

# Think College

## REPORTS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COHORT 3 TPSID MODEL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS (YEAR 4, 2023-2024)

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### BACKGROUND ON HIGHER EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

In 2020, the Office of Postsecondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education funded 22 model demonstration projects called Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs). These grantees are charged with creating or expanding inclusive higher education programs for students with intellectual disability. The Think College National Coordinating Center (NCC) is required to conduct an evaluation of the TPSID projects each year. This is a summary of the complete findings shared in the NCC's Annual Report of the Cohort 3 TPSID Model Demonstration Projects (Year 4, 2023-2024).

### CURRENT STATUS OF TPSID CHARACTERISTICS

#### PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

In 2023-2024, 22 TPSID grantees implemented 41 programs at 39 colleges and university campuses in 16 states. Of the 41 programs, 11 were located at a 2-year college and 30 were located at a 4-year college/university. Forty programs enrolled students, and one program was in a planning year. Twenty-one TPSID programs (51%) were approved as Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) programs, meaning they were able to offer eligible students access to certain forms of federal student aid.

#### STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

On average, programs enrolled 14 students per site (N = 557 total students). Ninety-nine percent of enrolled students had intellectual disability and/or autism. Seventy-four students were high school students receiving college-based transition services (13% of enrolled students). Most students

(92%) were between the ages of 18 and 25, with the majority of students (63%) identifying as male.

#### ACADEMICS

Students enrolled in both academically inclusive college courses (typical college courses attended by students with intellectual disability and other college students without intellectual disability) and specialized courses designed for and offered only to students with intellectual disability. In 2023-2024, students enrolled in 4,583 college or university courses, for an average of eight courses (inclusive or specialized) per student per year. Sixty-three percent of all enrollments were in academically inclusive courses.

Eighty-eight percent of programs enrolling students (n = 35) had at least 50% of their course enrollments in inclusive courses, and 23 programs (58%) enrolled students only in inclusive courses. Forty-five percent of enrollments were in courses offering credits that could only be used toward a TPSID credential, 32% were for standard college/university credit, 21% of enrollments were students auditing courses, and 1% were in not-for-credit or non-credit courses.

#### ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

Seventy-nine percent of students received support or accommodations from the disability services office (DSO) on their campus. In 78%

88%

of programs had at least 50% of their course enrollments in inclusive courses

23

programs had 100% of their course enrollments in inclusive courses

of programs, students had access to typical advising from the college/university either with or without specialized advising from TPSID staff.

## CREDENTIALS

Students were able to earn a credential at 38 of the 40 active programs (95%). Two programs reported their credentials were under development at the time of data collection.

TPSID programs offered 127 credentials. At 15 programs (39% of programs where students were able to earn a credential), a single credential was available to students. At 23 TPSID programs (61%), more than one credential was available. The majority of credentials available to students were certificates (n = 80; 63% of credentials), but additional types included industry certifications (n = 18, 14%); associate degrees (n = 15; 12%); bachelor's degrees (n = 6; 5%); other types of credentials, including digital badges and academic minors (n = 6; 5%); and licenses (n = 2; less than 2%). Of the 127 credentials offered across programs, 80 (63%) were reported as culminating credentials.

Thirty-three TPSID programs (83%) offered a credential approved by the college/university. Thirteen programs (33%) offered a credential aligned with an industry-recognized credential.

## RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS

In 2023–24, eight TPSID programs (20% of programs enrolling students) were located at commuter colleges/universities that did not offer housing for any student. Of the 32 TPSID programs located at residential schools, 27 (84%) offered college/university housing to students in the program, and five did not. Nearly two-thirds of students enrolled in TPSID programs (n = 355; 64%) lived in college/university housing or housing affiliated with the program at some point during the academic year. Fewer than one-third of students (n = 163, 29%) lived with their family throughout the academic year, and thirty-nine students (7%) lived in a different setting.

## The Ultimate Internship

When Nick McGee enrolled in the Integrated Studies program at Gwynedd Mercy University, he had one goal in mind: Nick wanted to take part in the Disney College Internship Program at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida.



*Nick McGee is ready to work!*

While enrolled at Gwynedd, Nick and his advisor carefully planned not only his course of study but his internships with Disney in mind. Internships are a cornerstone of the Gwynedd Integrated Studies program. Throughout his time at Gwynedd, Nick had numerous targeted internship experiences which helped to prepare him for his internship with Disney in the spring of 2024.

Nick was hired by Disney to intern as a greeter for Olivia's Cafe in the Old Key West Resort. Internships at Disney are very demanding; Nick was required to work 5 days a week for 7 hours a day helping customers to check in and get them to their seats. When asked, Nick said that it was "not even hard, I just loved working there."

Working at Disney didn't just require doing well on the job but also meant living independently a thousand miles from his support system in Pennsylvania. Nick lived in Disney housing with three other cast members as roommates. Nick shared that he was lucky to get along with his three roommates, but one in particular, "Nick from New York," became his good friend.

Although his time at Disney is over and Nick is now home, he still "misses it every day" and is hoping to go back and work there again. Nick would like everyone to know that if they are thinking about it "just apply" because his experience was "just fantastic."

## EMPLOYMENT

**67%** of students had paid employment or a paid work-based learning experience

Almost all students (97%) participated in at least one employment or career development activity, such as work-based learning, job-seeking, and career awareness/exploration. Sixty-seven percent of students (n = 371) had at least one paid position (employment or paid work-based learning) while enrolled. Forty percent of students (n = 225) had an individual paid job earning at or above minimum wage while enrolled. Ninety-eight students (38%) with paid employment never held a paid job before entering the TPSID.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

In 2023-24, 207 students (37%) were enrolled in their state vocational rehabilitation (VR) program and 129 students (23%) received services or funding from VR. The services VR most provided were rehabilitation counseling and guidance, benefits counseling, job coaching, job readiness training, and social skills instruction. Nineteen of the 32 TPSIDs partnering with VR reported they collaborated to provide pre-employment transition services as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA; 2014).

**23%** of students received services from a VR program

## PROGRAM COMPLETION AND CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

Of the 208 students who exited their program during the reporting period, 151 (73%) completed their program. The exiting students earned 180 credentials; 164 of these credentials were certificates, nine were industry certifications, and six were microcredentials. One student earned a bachelor's degree. Of the credentials earned, 77%

(n = 139) were approved by the college/university governance structure. All completers (n = 151, 100%) earned at least one credential.

## POST-EXIT OUTCOMES

### ONE-YEAR OUTCOMES

TPSIDs reported 1-year outcomes for 171 (of 327) graduates who completed their Cohort 3 TPSID program in Year 1 (2020-2021), Year 2 (2021-2022), or Year 3 (2022-2023). This reflects a 52% response rate for all students who completed a program in Cohort 3. Sixty-five percent of students (n = 112 of 171) who responded to the outcome survey reported being engaged in paid employment 1 year after program completion. This is significantly higher than the 17% national employment rate of adults with intellectual and developmental disability (National Core Indicators, 2024).

Thirty-six percent of TPSID program completers (n = 62) reported having pursued some type of continued postsecondary education in the year after program completion. Sixty-one percent (n = 104) of students were living with family 1 year after completing their program. This is consistent with current trends in living arrangements. In 2023, over half of young adults aged 18-24 were living at home (United States Census Bureau, 2024). Of the remaining 67 students, 55 (32%) rented an apartment or home, three owned their own home, one enrolled in postsecondary education and lived on campus, one lived in a group home, and seven did not answer this question. Eighty-five percent of respondents (n = 146) reported they were happy or very happy with their social life.

### TWO-YEAR OUTCOMES

Seventy-six students who completed a TPSID in either Year 1 (2020-2021) or Year 2 (2021-2022) responded to a follow-up survey 2 years after program completion, which reflects a 43% response rate. Two years after completing a TPSID, 67% of respondents (n = 51) had a paid job. Over half (53%, n = 40) lived with family, 37% (n = 28) rented an apartment or home, five respondents owned their own home, and two lived in a group home. One respondent did not indicate their living situation.

## THREE-YEAR OUTCOMES

Nineteen students who completed a TPSID program in Year 1 (2020–2021) responded to a survey of their 3-year follow-up outcomes, which reflects a 30% response rate. Three years after completing a TPSID program, 68% of respondents (n = 13) had a paid job. Fifty-eight percent (n = 11) lived with family, 21% (n = 4) rented an apartment or home, two owned their own home, and one respondent lived in a group home. One respondent did not indicate their living situation.

**65%** of respondents to a 1-year outcome survey had a paid job 1 year after completing a Cohort 3 TPSID program

## CONCLUSION

During 2023–2024, the fourth year of the Cohort 3 TPSID model demonstration project, the 22 TPSID grantees planned or implemented access to higher education in 41 programs at 39 colleges and university campuses in 16 states. Forty programs were in operation, enrolling 557 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities; the remaining program was in a planning year.

In the fourth year of the Cohort 3 TPSID project, significant progress was made in expanding inclusive course access, reflecting the program's strong commitment to academic inclusion. Employment outcomes also showed positive trends, with an increase in the number of students engaged in paid employment while enrolled, a key factor in post-program employment success. Although some challenges remain, particularly in student exit and engagement, the continued emphasis on comprehensive support and inclusive practices underscores the ongoing impact of the TPSID initiative in enhancing educational and employment opportunities for students with intellectual disability.

## REFERENCES

- National Core Indicators. (2024, May). Intellectual and developmental disabilities national report 2022-23: Employment. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute. [https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/IPS-22-23-Ch02-Employment\\_FINAL.pdf](https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/IPS-22-23-Ch02-Employment_FINAL.pdf)
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- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Pub. L. No. 113-128 (2014), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-113pub128/>



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### DISCLOSURE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The research team for this report consists of key staff from the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The organizations and the key staff members do not have financial interests that could be affected by findings from the evaluation.

**Read the full report:**  
**the Annual Report of**  
**the Cohort 3 TPSID**  
**Model Demonstration**  
**Projects (Year 4,**  
**2023–2024)**

