

# **Beyond Academics: Post Secondary Education for Young Adults with Intellectual and other Developmental Disabilities**

NCCDD Grantee: University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Project Period: 2007-2010

## **Summary of Policy Implications** *[taken from Project Final Grant Report, 2010]*

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### **What impact did project activities have on advocacy for people with developmental disabilities?**

At the person level, students participating in a course of study such as the ICS certificate program are breaking the glass ceiling of “services provided”. Through their participation, they gain skills to live on their own, pursue the career of their choice, instead of being “placed”, and to assert themselves about what they want their lives to be with providers, families, friends and neighbors and colleagues—they have been educated to give “voice” to managing their own affairs.

At the university level, the ICS certificate program has been embraced as another course of study offered by UNCG! The multiple departments of the university have worked together to create a process of access, acceptance and admission. This has been a major undertaking that the ICS students, their UNCG matriculating peers, academic and administrative departments, the BA Board of Directors, staff and families have consistently advocated for and now it has come to fruition. ICS course of study students are merely UNCG students!

### **What impact did project activities have on changing the service delivery system?**

At the state and national system level, the emergence of this comprehensive PSE program and others has demonstrated that life-long learning should be accessible to everyone and accommodated through higher education. The demand for this course of study and others like it will change how adult support service systems develop over the next decade. No longer will young adults and their families, friends and circles of support be satisfied with a “care” system that does not attend to empowerment of the individual through gaining skills to be truly self-reliant.

We are already seeing the impact that the first graduates are having as they independently create their circles of support and choose those providers that will help to support them in the way that will continue to build on the advances they have made while at UNCG.

The leadership and program staff at UNCG’s PSE program have been an active part of NC’s Post Secondary Alliance (see attached overview) and recently participated in a meeting of programs in the southeast...all activities to expand choice of post secondary programming for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

### **Describe unexpected outcomes from your project activities:**

The development of Post Graduate Advancement was a need but we did not envision it being organized in this manner but rather a part of Academics. Through the experience with the students, as with all improvements that have been made to the curriculum, we learned that we needed a

focused approach and a person dedicated to “life after college” to ensure that in the transition, the graduates would not “disappear” into a service system that tends to “care-take” person with intellectual disabilities. The experience with the graduates thus far has proven that our “speculation” about that concern is founded. The education of the various players in the community is critical to the graduates getting the life for which they planned. Focused advocacy on the part of our staff for the graduates is needed for the first few months of transitioning to that life after college. Similarly, we are cognizant that our involvement needs to fade out after several months so that BA does not become a “service provider de facto”. Our role should be to support the graduate, families, circles of support and friends to “get on with their self-determined lives”. Post-graduate planning must start the date of admission with increasing emphasis in transitions during the last semester of the junior year and throughout the senior year.

The increased demand to enter this course of study, with families prepared to cover the costs through tuition and private pay for student life support plans instead of Medicaid funding, has been overwhelming. The ICS course of study could have easily admitted 25 students for Academic Year 2011-2012. Thirty applications are pending with new applications coming in weekly.

### **What impact did unexpected outcomes have on the intended purpose of grant?**

The need to collaborate with the adult service system will need to be more far-reaching than through case management alone. We now know that in order for the students and graduates to sustain what they achieve through this course of study will depend on our ability to engage the adult service system that is in transition itself at the very beginning of admission. The increased demand for this course of study indicates that inclusive opportunities are not widely available as desired.

We also know that the cost structure of state tuition does not cover the full cost of providing this experience.

While we acknowledge that auditing of college classes is a valuable experience in itself, our experience tells us that this alone will not provide the skill set the students need to manage their lives after college. Universal Design for learning (UDL) used at the college course level should be the vehicle for students getting those skills but this newly emerging concept does not yet have the impact on students with intellectual disabilities that is needed. If the college experience could now be achieved solely through auditing of classes on campus, the cost structure through tuition would not be as big a challenge. Our experience is that a combination of access to “degree track courses” and specific course through the certificate course of study will be needed until such time that UDL becomes routinely utilized and that accommodation for students with I/DD, supported by the higher education Office for Disability Services (ODS) is attended with the same emphasis that is now experienced with other disabilities.

### **Describe project/initiative sustainability planning activities.**

While the use of Medicaid funding is an important option for funding post secondary education, particularly the “learning lab” or student life portions, it is important to identify other funding streams. Accessing the course of study through tuition and student life support plans now means that prospective students do not rely solely on grant funding or Medicaid service access. While we

have been surprised by the number of families that have identified resources for college, funding college tuition and fees has still not been an option for very long and many families still need assistance in identifying these resources.

- Continued efforts are underway to search out federal, corporate and community grant opportunities.
- In addition, Friends of BA continue to look at fundraising with an eye toward development of student scholarships.
- Discussions continue around the appropriate utilization of Medicaid waiver in connection with PSE.
- Preparation of federal grant application to be approved for student financial aid continues.
- Relevant information to VR for review and consideration of tuition assistance has been submitted.