own units, and thus should have a voice in development of policy and practice, particularly when it impacts their department. Effective communication and collaboration will allow for partnerships that optimally serve students.

As noted earlier, IPSE programs often benefit from establishing advisory committees/boards who help raise awareness of the program, advocate for the program across campus and within the community, and offer formative feedback about the program. Indeed, accreditation standards require that programs “seek and consider ongoing input on program development, policies, and practices from a variety of stakeholders that includes students, alumni, and parents.” Bear in mind that communication is a two-way street, and IPSE programs must focus not only on disseminating information about their goals and objectives but also on listening to the needs and concerns of stakeholders. As students prepare to transition out of college, communication and collaboration with adult service agencies (VR, assistive technology, community housing) will serve to facilitate success for alums. It is important that programs develop a transition process as students graduate from the program and into employment and community life.

How will you forge collaborations on campus to encourage disability-related pedagogy, research, grants, and other initiatives?

The most successful initiatives on a college campus are those that engage and benefit many, if not all, units on campus. IPSE programs are no exception; in fact, they rely on the invested engagement of campus stakeholders in order to implement a mission of full student participation and campus engagement. Consequently, it is in the best interest of IPSE programs to actively seek collaborations with other units. Programs will benefit from disability-related initiatives in pedagogy (e.g., campus-wide training in Universal Design for Learning; development of new courses with a disability focus, and current courses

that include disability issues or perspective), research, grant acquisition, and other community-based initiatives. IPSE programs are more likely to succeed when they work to identify the ways in which their mission and objectives align with those of the broader institution and other individual units, and work to develop partnerships to advance those objectives.

Related Resources:

[Preparing Your Son or Daughter for College](#)

This resource provides a list of the top ten things parents can do to help prepare their student for college.

[Preparing for the Expectations of College in High School](#)

This document identifies many college expectations for entering college freshmen and what middle and secondary school students with intellectual disability, their teachers, and parents can do to prepare for those expectations. There are three categories of expectations: personal independence, academic engagement, and civic and social engagement.

[What's a Parent to Do? Micah's College Dream](#)

This article, written by a parent, provides guiding principles for families wishing to support the dreams of their sons and daughters to have an inclusive college education.

[Parent Involvement, Expectations, Communication, and FERPA](#)

This webinar, recorded in June 2018, looks at family engagement in postsecondary education programs from a parent perspective. Parents and program staff explore strategies for effective family engagement practices in light of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements.

[Preparing for the Transfer of Rights: Taking a Closer Look at Guardianship and its Alternatives](#)

The goal of this brief is to educate parents and supporters of youth in transition about guardianship and alternatives to guardianship.

[Memoranda of Understanding: A Tool to Support and Strengthen Partnerships](#)

This Insight Brief explains Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and how they are used in inclusive postsecondary education to define relationships between the institution of higher education, employers, school districts, and other relevant parties.

[The Importance of Formal and Informal Communication Strategies in Maintaining Effective Partnerships Between Vocational Rehabilitation and Inclusive Higher Education Programs](#)

Many IPSE programs have started to partner with Vocational Rehabilitation. These partnerships require staff from both entities to develop an understanding about each partner's role to work together effectively. This publication emphasizes the importance of all methods of communication, and provides tips on making it happen.

Communication resources specific to dual or concurrent enrollment program:

[Establishing Inclusive Postsecondary Education Opportunities: Tips for Effective Communication](#)

This Insight Brief offers tips for effective communication with key stakeholders when working to establish an inclusive dual-enrollment program on a college campus.

[Engaging Parents in Conversations About College-Based Transition Services](#)

This Insight Brief outlines the kind of information and suggested activities that can help parents during the four stages of an inclusive college-based transition experience.

EVALUATION

Systematic evaluation is a critical standard for inclusive higher education programs, as assessment data are essential for the development of optimal practices and policies that are sustainable for all stakeholders. Evaluation should occur on two levels: student and program. At the student level, evaluations should track students' progress in attaining academic, social, employment, and independent living goals, established through the person-centered planning process, as well as satisfactory academic progress and progress toward the credential. Evaluations should also track employment and independent living outcomes post-graduation.

At the program level, evaluations should assess programmatic effectiveness in achieving strategic goals, including (a) partnering with campus stakeholders to ensure student access to campus resources, services, and activities, (b) student enrollment in inclusive academic courses, and (c) sustaining and advancing competitive integrated employment options for students, including paid internships. Accreditation standards require that the “program, along with key stakeholders, evaluates its program components, student assessment practices, student services, policies, activities, students learning outcomes, and program outcomes at a minimum of every three years.” In addition, programs are required to implement program revisions based on these evaluations and demonstrate continuous quality improvement.

In establishing policies for evaluation, IHE's should consider the following issues:

How will you solicit feedback from all stakeholders, including students, families, staff, faculty, peer mentors, administrators, and employers, in a way that allows for candid, anonymous responses?

Although many programs benefit from engaging in a regular internal evaluation process, it is also important that they develop a mechanism for soliciting regular, candid feedback from stakeholders, particularly those directly involved with the program. A regular and consistent process will help programs identify and address challenges as they emerge, thereby improving program sustainability and enhancing cooperation among stakeholders. It is essential that programs have an established process for identifying and resolving any challenges in a timely fashion.

What are the metrics and processes you will use to evaluate the components of your program on a regular basis?

Programs will need to establish objective measures to track both student level progress and programmatic success. The person-centered planning process provides an important mechanism for reviewing student progress. At the program level, there is at least one nationally-recognized tool that will prove useful in guiding the regular evaluation process, namely the Model Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with ID (see Related Resources below).

How will you use the data from your regular evaluation process to create a strategic plan for program sustainability, development, and enhancement?

Evaluation is only useful if the data are used to inform best practices, policy modification, program development. IPSE programs will need to have a process for translating evaluation data into a strategic plan that includes both short and long-term goals. Programs will need to determine who is responsible for developing that plan and evaluating progress towards goals.

Programs will need to establish objective measures to track both student level progress and programmatic success.

Related Resources:

[Model Program Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with ID](#)

This document includes program accreditation standards, guidance on how to address those standards in your inclusive college program, and the documentation that will be required to indicate that the standard is met.

CHAPTER VII: FUNDING

In this section, we will discuss decisions you need to make related to two issues: funding models for the program budget and funding models for how students pay for college. Topics include:

- How will you fund your IPSE program?
- What are the funding options for IPSE students and their families to pay for college?

How will you fund your IPSE program?

Accreditation standards require that programs have viable plans for current and future fiscal sustainability. It will be important to develop a balanced budget that considers all sources of income and what that income allows for regarding staffing and support. One source of income for programs is student tuition. However, note that student tuition dollars do not always go back to the program to support their budget - that can vary by IHE and depends on the arrangement negotiated with the IHE administration during program development. Consequently, many IPSEs also charge a program fee to students, and this program fee typically does return directly to the program budget. That said, programs may also want to consider external funding sources (e.g., donors, grants) to help support the program.

Scholarships for students with ID are still fairly limited and students with ID do not qualify for federal student loans; thus high tuition and fees can place a tremendous burden on families. To alleviate this burden, many programs have utilized braided funding to assist families with costs associated with tuition, including support from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Medicaid waivers, scholarships, state funds, and funds raised from donors (see Related Resources below). IPSE programs are encouraged to apply for status as a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). If the program is approved, eligible students may receive funds from federal grant programs and work study to support the cost of attendance. It may be helpful to partner with your institutional development office to consider opportunities for fundraising to support student scholarships and program growth. It may also be helpful to forge relationships with state representatives in an effort to secure state funding for the program and/or student scholarships.

It will be important to develop a balanced budget that considers all sources of income and what that income allows for regarding staffing and support.

What are the funding options for IPSE students and their families to pay for college?

Finding the funding to pay for college can pose serious challenges for students and their families, as inclusive college education generally costs as much as typical college education. This is compounded by the fact that students with ID are often not eligible for the same merit-based scholarships or athletic scholarships available to students without ID. That said, there is now a mechanism, called an ABLE account, that allows families to save significant funds for college expenses (for further details, see Related Resources below). In some states, funds from VR and/or Medicaid waivers can be used to pay tuition. It can be beneficial for programs to build a relationship with VR and other state agencies so that there is a strong understanding of the ways in which the goals of your program align with those of the state agency, thus increasing the likelihood that agency funds may support student attendance in college programs, including tuition, books, housing, student support, and program fees. Additionally, there is an ever-increasing pool of private foundation and state scholarships to which students with ID can apply to support their college expenses. Finally, students who attend approved CTP programs may be eligible for federal grant programs (Pell and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants) and/or work-study support.

Related Resources:

[Paying for College](#)

A webpage on the Think College website outlining various funding sources to help pay for college.

[Paying for College - Exploring Possible Funding Options](#)

This webinar and related handout summarize 10 different sources of funding for college for students with ID.

[Scholarships for Students with ID](#)

A list of scholarships that students with ID may be able to apply for, as well as recommendations on finding scholarships within local communities. This resource is updated annually.

[Sample Bill for Support from State Funding](#)

This is a sample bill introduced in the state of Texas in 2021 to support IPSE through a program called Building Better Futures.

[Sample Legislation from Different States](#)

This resource provides a list of state-based legislation supporting IPSE

[Comprehensive Transition Programs - A Think College Learning Module](#)

This course provides instruction, resources and examples to guide postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disability through the comprehensive transition postsecondary (CTP) program application process.

[An Overview of CTP Programs](#)

In this webinar, Lindsay Wertemberger from Federal Student Aid at the U.S. Department of Education explains the process for applying to become a CTP program.

[ABLE National Resource Center](#)

ABLE accounts all individuals to save, while maintaining their benefits like SSI and Medicaid. This website provides more information.