

Postsecondary Pathways for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



COURTESY UT-KNOXVILLE

This guide was produced by Project Support & Include at Vanderbilt University—one of seven projects across the state funded by the Tennessee Department of Education to provide training and technical assistance to schools as they address the academic, social, and behavioral needs of students. This brief was authored by Lauren Magill, Steven Greiner, and Erik W. Carter. 11/2013

STEVEN'S STORY



A graduate of Next Steps at Vanderbilt University, Steven Greiner reflects on his college experience and offers advice to others considering postsecondary education.

Who are you? I went to an elementary and secondary school in the Nashville area, worked for a few years, and then went to college at Vanderbilt University through the Next Steps program. I graduated from the program

and now work at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. I am also still very active with the Next Steps program, Best Buddies Citizens, the state Best Buddies junior advisory board, and my local National Stuttering Association (NSA). In my spare time, I am a real big fisherman and boater. I have had a very blessed life, with two amazing parents who help me grow. I think there's more to me than meets the eye. I consider myself an interesting, nice, and funny guy who is easy to talk to. I have been working hard all of my life trying to achieve greatness. I'll put 100% into whatever I set my mind to.

How would you summarize your college experience? I think everyone should go to college. I had an amazing time in the Next Steps program. I think it was an amazing experience that allowed me to follow my dreams and go to college. I've made amazing new college friends and enjoyed getting to hang out with them at Vanderbilt's eateries. I also loved the experience of taking college

courses. I would like to thank my mom and dad for giving me the chance to go to college. I've enjoyed it very much.

How did you hear about Next Steps? I heard about it through my friend who was in the very first class of the program. We had been friends for several years, so I knew she was in it. It looked like she was having so much fun, so I knew that I wanted to apply.

Who inspired you to go to college? My biggest influence was my parents. They both went to college; my mom went to nursing school in Cincinnati, Ohio, and my father went to the University of Miami and Florida Atlantic. I think I just wanted to do what every high school student dreams—go to college, take higher education classes, and get a job.

What did you like about the Next Steps program? I loved developing friendships and meeting different people. Also, Vanderbilt's campus is incredible. Next Steps was an amazing college

For more information about the technical assistance project funded to support schools in your region, please see page 6 of this guide.



experience. I am thankful the program allowed me to take real college courses and meet new friends. I think young adults with disabilities should experience the adventure of postsecondary education. I am a big advocate for Vanderbilt's Best Buddies, an international student organization where a college student gets paired with an adult in the community that has a disability. It is empowering to be a part of this organization. A lot of my friends and fellow board members did Best Buddies in their high school or heard of it in the community. It is an amazing opportunity, so I recommend that students look for this organization at their college or university.

What are some of the courses you took in Next Steps?

1. I took oceanography, where we learned about how the ocean formed over thousands of years and about the living things in the ocean. We also talked about how big the ocean is and how the plates underneath the ocean

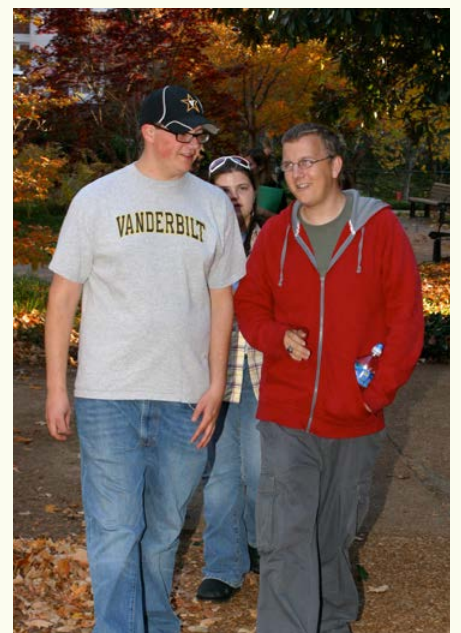
- move. We watched some cool DVDs about the ocean, too.
- 2. I took a film course, where I learned how to analyze movies from different types of scenes and camera shots.
- 3. I took a course about transition from high school to college.
- 4. I took a rhetoric class about famous speeches from the 1620s to the 1860s. It was fascinating, and we read some interesting texts and speeches.

I had semester-long internships at the Sarratt Art Center, Tennessee Technology Center, Vanderbilt Dayani Center for Health & Wellness, and Vanderbilt Music Library. I also learned about employment opportunities.

What steps should students take when thinking about college?

I would first do my homework on programs at universities in your area. I would also look on **www.thinkcollege.net** if you would like to look at programs in other states. The key is to research and do your homework on the different

programs out there, to figure out which programs fit you and your needs. There's a new movement for postsecondary programs for young adults with disabilities. We now have a voice in the postsecondary world. I wish this movement would have come about years ago, but I am thankful that young adults with disabilities are now able to experience college. Don't let anyone say you can't go to college! If you put your head and heart into it, anything is possible. So go out there and grab your future and don't let anyone take it. Just go out into this new revolution of postsecondary programs and find your spot. You can do whatever you want, including college or trade school, so don't let anyone tell you that you can't achieve your goals. Just go out there and grab life with all you've got and don't stop until you get whatever your dream is, whether that is attending college or something else. You can do whatever your heart desires.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE

With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and the Higher Education Opportunity Act, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have unprecedented opportunities to acquire postsecondary education. Programs around the country are beginning to include people with IDD in college classes and campuses. Postsecondary education is now a viable and growing option for people with IDD as they seek to acquire the skills and experiences necessary for successful employment.¹

BENEFITS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Postsecondary education enables students with IDD to transition into the labor force in an age-appropriate setting, where they can learn social, academic, and employment skills.² While in college, students with IDD assume many new responsibilities, including choosing courses, attending class, completing assignments, navigating the campus, and accessing public transportation. Social activities (e.g., peer mentors, lunch buddies) provide students the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom and explore their interests. Postsecondary education presents an opportunity for students with IDD to learn in an environment with fewer rules than the high school setting, which may be beneficial as they learn technical and interpersonal skills helpful in community and employment settings.³

Nationally, several options exist for students with IDD who wish to access postsecondary education.

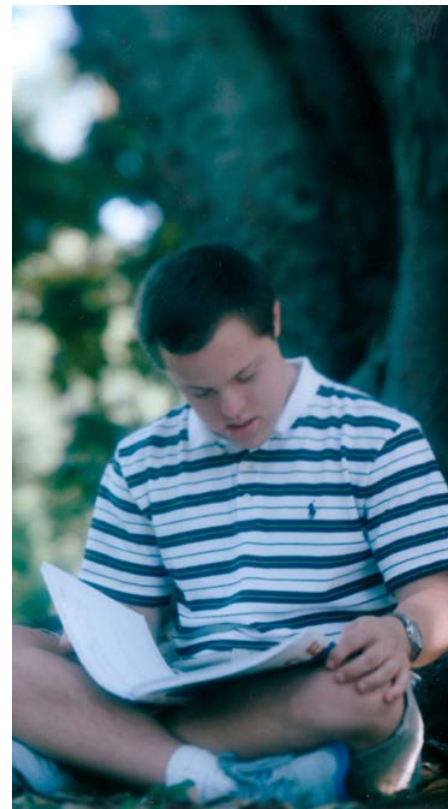
A listing of over 200 college programs for students with IDD can be found online at www.thinkcollege.net. While programs may differ in length, focus, and services, they each focus on promoting transition-related skills and activities (e.g., completing internships, managing schedules, participating in community activities).⁴

TIPS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Secondary school teachers can start discussions regarding postsecondary opportunities early on and revisit them throughout the transition planning process.

Talk about the future. Work with students to set long-term goals they see as valuable. Begin with short-term goals by developing plans to achieve their long-term goals and tracking progress. Help students increase their self-awareness as they explore their strengths, limitations, and abilities.⁵ Share your own college experiences, including the academic (e.g., classes, managing your own schedule) and social (e.g., clubs, events, meeting new people) experiences you enjoyed.

Prepare for postsecondary opportunities. Spend time teaching students self-determination skills, which will be valuable in community and postsecondary experiences. Self-determination skills allow students to better understand their disability and how it affects their learning. In addition, these skills promote self-advocacy and student knowledge of available supports and services they may access when seeking postsecondary educational opportunities.⁶



Encourage early work experience. In addition to developing students' self-knowledge, career aspirations, and employment skills, employment during high school has been found to be a predictor of post-school success.⁷ Help students connect to paid jobs and/or internships that help shape their post-school goals.

Raise family expectations. Parents can have a powerful influence on their child's desire for postsecondary education and employment. Encourage parents to help their child explore possible postsecondary options and prepare for those possibilities by acquiring needed skills and experiences in the school and community.⁸ Address planning for postsecondary education as part of the transition planning process.

PAYING FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

In addition to reaching out to local businesses and community agencies for scholarship opportunities, federal financial aid options (e.g., grants, work-study programs) exist for students with IDD to attend college. To access these funds, students must have an intellectual disability as defined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act, can no longer be enrolled in or receive services from their high school,

must demonstrate financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and must be seeking funds to attend an approved Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP).⁹

In June 2013, the Tennessee STEP UP Scholarship legislation passed, making Tennessee students with IDD eligible for the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship. The STEP UP Scholarship will award \$4,000 per year for up to two years, and is

available to Tennessee residents who have received a diploma or certificate from a Tennessee high school within 16 months of enrolling in qualified postsecondary programs. Eligible certificate-based programs currently include FUTURE Program at University of Tennessee-Knoxville, IDEAL at Lipscomb University, Next Steps at Vanderbilt University, and TigerLIFE at University of Memphis.¹⁰

CURRENT PROGRAMS IN TENNESSEE

While many colleges have opportunities for students with IDD, Tennessee has several programs specifically designed to support the enrollment of these young adults.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE
Tennessee College of Applied Technology offers comprehensive technical and vocational training at 27 locations in Tennessee. There are training programs in many areas, including tool and dye mechanics, aviation mechanics, and welding.	tinyurl.com/tncat
FUTURE Program at University of Tennessee is a 2-year, certificate-based, nonresidential Comprehensive Transition Program for people ages 18-29 with IDD and/or autism. Students are provided person-centered plans to meet their career aspirations through academic and vocational education.	futureut.utk.edu
IDEAL at Lipscomb University (Igniting the Dream of Education and Access at Lipscomb) will provide young adults with IDD the support and encouragement needed to experience college by offering academic and skill-building courses, internships and externships, peer mentoring, and much more. The first cohort of students will enroll in January 2014.	www.lipscomb.edu/education/IDEAL-Program
Next Steps at Vanderbilt University is a 2-year, certificate-based, nonresidential Comprehensive Transition Program for people with IDD. The program accepts applicants between ages 18 to 26, and focuses on education, social, and vocational training within an inclusive environment.	vu.edu/nextsteps
TigerLIFE at University of Memphis is a 2-year, certificate-based program offering person-centered planning to meet the unique needs and skills of people over age 18 with IDD. Utilizing both academic and vocational learning experiences, the program's goal is to prepare young adults for independence and employment.	blogs.memphis.edu/tigerlife

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS:

1. Have you had conversations with students about their goals?
2. Do you think any of your students are interested in postsecondary education?
3. Why do you think your students would enjoy these postsecondary programs?
4. Do you think your students would be greater impacted at any particular postsecondary programs?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Think College!**
www.thinkcollege.net
- **Tennessee Alliance for Postsecondary Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities**
kc.vanderbilt.edu/site/services/disabilityservices/page.aspx?id=833
- **TennesseeWorks**
www.tennesseeworks.org
- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**
www.fafsa.ed.gov
- **Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP)**
studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities
- **Tennessee Lottery Scholarship**
www.tn.gov/collegepays
- **Self-Determination Guide**
vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/ci3t/resources
- **Think College! Postsecondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities; A book by Meg Grigal, Ph.D., & Debra Hart, M.S.**
www.brookespublishing.com
- **Tennessee STEP UP Scholarship**
www.tn.gov/collegepays/mon_college/stepup.shtml

ENDNOTES

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⁵Cabeza, B., Magill, L., Jenkins, A., Carter, E. W., Greiner, S., Bell, L., & Lane, K. L. (2013). *Promoting self-determination among students with disabilities: A guide for Tennessee educators*. Nashville, TN: Project Support and Include, Vanderbilt University. Available at <http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/ci3t/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Self-DeterminationBrief-vs2.pdf>.

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⁹Boyle, M. (2012). Federal financial aid for students with intellectual disabilities. *Think College Insight Brief*, 16. Boston, MA: Institute for Community Inclusion.

¹⁰Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. (2013, June 6). Next steps students advocate for lottery scholarships. *Vanderbilt Kennedy Center*. Retrieved from <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/site/newsandevents/news/page.aspx?id=3990>.

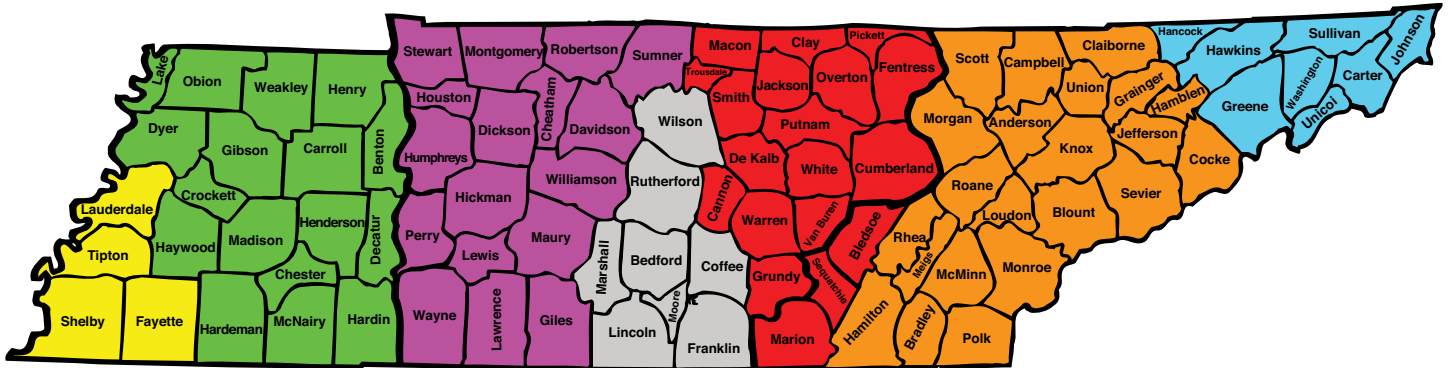


VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER

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CI3T TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS BY REGION: 2012-2015

The Tennessee Department of Education has provided funding to seven projects to provide training and technical assistance to schools as they address the academic, social, and behavioral needs of students within comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered (CI3T) models of prevention. To locate the project assigned to your region, see below.



UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS (RISE):

Dr. Renee Murley
Email: reneelee@memphis.edu
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UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS, LAMBUTH CAMPUS:

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