Evaluating Think College-VT: Challenges and Opportunities

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What is Think College?

- Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)
- USDOE, Office of Post Secondary Education
- October 2010: 27 grants awarded nationally ($10.5 million)
- 23 states represented
- National Coordinating Center: U Mass, Boston
TRANSITION AND POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (TPSID) GRANTEES

TPSID Grantees

TPSID Coordinating Center Grantee
“As a person with a disability I always dreamed about going to college or a big University. Think College gave me the opportunity to fulfill my dreams at UVM.”
Think College-VT Highlights

- Certificate Program
- Mentor Support
- Financial Guidance
- Sub-award to Johnson State College
- Partnerships: Self-Advocates, Vocational Rehabilitation, Local Education & Mental Health Agencies
Fully inclusive Higher Education for students with cognitive disabilities

- Academic
- Social/Recreational
- Independent Living & Self-Advocacy Skills
- Integrated Work Experience & Career Skills
Academics

- Course credits earned
- Tuition based
- Course selection based on interests & potential career choices
- Written Expression, Child Development, US History, Farm to Table, Digital Media, etc.
- Faculty Consultation (Universal Design for Learning)

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Social/Recreational

- UVM Student Center
  - Pool, Foosball
  - Lounge
  - Dining

- Fitness Center
  - Swimming Pool
  - Tennis
  - Racquetball
  - Zumba/Yoga

- Burlington 101
Independent Living & Self-Advocacy

- No Residential Option
- Individualized & Experiential
- Budgeting
- Health & Nutrition
- Communication
- Organization
- Dress to Impress
- Transportation
Integrated Work & Career Skills

- **Exploration**
  - Interest Inventories
  - Job Shadowing
  - Job Fairs

- **Planning**
  - Resume Writing
  - Linked-In Account
  - Portfolio

- **Experience**
  - Internship
  - Resume Building
  - Employability Skills

- **Connections**
  - DVR Case/Counselor
  - Community Rehab. Program
  - Career-Focused Job
Technology & Social Media

- iPads
- Drop-Box (shared folders)
- Cell phones
- Schedules/Calendars
- Facebook, blogs, Twitter
Evaluating the Program

Assessment Cycle
Logic Model

- Inputs ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes

- Articulated Performance Outcomes: Short, Intermediate, Long Term

- Alignment with Program (GPRA) Measures, TPSID Standards, Quality Indicators, Benchmarks
Evaluation Plan

- 5 Objectives with Performance Measures (Process & Outcome)
- Evaluation Questions
- Data Sources
- Methods/Analysis
- Party Responsible
- Timeline
- Program/Competitive Priority Alignment
Parent & Support Staff Survey Results

- High level of satisfaction with...
  - application process
  - coursework
  - support to students

- Actionable Recommendations
  - additional information on financial support
  - more natural social interaction
  - mini-tutorials for academic support
  - improved communication among team members
“The entire experience for [us] has been incredible...It’s a terrific program that now needs university support and support from secondary schools to feed the program with great students.”
UVM Peer Mentors
Mentor Survey Results

- 100% agreement that the Program...
  - provides adequate training and supervision
  - is well-organized and of high quality

- Actionable Recommendations
  - offer residential options
  - allow for free time on campus/increased social opportunities
  - have a substitute mentor pool
  - improved communication among team members
“This is the best job that I’ve ever had...

A program that allows people with intellectual disabilities to pursue higher education feels so right!

Being a mentor has made me think about my personal and professional life goals in a way that past academic and job experiences haven’t.

Our students are AMAZING!”
Student Interviews

All students reported high satisfaction with “being in college.”

Positive comments about...
• mentor & faculty support
• meeting new friends
• increasing skills

Actionable Recommendations
• increase on campus activities
• residential option
• adjust course load/work
Faculty Interviews

Benefits & Challenges to...

- Faculty
- TC student
- Mentors
- Other students in the class

Overall impressions, additional supports and recommendations
Actionable Recommendations

- Increase marketing
- Ensure faculty understand the concept of “inclusion”
- Improve match of student with class
- Improve logistics re: student placement & grading
- Clarify roles & communication
- Continue to provide support re: UDL principles
Evaluation Impact to Date

- Increased check-ins with faculty; ongoing communication; clarification of roles
- Monitoring number of students with ID in 1 class
- Documenting how to earn the Certificate
- Use of technology & social media has increased social interactions (e.g., participation in clubs)
More free time available for students to increase independence

Mentors are learning when to “back off”

Cloud-based individual student folders to increase communication/accessibility

Increased opportunities for career exploration
Evaluation Opportunities

- Chance to talk with end-users
- Management Team is “evaluation savvy”
- Evaluation data is USED for Program improvement...yahoo!
- Ability to triangulate the data
- Ability to work in home state
- Recommendations ARE actionable!
Evaluation Challenges

- Need evaluator with expertise/comfort with the population
- Comfort level of the TC students with the evaluator
- Scheduling challenges with all interviewees
- Limited budget for on-site observation; more in-depth methodologies
- Multi-site program = tailoring instruments
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Think College National Site

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