

Janai's Story: An Opportunity to Achieve her Dreams

This series of stories aims to shed light on the transformative power of higher education credentials for students with intellectual disability. Through real-life examples, we explore how earning credentials in various fields has not only equipped these individuals with essential skills but has also paved the way for meaningful employment opportunities.

4-year university

Early childhood education

Virginia

Janai's dream was to work as an assistant teacher with young children. To make her dream a reality, Janai attended Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) ACE-IT in College program.

VCU's ACE-IT in College is an inclusive certificate program for transition-age adults with intellectual disability. The program is accredited by the Inclusive Higher Education Accreditation Council (IHEAC). Students earn a Certificate of Completion from the VCU School of Education after fulfilling the requirements of their Academic and Career Plan. The Academic and Career Plan includes 20+ VCU course credits, campus employment, and an internship. Students audit 2-3 VCU classes per semester with individualized support provided for participation in employment, college classes, and campus activities.



Janai always had a heart for teaching and wanted to impact children's lives.

While in college, Janai worked as a classroom assistant at VCU's Child Development Center and a communication assistant at VCU's Office of Continuing and Professional Education. She wrapped up her final semester in college as a teacher's assistant at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Early Childhood Education program.

Janai certainly wasn't alone in her college journey as she prepared for her career. Janai and the ACE-IT in College program staff worked collaboratively with a variety of partners, including Virginia's vocational rehabilitation agency, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS); job coaches; campus employers; an internship business site; and an organization that provided supported employment services post-graduation.

Janai graduated from college with a Certificate of Completion, a strong resume, and skills to help her in her career search. Because of the relationships built between program staff, DARS, and a local organization that provides supported employment services, Janai could smoothly transition from college into the career search process and eventually on to her dream job as a teacher's assistant in a local preschool.

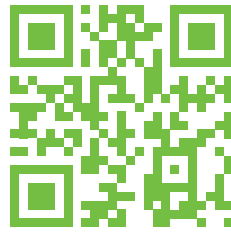
Janai always had a heart for teaching and wanted to impact children's lives. Her determination and skills ultimately led her to take advantage of every opportunity she got to excel. VCU's ACE-IT in College certificate program paved the way for opportunities, support, and guidance that Janai used to reach her career goals.

Why are postsecondary education credentials important?

Earning a postsecondary education credential creates a better starting point for students with intellectual disability entering the job market and adult life. Those who access higher education are more likely to be employed, earn higher wages, and have stronger social and professional networks. There are more than 350 colleges and universities in the US with various credential options providing college students with intellectual disability opportunities for better employment outcomes and more successful adult lives.



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pathway stories



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postsecondary education



See the data on employment
outcomes of students with
intellectual disability



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The Inclusive Higher Education Network is a national technical assistance and dissemination center, funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. The Network is tasked with increasing regional and state capacity, building awareness, creating strategic partnerships, and supporting expansion and improvement of higher education for students with intellectual disability through resource and training development.

Learn more about TCN at thinkcollege.net/projects/tcn

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