

If you are a student or if you know of a student with intellectual or developmental disabilities, are you wondering...

‘Why Not College?’

February 2016

So are we.

We are the Indiana Postsecondary Education Coalition, and we promote postsecondary education (college) options and experiences for students with developmental disabilities, like Down syndrome or autism spectrum disorders.

Students with intellectual disabilities want to attend college for the same reasons as their peers: to expand their knowledge, build their resumes, develop lifelong friendships, enhance their skills, increase their earning potential, and learn how to be more independent.

Many students, parents, and teachers, however, aren’t sure college is a worthwhile goal. And yet, according to a 2010 Easter Seals study, the vast majority of adults with a disability feel that their primary or secondary education was not sufficient in preparing them for gainful employment (70%) and independent living (80%). Moreover, only 27 percent of people with developmental disabilities are reportedly working in community-based jobs (National Core Indicators, 2010).

But there is good news:

- Students with intellectual and other disabilities who attend college have a 48% employment rate (Migliore, Butterworth, and Hart, 2009).
- Students with disabilities who receive a postsecondary education earn \$316 a week vs. \$195 a week for those who have no additional education (Migliore et al., 2009).

Even those students with intellectual disabilities who take some college courses but who don’t graduate from college have better employment outcomes than those students who don’t take any postsecondary classes (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003).

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‘Why Not College?’ continued

More good news:

- Students with intellectual disabilities who had postsecondary education experiences said they gained increased self-esteem, more responsibility, the ability to advocate for themselves, and greater freedom and independence (Paiewonsky, 2020).

Students with disabilities aren’t the only people who benefits from inclusive campus programs.

- College students who mentored students with intellectual disabilities on the campus at College of Charleston showed reliably higher social maturity and spiritual/moral growth, reported more meaningful relationships with others, had a stronger sense of community, wanted to have an impact on the world, reported a greater understanding of how to help others, were able to appreciate the strengths of others, and reported an increase in their own faith (College of Charleston, 2011).
- More colleges are adapting the Universal Design for Learning principles that reduce barriers to instruction and provide supports and accommodations for diverse learners (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008).

So keep an open mind, explore your options, and Think College!

For more information on the Indiana Postsecondary Education Coalition and Indiana colleges and universities offering postsecondary experiences, please visit the [ThinkCollege Indiana website](#).

Indiana University’s Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (IIDC) has been awarded a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education for model demonstration programs promoting the successful transition of students with intellectual disabilities into higher education.

For more information, contact IIDC’s Center on Community Living and Careers at CCLC@indiana.edu.