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WEBINAR

Postsecondary Educational Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Presented by **Stephanie Smith Lee and Heidi Graff**
Wednesday, October 29, 2008
3-4:30 PM ET



Stephanie Smith Lee has over thirty-five years of experience in public policy, including serving in senior Congressional staff positions, as a foundation administrator, and as a nationally recognized disability parent leader. Since her daughter, Laura, was born with Down syndrome in 1982, she has organized and led many successful bipartisan, collaborative efforts to improve special education and disability policy in Virginia and at the national level.

As the Director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the US Department of Education, from 2002 through March 2005, Ms. Lee directed the policy development, program planning, monitoring, evaluation, research and implementation of the Federal special education law. In that capacity, she focused the work of OSEP on improved transition and postsecondary opportunities for all students with disabilities, and on new opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, among other initiatives.

Currently Ms. Lee is the Senior Policy Advisor for the [National Down Syndrome Society's Policy Center](#). She provides policy analysis and advice on a wide range of education and disability issues. For the past three years, she has provided "hands on" technical assistance to parents, educators, and institutions of higher education (IHEs) on how to develop and implement high quality inclusive postsecondary programs and services for students with intellectual disabilities. Through frequent speeches at national and state conferences she has provided information on successful approaches to developing these innovative opportunities. As Project Leader of the NDSS partnership project with the College Transition Connection (CTC) and the Center for Disability Resources, the UCEDD in South Carolina, she has worked with these partners to organize a successful effort to develop and fund postsecondary projects in that state. Currently, three universities have been funded to develop model programs. As part of this systems change effort, state agencies have agreed to provide funding for the project and some funding for individual students.

Recently, at the request of Republican and Democratic staff in the U.S. House and Senate, Ms. Lee and Madeleine Will, NDSS Policy Center Director, coordinated a group of experts who provided technical expertise regarding provisions that have been included in the Higher Education Act reauthorization related to students with intellectual disabilities.



Dr. Heidi Graff obtained her doctoral degree in Education from George Mason University in May of 2007 with a major in Special Education and a minor in Instructional Technology. During her doctoral studies at George Mason University, she supported the Master's degree Immersion Team of instructional designers through the development of the KIHd System by working as a facilitator in Phase 1. In 2006-2008 she served as a project coordinator for the KIHd System, Phase II, U.S. Department of Education Steppingstones of Technology Grant (CFDA 84.327A, Steppingstones of Technology, Innovations for Students with Disabilities/H327A060031).

KIHd System grant was implemented in a metropolitan school servicing students on the autism Spectrum. Currently, she is a Co-PI on the U.S. Department of Education Steppingstones of Technology grant (CFDA 84.327A, Steppingstones of Technology, Innovations for Students with Disabilities/H327A080013) aimed to develop the software tool to create adapted and interactive video clips.

Since June 2007, Dr. Graff is the director of the Mason Learning into Future Environments (LIFE) program designed to provide students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with transition/postsecondary educational experiences in a supportive university environment. Under her tutelage the Mason Life program has grown to full capacity with 24 students who are from surrounding areas such as Maryland, District of Columbia, and Loudoun as well as Prince William counties. Dr. Graff initiated a four-year academic curriculum, the Mason LIFE internship program to deepen community ties with local employers, and has expanded the residential dorm program to include weekends. With a Lab school model, GMU graduate students in special education teach the Mason LIFE students while gaining practical experience and meeting their internship or licensure requirements. Dr. Graff now recruits GMU students from other disciplines to volunteer in the program. She places a heavy emphasis on conducting research to promote the continued investigation of learning pedagogy for transition students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Additionally, the Mason LIFE students are active in Special Olympics and Best Buddies with Dr. Graff acting as Faculty Advisor.

Dr. Graff has extensive experience in single-subject research methodology including teaching classes on the master's and doctoral levels. Dr. Graff is one of the leading instructors in the Autism Certificate program at GMU and teaches the Characteristics of Autism class. Prior to her work at GMU, for almost ten years, Dr. Graff administered and co-partnered a private practice to assist families and children with disabilities. Besides being a parent of the teen with autism, she has professional experience in advocating for students with disabilities. Her goals include expanding the research line in the area of secondary and post-secondary education for student with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as setting national standards for transition programs.

www.VaCollegeQuest.org is a project of



A not-for-profit organization dedicated to services and projects that work to improve the lives of children, youth and adults with disabilities.

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Higher Education Opportunity Act – new opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities

Stephanie Smith Lee
Senior Policy Advisor
National Policy Center
National Down Syndrome Society



Factors leading students and families to ask for postsecondary opportunities

- Result of success of IDEA, technology, health care, living with families, K-12 inclusion
- Desire to learn and socialize with age appropriate peers, make friends, have a life!
- Desire to continue education, improve employment and independent living outcomes
- Few other positive options



What do we Know?

- Positive outcomes and results for students with intellectual disabilities
- Programs “popping up” independently in states across the country – over 130 on www.thinkcollege.net
- NDSS systems change efforts in NJ, SC and other states (partnering with UCEDDs and DD Councils)
- Structure and composition vary and include individualized services and support
- Some operated by school districts, others by IHEs
- “Located” in various places within colleges & universities



Barriers Addressed by HEOA

- Funding is a big issue—for students, parents and IHEs (no 529's for students with ID)
- Previously, in order to receive financial aid or qualify for work study, students needed to have a regular high school diploma, GED, or pass an ability to benefit test and be enrolled in classes leading to accredited certificate or degree
- Need for model demonstration programs to identify and replicate best practice: how to start a high-quality inclusive program and provide services
- Need for technical assistance and dissemination
- Lack of model accreditation standards



Summary of HEOA ID Provisions

- Allows students with ID enrolled in programs for such students to access work-study jobs, Pell grants and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants.
- Authorizes inclusive model comprehensive transition and post-secondary programs
- Authorizes new coordinating center



Definition of a Student with an Intellectual Disability

A student—
“(A) with mental retardation or 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.

(Conference Report: includes a student eligible for FAPE not enrolled in public school who can otherwise demonstrate they meet the eligibility criteria)



Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities definition

A degree, certificate, or nondegree program that is—
(A) offered by an institution of higher education;
(B) designed to support students with intellectual disabilities who are seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction at an institution of higher education in order to prepare for gainful employment;
(C) includes an advising and curriculum structure;



Comprehensive program definition continued: program requirements

(D) requires students with intellectual disabilities to participate on not less than a half-time basis, as determined by the institution, with such participation focusing on academic components and occurring through one or more of the following activities:

- (i) Regular enrollment in credit-bearing courses with nondisabled students offered by the institution.
- (ii) Auditing or participating in courses with nondisabled students offered by the institution for which the student does not receive regular academic credit.
- (iii) Enrollment in noncredit-bearing, nondegree courses with nondisabled students.
- (iv) Participation in internships or work-based training in settings with nondisabled individuals.




Eligibility for Work-Study Jobs, Pell and SEOP Grants (SEC. 485)

- Must meet definition of student with intellectual disability
 - Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a comprehensive...program
 - Be maintaining satisfactory progress in the program as determined by the IHE, in accordance with standards set by IHE
- (Secretary shall promulgate regulations)



Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (SEC 767)

- Competitive grants to IHEs or consortiums of IHEs to create or expand high-quality, inclusive programs
- Administered by DOE office that administers other postsecondary programs
- Grants awarded for 5 years




Model demo award basis

The Secretary shall—

“(1) provide for an equitable geographic distribution of such grants;

“(2) provide grant funds for model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities that will serve areas that are underserved by programs of this type; and

“(3) give preference to applications submitted under subsection (b) that agree to incorporate into the model comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities carried out under the grant one or more of the following elements:




Model demo awards: preference given for:

(A) The formation of a partnership with any relevant agency serving students with intellectual disabilities, such as a vocational rehabilitation agency.

(B) In the case of an institution of higher education that provides institutionally owned or operated housing for students attending the institution, the integration of students with intellectual disabilities into the housing offered to nondisabled students.

(C) The involvement of students attending the institution of higher education who are studying special education, general education, vocational rehabilitation, assistive technology, or related fields in the model program.



Model Demo Grants: Use of Funds

- (1) serves students with intellectual disabilities;
- (2) provides individual supports and services for the academic and social inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in academic courses, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of the institution of higher education's regular postsecondary program;
- (3) with respect to the students with intellectual disabilities participating in the model program, provides a focus on—
 - (A) academic enrichment;
 - (B) socialization;
 - (C) independent living skills, including self-advocacy skills; and
 - (D) integrated work experiences and career skills that lead to gainful employment;



Model Demo Grants: Use of Funds (Cont.)

- (4) incorporates person-centered planning in the development of the course of study for each student with an intellectual disability participating in the model program;
- (5) participates with the coordinating center established under section 777(b) in the evaluation of the model program;
- (6) partners with one or more local educational agencies to support students with intellectual disabilities participating in the model program who are still eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including the use of funds available under part B of such Act to support the participation of such students in the model program;



Model Demo Grants: Use of Funds (Cont.)

- (7) plans for the sustainability of the model program after the end of the grant period; and
 - (8) creates and offers a meaningful credential for students with intellectual disabilities upon the completion of the model program.
- (c) **MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**—An institution of higher education (or consortium) that receives a grant under this section shall provide matching funds toward the cost of the model comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities carried out under the grant. Such matching funds may be provided in cash or in-kind, and shall be in an amount of not less than 25 percent of the amount of such costs.



Model Demo Grants: Misc

- Secretary report within 5 years on activities of model demos and programs and guidance and recommendations for replication
- Construction rule: no reduction or expansion of IDEA or other laws
- “Such Sums” authorization

(Conference report: “The Conferees recognize that under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, nothing prohibits the use of Part B funds to support students with disabilities in transition programs at institutions of higher education, if the Individualized Education Program Team determines that such a program is the appropriate placement for the student.”)



Coordinating Center for Model Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (Part D, Subpart 4)

- Competitive award for 5 year cooperative agreement: OPE administers
- TA regarding development, evaluation, and continuous improvement
- Develop evaluation protocol with quantitative and qualitative methodologies to measure student outcomes and program strengths in: academic enrichment, socialization, independent living, and competitive or supported employment

(Conference report: center to work with existing programs and model demos)



Coordinating Center Responsibilities:

- Assist model demos in awarding a meaningful credential (taking into account unique state factors)
- Develop recommendations for necessary program components (such as: academic, vocational, social, and independent living skills; student progress evaluation, program administration and evaluation; student eligibility and participation equivalency)
- Analyze possible funding streams



Coordinating Center Responsibilities (cont)

- Develop model MOUs for IHEs and State and local agencies
- Regular communication, outreach and dissemination among programs and to families and prospective students
- Host an annual meeting of model demo projects



Coordinating Center Responsibilities: Model Accreditation Standards

- Convene workgroup to develop and recommend model criteria, standards, and components of programs for model accreditation standards
- Workgroup shall include: higher education and special education experts; disability organization representing students with ID; representatives from National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity and a regional or national accreditation agency
- Report within 5 years of establishing coordinating center

(Note: such sums authorization for Center)





About NDSS

The National Down Syndrome Society is a nonprofit organization representing the more than 400,000 Americans who have this genetic condition. NDSS is committed to being the national leader in supporting and enhancing the quality of life, and realizing the potential of all people with Down syndrome. We demonstrate this commitment through our education, research and advocacy initiatives that benefit people with Down syndrome and their families.

To learn more about NDSS, and our transition and postsecondary education initiative, visit <http://www.ndss.org>.




5 Basic Tenets

- Students
- Families
- Instructors/Resident Assistants
- Employment Experiences
- Research



Students

- Continuing their growth especially in the core areas:
 - Reading (Lit 1)
 - Writing (Featured Writing)
 - Math (Applied Math)
- Other curriculum includes:
 - Independent Living (Entertainment)
 - Theatre Arts
 - Current Events
 - Fitness (Swim)
 - Blackboard Basics (Technology class).



Four Year Curriculum

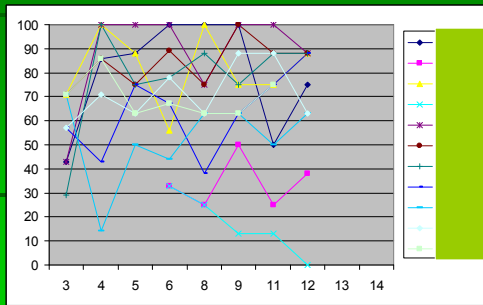
Fall Classes 2008

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9-10	Literature II Science Fiction	Money Math	Literature II Science Fiction	Money Math	Technology Web Design
10:10-11:30	Banking** Yearbook I	Featured Writing Expository	<Community Access>	Featured Writing Expository	<Theatre Arts I>
LUNCH PLAN					
12:30-1:30	<Current Events>	Interpersonal Dynamics Conflict Resolution	<Independent Living No Cook Meals>	Inters Acti Junior/Sen ior	Introducin <Fitness & Aquatic Training>
1:40-2:45	Human Growth I Self-Determination	University Orientation Independent Study & Portfolio Development		Introduc Ment ing Internat ional	
Wrap-Up					

Assessment

- Weekly probe assessment in Reading and Math
- Work samples in Writing
- Anchor projects
- Mason LIFE work Portfolios
- Transcripts

Weekly Probes



Grades

	Minimal (1)	Moderate (3)	Exceptional (5)	Total
Participation	Student rarely tried to work with the class.	Student interacted with the class and peers.	Student always interacted with the class and helped peers when needed.	
Independent Work	Student rarely stayed on task.	Student mostly stayed on task.	Student always stayed on task.	
Follows Instruction	Student rarely followed directions.	Student followed most of the directions.	Student always followed directions.	
Personal Development	Student rarely demonstrated the correct model speech.	Student demonstrated the correct model speech.	Student always demonstrated the correct model speech.	

Grading:
 A=10-20pts
 B=5-10pts C=0-5pts

Community Access



Independent Living



Instructors

- Compose master and doctoral student enrolled in special education program.
 - This provides them with an opportunity to work within the field.
 - Field work students an hour week mentorship
 - Practicum students two days a week undergraduate minor in special education

Families

- Support having an independent student having a university experience.
 - For example, our students have an hour and a half break between classes. They go down to our student union or bistro and we expect them to navigate the campus and get back to class on time.
 - For some that means the residence program. Students have the opportunity to stay in the resident halls for implement independent living skills also taught in the curriculum.
 - Curriculum based, not IEP driven

Artreach Productions

- **Feature length film about post secondary special education**
- Builds upon the previous work
 - 20 minute film in 2005 titled *The Mason LIFE Program*.



Residential Program



- Promotes continued learning
- Guided and independent accommodations
 - Meal planning
 - Grocery shopping
 - Cooking/Eating out
 - Laundry
 - Time management

Resident Assistants

- Facilitate independent living
- Leisure activities
 - Lead 2 activities outside dorm
 - Grocery store
 - Fitness
 - Lead 2 activities inside dorm
 - Cleaning
 - Book club

GMU Students

- Hands on training for practicums and conducting research studies.
- GMU students majoring in human service studies such as:
 - Education
 - Health Fitness and Therapeutic Recreation
 - Psychology
 - Assistive Technology
 - Social Work

Best Buddies



- Best Buddies matches people with intellectual disabilities with College Students and creates one to one friendships.
- Builds friends within our university environment.



Special Olympics

- 3 teams that represent George Mason University
- Soccer, Basketball, and Track & Field



Employment Experiences

- Freshman/Sophomores
 - Opportunities to hone skill such as making a resume and interviewing.
- Juniors/Seniors
 - Campus experiences range
 - Receptionist
 - Child Development Center
 - TTAC data entry
 - TTAC library paige.
 - Fitness Center

Employment Postal Services



Employment Ushering



Employment Child Development Center



Employment Data Entry



Employment Library Paige



Internship Program

- Graduates from Mason LIFE Program
 - Jobs outside of the University
 - World Bank
 - FYE
 - Kennedy Center
 - Food Services
 - INOVA Fair Oaks Hospital

Research

- Goal of the program is to provide an evidence based interventions that work for our population.
- All of our research to date is single subject design or case studies.
 - Visual Memory
 - Adapted Videos
 - Reading Intervention
 - Eye Tracking

Mason LIFE Student Characteristics

- Students begin program between 18-23 years of age.
- Disabilities range from student being on the Autism spectrum to students with mild/moderate cognitive challenges to students with physical disabilities.
- Students range in ability. The average reading level is about 4th/5th grade.
- Want to have a university experience that included independent transitions between classes and non-academic activities.
- Behavior appropriate to university learning and ability/desire to be in a social but academically supported setting.

Timeline

- Information session on November 20 from 7-8pm on the Fairfax Campus
- Applications must be completed by January 1st
- Interviews in February
- Trial day in March
- Offers extended by April 15th
- Non-refundable deposits are due by May 1st to hold the spot
- Have about a 23% acceptance rate. About 30 applicants a year. Will interview about 15. Of the 15, 10 will be asked for a trial day. Of the 10, 6-8 will be accepted into the program for next fall.

Contacts

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