

**Nathan's Story:  
Carpe Diem**

*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

Mechanical Engineering

California

Nathan's determination and drive were evident from an early age. In high school, he excelled both academically and athletically. He was a member of his varsity track team, and played as an offensive and defensive lineman for the football team. To continue his education, Nathan enrolled in the Transition to Independent Living (TIL) Program at Taft College.

The TIL Program is an inclusive postsecondary educational experience for students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities that also offers on and off-campus housing. TIL program staff work with each student to establish short-and long-term goals and write Individual Program Plans to assist students in attaining these goals. Students participate in the program for an average of 22 months and are eligible for graduation when they complete the required course work and independently demonstrate the learned skills. Students are awarded a Certificate in Transition to Independent Living when they complete the program, and many also earn other credentials from the college.

Since fall 2021, Nathan has worked 24 hours a week as an After School Assistant for the STEM & CTE Department at Taft College. He has gained recognition as the college's "3D printing expert," designing and printing the new Taft College Bookstore Carpe Diem seal, along with numerous other projects for the campus.

Nathan embodies independence and resourcefulness. He lives in his own apartment in Taft, drives his own car, and enjoys hobbies like golfing, RC cars, RC airplanes, and video games. He even built his own computer, showcasing his technical skills and curiosity.

A key part of Nathan's personal journey has been his relationship with Mary, whom he met during a TIL program gathering. Nathan and Mary connected instantly and have been excitedly planning their future together.

In 2022, Nathan graduated from the Taft College TIL Program, a pivotal moment in his life. Nathan earned the Certificate in Transition to Independent Living and completed a certification in CPR/ First Aid. During his time at TIL, he began pursuing his passion for mechanical engineering and is now on track to transfer to either Cal State Bakersfield or Cal State Chico. Nathan's ultimate goal is to earn his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and work in Aerospace Defense Contracting. He finds joy in the hands-on and theoretical computational aspects of engineering, and his future in the field looks bright.



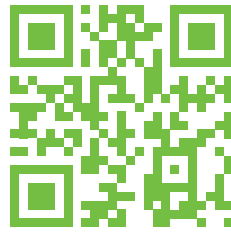
**Nathan's ultimate goal is to  
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Defense Contracting.**

## 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



Learn more about inclusive  
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](http://thinkcollege.net/projects/tcn)

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