Expanding College Access through Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Session Objectives

- Gain an understanding of the landscape of inclusive postsecondary education across Pennsylvania

- Discuss the development of the RISE program at Westmoreland County Community College

- Learn practical strategies for supporting college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE)

College programs for students with intellectual disabilities

- Focus on academics, socialization, employment, and independent living

- 350+ IPSE programs across the country

- Large variety across programs

  - 2 year, 4 year, and trade schools

  - Public and private universities

  - Level of inclusion

  - Residential vs non residential

Pennsylvania Inclusive Higher Education Consortium

PA Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs

17 Active IPSE programs in PA as of 9/2025

Why should students with IDD go to college?

Educational Disparities

69.7% of students without IDD go on to post-secondary education

28.7% of students with IDD go on to post-secondary education

Employment Disparities

65.7% of people without IDD are working

18.7% of people with IDD are working

Social Disparities

People without IDD have an average of **125** social connections

People with IDD have an average of **3.1** social connections

(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Harrison et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2011; Hill & Dunbar, 2003; Verdonschot et al., 2009)

RISE Program Mission

To provide <u>supported</u> pathways for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to <u>earn a college credential</u> and seamlessly transition into <u>sustainable employment</u> and independent living.

RISE

An inclusive postsecondary education opportunity for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities

- 2 year program
- Integrated Studies Certificate
- Fully inclusive
- Employment-focused

Academics

- 3 courses per semester

  - Technical training course (for credit)

  - Career readiness course (for credit)

  - General education course (for credit or for audit)

- No requirements for placement assessment

- No English or Math courses required

- Courses are primarily on-campus, not online

- All courses are fully inclusive

Academics - Career Pathways

- Students select a career pathway at the beginning of the program:
  - Baking and Pastry
  - Culinary Arts
  - Early Childhood Education
  - Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
  - Office Technology
  - Plumbing
  - Security Professional
  - Social Work

Other Program Areas

Social

- Students are required to participate in at least four campus events per semester and are encouraged to join a student club

Career

- Students build job skills and technical knowledge throughout their courses, time on campus, and work based learning opportunities

- Career Connections Center

Independent Living

- Time management, money management, communication, self-advocacy, problem solving, self-determination

THE informal FORMAL
2025

Campus Supports

- Tutoring

- Academic advising

- Library services

- Disability services

- Counselors

- Career connections

- Student life

RISE Supports

- Structured study lounge
  - Minimum of 4 hours per week
- Academic coaching
  - 1 hour per week
- Peer mentors
- Requirement to meet with professors throughout the semester
- Midterm feedback opportunities

Fall 2025 Recap

- First semester with students

- 8 students enrolled

- 10 unique courses taken

- 58 credits taken

- 100% of courses passed

- 860+ hours completed in the RISE lounge

- 27+ campus events attended

- 2 students passed the ServSafe Manager Exam

K-12 Educators and Counselors

- Talk to students with IDD about college

- Schedule visits to IPSE programs

- Add postsecondary education as an IEP transition goal

- Provide students with opportunities to gain independence and self-determination

  - Decision-making

  - Time management

  - Self-advocacy

Post-Secondary Educators

- Consider starting an IPSE program

- Incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into your classroom

- Focus on increasing accessibility across campus

- Promote collaboration amongst campus departments

Resources

- ThinkCollege.net
  - National database of IPSE programs, resources for students, families, and educators
- pihec.com
  - Information about PA IPSE programs
- dreampartnership.org
  - Provides scholarship for PA IPSE students
- cast.org
  - Information on UDL

College is possible for students with IDD!

Contact

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