



**Think Higher.  
Think College.**

# **A Resource Guide for Inclusive Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disability**



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**ThinkCollege**

**INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK**

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION, UMASS BOSTON

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**This guide contains links to additional resources and is best viewed on a device with an internet connection. To find this guide online, scan the QR code or visit [www.thinkhighered.net](http://www.thinkhighered.net)**



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## FOR MORE THAN A DECADE

Think College has been working to create and support opportunities for students with intellectual disability to go to college. We want students with intellectual disability to have the same access to college as other students. A college education leads to good jobs, strong social connections, and an independent adult life. And while many students with intellectual disability have begun to access college, there are many more who could attend college if they were told it was possible and offered the chance.

On the following pages, you'll find everything you need to know about inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) in an easy-to-read format, with helpful tips and information. This resource guide references numerous web pages and resources from the [Think College website](#), so you will find links or codes to scan throughout the guide.



## Let's Start With the Basics: What Is Inclusive Postsecondary Education?

Inclusive postsecondary education, or IPSE, is college for students with intellectual disability. It is attending college with other peers with or without disabilities. Student attending IPSE programs enroll in classes with peers with and without disability. Student have access to internships, social clubs,

Greek Life, athletics, recreation, residence and dining halls, campus offices, and employment opportunities. Students take classes for audit or credit and work toward earning a certificate or credential. When they have completed their coursework, they graduate from their program and go on to more learning opportunities or to live and work in the community.

**STUDENTS TAKE CLASSES  
FOR AUDIT OR CREDIT AND  
WORK TOWARD EARNING A  
CERTIFICATE OR CREDENTIAL**



## Why Go to College?

People attend college for many reasons, but one important reason is so they can become qualified to have the career they desire.

People who attend college are usually paid more. This is true for college students with intellectual disability, too. Students who

attend IPSE programs are more likely to earn more and be employed upon exiting college, compared to people with intellectual disability who do not attend college. These programs focus on employment experiences and outcomes as well as developing independence. Most programs offer non-degree credentials.

Students in IPSE programs navigate campus and their communities, experience independence by living away from home, and meet new people through clubs, organizations, and sporting events. They learn how to balance the social life they want with their academic and employment commitments.

**HAVE THE CAREER YOU DESIRE!**



Students take  
**CLASSES IN ALMOST EVERY SUBJECT**  
including

- Math in the Modern World
- Drawing 101
- Political Science



**THE POSSIBILITIES  
ARE ENDLESS!**

Many students live  
**ON CAMPUS IN DORMS OR APARTMENTS.**

**41%**

of IPSE  
programs  
offer  
housing





## Who Can Go to College?

Like most college programs, each IPSE program has different admission requirements.

Most IPSE programs require students to have a documented intellectual disability. This is likely already part of a student's educational record. Documents like an individualized education plan (IEP) or educational testing done by a school district or doctor's office are often required.

IPSE programs are designed for people who would not typically be accepted to college because of their diploma status or not meeting other traditional entrance requirements, such as having a certain ACT/SAT scores or grade point average. In addition to academic and employment supports, students also receive support outside of the classroom to build friendships, manage their time, and live independently.

**STRONG FOCUS ON  
EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES  
AND OUTCOMES**

**ABOUT  
8000  
STUDENTS**

**are currently  
attending  
IPSE  
programs  
across the  
country.**



## How Do Colleges and Universities Include Students With Intellectual Disability?

Students enrolled in IPSE programs are included in all aspects of the college experience — taking classes, joining student organizations and clubs, attending sporting events, and participating in internships. IPSE program staff members work with faculty, student affairs professionals, and disability service offices to make sure partners on campus know about the program and are prepared to support students with intellectual disability.



**Now you know what IPSE programs are and who can attend them. But how do you prepare students with intellectual disability for college?**

First, explore how it differs from high school so you know what to expect. Then, find the right college, send in an application, and determine out how to pay for it. Read on to learn more.

### WEBINAR

[Partnering with Campus Resources to Offer Inclusive Learning Experiences](#)



### RESOURCE LIST

[Transition to College resources](#)



## Understanding the Differences Between High School and College

There are many differences between high school and college for all students. This is to be expected! Students with intellectual disability in high school may be separated from their peers for some or most of the day. Families and teachers may provide a lot of support and make decisions for students, with their best interests and future in mind. Students may not be used to having multiple assignments each week. College shifts a lot of responsibility from parent to student. The chart below outlines some differences that are important to think about as students prepare for the transition to college life.



## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

High School	Area of Difference	College
Less freedom; living at home	<b>PERSONAL FREEDOM</b>	More freedom; hanging out or living on campus
Family make decisions	<b>DECISION-MAKING</b>	Students make decisions
See teachers each day; they remind you when things are due	<b>TEACHER CONTACT</b>	See teachers less often; less reminders about due dates and grades
Few tests and little homework; graded based upon completion	<b>TESTS AND GRADES</b>	More tests and homework; based upon quality of work.
Predictable schedule in the same classrooms	<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	Varying schedule in classrooms all across campus
Responsibility of the teacher; determined by the IEP process	<b>ACCOMMODATIONS</b>	Responsibility of the student; must register and communicate with the Office of Disability Services
Family members and teachers advocate on students' behalf	<b>ADVOCATING</b>	Student is responsible for advocating for what they need
Teachers communicate directly with families	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Teachers do not communicate with families, only with students
Decision-maker; must provide permission for educational decisions	<b>PARENT'S ROLE</b>	Support team member; a valuable and trusted sounding board with no authority to make educational decisions

**For more ways in which high school differs from college, see the full resource.**



## How to Find the Right College

Finding the right college can be exciting and overwhelming at the same time. There are over 300 programs across the country to choose from. But students do need to consider some important factors:



- How far away from home do they want to be?
- Do they want to live on campus?
- What type of credential will they receive, and will it help them get the job they want?
- How much support do they need to be successful?
- Does the program provide employment experiences in the area they're interested in?
- Can the student and their family afford to attend?

### BLOG POST

[College Search 101–  
Considerations and  
Resources for Finding  
the Best Fit](#)



## Applying to College

IPSE programs do not require students to take entrance exams like the SAT/ACT. They usually don't require a certain grade point average. When applying to an IPSE program, students will likely need the following:



- Documentation of intellectual disability
- Education and work history
- Letter(s) of recommendation
- Rationale for why the student would like to attend and how it will help them reach their goals

The application process requires a lot of time from families, students, and other support team members. Many programs interview students and their parents. Students and their families can prepare for the application and interview process ahead of time.

### WEBINAR

[Hear from a student's  
family how it really  
does "take a village" to  
ensure students have  
everything they need to apply.](#)



**DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT!**  
[Read about the experience of  
applying for college  
directly from  
students!](#)





## Paying for College

Students and families will want to consider how to pay for college long before the application process. Because opportunities for student loans for students with intellectual disability attending IPSE programs are rare, families often have to pay for tuition and room and board, as well as other college/university and program fees out of pocket. Here are some tips for offsetting the cost of college:



- Find a program designated as a [\*\*comprehensive transition postsecondary program \(CTP\)\*\*](#), because students will have access to federal financial aid
- Apply for [\*\*scholarships\*\*](#) available for students attending IPSE programs
- Use [\*\*Medicaid waivers\*\*](#) to pay for services offered at an IPSE program
- Partner with vocational rehabilitation to fund tuition, books, and more
- Start an [\*\*ABLE account\*\*](#) to save for college



### FOR MORE IDEAS...

[Read this resource on paying for college](#)  
or  
[View our Paying for College page](#)

## ACHIEVING YOUR DREAMS: AN IPSE SUCCESS STORY

**Students who attend IPSE programs go on and achieve great things. Kenneth provides a great example of how IPSE can prepare students for careers and life after college.**

**Kenneth Kelty is an award-winning motivational speaker and activist on his life with disabilities and exceeding beyond expectations. Kenneth is a proud alumni of the Western Carolina University's University Participant (UP) Program class of 2014. After graduation he was recruited to represent disability advocacy in the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program.**



## PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

### ASSEMBLE THE TEAM!

It is important students have support from their families and educational team when deciding to pursue college. This also means supporting the student by [creating meaningful IEP goals](#) towards attending an inclusive college program.



### PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

College is different from high school and living at home. There are several strategies students and families can use to prepare for this exciting transition. Get started in making some small steps towards independence with [these powerful strategies](#).



### DO YOUR RESEARCH!

Programs are different in many ways. It is important to consider several factors when deciding which programs to apply to. [Use this handy guide to start the search](#) and find the program that best fits the student, their support needs, and their goals.



[For more information on preparing for college, check out our Preparing for College resource page!](#)



## Let's Get Started!

Whether you're a student or a family member, a transition professional, or higher education professional, we hope you can use this information to make a difference in someone's life—maybe your own! By reviewing the information and resources in this guide, as well as on the [Think College website](#), you are taking the first steps toward expanding college options for students with intellectual disability.



### ASK OUR HELP DESK



Send your questions  
to one of our technical  
assistance providers

[ThinkCollegeTA@gmail.com](mailto:ThinkCollegeTA@gmail.com)

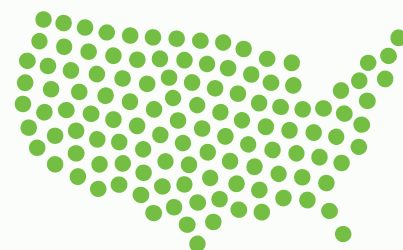
### VISIT THE WEBSITE



The "**Think Higher.**  
**Think College.**" site is  
dedicated to helping  
anyone learn more  
about IPSE!

[www.ThinkHigherEd.net](http://www.ThinkHigherEd.net)

### FIND A PROGRAM



Use our College Search  
Tool to explore IPSE  
options in your state  
and beyond.

[ThinkCollege.net/  
college-search](http://ThinkCollege.net/college-search)



Visit: [www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

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Contact: [thinkcollegeIHEN@umb.edu](mailto:thinkcollegeIHEN@umb.edu)

Subscribe: [thinkcollege.net/subscribe](http://thinkcollege.net/subscribe)



# CALL TO ACTION!

**Share this guide with someone today. More people, students, families, and professionals, need to know college is possible for students with intellectual disability.**

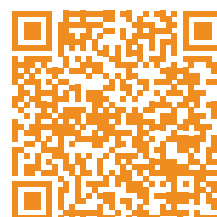
**The future is bright and now is the time to Think Higher. Think College.**



**CHECK OUT OTHER RESOURCES DESIGNED FOR STUDENTS, FAMILIES, EDUCATORS AND HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS!**



**Higher Education Leaders Make College Possible for Students with Intellectual Disability**



**Transition to College: Educators Can Make it Happen!**



**Exploring College for Students with Intellectual Disability: Families Make it Happen!**



**College is for You! (A Guide for Students)**