Building a Movement Toward Inclusive Postsecondary, Employment & Community Living

COALITIONS, PARENTS, AND YOUTH ARE A VITAL FORCE FOR ACCESS AND CHANGE

PRESENTED BY
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ADULT TRANSITION SUMMIT:
COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS FOR ALL

ALL BORN (IN) CONFERENCE: PORTLAND, OREGON
APRIL 5, 2019
Agenda

- Role of Families & Youth
- National Perspective
- Higher Education Opportunity Act
- State Coalitions & Success
- What You Can Do!
Families and youth are playing a critical role in the national movement to create and expand postsecondary opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities and the systems change needed for high-quality services and sustainability.
The Power of Advocacy

- Creating demand and a vision
- Turning awareness and dreams into reality
- Creating partnerships and coalitions
- Advocating at the national, state, local and college level
Laura Jean Elizabeth Lee
1982-2016

Graduation from George Mason LIFE program 2002
Progress Since 2002!

- Families and student advocacy key to new opportunities!

- Research and Think College evaluation shows good outcomes in employment, social engagement and living more independently

- Initiatives “popped up” independently in states. Now federal funding, state-wide success and Think College

- Structure and composition vary: 2 year colleges, 4 year colleges and universities, vocational

- Services coordinated in various places within colleges & universities

- 266 programs on thinkcollege.net

- Funding is still a big issue – for parents, school systems and IHEs. Now have ABLE Act!
COLLEGE OPTIONS for PEOPLE with INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES, March 19 2019

TOTAL NUMBER OF PROGRAMS: 266

WWW.THINKCOLLEGE.NET
Riggio Inclusive Transition and Postsecondary Initiative*

- Promote public policy and systems change

- Promote: federal research, model demos, TA & outreach (NIDRR & ADD)

- Promote public awareness

- Riggio grant: New Jersey model programs

- SC partnership and model programs

- Support development of state PSE coalitions & TA

- Higher Ed Act changes: financial aid, models, national coordinating center

*A 10-year project at the National Down Syndrome Society funded by the Riggio family ended in 2012
Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA)

- **Federal Student Aid:** Eligibility for Pell grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Work-Study jobs.

- **Model Demonstration Programs:** Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSIDs) authorized to enable institutions of higher education (IHEs) to create or expand high-quality inclusive programs for students with ID.

- **National Coordinating Center (NCC):** Authorized to provide technical assistance, coordination between and evaluation of TPSID projects, and create recommended model standards for programs through an Accreditation Workgroup.
Definition of a Student with an Intellectual Disability

A student—

‘‘(A) with a cognitive impairment, characterized by significant limitations in—
‘‘(i) intellectual and cognitive functioning; and
‘‘(ii) adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills; and
‘‘(B) who is currently, or was formerly, eligible for a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If a student is not identified as having an ID during K-12, the regulations state how to demonstrate a student with another disability also has an intellectual disability.
Eligible program: a degree, certificate, or nondegree program that is—

- offered by an institution of higher education;
- designed to support students with ID who are seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction...in order to prepare for gainful employment;
- includes an advising and curriculum structure; and

At least 50% focus on academic components with nondisabled students in:

- Regular enrollment in credit-bearing courses, or
- Auditing or participating in courses for which the student does not receive regular academic credit, or
- Enrollment in noncredit-bearing, nondegree courses, or
- Participation in internships or work-based training in settings with nondisabled individuals
Financial Aid
(Grants & Work Study, not Loans)

- Student must meet definition of “intellectual disability” (ID)

- Student must be enrolled in approved Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP)
  → IHEs must apply to US ED for CTP approval in order for students with ID to receive financial aid

- Family must fill out FAFSA and meet financial need requirements
Other Possible Sources for Student Funding

- IDEA: Dual enrollment, IEP placement, services to parentally-placed students
- Vocational Rehabilitation: tuition assistance, assessment, job development, job coaching
- Developmental Disability agency funding
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Other sources such as Medicaid waiver, Social Security funds; organization donations, scholarships
- The ABLE Act 529A funds!
Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs) (SEC 767)

- Competitive grants to IHEs or consortiums of IHEs to create or expand high-quality, inclusive programs
- Administered by Office of Postsecondary Education in US Department of Education
- Grants awarded for 5 years
- Current appropriations - $11.8 million per year, requesting $12.3 mil for FY 2020
Report on Model Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability

Highlighting South Carolina State-wide Change

- Partnership with College Transition Connection
- I provided national expertise, grant administration, technical assistance. CTC provided local and state expertise, contacts, funding and obtained almost $1.5 million from State Center for Disability Resources (UCEDD) a partner
- Developmental Disabilities Council provided funds for Roundtable and experts
- VR agreed to pilot tuition assistance for eligible students.
- CTC: [http://collegetransitionconnection.org/](http://collegetransitionconnection.org/)
- Donald Bailey’s book: [http://amzn.to/1LXpjsD](http://amzn.to/1LXpjsD)
SC Action Steps Summary

- CTC Board raised substantial funds, obtained non-profit tax status, developed website
- Task Force reviewed N.J. model, RFP and speaker from N.J. at task force
- CTC Board visited The College of New Jersey and Mercer County Community College
- RFP sent to all IHEs and Roundtable held
- Task Force reviewed applications, visited sites, recommended funding to CTC Board (5 grants awarded)
- Project Director provided ongoing TA
- Collaboration through Task Force
- General Assembly approved use of lottery funds for scholarships - $7,000 per year
South Carolina CTC Grants

- University of South Carolina, Columbia
- Clemson University
- Coastal Carolina University
- College of Charleston
- Winthrop University (dual enrollment)
- $155,000 to each over 3 years
- Additional funds for research, attending State of the Art conference
State-wide Change in Tennessee

• Invitation-only roundtable organized by the Vanderbilt Kennedy University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and co-sponsored by Down Syndrome affiliates and other organizations. All key state agencies and 9 colleges participated with agreement to form a coalition. Coalition sponsored a visit to The College of New Jersey and Mercer in New Jersey, taking a high-ranking official of the Tennessee Department of Education.

• Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities offered a three-year grant to develop a Tennessee program. Vanderbilt University was selected and combined that funding with a gift from a private donor whose own daughter with Down Syndrome had not been able to find a program when she was in her 20s.

• Vanderbilt University was also awarded a mini-grant from Think College to continue to work to develop inclusive postsecondary education across Tennessee.

• University of Tennessee in Knoxville was later awarded five-year TPSID federal funding.
TN Inclusive Higher Education Alliance

- Programs start opening doors in Jan. 2010 on the Vanderbilt Campus
- Task Force became the TN IHE Alliance
- Work of Alliance includes:
  - Networking supports for existing universities and colleges
  - Technical assistance and support for emerging college programming for students with ID
  - Informing/collaborating with Tennessee and federal policy makers
  - Quarterly meetings
1. Lipscomb University
   IDEAL, *
   Nashville, TN
2. University of Memphis
   TigerLife
   Memphis, TN
3. University of Tennessee
   FUTURE*
   Knoxville, TN
4. Union University
   EDGE
   Jackson, TN
5. Vanderbilt University
   Next Steps*
   Nashville, TN

*Programs which are currently two-years and expanding to three and four in upcoming years
Financial Aid Opportunities:

- **STEP UP Scholarship**: $3,500/year if enrolled in PSE within 16 months of completing high school
- **Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA)**: Federal grants available for eligible CTP program participants who have demonstrated financial need
- **Program Scholarship Funds**: Awards given per semester to students who demonstrate financial need (as available)
- **Vocational Rehabilitation**: funding for Transitional Learning Services for VR clients of $4,800 for four semesters, TN VR is rising as a national leader in collaborating with making college more affordable to students
- **Vanderbilt University Faculty and Staff Dependent Tuition Assistance**: faculty and staff may also be eligible for the Dependent Tuition Assistance benefit. This benefit may also be applied to a dependent’s tuition at other Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTP) throughout the country
- **529 College Savings Plan**: Families can set up an account for their child with I/DD or utilize funds saved for another child
- **Individualized Education Account Program - TN.Gov**: New state program that could provide educational funds to help pay for postsecondary education, [https://www.tn.gov/education/section/iea](https://www.tn.gov/education/section/iea)
- **Disability Specific Scholarships**: Many organizations are now providing scholarships to students for college (Ruby’s Rainbows, The ARC, Down Syndrome Association, Autism Speaks, etc.)
TN Community Partners

- Vocational Rehabilitation – Transitional Learning Services funds
- New opportunities with state and city government:
  - Internship at Governors' Office, Dept. of Education, Dept. of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Dept. of Economic and Community Development
  - Internship at Davidson County Clerk’s Office and District Attorney’s Office
What You Can Do in Your State

- Join with others in state to form a coalition with parents, self-advocates, and disability leaders
- Involve UCEDD, DD council, VR and DD agencies, Higher Education, Special Education Director, Parent Training Centers, and others
- Identify funding sources/raise funds
- Hold a Roundtable/Invitation only conference
- Share info about TPSID grants and other funding
- Develop an RFP for model funding and award $
- Continue building relationships with state agencies, developing funding sources and partnerships and promoting systems change and policy improvements
What Can You Do Locally?

- Develop a committee of interested parents, self-advocates, professionals, organizations
- Check thinkcollege.net for existing programs
- Contact local school districts to participate
- Research quality services, national picture and possible start-up funding
- Consider how this will fit into the mission of the IHE and how IHE would benefit
- Identify contacts at IHE and find a champion
- Ask for an exploratory committee to consider a pilot
Identify Benefits to Colleges and Universities

- Tie in to IHE mission: diversity, outreach, community, teacher preparation
- Collaboration with schools of education and related fields: practicum and internships
- Student, faculty and staff opportunities
- Students with ID bring a rich diversity of experiences and interests
Reauthorization of ID Provisions in Higher Education Act

- Inclusive Higher Education Committee led advocacy efforts for changes in HEOA 2008 and appropriations since then. Co-chair on behalf of NDSC.

- NDSC now working with Congress to ensure ID provisions, with improvements, stay in HEOA in reauthorization.

- If TPSID model demos and National Coordinating Center are not included in reauthorization, the programs will end.
Keep the ID Provisions in the Higher Education Act!


- Senate HELP Committee staff now negotiating.

Appropriations: requesting a $500,000 FY 2020 appropriations increase from $11.8 mil to $12.3 million.
Key Inclusive Higher Education Committee (IHEC) Recommendations

Specific legislative language included in recommendations chart. Key recommendations include:

- Revise the definition of a “Comprehensive Transition Program” to
  - Change “gainful employment” to “competitive integrated employment”
  - change “curriculum” to “program of study”
  - require both academic and career development components.
IHEC Recommendations Continued

- Increase inclusive housing opportunities
- Strengthen requirements for meaningful credentials
- Strengthen requirements for outcome data collection
- Address problems with the use of IDEA and vocational rehabilitation funds if the Department of Education does not issue requested guidance

What’s Next & What You Can Do

- **Congressional “Ask”: Retain and improve the ID provisions in the Higher Education Act reauthorization as recommended by the Inclusive Higher Education Committee.** Appropriate $12.3 mil for FY 2020.
- Let your Members of Congress know this is important to you!
- If one of your Senators is on the HELP Committee, it is especially important you contact them. See list here: https://www.help.senate.gov/about/members
Advocate with NDSC!

- Sign up for information and action alerts by joining the NDSC email list at [https://www.ndscccenter.org/stay-up-to-date-with-ndsc-news/](https://www.ndscccenter.org/stay-up-to-date-with-ndsc-news/)
- “Like” the National Down Syndrome Congress Governmental Affairs FB page at [https://www.facebook.com/dsadvocates/](https://www.facebook.com/dsadvocates/)
- Follow NDSC on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/thendsc/](https://www.facebook.com/thendsc/) and Twitter @policyupdates
Resources


- Laura Lee goes to work at the World Bank video: https://masonlife.gmu.edu/video-life/life-video-laura


Additional Resources

- “LIFE Learning Is For Everyone: The True Story of How South Carolina Came to be a Leader in Providing Opportunities for Postsecondary Education to Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities” : Amazon

- National ABLE Resource Center
  http://www.ableresource.org

- Ruby’s Rainbow: Scholarships for Youth and Adults w Down Syndrome
  https://rubysrainbow.org

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