

# THINK COLLEGE

Wisconsin State Plan



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The Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin Madison is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about human development, developmental disabilities and neurodegenerative diseases. It is one of nine national centers that encompass both a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) designated by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, and an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center designated by the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development.

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# **THINK COLLEGE**

## **Wisconsin State Plan**

**Increasing opportunities for inclusive postsecondary  
education for people with intellectual disabilities**



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**2012**

# Acknowledgements

The following individuals participated in or provided input to inform the discussions that led to the creation of this report. Meetings were held in La Crosse, Waukesha and Madison. Input was also solicited using the available social media.

## Think College Wisconsin Steering Committee

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# THINK COLLEGE Wisconsin State Plan

## Contents

Background and Purpose .....	4–6
Process to Develop the State Plan .....	7–8
Think College Wisconsin State Plan .....	9–15
Appendix A: Summary of Meetings and Discussions.....	16–17
Appendix B: Notes from Input Meetings .....	18–19
Endnotes .....	20

**Definition:** Based on the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, PL110-315, a student with an intellectual disability is a student:

- A) with 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

## Background and Purpose

The purpose of the *Think College Wisconsin State Plan* is to support the efforts of a statewide group of Wisconsin colleges, universities, state agencies, and non-profit organizations including organizations comprised of individuals with intellectual disabilities<sup>1</sup> and their family members, to increase opportunities for inclusive postsecondary education for people with intellectual disabilities within one or more of the 15 public colleges and universities, 19 private colleges and universities, 16 two-year institutions, and 16 technical colleges in the state. Increased opportunity specifically means supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities to access typical college courses with peers without disabilities and to participate in other streams of campus life. The Think College Wisconsin State Plan represents an understanding of and commitment to the fact that learning is a lifelong process and that all

Wisconsin learners, regardless of their level of intellectual functioning should be provided with the opportunity and the support to assist them to be engaged in the exciting process of lifelong learning.

*Increased opportunity specifically means supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities to access typical college courses with peers without disabilities and to participate in other streams of campus life.*

Those who are unfamiliar with the strides taken over the past 40 years to support individuals with disabilities to participate and succeed in all aspects of community life may be surprised to learn about this plan to promote access to postsecondary education options. Postsecondary education programs (PSE) for those with intellectual disabilities have developed over the past decade as a logical next step for work that was begun in the 1970's federal legislation mandating that all children have the right to a free and appropriate public education to age 21, regardless of the nature or severity of their disability. Now more than ever we know that individuals with intellectual disabilities do not stop learning at age 3, 13, 18 or 21. And because of that, as they become adults they should be provided with access to adult learning opportunities just like their peers without disabilities. They should have access to the adult learning environments of our colleges and universities. They should be encouraged to access knowledge on topics of interest to them. They should be supported to continue to develop their academic

*Postsecondary programs for those with intellectual disabilities have developed over the past decade as a logical next step from work that was begun in the 1970's.*

skills and understand what it means to register for courses, take continuing education, live on a college campus, and otherwise participate in all that campus life has to offer.

As of 2010, the Think College program at the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts-Boston has documented that over 250 postsecondary programs currently exist across the nation. Of the programs that responded to a national survey,<sup>2</sup> four-year colleges or universities accounted for half of the programs, followed by two-year colleges at 40%, and trade/technical schools 10%. Within Wisconsin, the Cutting-Edge Program at Edgewood College in Madison has been recognized as one of the few inclusive opportunities within the State, and one that can serve as a model for others to replicate. Interest is rapidly growing, though, resulting in a number of "hotspots" of activity throughout the state in which groups are forming to consider the development of PSE programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

## How is a postsecondary education experience defined?

The definition of what constitutes a postsecondary experience for individuals with an intellectual disability has evolved over the years as the various programs have developed and evolved. The definition frequently used is included in the Higher Education Opportunity Act (PL 110-315) that was enacted on August 14, 2008.<sup>3</sup> According to Sec 760 of that law, the term comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities means a degree, certificate, or non-degree 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; and
- (D) requires students with intellectual disabilities to participate in 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 students without disabilities.
  - (ii) Auditing or otherwise participating in courses with students without disabilities for which the student does not receive regular academic credit.
  - (iii) Enrollment in non-credit-bearing, non-degree courses with students without disabilities.
  - (iv) Participating in internships or work-based training in settings with individuals without disabilities.

## Being Realistic about Postsecondary Options

Not all students, regardless of their abilities, want to attend college or plan to attend college. But all students should be provided with the opportunity and support to consider their postsecondary options and to assess their motivation and readiness to work towards their goals. These goals, developed by the student with their family and support team, should then serve as the basis for developing the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Postsecondary education should not be dismissed as an unrealistic option for a student solely because the student has an intellectual disability. Even in instances when a student with an intellectual disability is not planning to pursue postsecondary education, college classes and related campus activity such as working on a college campus could be considered as a possible component within the transition program activities for students age 18-21 who have completed and/or exhausted the coursework options available to them at their high school. Students who may not be characterized as interested in and motivated to attend college can still benefit from the extended learning opportunities available at the college level.

*Postsecondary education should not be dismissed as an unrealistic option for a student solely because the student has an intellectual disability.*



## **The Cutting-Edge Program It's All About Inclusion**

The Cutting-Edge program at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin is one of a growing number of programs nationally that are revolutionizing postsecondary education for adult learners with intellectual disabilities. Edgewood College is the first four-year college in Wisconsin to offer inclusion in college for adult learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program started as a pilot project in 2007 as part of a doctoral research study and has gradually expanded to 20 students for 2012. Using best practices, the program is designed to be small and intimate. At Edgewood College, the Cutting-Edge students are integrated into all aspects of student life. Individual College Plans are designed for each student where they can take regular college courses either for credit or audit.

In order to create genuine inclusive experiences where students without disabilities are engaged with the Cutting-Edge students on a personal level, the program uses undergraduate and graduate students who serve as peer mentors. Each semester, there are 60-70 college students who help the Cutting-Edge students fit into college. The peer mentors are instrumental in facilitating the college experience. One peer mentor writes, "The Cutting-Edge helps create that college atmosphere and making sure at the same time that the student is confident in what they are doing and having fun doing it. I am just glad that I can help and be a part of such a great program here at Edgewood College."

As the program continues to grow, the outcomes for the Cutting-Edge students after college need to be acknowledged. In 2010, the first Cutting-Edge student was awarded his Bachelor's Degree in History. In 2011, a Cutting-Edge student was invited to Washington DC to testify in front of a congressional committee. Students have participated on athletic teams, theater productions, and civic action projects. The social aspects of the college experience continue to have profound effects on students who can comment in their own words about compassion, community, social justice, and partnership.

For more information, contact Dedra Hafner, PhD., Director  
Cutting Edge Program  
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# Process to Develop the State Plan

The decision to develop the *Think College Wisconsin State Plan* was made by a group of individuals from various agencies in the state when they became aware that the Association of University Centers on Disabilities<sup>4</sup> in cooperation with the Think College Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston were offering small grants to support State Plan development efforts. With the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the Waisman Center as the lead, a planning grant application was submitted. The application was approved and a Steering Committee was organized to oversee plan development. The planning process began in the spring of 2011 and concluded with the publication of this final report. The process to develop the State Plan was implemented within the following phases.

**Input Phase of Planning:** During the Input Phase a variety of meetings were held with key stakeholders that included individuals with disabilities and their family members, public school staff and administration, college/university personnel, and state and local agency personnel that serve and support those with disabilities. The objective of these meetings was to engage with as many people as possible to learn more about:

- (a) the current level of interest and activity regarding postsecondary education opportunities,
- (b) steps that are being taken to prepare individuals for postsecondary experiences,
- (c) emerging and existing opportunities in the state and how to expand and improve them, and
- (d) creative funding ideas to further explore to support program development and student enrollment.

A variety of meeting formats were utilized including regional summits, college open houses, exhibits at statewide conferences, and other outreach efforts to specific individuals. Summaries of these meetings are included in the appendices.

## ***Individuals from the following agencies and programs formed the initial group of sponsors to develop the Think College Wisconsin State Plan***

<i>Cardinal Stritch University, Special Education Department</i>	<i>Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Statewide Transition Initiative</i>
<i>Edgewood College, Cutting-Edge Program</i>	<i>Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation</i>
<i>Family Voices of Wisconsin</i>	<i>Wisconsin AHEAD</i>
<i>Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities</i>	<i>Wisconsin FACETS</i>
<i>People First Wisconsin</i>	<i>Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers</i>
<i>UW-Milwaukee, Special Education Department</i>	<i>Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative</i>
<i>UW-Stout, Vocational Rehabilitation Institute</i>	<i>Wisconsin Technical College System</i>
<i>UW-Madison, Waisman Center</i>	<i>Western Technical College, Allied Health Department</i>
<i>Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities</i>	

**Input Summation Phase of Planning:** Input from the various meetings was summarized and further discussed by the Think College Wisconsin Steering Committee.

One of the key points that was consistently made during the series of conversations that were held throughout the state is that while there is no one route to postsecondary success for an individual with an intellectual disability, there are many factors that contribute to success. Therefore, as plan development proceeded, it was important to consider how each of those factors could be identified and addressed in the plan:

- A highly motivated individual who is prepared during the high school years to enter into a postsecondary education experience.
- A supportive and engaged family and/or network or circle of support.
- Postsecondary institutions that are interested, staffed, trained and supported to provide an educational experience to individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- A person centered academic plan that is based on the interests of the student, the opportunities of the campus, and has the necessary supports in place to increase the likelihood of success.
- Funding sources to support the costs of implementing the academic plan.
- Statewide leadership to nurture and support individuals, academic institutions, agencies and organizations to become involved in the Think College Wisconsin initiative.

Other key points that came out of the conversations were:

- Given that this is a new initiative that is about new possibilities, proceed with the planning so that it proceeds with an authentic and exciting sense of urgency and expectation for success.
- Foster movement out of organizational and individual comfort zones to be open to new ways of thinking.
- Resist getting bogged down or frustrated on what can't work. Promote this as a discussion about possibilities and new frameworks for success.
- Look to, rely upon and further assist the “Champions” who are out there who will help move things forward. A champion is anyone who is interested, motivated and committed to doing something, however big or small, that it might be perceived by them, or others. It's all important.

**Plan Development Phase:** The Think College Wisconsin State Plan that follows was developed under the guidance of the Think College Wisconsin Steering Committee and other individuals who were invited to participate in a one day planning meeting. That meeting was conducted by adapting the PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) process,<sup>5</sup> a creative planning tool that starts in the future and works backwards to an outcome of first steps that are possible and positive. One result of the PATH process is the creation of the diagram on pages 10-11 that serves as a record of ideas as they emerged from the facilitated discussion. As shown, the right portion of the diagram summarizes elements of the ideal future (North Star) toward which the plan is intended to work. The center portion summarizes priority areas of possibility. The left portion offers more specific information related to next steps, specific opportunities to draw upon, and individuals to more directly engage in the process. Given that this planning is completed in one day, the process is designed to be followed up by more thorough strategic planning processes as efforts continue. In that way the PATH process is not an end in itself, but rather a tool that is used to help the individuals who are involved to restate their dreams and goals, and begin to develop and advance on their path to achieving those dreams and goals.

# THINK COLLEGE Wisconsin State Plan

**Plan Summary:** While a number of steps must be taken over the next several years to make postsecondary education opportunities more available to individuals with intellectual disabilities in the state, the following plan outlines the three major goal areas that the contributors to the plan believe are most important.

- The first goal speaks to the need to assure that a leadership structure is in place that provides the vision and encouragement for the effort, and the recognition and nurturing of the dedicated individual and organizational “champions” who are working to make that vision a reality.
- The second goal focuses on raising expectations and the important work of teaching a child. More specifically this goal addresses ways our K-12 system and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams can work to assure that the IEP for each child and adolescent with an intellectual disability is designed and implemented so that it promotes optimal academic and social development and prepares these young adults to pursue meaningful postsecondary options.
- The third goal works within the realm of postsecondary education institutions and efforts to support their work to develop and sustain opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities on their campuses.

## THINK COLLEGE Wisconsin State Plan Goals







# think COLLEGE!

## WISCONSIN PATH



7.28.2011  
facilitated by  
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Rebecca Krantz  
Elizabeth Watson

Jill Gonzalez  
Liz Kennedy  
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Dan Bier  
Abby Tessman  
Debra Hafner

overwhelming...  
near process...  
challenging  
Sad about  
unfairness...  
wants to participate

Exhausted  
but charged  
SAD  
AT DISPARITY  
HOPEFUL

### NOW~ OPPORTUNITIES

- CUTTING EDGE
- WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT
- NICOLET-TECH SCHOOL IN RHINELANDER
- GREEN BAY-Transition Program
- VITERBO? - La Crosse
- CARDINAL STITCH? - Milwaukee
- MADISON COLLEGE - used to have 15 certificate programs
- HISTORY OF UW-STOUT PROGRAM
- CONCORDIA? - Mequon
- FOLK SCHOOL in Viroqua

Scott Ritter  
Fil Clissa  
Lauren Hall  
Meredith Dressler  
Molly Cooney  
Patricia Roth

### ENROLL

- Cardinal Stitch - Sr. Gabriel Kowalski
- Nicolet - Libby Burmaster
- College Presidents
- Sp. Ed. Directors in School Districts
- Debra Hafner
- DD Board
- DRW
- Waisman Center
- DNR - Charlene Dwyer
- Kathleen Enders
- Meredith Dressler
- DPI - Stephanie Petska
- Wendy Dawson
- SELF-ADVOCATES
- KEY ACTORS AT EACH SCHOOL/AREA

### WORK TOGETHER

- online ways to work together from Kate Norby
- Learning circles through DD Board

### ROLES RELATIONSHIPS

- Add people to: continue steering committee ~ use Skype, etc.
- DPI - WSTI Communities of Practice
- DD Board - Leadership
- 5yr state plan
- Youth: employment
- grant - project of national significance

### NEXT STEPS

- ~ one week to 6 months ~
- Re-draw PATH: distribute ~ MARY
- Distribute contact info to all participants ~ MARY
- Solicit comments, input, and incorporate ~ MOLLY
- DD Board representative join steering committee ~ FIL
- Evaluate PATH
- finish: finalize plan
- Summarize our understanding ~ Dan: Team: Steering Committee

Website  
Directory of existing programs or efforts: Key players, other info, best practices

- updating inventory of best practices
- Preparing presentations for: WSTI - Feb. 2013  
RFW - April 2013  
SDS - Nov. 2013  
Superintendent's Leadership Conference - Nov. 2013  
"CREATING A BUZZ" ~ Visim - best practices - lessons learned... JULY 2012

- ~ CHAMPIONS ~ platform for discussion
- Self-Assessment tool for institution's interest/ readiness ~ mission ~ is available, being promoted
- Linking with national programs

• A clear plan: structure to sustain this work, set \$ and buy-in

IMPRESSED!  
We're just the tip of the iceberg...  
VERY HAPPY - GOOD!

GOOD! HEAVENLY!  
OVERWHELMED  
LOTS TO THINK ABOUT

Kids with disabilities should have the same opportunities  
CHALLENGED - look forward to success  
hopeful - Excited

IN AWE OF COMPLEXITY  
Very complex - but Hopeful - committed  
IT'S THE NEXT STEP  
LOTS TO THINK ABOUT!

Just takes time  
PONDERING - PROCESSING  
SIMMERING...  
NICE GROUP

A RANGE OF ALL PSE OPTIONS  
A year - Tech Coll  
targeted program  
TO ALL KINDS of race, class

Positi

\*We are about existing prog

\*We are of PSE 4 year college ~ Patricia R Wisconsin S suggested: M Linda Mai

A RANGE OF ALL PSE OPTIONS  
A year - Tech Coll  
targeted program  
TO ALL KINDS of race, class



# July 2011

Learning  
Working with  
Emerging  
\* rest of PATH  
steps speak to this goal  
~ Identify them  
~ Support them: challenge them  
~ Learn from them

\* IEP is being used as a tool / the driver for PSE options for students with intellectual disabilities  
→ students are leading their IEPs  
→ guidance counsellors involved  
Health: IEP as a model  
Work Group interested in making a plan for this goal:  
Hay Derezinski, Jill Gonzalez, Clissa, Katelyn Rekoske, Susan Beaver ~ suggested member: Andy Dawson, who wasn't there

Exploring the possibility opportunities at a public college, and a technical  
Work group:  
both, Thine College  
steering group ~  
any Kampa and in the Jean

AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE STATE!  
FAMILIES  
ss, Sender...

EVERYONE HAS VALUE  
WE'RE ALL TOGETHER = SOCIAL JUSTICE  
= ACCOMMODATIONS



ANY: ALL NEEDED!  
LEARNING HOW TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY  
ALL OF COLLEGE LIFE AVAILABLE/ACCESSIBLE

Professors know how to teach EVERYONE!

MENTORS for FACULTY

STUDENT ASSESSMENT  
LEARNING OUTCOMES - STRENGTH-BASED

EVERYONE sees it as an option!

Teachers  
Guidance Counsellors  
Transition Coordinator  
ETC!

BELIEF IN CAPACITY for STUDENTS W/ID  
"they're getting smarter"  
K-12 EDUCATION CHANGING!

STUDENTS SUCCEEDING!!!  
SELF-DETERMINATION  
Listening for this - setting out of the way!

TRANSITION  
Embraces PSE as an option  
close coordination between transition support college programs

Plenty o' MONEY!

"Bridled Funding" STARTING & EASILY!

PEERS / other college students  
change in how they run their business, as employers!

INTEGRATED starts in High School!

separation of programs

LASTING FRIENDSHIPS

"Soul Sisters"

Peer Support

Let peer mentors take the lead!

THIS WILL MAKE A LOT OF ALL THIS POSSIBLE!

DOORS ARE OPEN

EVERYONE GETS IT!

SAFETY

A universal concern...

CAREERS

including benefits!

WORKS for: BENEFITS EVERYONE

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

CHOICE from DAY 1!

"NEW NORMAL!"

EVERYONE IS "HAVES"

TEARING DOWN THE WALLS!

We won't need a plan - it's what's happening!

BUILDING NEW CONNECTIONS  
NEW WAYS

PLAYERS ARE ALL AT THE TABLE

Agencies, Organizations  
Relationships with Employers, Employment Agencies

FAMILIES prepared for both opportunities: risks... as well as students...

TRANSPORTATION - to college - setting around -

HOUSING - ACCESSIBLE UNIVERSAL DESIGN

HARVARD inclusive program!



## **Goal 1: Assure leadership is in place to promote development of postsecondary opportunities.**

**Rationale:** If any plan is going to be successful, it is necessary to have a group of key visionary stakeholders identified, motivated and supported to provide the leadership to implement the plan.

### **Action Steps:**

- A. Contact specific groups to determine their level of interest in assuming a lead to advance postsecondary opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the state and for implementation of the Think College Wisconsin State Plan.
  - A1: Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities
  - A2: Wisconsin Community of Practice on Transition
    - Wisconsin Youth First Practice Group
    - Postsecondary Education Practice Group
  - A3: University Center for Excellence in DD at the Waisman Center
  - A4: Wisconsin Association on Higher Education and Disability - WI AHEAD
  - A5: Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative - WSPEI
    - Parents in Partnership (PIP)
    - Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment (YiPPE)
- B. Continually monitor possible funding opportunities to support development of postsecondary education opportunities. Facilitate the development of an application from Wisconsin if the U.S. Department of Education funds another cycle of Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID).
- C. Develop, maintain and broadly disseminate a listing of individuals, academic institutions, agencies and organizations that are working to make postsecondary opportunities available to individuals with intellectual disabilities, and recognize them for their good work as a model for others to replicate.

## **Goal 2: Make best use of K-12 experience to prepare students for postsecondary education. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed with a team, including the student with a disability and their family, and implemented in such a way that it increases academic and postsecondary expectations for all stakeholders and advances the understanding that college is a viable and realistic post high school option for individuals with intellectual disabilities.**

**Rationale:** College has only recently become a possible and realistic option for youth with intellectual disabilities and many people are still unaware of this possibility. Therefore, many students, families, public school staff and adult agency providers are not considering, discussing or including college as a post high school goal in IEPs or transition plans. The realization that college is an option can raise expectations of students, families and education staff for a more inclusive and meaningful school experience that better prepares students for postsecondary education and work. Wisconsin is working towards 100% compliance on Part B Indicator 13,<sup>6</sup> which states that all youth with an IEP, regardless of severity of disability, must have a measurable postsecondary goal that covers (1) education or training, (2) employment, and, (3) as needed, independent living. These heightened expectations, along with Indicator 13, will raise the bar from kindergarten through twelfth grade regarding what children and youth are capable of doing and learning.

*... heightened expectations, along with Indicator 13,  
will raise the bar from kindergarten through twelfth grade  
regarding what children and youth are capable of doing and learning.*

**Action Steps:**

- A. Identify the champions at the local school and district level, including individuals with disabilities, parents and school staff, who recognize that postsecondary education can be an option and that steps should be taken to prepare their students for such opportunities. Use a variety of methods to acknowledge and support their efforts, learn from their strategies and promote their methods across the state. Collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on which schools are best meeting the Indicator 13 compliance measures. Learn from those schools best practices that could be replicated statewide.
- B. Collaborate with organizations and agencies, such as the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), that regularly provide training and resources to disseminate information on how to provide more substantial experiences in the K-12 school system for students with intellectual disabilities that prepare them for postsecondary opportunities, such as postsecondary education. This may include information for teachers on how to meaningfully involve students in their IEPs; training for families on how to further advocate for increased social and academic engagement of their children in the K-12 grade years; leadership and self-advocacy training for students with disabilities, and resources on how to prepare students for these opportunities academically and socially and how to foster self-determination skills.
- C. Identify tools and processes, some of which are already mandated or widely used, that can be utilized to further engage students with intellectual disabilities academically and socially during the K-12 years, better preparing them for college. Include these tools and processes in the inventory on the Think College Wisconsin website. Examples of such tools and processes include the following:
  - IEPs and transition plans are used to drive higher expectations, like increased inclusion in academic classes, for all involved parties.
  - Person-centered-planning assists students to identify their dreams and goals which in turn clarifies the skills and experiences needed now to move the student towards those dreams and goals.
  - Peer support arrangements are used in public schools and college settings to support individuals with disabilities to access the course curriculum and become more socially integrated.
  - A full range of class and activity options are available that have students with and without disabilities engaging with one another throughout the day. This is essential as research shows that students who are included in general education classes more frequently also have increased opportunities to engage in planning for attendance at postsecondary education.<sup>7</sup>
  - Guidance counselors at the high school level routinely participate in the educational planning for students with intellectual disabilities who are interested in college so that those students are counseled and supported to secure the credits needed to go on to a postsecondary program.



**Goal 3: Nurture development of postsecondary opportunities. The number of Wisconsin based postsecondary education programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities increases at technical colleges and public/private 2 and 4-year colleges and universities.**

**Rationale:** Currently there are very few postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities available in the Wisconsin. But the interest and demand for such programs is growing. Pockets of people around the state have expressed interest in developing programs and have asked for technical assistance and resources on how to proceed. More information and experience is needed about the development of programs at 2-year and 4-year institutions. By strategically creating pilot programs at different types of institutions, the breadth and depth of knowledge regarding how to develop and sustain such programs will emerge.

**Action Steps:**

- A. Identify existing and emerging programs throughout the state. Contact the program directors/coordinators and other key players to learn about their efforts, lessons learned and support needs.
- B. Support and acknowledge existing programs and emerging initiatives throughout the state. Learn from these programs and efforts, and begin exploring the possibility of developing pilot programs at a 2-year university, 4-year university and technical college.
- C. Offer “how to” trainings for those interested in starting a program in their area. Consider using the World Café<sup>8</sup> community conversation approach to launch conversations with and increase engagement of key players and other interested community members.
- D. Create and maintain a Wisconsin Think College website to include the following:
  - The Wisconsin Think College State Plan.
  - A directory of existing programs and emerging programs with contact information.
  - An inventory of best practices regarding self-determination, social integration supports, college class supports and vocational planning.
  - A self-assessment tool for colleges and communities to use to assess their interest, readiness and needs for a program.
  - A listserv for interested individuals to join for information and resource sharing.
  - Stories of youth with intellectual disabilities who have successfully attended an institution of higher education.
  - Tips geared toward youth, parents and teachers on preparing for college and information on how college is different from high school.
  - Financial aid options.
- E. Identify receptive 2-year, 4-year, and technical colleges open to the possibility of a pilot program. Find other key players and champions in those locations who are interested in developing a program.
- F. In cooperation with the Think College staff at the Institute for Community Inclusion in Boston, continually monitor and make more readily available information on what is happening throughout the nation. This should include the latest information on program evaluations and evolving program standards.

## National and Community Service as a Path to College

Paying for college is a challenge for most individuals and their families, making it imperative to find ways to offset the costs. The reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act in 2008 made financial aid, such as Pell grants and work study, available to students with intellectual disabilities. However, these options are not yet available at many institutions. Other avenues, such as National and Community Service including AmeriCorps and Vista, should also be explored because such service has emerged as an excellent way to pay for some of the costs of college. With targeted efforts within the Wisconsin National and Community Service Board,<sup>9</sup> it is becoming a more feasible option for individuals with intellectual disabilities. As a National and Community Service member, people not only gain valuable employment experience, contribute to their community and explore a new field of work to clarify future career and postsecondary education goals, but they also earn a Segal Education Award upon completion of service. This award can be used to pay for educational expenses, such as tuition, fees and books at a qualified higher education institution, including some vocational programs. In 2011, a full-time member earned \$5500 and a part-time member earned \$2,750. Individuals can serve up to four terms of service and earn up to two full-time education awards for a total of \$11,000.



*Think CollegeWisconsin Website:*  
[www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/thinkcollege/](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/thinkcollege/)

### Talking from experience....

*Claire Bible is young woman with Down Syndrome who recently completed the Cutting Edge Program at Edgewood College and is currently enrolled as an MCH LEND student at the Waisman Center, UW-Madison. As we were completing this report, we asked Claire to share her thoughts on college.*

**What advice do you have for individuals with disabilities, family members and schools as they consider what they can do to prepare students for college?**

Claire: Expect college to happen, and start that right away by making sure that plans to go to college are included in the IEP. The IEP should be self-directed by age 12, and the kid needs to run the show. The school and the parents need to give the kid the trust to make choices.

**What advice do you have for colleges as they consider developing such a program?**

Claire: A revolution is going on for disability rights, so join in. Don't just settle for the programs you have right now. Create new opportunities. Some of this takes money so do the fundraising. Include mentorships to help the student – peer mentors. Ask the student what their passions are and help their dream come true. Don't give up on this work.

**How do you view yourself as you look back on your experience?**

Claire: People with disabilities should not just accept what they have. They should be able to follow their dream. I've gone to college but I don't want to view myself as a special case. I don't want to be the exception to the rule about going to college. I want to change the rule. Who made the rule, and who plays by that rulebook?

## Appendix A:

### Summary of Meetings and Discussions that were held to solicit input on issues to consider when developing a Think College Wisconsin State Plan

To create a relevant state plan for increasing postsecondary educational opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, it was essential to gain the input of stakeholders around the state. Five stakeholder groups were identified: individuals with intellectual disabilities; families of individuals with intellectual disabilities; public school staff and administration; college/university personnel; and adult agency personnel. By soliciting information from these stakeholders, the project learned about emerging and existing opportunities in the state, steps that could be taken to expand and improve these opportunities and creative funding ideas to support both students and program development. To gain information and ideas from stakeholders, the project coordinated, in partnership with other organizations, two regional summits; participated in two college open houses and two statewide conferences; and made numerous outreach efforts to specific individuals interested and knowledgeable about aspects of this effort.

The first regional summit was held on May 12, 2011 in La Crosse, Wisconsin. This meeting was coordinated with two Transition Advisory Council members in the area--a high school special education teacher and a disability support specialist at a local technical college. Transition Advisory Councils, part of the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative, exist regionally across the state and seek to increase collaboration and communication between the various agencies that support students transitioning from high school to adulthood. There were thirty-two participants at the summit, including individuals representing all stakeholder groups. The meeting began with a brief PowerPoint presentation explaining the Think College initiative and mini-planning grants, an overview of what's happening nationwide and locally in terms of interest and existing programs and a brief introduction to the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Following the presentation four students spoke about their experiences in college and/or their interest in going to college. One student was in the Cutting Edge program at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin. The other three students attend a local high school's transition program. Meeting attendees participated in small group discussions using the World Café model.<sup>10</sup> Positively framed conversations generated creative ideas, possible solutions, additional questions to be explored and energy about the effort. Participants also had the opportunity to meet and converse with a number of people, voicing and connecting their ideas to those of others, hopefully increasing the likelihood of further collaboration between the parties in the future. During these discussions, besides hoping to further engage individuals in this effort, participants gained unique perspectives and expertise about the following questions:

- What are we already doing well in terms of postsecondary educational opportunities and supports for people with disabilities?
- What can we do to further increase the quality and availability of postsecondary educational opportunities and supports?
- What should we begin doing in the next three months?

At each table, about four to six individuals discussed each question for twenty minutes. A "table host" took notes and kept the conversations on topic and positively framed. At the end of the rounds of conversation, a large group "harvest" occurred where any participant could share an especially striking idea or consideration they had heard. The meeting then concluded. After the summit the table host and harvest notes were compiled and coded for themes.

The second summit was held on June 16th at Carroll College in Waukesha as part of a daylong event with the Community of Practice on Transition. The morning session included presentations by disability service providers from local private and technical colleges and a university. The Think College summit was held in the afternoon and included sixty participants and followed a similar format to the first summit. Two representatives from Think College at Boston presented an overview of the national scene, possible funding stream ideas, and data about the benefits of postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The summit included a student panel and World Café discussions with participants being asked the same three questions listed previously.

The project also attended two open houses at Wisconsin colleges to inform others about the state plan and to gain perspectives of students and families. Cutting-Edge, a program for students with intellectual disabilities, at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, held an open house for prospective students and families. The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater also hosted an open house for its prospective students with disabilities and their families. During the resource fair at both events, prospective and current students and their families were surveyed regarding why they want to attend college, barriers that prevent access and ideas for making college a more realistic option. The top three reasons students selected regarding why they want to attend college include making friends, continuing to learn through college courses and preparing for a job. The biggest barriers to going to college are that people don't have high enough expectations for youth with developmental disabilities, there is little information about existing college opportunities and there are few opportunities currently available. To make college a more realistic option, there needs to be more postsecondary programs, more information about colleges available to students earlier in high school and more collaboration between schools, colleges, families and agencies.

The project participated in two statewide conferences: Wisconsin-AHEAD Spring Conference in Menomonie, and the State-wide Institute on Best Practices in Inclusive Education in Wausau. At the AHEAD conference group discussion was facilitated among disability service providers, and at the institute an abbreviated version of the regional summits was held for the fourteen participants.

A number of other conversations occurred to learn more about level of interest, program development and funding, and adult agency collaboration. Steering Committee members met with two Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) employees--the director of Bureau of Consumer Services and a transition specialist--to clarify the role DVR can play to support postsecondary education goals. An exciting outcome of the meeting included DVR's interest in educating newly hired counselors during their initial training to recognize college as a possible step towards employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

During a meeting with the director of the UW-Stout's Transition Partnership School—a 5 year cooperative program of the School District of the Menomonie Area and the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute that concluded in 2010—the project gleaned the importance of establishing strong buy-in and commitment from college administration to ensure sustainability and longevity of programs. Staff of that program are currently working on a manual for others to reference when establishing similar transition based programs. This manual will include goals and objectives of the program, funding streams used, logistics and evolution of the program over its lifespan.<sup>11</sup>

## **Appendix B:**

### **Compiled Notes from Discussions and Input Meetings**

After each informational gathering session, notes were compiled and themes emerged. The themes have been organized into three categories based on the questions asked during the summit conversations. The project sought to identify what our state is currently doing to support individuals, what needs to happen long-term to expand and improve college opportunities and next steps to begin working toward greater inclusion in college.

1. In terms of what people and organizations are already doing well to provide postsecondary educational opportunities and supports for people with disabilities, people shared that:

- Mindset shift is happening: There is increased awareness that college is an option, students see themselves as college bound, and there are increased choices about post-high school life.
- PSE institutions have increased accessibility and supports available for people with some disabilities; Disability services centers exist at most colleges; individuals with high incidence disabilities and physical disabilities are attending college more readily than in the past; more colleges allow auditing of courses; there has been a broadened use of technology, enabling more people to access courses and curriculum.
- Informational and Learning groups exist such as the Wisconsin Statewide Initiative, Community of Practice on Transition, and Transition Advisory Councils.
- Information is more readily available about accessing college such as the Opening Doors series and resource and transition fairs.
- Increased collaboration exists between adult service agencies, schools, and families; Examples include inter-agency agreements, more collaboration between adult service agencies and schools, and increased connections between community colleges and public schools.
- Increased data collection: Indicators 13 and 14, part of Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction's State Performance Plan, measure transition results by monitoring transition goals and post school outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Funding--There are more funding options to help students afford college, such as scholarships for students with disabilities and AmeriCorps.
- Improved inclusive practices and transition programs at the high school level.

2. To further the quality and availability of postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the following needs to occur:

- Increase supports available such as more transportation options, peer mentoring programs, etc.
- Change mindsets, expectations, and messages regarding what is possible.
- Increase blended funding options and joint agreements between agencies.
- Improve and increase training for school, adult agency, and disability resource center (college level) staff regarding how to prepare and support students with intellectual disabilities for college.
- Educate and provide outreach to families, students, high school staff, and postsecondary education staff regarding college options available.
- Increase communication between all stakeholder groups.

- Expand programs by exploring 2 year colleges and considering more certificate programs.
- Create alternative admission criteria to enter colleges.
- Prepare students for postsecondary education and experiences academically and through increased self-determination skills.
- Create better transition programs for 18-21 year old students.

3. To begin working towards the goal of increasing opportunities, next steps include:

- Identify what programs currently exist. Learn how these programs started and ways they measure outcomes. Use this information to build on what is working.
- Identify and support colleges and communities starting a program or showing interest in pursuing these programs.
- Assist students with needs, wants, and supports before and during college. Help students be self-advocates and discuss college as an option during IEP meetings from early age.
- Continue conversations and collaborations with and between more stakeholder groups, bringing in school district and higher education institution administrators.
- Create action groups about postsecondary education and find “champions” within stakeholder groups.
- Build awareness by educating and reaching out to all stakeholder groups with information about programs, possibilities, benefits for all parties, and logistics.
- Advocate for policy change.
- Identify new ways to assess student learning, growth, and success. This relates to alternative admission criteria, alternative assessment options to demonstrate knowledge of course content, and definitions of success held by our culture.
- Survey students and families to identify level of interest in postsecondary education and what types of programs are in demand.
- Survey colleges to identify level of interest and commitment. This should include college administrators.

*The top three reasons students selected regarding why they want to attend college include:*

- *Making friends.*
- *Continuing to learn through college courses.*
- *Preparing for a job.*

*The biggest barriers to going to college are that:*

- *People don't have high enough expectations for youth with developmental disabilities.*
- *There is little information about existing college opportunities.*
- *There are few opportunities currently available.*



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> According to the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the term intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills and originates before the age of 18.

<sup>2</sup> Hart, D., Grigal, M. & Weir, C (2010). Think College: A Snapshot of Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Across the United States. Think College Fast Facts, Issue No. 2. Boston, MA: Institute for Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Dept of Education (2008). Higher Education Opportunity Act (P.L. 110-315). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is a membership organization that is based in Silver Springs, Maryland that supports and promotes a national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs. Network members consist of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD), 39 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Programs funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), and 19 Intellectual and Developmental Disability Research Centers (IDDRC), most of which are funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Development (NICHD).

<sup>5</sup> Pearpoint, J, O'Brien, J, Forest, M, Path: Planning Possible Positive Futures, Inclusion Press, Ontario, CA.

<sup>6</sup> The Federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has identified 20 indicators to guide State Education Agencies in their implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and in how they report their progress and performance back to OSEP. This allows OSEP to report concrete data back to Congress and to monitor and supervise State implementation in specific areas.

<sup>7</sup> Carter, E. W., Trainor, A. A., Cakiroglu, O., Swedeen, B., & Owens, L. A. (2010). Availability of and access to career development activities for transition-age youth with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 33(1), 13-24. The following article also includes research-based evidence of the link between access to the general education curriculum and better outcomes in post-secondary education and employment.

Test, D.W., Mazzoti V.L., Mustian, A.L., Fowler, C.H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving post school outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32 (3), 160-181.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, J. & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Café: Shaping our Futures Through Conversations that Matter*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

<sup>9</sup> Serve Wisconsin is the Wisconsin National and Community Service Board that supports service primarily by granting AmeriCorps funds through the Corporation for National and Community Service to organizations that involve citizens in service activities that meet human, educational, environmental, public safety, and homeland security needs. Website, <http://www.servewisconsin.wi.gov/>

<sup>10</sup> The World Café is a process for engaging people in meaningful conversations that draws on the following principles: Set the Context, Create Hospitable Space, Explore Questions that Matter, Encourage Everyone's Contribution, Connect Diverse Perspectives, Listen Together for Patterns and Insights and Share Collective Discoveries. For more information contact The World Café Community Foundation at <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

<sup>11</sup> For more information contact Al Noll, email: [NollA@uwstout.edu](mailto:NollA@uwstout.edu)





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