



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

# IPSE 101:

An Introductory Course to  
Inclusive Postsecondary  
Education (IPSE)



# Introductions

**Caroline Billeaudeau**  
Think College  
[ThinkCollegeTA@umb.edu](mailto:ThinkCollegeTA@umb.edu)



# Presentation Overview



1. Think College Overview
2. What is Inclusive Postsecondary Education? How do we pay for it?
3. Characteristics of IPSE programs
4. Student Outcomes
5. How can Families Prepare?
6. Think College Resources
7. Need Help?
8. Questions
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# Overview of Think College

# What is Think College?

Think College is the leading national center dedicated to advancing higher education for students with intellectual disability. Through research, training, technical assistance, dissemination, and partnerships, Think College works to expand opportunities for students with intellectual disability to access and succeed in higher education  
[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)



# NCC: What We Do

1. Provide technical assistance (TA) and support
  - Support for colleges, educators, families, and students nationwide
2. Use data to drive improvement
  - Identify effective practices in inclusive postsecondary education & use findings to guide personalized TA and create new tools and resources
3. Share knowledge and resources
  - Increase awareness of college options for students with intellectual disability
4. Promote quality & sustainability
  - Strengthen accountability and long-term program success & lead national gatherings to promote collaboration and effective practices for sustainability



# What is Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE)?

How can we pay for it?

# What is Inclusive Postsecondary Education?



Higher education programs that provide access to postsecondary education for people with intellectual disabilities.

- 2 and 4-year colleges, tech schools, dual enrollment
- Class, campus, & work in inclusive settings
- Focus on Career Preparation, Independent Living, & Community Engagement

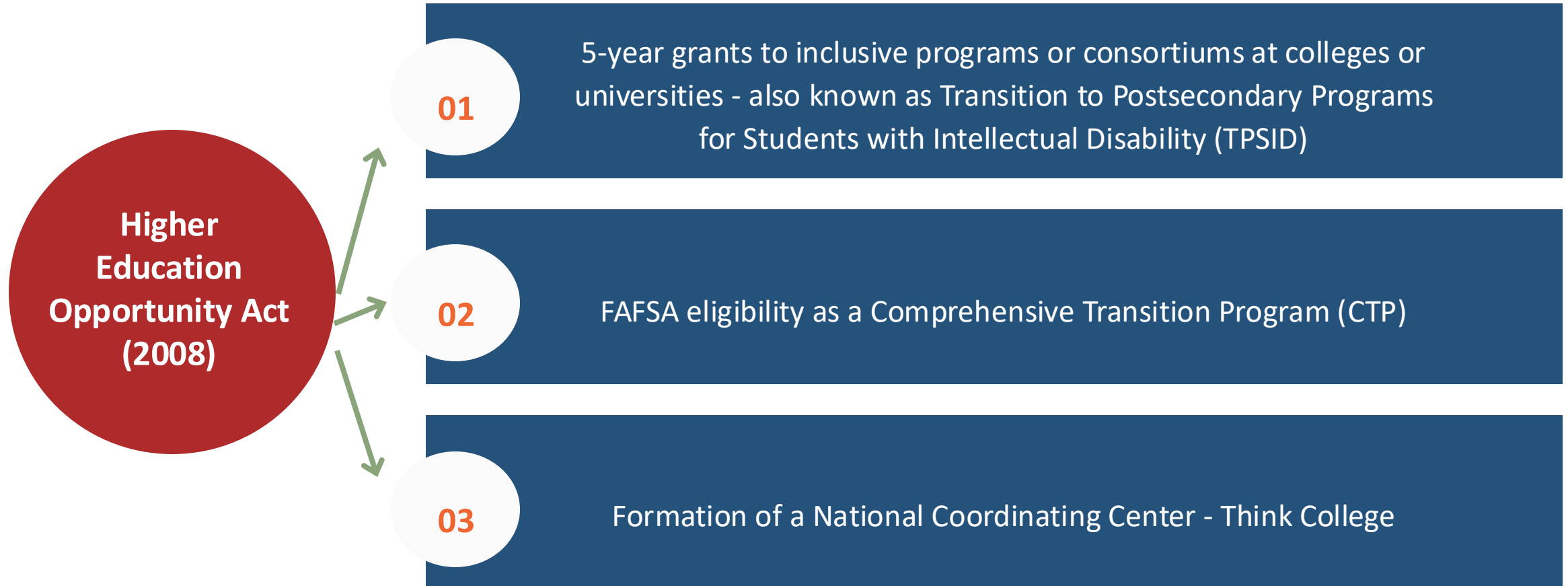


**MARTHA HAYTHORN**

Student, Georgia Institute of Technology

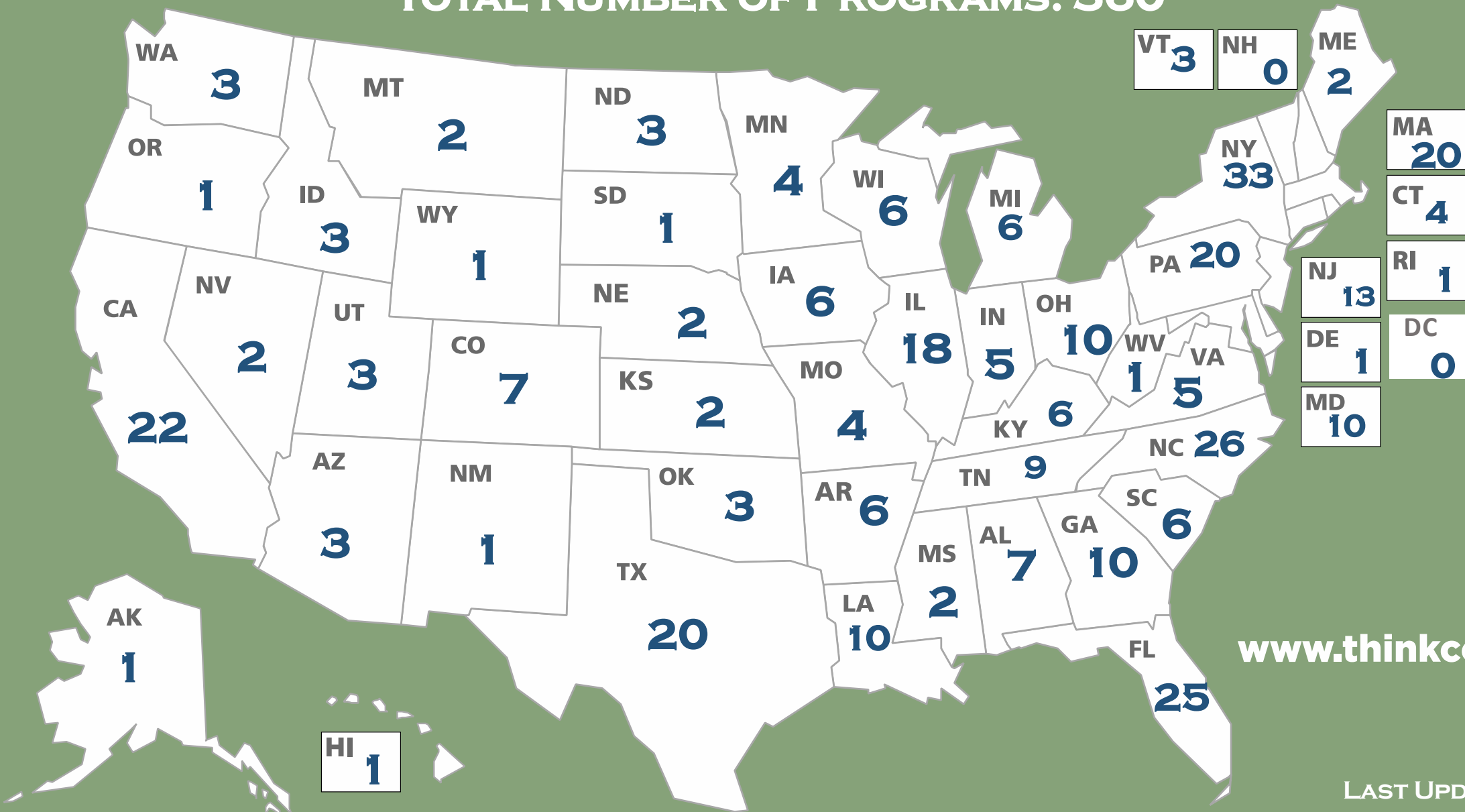
Hi everyone! I'm a student here at Georgia Tech.

# Formalization of Inclusive Postsecondary Education



# COLLEGE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

TOTAL NUMBER OF PROGRAMS: 360



Think College

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

LAST UPDATED: 11/6/25

# Types of College Programs

## Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)

Model Demonstration projects funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education

## Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs

Programs that have been through an approval process and can offer access to federal financial aid

## Dual/concurrent enrollment program

Programs that serve students while still in high school, typically a partnership between a school district and a local college

# Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs

- Approval process (defined in federal law).
- Students can access federal financial aid:
  - Pell Grants
  - Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants
  - Federal Work Study
  - *Not federal student loans*
- *Not all inclusive higher education programs are CTPs.*

# Paying for College

- Any student preparing for college must have a plan to pay for college and students with intellectual disability (ID) are likely to use many of the same resources as other college students to pay for college. Students are using numerous approaches to pay for college, often braiding together several different funding sources to cover the costs.
  - Federal financial aid
  - Scholarships
  - Medicaid waiver funds
  - Vocational rehabilitation
  - Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Benefits/GI Bill
  - Loans (not student loans)
  - Social security
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  - Family funds
  - Student contributions

# Think College Paying for College Resource Page

<https://thinkcollege.net/resources/resources-by-topic/paying-for-college>



# Characteristics of IPSE



APPROXIMATELY

**8,000**

STUDENTS WITH  
INTELLECTUAL  
DISABILITY ATTEND  
EACH YEAR

# Key Features of IPSE



The focus of IPSE is on academics, employment outcomes, self-sufficiency, and enhanced self-determination.

- Different admissions process & requirements
- Accepts students who are non-degree seeking
- Students take college courses for credit or audit
- Employment supports provided
- Traditional college student experience
- Additional Supports provided through the program
- Vary in length from 1 to 4 years
- May offer federal student aid (not loans)

# IPSE is NOT...

- Special education located on a college campus
- Life skills instruction
- Vocational training program

# Components of IPSE Programs

## Academics

- Students may enroll in college courses for credit or audit
  - If auditing, modifications are allowed
- Student success services are made available
- Students may have specialized classes just for students in the program

## Employment

- Career development activities
- Internships/work-study
- Paid jobs on and off campus
- Support to find paid work after graduation

## Housing

- Dorms/On-Campus Housing
  - Sometimes with another student in the program
  - Sometimes with a student outside of the program
  - Supports based on the needs of students
  - Some expectation for independent skills is typical
- Off-Campus Housing
  - A house or apartment complex with other students in the program

## Student Experience

- Social support from peer mentors/coaches
- Participating in campus organizations
  - Student Government, Greek life, Intramural Sports
- Developing independence on campus

# Peer Mentors

- Social
- Academic
- Independent Living
- Employment
- Transportation
- Other things...

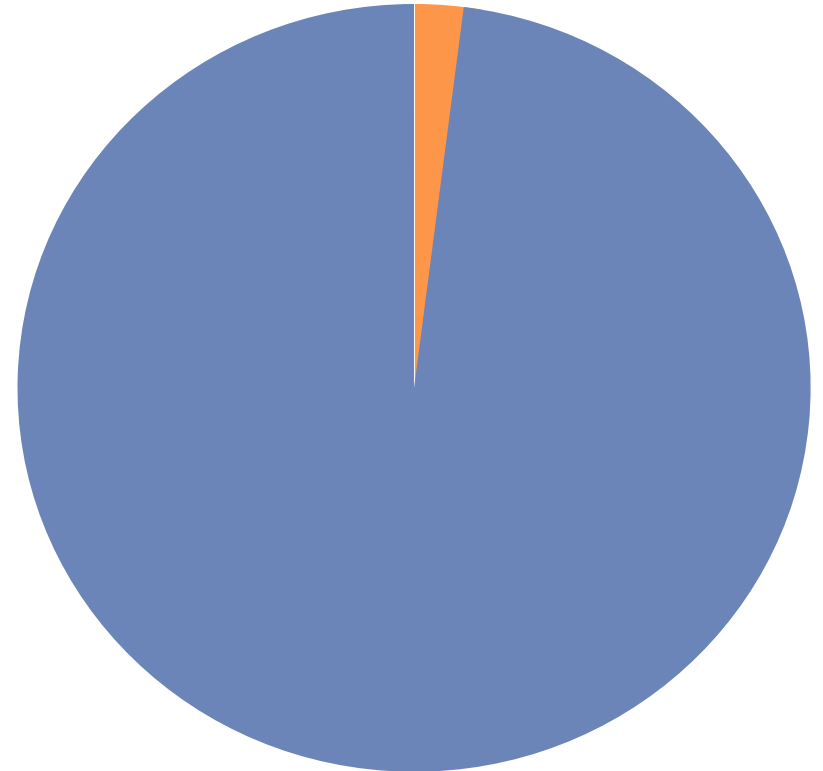


# Student Outcomes

# Outcomes By the Numbers

- There are more than 420,000 school age students with intellectual disability in the United States<sup>1</sup>
- Fewer than 2% are likely to attend college after high school

Students with ID attending college 2%



Students with ID who do not attend college 98%

1. National Core Indicators, 2022

# For the 98% of adults with intellectual disability who don't go to college...

- Only 15% have paid employment in the community<sup>2</sup>
- 42% attend a day program or sheltered workshop<sup>2</sup>
- 44% report they often or sometimes feel lonely<sup>2</sup>
- 29.3% live below the poverty line<sup>3</sup>

2. National Core Indicators, 2022

3. Winsor et al., 2022

# For the 2% who attend postsecondary education, the outcomes are promising...

- 59% find competitive, integrated employment 1 year after exit<sup>3</sup>
- 51% earned higher wages than those who did not access postsecondary education<sup>4</sup>
- 87% of students were enrolled in a credential program<sup>3\*</sup>
- 100% of programs provided peer mentor support to students<sup>3\*</sup>

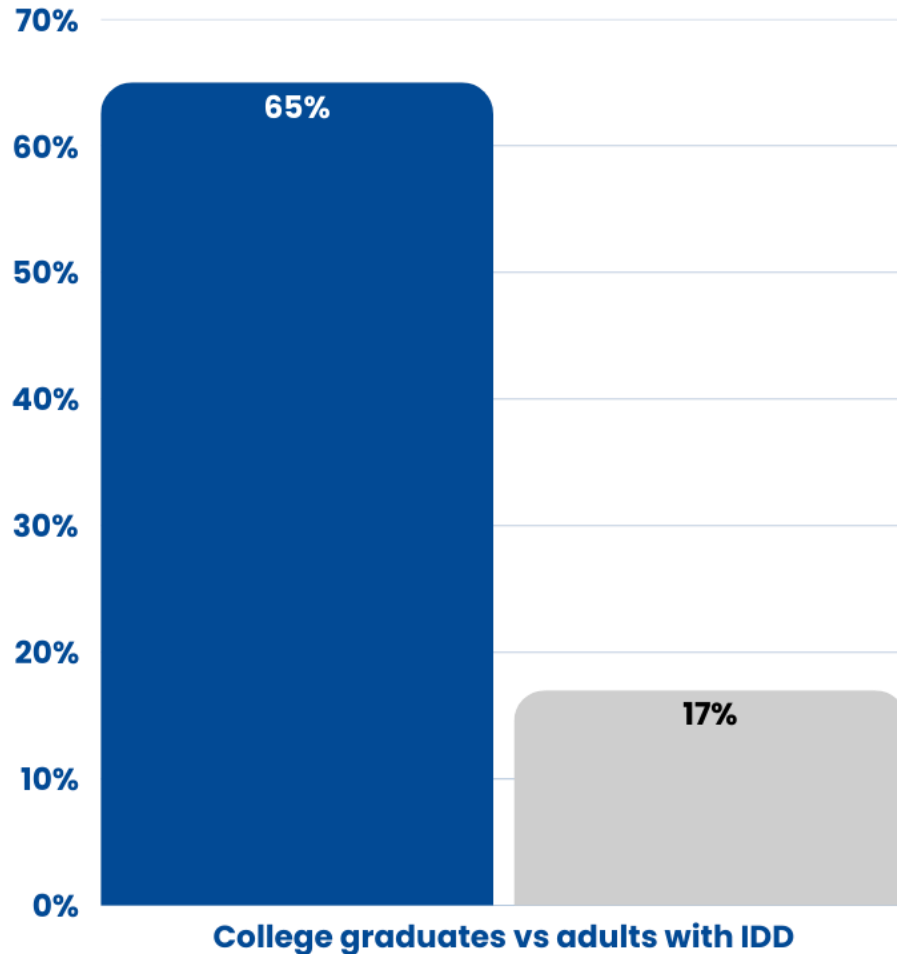


3. Grigal et al., 2022,

4. Smith et al., 2018

\*based on TPSID model demonstration sites, not representative of all programs in the US

# Employment Outcomes



Employment rates of college graduates with IDD far exceed national employment of adults with IDD

- 65% TPSID graduates employed 1 year after graduation (Grigal et al., 2025)
- 17% adults with IDD in the general population are employed (National Core Indicators, 2024)

# How can families help students prepare for college?

Is your family thinking about college?



# Getting Ready for College: Attitudes

- The role of family will change over time
- Be future-focused
- Have high expectations
- Let your child take chances and make mistakes
- Allow voice and choice
- Inclusion is essential
- When the time is right, get a job!
- Take advantage of natural supports
- Share success stories

*(Adapted from Westling and Kelley, 2015)*

# Where Should I Start?

## QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED



### Ask Teachers:

- How can we work together to prepare my student for college?
- How can I help my student decide if they would like to go to college?
- How do we decide which program may be the right “fit” for my student?
- How can we support my student in identifying career interests to consider when deciding where to go to college?

### Ask Students:

- When you think of going to college, what is important for you?
- What college experiences would you like to have?
- Do you want to visit a college?

# Ways to Prepare for College Expectations

| PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE   |   |
|---|---|
| College expectations  | Middle & Secondary preparations   |
| <b>Independently Travel to/from college, employment, &amp; internships</b>                                  | Teach public transportation and ADA/regional transit options. <b>Plan travel</b> to/from [school] and the time to be ready or to arrive. Plan contingencies.  |
| <b>Learn to Navigate campus independently</b>   | <b>Enable</b> independent navigation, allow for mistakes and problem solving in local community, on high school campus, allow natural consequences.   |
| <b>Maintain important personal information</b>  | <b>Maintain</b> personal identification (passwords, contact information. <b>Learn and develop strategies</b> for personal medication and medical information (e.g., insurance, medical conditions, allergies),  |
| <b>Uses strategies to manage use of funds</b>   | <b>Develop strategies</b> to keep money and banking information safe (manage funds, personal bank card), and make purchases within resources (e.g., buy beverages/snacks, pay for transportation, meals, books, personal items)   |
| <b>Self-identify &amp; Self-advocate, as needed, to gain access to accommodations or success strategies</b> | <b>Develop understanding</b> of personal disability and abilities. Learn about personal academic & support needs. Be able to share disability when needed (self-identify). Identify and tryout accommodations available at IHEs and decide which are a good fit. Identify and request academic, physical, or personal accommodations and strategies as warranted. Schedule time to meet with school counselor when changes to IEP needed. |
| <b>Exhibit personal Agency &amp; Self-determination</b>   | Identify & understand how and where to find resources and activities available to them. Students <b>make choices &amp; decisions</b> (e.g., awareness of and choice in purchases, healthy choices, socializing at high school clubs, sports, and volunteer opportunities). Allow natural consequences for choices made.   |

# Ensure College is Evident in IEP

## Measurable postsecondary goal: Education and training

- After graduation, Juan will attend a college or university to pursue education in support of his chosen career path.

## IEP goals

- Using online resources, Juan will identify a minimum of 3 potential careers that match his interests and strengths, and will be able to state the educational requirements for those careers.

## Transition services and activities

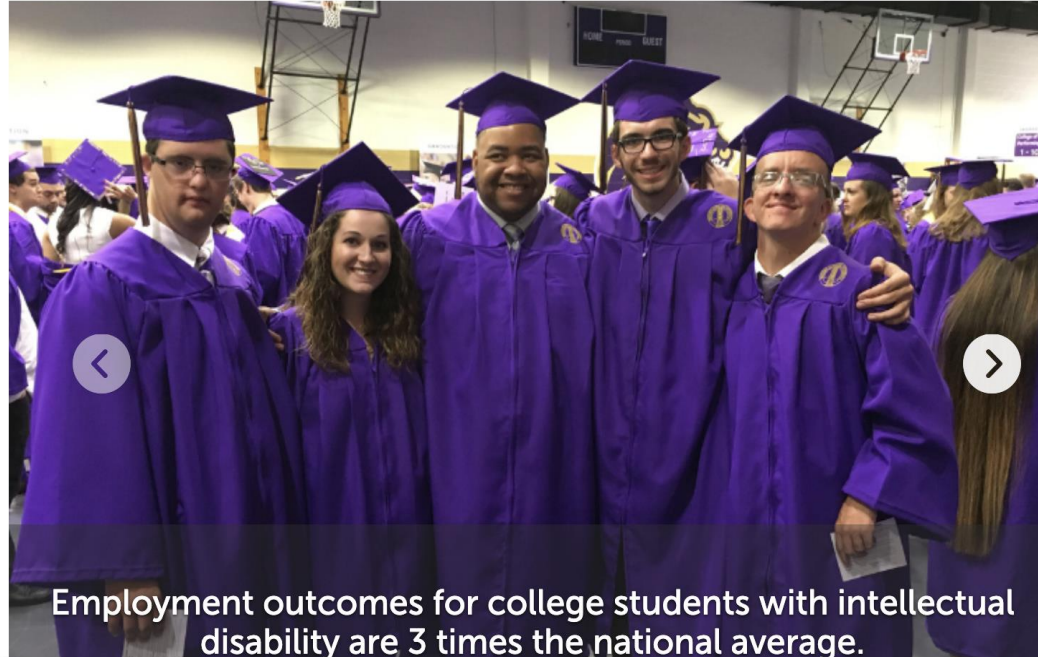
- Self-advocacy skills instruction
- Research and visit colleges and universities that have programs in areas that match potential careers
- Attend college fair
- Participate in extra-curricular activities
- Provide information on financial support for college
- Make a plan for paying for college

# Think College Resources

# Think College Website



thinkcollege.net



## LATEST FROM THINK COLLEGE

**RESOURCE** | January 1, 2026  
[Internship and Employment Memorandum of Understanding Template](#)

**BLOG ARTICLE** | January 1, 2026  
[Our Expanded Approach to Technical Assistance: What It Means for You](#)

**PAGE** | December 12, 2025  
[Get Help from Think College](#)

**RESOURCE** | December 12, 2025  
[Paying for College: Exploring Funding Sources for an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program](#)



The only national database of college programs for students with intellectual disability.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL "www.thinkcollege.net/college-search". The page header includes the "Think College" logo (Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston) and a navigation menu with links for HOME, STUDENTS &amp; FAMILIES, PROJECTS, TA &amp; TRAINING, RESOURCES, and ABOUT. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area is titled "College Search" and contains a descriptive paragraph about the directory's 313 colleges and universities. Below the text is a map of the United States where each state is shaded in a different shade of blue, representing the number of programs available in that state. A legend at the bottom of the map shows the color key for the number of programs: 0 (lightest blue), 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10+ (darkest blue). On the left side of the page, there are sections for "FAVORITES", "RECENTLY ADDED" (listing Sinclair Community College, San Francisco State University, University of Maryland, University of New Hampshire, and University of South Florida), a "SEARCH" box, a "LOCATION" filter, and "PROGRAM FEATURES" checkboxes.

# College Search Website

## DISABILITY

- Intellectual disability
- Autism
- Other disabilities

## PUBLIC OR PRIVATE

- Private
- Public

## STUDENTS TAKE TYPICAL COURSES FOR CREDIT?

- No
- Yes

## TYPE OF SCHOOL

- 2-year community college or junior college
- 4-year college or university
- Technical or vocational/trade school
- Other

## PLANNED LENGTH OF PROGRAM

- 1 year (28)
- 2 years (144)
- 3 years (49)
- 4 years (71)
- Varies from student to student (92)

# More Information Needed?

[Advanced Search](#)

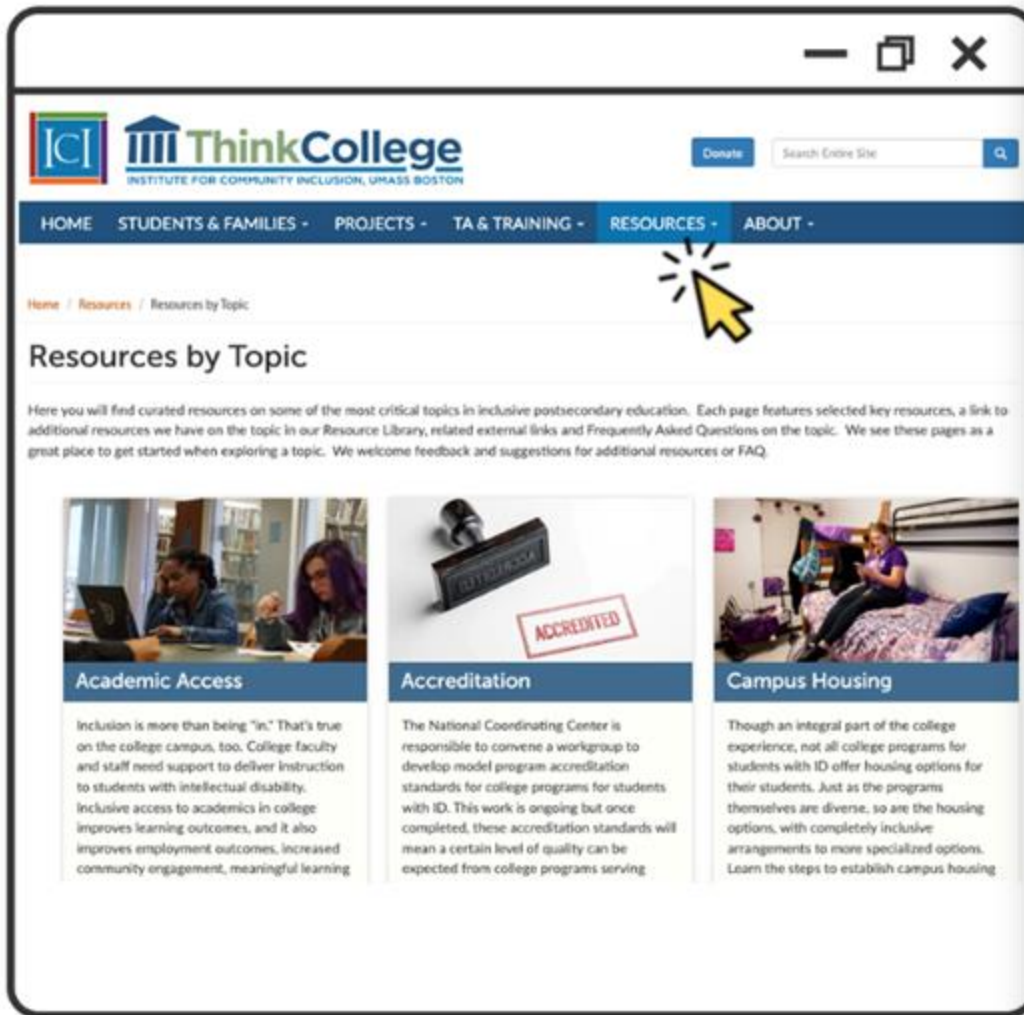
[FAQ](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

- › What are the requirements to attend these programs?
- › What do you mean by the term intellectual disability?
- › What is IPSE, or "inclusive postsecondary education"?
- › Do some of the programs in your listing serve students that are transition-aged and still in high school?
- › What are college-based transition services?
- › Are there summer programs available for students to experience college life before attending full time?

# Resources by Topic



ICI ThinkCollege  
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION, UMASS BOSTON


Donate Search Entire Site

HOME STUDENTS & FAMILIES - PROJECTS - TA & TRAINING - **RESOURCES -** ABOUT -

Home / Resources / Resources by Topic


## Resources by Topic

Here you will find curated resources on some of the most critical topics in inclusive postsecondary education. Each page features selected key resources, a link to additional resources we have on the topic in our Resource Library, related external links and Frequently Asked Questions on the topic. We see these pages as a great place to get started when exploring a topic. We welcome feedback and suggestions for additional resources or FAQ.




### Academic Access

Inclusion is more than being "in." That's true on the college campus, too. College faculty and staff need support to deliver instruction to students with intellectual disability. Inclusive access to academics in college improves learning outcomes, and it also improves employment outcomes, increased community engagement, meaningful learning



### Accreditation

The National Coordinating Center is responsible to convene a workgroup to develop model program accreditation standards for college programs for students with ID. This work is ongoing but once completed, these accreditation standards will mean a certain level of quality can be expected from college programs serving



### Campus Housing


Though an integral part of the college experience, not all college programs for students with ID offer housing options for their students. Just as the programs themselves are diverse, so are the housing options, with completely inclusive arrangements to more specialized options. Learn the steps to establish campus housing

- Academic Access
- Campus Housing
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- College-Based Transition Services
- Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs
- Employment
- For Families
- Paying for College
- Peer Mentors
- Preparing for College
- Program Development
- Program Accreditation
- State Alliances
- Student Credentials
- Technology for College Students
- Vocational Rehabilitation

## Preparing for College

### FEATURED RESOURCES

 [College is For You!](#)

 [A Resource Guide for Inclusive Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disability](#)

 [Transition to College Resources](#)

 [Individualized Education Plan \(IEP\) Goal Ideas to Support College Readiness](#)

 [Preparing for College Expectations](#)

 [Summer Programs](#)

1 2 3 next >

last >

There are many things that students can and should do, with the support of their family and teachers, to get ready for the transition from high school to college. Resources on this page include ways to create an IEP that will best prepare students for college, information on important decisions such as guardianship, information on how college differs from high school, and more.

### NEWS & FEATURES



#### Preparing for College

Part of any adventure is planning and getting ready - and going to college is no different. This article shares a number of helpful resources that families and teachers can use to support students to be ready for college. ...[Read more](#)



#### Tech Tools for College

As students prepare for college, it's important they become familiar with the technology that can help with important skills for college such as organizing, planning, note-taking, communication, scheduling, etc. ...[Read more](#)



#### Foundational Skills for College and Career Success

A guide to help students work on important college and career skills. ...[Read more](#)

# Families Think College Facebook



Over 3000 members!

This space was created so families can connect with one another in a safe place to discuss...well, whatever they like!



# Need help?

# Technical Assistance



## Need support or guidance?

Reach out to our *Technical Assistance Team* at [thinkcollegeTA@umb.edu](mailto:thinkcollegeTA@umb.edu) or join one of our *Think College Facebook Groups* (Program Professionals and Families)

# Questions?

**Please take a moment  
to scan the QR code and  
provide your feedback  
on the presentation  
today!**



TO LEARN MORE

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NEED ADVICE?

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<https://thinkcollege.net/about/contact-us#newsletter>

