

# CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS

## Patrick's Story: Driven to Achieve Automotive Services Skills

*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.*

Career Technical Education

Automotive Service Technician

Florida

Patrick wanted to have a career that supports his wife and family. He knew he enjoyed working on cars and took automotive classes in high school. After high school, he enrolled in the Automotive Service Technician program at Ft. Myers Technical College (FMYC) in 2021 with support through the How I Reach Employment (HIRE) program.

The HIRE Program at FMYC is a postsecondary non-degree seeking transition program designed for students with intellectual disability. Through the HIRE program, Patrick was able to access in-class support, tutoring, and other accommodations in the Automotive Service Technician program, which prepares each student to enter the automotive field as an entry-level technician. The 1,800-hour program includes coursework to prepare students to earn several industry certifications through the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) and an externship. The HIRE program closely monitored his academic performance and stepped in with extra supports when needed.

To say that Patrick excelled in the program would be an understatement. By the time the next cohort arrived on campus in the fall of 2022, Patrick was doing so well that the instructors tasked him with helping the new students. Patrick also showed a penchant for all things wheel related. He got so good on wheels that the instructors had him work with students who were struggling to get the concepts. As he got closer to completing his 1,800-clock-hour program in 2023, Patrick had amassed an impressive list of industry certifications: ASE Auto Maintenance and Light Repair; ASE Engine Repair; ASE Suspension and Steering; ASE Brakes; Florida Automobile Dealers Association; and ASE Heating and Air Conditioning.

Having multiple ASE certifications allowed Patrick to show prospective employers the wide range of skills he acquired in the Automotive Service Technician program. Patrick met his future employer at his technical college's career fair: The School District of Lee County. After sharing his resume, Patrick had a brief interview on the spot and followed up with an in-person interview a few weeks later, which led to a job offer. Patrick now works full-time for the district as a Service Technician, earning above average wages and receiving a comprehensive benefits package. When asked how his time at FMYC helped him get to where he is today, Patrick replied, "I never thought I would be doing what I do. Without my instructors, I couldn't have done this. I always wanted to work on cars but now I get to work on buses!"



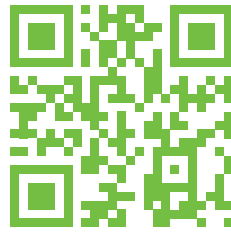
**"I never thought I would be doing what I do. Without my instructors, I couldn't have done this. I always wanted to work on cars but now I get to work on buses!"**

## 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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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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