Providing New Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

An Overview of Indiana’s Partnership for Postsecondary Education and Careers Project

In October of 2010, Indiana University's Indiana Institute on Disability and Community was 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.

Four years ago, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the nationwide award of $10.9 million for 28 grants under two new federal programs that create opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to attend, and be successful, in higher education. Duncan stated, "These new programs make an important contribution toward that goal by giving students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to receive a quality postsecondary education with the supports they need to attend, complete and succeed in higher education."

Key components of IIDC's Indiana Partnership for Postsecondary Education and Careers Project include:

- partnering with Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), which has an emerging postsecondary program for persons with intellectual disabilities, and establishing at least one other program in the state;
- creating an Indiana postsecondary coalition that includes advocacy and provider organizations, families and institutions of higher education;
- recruiting additional colleges and universities; and
- providing data collection and evaluation on project achievement, social inclusion, and career outcomes.

Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) has partnered for the past seven years with the Indianapolis Public Schools to present a dual-enrollment program on the IUPUI campus program for students with intellectual disabilities. IUPUI’s S.I.T.E. program has 16 students participating during academic year 2014-15 who are completing their IEP goals through campus and community activities. Grant activities and funding have provided IUPUI the opportunity to formalize processes used with the program as well as expand to include students from secondary schools surrounding the Indianapolis metropolitan area.

Through the grant, five additional programs have been established. Four of these are for students who are completing their high school education while fully immersed on a college campus. These programs are at Franklin College (Johnson County Special Services), Huntington University (Huntington County Community Schools), Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion Community Schools), and Vincennes
University Jasper Campus (Dubois/Spencer/Perry Schools). All of these programs allow students to audit courses and provide work experience opportunities and social interaction on the campus.

A new postsecondary program, which began in the fall of the 2014 academic year on the Vincennes University campus, is accepting students with intellectual disabilities who, like their VU freshman peers, have graduated from high school. These students are working toward completion of a certificate program in areas such as Early Childhood Education, Bowling Management, or Graphic Arts. There is an option to reside on campus with this program.

The grant has received ongoing support through a statewide coalition of concerned citizens. The Postsecondary Coalition includes members from Down Syndrome Indiana, Autism Society of Indiana, Arc of Indiana, parents, advocates, community rehabilitation programs, Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation, Riley Hospital for Children, the Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University, and IUPUI.

For more information on the Indiana Partnership for Postsecondary Education Project, contact Jean Updike at jupdike@indiana.edu. For more information on the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, visit www.iidc.indiana.edu. Additional information can also be found at www.thinkcollege.net, www.thinkcollegeindiana.org, and www.site.iupui.edu.