Exploring the Development and Operation of Inclusive Postsecondary Education

Programs

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Abstract

This study examined the operations and development of five inclusive postsecondary

education (IPSE) programs to identify the key characteristics of effective IPSE institutions.

Researchers chose the five schools because they were in the Top 20 Schools/ Colleges of

Education based on US News and World Report and also have successful IPSE programs. A

survey was sent out to the directors of the schools via an email link and consisted of

questions pertaining to (a) operations, (b) foundations, (c) the role of outside services, and (d)

involvement on campus. The study found that nearly all the schools received TPSID funding

at some point, other departments on campus provide vital support to the programs, and

support staff were needed to ensure that the students had access to all the help they need. The

information from this study can be used by developing programs as a blueprint for a

successful launch. The ultimate goal is to contribute to a higher number of IPSE programs to

increase accessibility to higher education.

 Keywords: higher education, intellectual disabilities, inclusive postsecondary

education

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For ten years, the Department of Education collected data from individuals with disabilities, documenting their postsecondary transitions. This study aimed to address questions surrounding the experiences of people with disabilities once they graduated from high school. The results revealed some shocking statistics about the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) once they graduate from high school. According to the study, only 28.7 percent of interviewed individuals with IDD attended a form of postsecondary education. Only 38.8 percent of participants held a job at the time of the interview. Only 36.3 lived independently (Newman, Wagner, Knokey, Marder, Nagle, Shaver, Wei, X, Cameto, Contreras, Ferguson, Greene, & Schwarting, 2011). These statistics illustrate the great need for an intervention and a solution to increase the number of employed, independent individuals.

In 2008, Congress passed the re-authorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. This re-authorization included various amendments that opened higher education doors for many populations- including students with disabilities. The re-authorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) included increased access to higher education for non-degree seeking students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and made it so that these students were able to access Title IV funding if they enrolled in an approved Comprehensive Postsecondary and Transition Program (CPT) (HEOA, 2008). CPT's are programs designed to support students with ID in academic, career, technical and independent living instruction (Grigal & Papay, 2018). HEOA also authorized a model demonstration program for a higher education opportunity for students with ID, the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, or TPSID (HEOA, 2008). This bill had a significant

impact on higher education, especially for students who received special education services at the secondary level.

Background

In the five years following the passage of this bill, twenty-seven higher education programs were implemented at fifty-two college across the United States (Grigal & Papay, 2018). The rapid expansion only continued, and today there are nearly 266 programs throughout the US (Think College, 2019). At first, this appears like a large number, but when it is revealed that there are nearly 7,000 postsecondary options for neurotypical students, this number feels much smaller (NCES). While some progress is being made in providing better postsecondary options for students with disabilities, it is also evident that there is still ample room to extend a greater array of options to students. According to most recent statistics in the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 6.7 million students, or 13% of the school population, received special education services in the 2015-2016 school year (NCES). Of the 6.7 million students, 804,000 have IDD (NCES), demonstrating the great need for IPSE options in the US.

What is Inclusive Postsecondary Education?

Postsecondary education is any form of education beyond a secondary, or high school, education. This could be a 4-year university, 2-year college, or certification programs. As shown above, there are literally thousands of these in the United States for neurotypical students, but how do options differ for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

Inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs, like the traditional counterpart, vary greatly. However, some of the common themes include: attending classes, belonging to clubs, making friends, living on campus, and having a formal and informal social life (Uditsky & Hughson, 2008). The programs can be fully inclusive where students take their classes, live in

dorms, and participate in social events with students without disabilities. Programs take in more separate environments where the students may live on campus but take both classes within their program with other students with special needs, and within the larger university with matriculating students (PACER, 2019). Most of the programs currently operating are mixture of inclusive and separate settings (PACER, 2019). In addition to the settings, there is also a variety of supports in place for the students.

Many programs have their own directors and team of educators to support the students and help them through the transition and adjust to the new environment. In many cases, there are also academic and job coaches and mentors. Many of the mentors are college peers who are interested in the program or aspire to work with people with disabilities (PACER, 2019). The combination of adaptable education as well as supportive staff is extremely important in creating inclusive postsecondary. Due to the fact that these programs can be challenging to establish, there is a demonstrated lack of these programs today. They exist, but when compared to the total number of postsecondary education options, a marked difference is evident. There is also an issue with sustainability. Given the high costs of the necessary resources and supports, many programs struggle to remain open after the initial launch.

Lack of Options

Despite there being a significant portion of the population in need of IPSE options, there is still a long way to go before there is a sufficient number available to students. According to the NCES, there are over 7,000 postsecondary education options in the US total in the year 2016. Therefore, although 266 might appear like a high number, when compared to 7,000, the gap is shown. In addition, many of these programs are small. They often cap at about fifteen students, which further illustrates the need for a higher number of programs.

That is not to say there are not universities out there developing inclusive programs, but these programs are challenging to create. There are many moving pieces and aspects that are difficult to navigate. These can range from basic accommodations such as housing to more bureaucratic issues such as funding these institutions. When added to the fact that inclusive postsecondary education options are still a fairly new idea- creating a university program for students with IDD is extremely challenging.

Need for Study into Formation Strategies

Due to the many variables and unique aspects of inclusive programs, there is a need for a comprehensive study to examine how the successful institutions have been started. It is important to identify how the foundations for successful programs were laid and the challenges IPSE programs are grappling with in order to make higher education as accessible as possible to as many students as possible. There are various questions about details that are unanswered in the literature. Investigating these questions with current participants and founders is extremely important to document their experiences. Using the survey methodology, the study will reach out to current founders and directors of postsecondary education options for students with IDD. This survey will ask the leaders about how, why, and the necessities needed to create a successful program, as well as ways to improve their own programs. This survey will be an important piece in the creation of new programs, especially at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Professional use. The information collected in this survey will be extremely important to programs attempting to form right now, as well as programs trying to form in the future. This particular survey will be created in partnership with UNC Chapel Hill's Higher Education Employment Living Success University Participant (HEELS UP) program. The HEELS UP program will be an inclusive postsecondary education options for students with IDD including

Autism Spectrum disorder. The program is still in the planning phase, and this survey will serve as a guide to help answer some of the remaining questions and issues.

Although it is being designed with the HEELS UP program, the hope is that this research will be able to have an impact beyond the university and serve as summary of critical information for many new programs in the years to come. Compiling a comprehensive, condensed set of data as to how to create the programs in the most efficient manner is important, and has the potential to lead to the creation of many more programs. Appropriate postsecondary education options should be an opportunity that everyone is able to access. As evidenced by the statistics above, the number of these programs is lacking in the United States. This survey aims to help narrow this gap, and create an extensive system of inclusive postsecondary options for all students.

Methodology

This research study will use a survey that will be sent out to inclusive postsecondary education options throughout the United States. This survey will ask questions about the foundations, funding, functioning, and start of these programs. The survey will aim to fill in the gaps in the literature, and research a way to create a comprehensive study about how to form these institutions. The ultimate goal is to make postsecondary education as inclusive as possible.

The survey will be created in partnership with the HEELS UP program Steering Committee at UNC Chapel Hill. HEELS UP is an inclusive postsecondary education option that is still in the planning stages. With this survey, HEELS UP will have more information to help establish itself as a fully functioning program in the near future. It will assist the planners in making the final adjustments to the program, and help to launch a new program. Thus, the purpose of the study is to determine what are the key characteristics needed to effectively create

an inclusive postsecondary education options for students with ID through surveying five different institutions of higher education. The five schools were chosen based on the fact they are ranked within the Top 20 Schools/Colleges of Education and would be considered institutional peers to UNC-Chapel Hill.

Research Question

The research questions I set out to answer is: What are key characteristics of effective inclusive postsecondary education programs at a 4-year IHEs within the United states?

Key Terms

a) Intellectual disabilities (ID): According to the DSM-5 (2013), an intellectual disability is defined as "impairments of general mental abilities that impact adaptive functioning in three domains." These domains are conceptual, social, and practical.

b) Postsecondary education (PSE): any education beyond high school

c) Individualized Education Plan (IEP): According to the US Department of Education, an IEP is a plan designed for individual students to improve educational results for children with disabilities. These are an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrates, service personal, and students to create the best opportunities for the individual student.

d) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): The DSM-5 (2013) defines autism spectrum disorder as

> "persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple
>
> contexts, as manifested by the following currently or by history
>
> 1. Deficits in social emotional reciprocity
>
> 2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors
>
> 3. Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships."

e) Vocational rehabilitation (VR): set of services offered to individuals with mental or physical disabilities designed to enable to participant to obtain skills, resources, attitudes, and expectations needed to function in society (Mentaldisorders.com)

f) Transition planning: According to the US Department of Education, transition planning is the process of planning for a student with disabilities to graduate from high school in order to prepare and deal with the change, advocate for the right supports, understand one's strengths and needs, develop skills that will increase independence, create action-oriented skills to ease transition.

g) Life skills: Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and changes of everyday life. They are loosely categorized into three broad categories: cognitive skills, personal skills, and interpersonal skills (UNICEF, 2003).

h) Adapted behavior: a student's capability to function independently in society (Special Education Guide, 2019).

i) Intelligence quotient (IQ): tests with a series of exams used to determine general intelligence in relation to other people of the same age. They are widely used to determine functioning abilities', and often used to determine eligibility for special education services (Special Education Guide, 2019).

j) Matriculated student: A student that has been accepted into a university as a degree-seeking student, and will pursue a coursework that reflects this goal (Merriman-Webster)

k) TPSID: Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, model demonstration projects funded by the Department of Education (Think College).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) opened numerous doors for many students receiving special education services. Congress reauthorized the bill in 2008, and included increased access to higher education for non-diploma receiving students with intellectual and developmental disabilities by allowing them to access Title IV funding if they enroll in an approved Comprehensive Postsecondary and Transition program (HEOA, 2008). This law greatly expanded the availability of inclusive postsecondary education options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and has created numerous opportunities for the students with IDD. The bill granted these students the opportunity to attend college, further their education, and take structured steps towards employment and independent living. As demonstrated in the following literature, these programs have social, economic, and academic benefits to both their students and society as a whole.

New Opportunities for Students with Special Needs

With the passage of the HEOA, the options for students with disabilities after graduating from high school greatly expanded. Among the greatest expansion includes the number of inclusive postsecondary education options. Inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs are designed for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and are often designed with extra supports. While IPSE programs are available at many institutions across the country, their set-up and guiding principles vary greatly from school to school. According to the PACER program (2019), some are part of a two-year community college, while others are part of a four-year university. Some programs can have on or off campus housing, or no housing at all for their students. They can begin while the students are in high school or, more traditionally, after the students has graduated. Students in these programs can take classes with their traditional

peers, or in separate settings with other students in the same inclusive education programs. There are also varying levels of inclusivity among the programs.

The level of inclusivity varies depending on the program. Some IPSE options are fully inclusive and students take classes, participate in social events, and live independently without much support from staff. Other programs offer a more separate experience. The students involved in these programs may be on the college campus, but take classes and primarily partake in activities with other students in the IPSE school (PACER, 2019). At the time of the study, the most common approach is a balance of inclusive and separate setting activities. Many of these programs have staff to help students transition and navigate the collegiate setting and beyond.

The majority of IPSE programs have both administration faculty, including directors and educators, as well as support staff which may be comprised of mentors, academic coaches, and peer buddies. (PACER, 2019). A study from Farley, Gibbons, and Cihak (2014) found that peer programs are a great resource, with both the peer mentors and students having an extremely positive response to the support and companionship.

Although these programs are extremely diverse, they all require the diagnosis of intellectual disabilities in order to be admitted. The official diagnosis for ID to be considered is outlined in the HEOA to give clear guidelines about who is eligible to attend IPSE schools.

Intellectual Disability

The definition of an intellectual disability can be found in the HEOA of 2008. This section outlines who is eligible to apply for IPSE programs and government funding. The HEOA (2008) defined an intellectual disability as

"(a) a student with cognitive impairment, characterized by significant limitations in—

i) Intellectual and cognitive functioning and

ii) Adaptive behavior expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills

iii) Who is currently, or was formerly, eligible for a free and appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act."

In order to be eligible to attend many IPSE programs, students must have diagnosis of ID. This allows the programs to stay within regulations, especially if federal funding is involved.

Long Term Impact of HEOA

The reauthorization of the HEOA has had various implications, both long-term and short-term. By 2013, 27 model demonstration programs were implemented at 52 different colleges (Grigal & Papay, 2018). This expansion has opened many doors, but there are certain steps that families have to take in order to be able to send their children with ID to college.

Step towards college. Families interested in sending their children to IPSE programs often must engage in financial, academic, and social planning first. This type of planning is important, and often takes place during IEP meetings. However, the level of parental participation in the process greatly varies. A study by Cavendish and Connor (2017) found that parents often felt that they were told what was going into the IEP, rather than taking an active part in creating the document. Cavendish and Connor's study also found that college transition support was not common for students below twelfth grade.

Studies have shown that having a disability does not diminish one's desire to go to college. A resource by Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp and Harrison (2012) found that students with ID now have similar goals to their peers without ID. They want to go to college, obtain a job, have independence, have friendships with peers, and attend class (2012). The expansion of IPSE options has also shifted the mindset of parents as well. Parents now envision a future where their child is able to attend an appropriate college program (Kleinert et al., 2012).

This transition does not just have an impact on the families' lives, it also impacts how the students are prepared to exit high school.

  Transition planning. Transition planning is a continuous process for someone with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). However, for students with an IEP and the desire to go to college, it is important to ensure that the IEP team is working with the student to make this goal as attainable as possible. There are various aspects of transition planning that are important when considering the transition to college for students. A study by Wilczenski, Cook, and Regal (2017) showed that it is important to provide students with dynamic learning opportunities such as employment opportunities and community service. It is also important to provide students with supportive teams of both adults and peers, responsive schools, youth and family involvement, and setting high expectations (Wilczenski, Cook, & Regal, 2017). Griffin and Papay (2017) also provide strategies to helping parents and students through this transition. They emphasize the importance of providing families with information and resources, student participation in transition planning, and teaching self-advocacy and safety to the students while they are still at home.

  All of these strategies stand to make a positive impact on almost every student, but especially those with IDD. This postsecondary transition can be challenging for all youth, but especially for students with IDD. For students who are not graduating with a traditional high school diploma, the economic, social, and employment outcomes are often much lower than students who received a traditional diploma, illustrating the need for inclusive postsecondary options.

Why Postsecondary Education Is Important

In today's workforce, a college education is seen as extremely valuable in the eyes of most employers. However, for some members of the population, that is an extremely challenging goal to achieve. For individuals with IDD without a traditional high school diploma, succeeding in the workforce can be extremely challenging. Thus, gaining further independent living and employment skills at a college or university helps adequately prepare the individual with IDD for future employment success.

Common Issues for Students with ID without Postsecondary Education

Students with IDD already face many challenges, and life after high school is not different. Some common issues include lack of consistent employment and supports once high school has ended (Taylor & Dawalt, 2017). A study by Taylor and Dawalt (2017) followed 36 families in the special education program during the transition out of high school. Of these 36 individuals, over one-half experienced a vocational disruption, most often leaving or being fired from their job. This trend continued for many of the students studied, and some faced multiple disruptions in their vocations during the three years the study took place. The most common reason cited for the individuals' exits was lack of adequate support.

Research into inclusive postsecondary education by Garrison-Wade (2012) found that IPSE contributed to reduced levels of disruptions. The study focused on successful inclusive education and found that capitalizing on self-determination, building self-advocacy skills, and formalized planning processes helped individuals translate their success beyond schooling. These skills are important in the workplace, and contribute to more consistent jobs.

Positive Outcomes for Students with Postsecondary Education

Young adults with ID that receive some type of postsecondary education have been found to reap several benefits when contrasted with their contemporaries who did not receive any postsecondary training. A study by Taylor and Dewalt (2017) found that 50% of students with no IPSE involvement experienced an employment disruption. A different study showed that students who had participated in an IPSE program are less likely to be on Medicaid, receive vocational rehabilitation services, remained employed, and depend on social security income (Sannicandro, Parish, Fournier, Mitra, & Paiewonsky, 2018). There is also research that says these individuals have more positive peer relations and a higher desire to attend work (Garrison-Wade, 2012).

The above studies illustrate that students who receive higher education are more likely to experience positive outcomes, and that their education has positive implications in the job markets for the students. A study by Lindstrom, Doren, and Miesch (2011) found that all their subjects who participated in postsecondary education training were engaged in continuous, living wage employment. Another study by Southward and Kyzar (2017) found that students who received a postsecondary education were two times more likely to be employed than those who did not receive the same training.

Postsecondary education also had positive effects on the social and emotional health of students with IDD. Bouck and Park (2018) studied students with ID who attended colleges and those who did not attend any kind of postsecondary education program. Their study found that students who attended the college program had more friends, were taking fewer medications, and exercised more. A different study by Wehman, Schall, Carr, Targett, West, and Cifu (2014) found that higher education was an important socialization location, and that education was an

effective method to bridge the gap between students with and without IDD. The program they studied found that it promoted inclusion, provided social skill instruction, increased access to employment and internships, and increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-determination among its participants. A study by Ryan (2014) reported that students had personal growth and developed life skills, as well as increasing their independence. All of these points stress the importance of IPSE programs for students' all-around well-being, with benefits reaching far beyond increasing their ability to obtain employment.

What is Needed to Make These Programs Successful

Existing research highlights the factors the make IPSE programs most beneficial to students. There are various pathways to success, and Hart, Grigal, and Weir (2010) found that most students reported variety and accommodation as some of the most important aspects. There should be a diverse selection of programs available, but all with similar goals in mind. Hart, Grigal, and Weir (2010) argued that person-centered planning, an individualized plan, and providing students with the necessary accommodations are some of the most integral aspects of a successful IPSE program. A different study by Garrison-Wade (2012) found three themes that inhibit or enhance the prospects for postsecondary success. The themes include capitalizing on self-determination by avoiding low expectations, implementing a formalized planning process, and improving support through accommodations. Universities can enhance accommodations through architectural accessibility, financial assistance, and mentors. These aspects are important when considering how to make these programs thrive, as well as ensuring success for their students beyond school.

Staff and Peer Support

In addition to the research that states the overwhelmingly positive results from these programs, the staff from at the larger university are also largely in support of inclusive postsecondary education. When O'Connor, Kubiak, Espiner, and O'Brien (2012) interviewed university-wide lecturers, they found that the staff have positive opinions regarding these programs, and believe that the existence of the programs have a positive influence on the entire universities' faculty, staff, and student body. This study also found that the students from the IPSE programs aided in faculty and student understanding of social justice competence, diverse learning, personal affirmation, and led them to support more campus initiatives. The professors surveyed largely believed that the students had a right to attend and benefit from the learning environment. They were able to witness firsthand the social benefits, passion for learning, and positive impact that the included students experienced in their classrooms (O'Connor, Kubiak, Espiner, & O'Brien, 2012). The faculty are not the only people outside the program that view inclusive education in a positive light, many students at universities with these programs are largely in favor of inclusive education as well.

Peer mentors are students at the university involved in the IPSE programs, often through volunteer or internship programs. In one study done by Farley, Gibbons, and Cihak (2014), graduate and undergraduate university students were assigned one student to work with. The mentors would help this student with activities such as going to lunch, doing homework, or exercising. The feedback from the peers involved in this study was largely positive. The peer mentors felt that they were receiving intrapersonal enrichment and growth, along with work experience, friendships, and skills development. The mentors also highlighted personal changes

in regards to their perceptions about IDD or even changed their career path to further involved themselves in similar vocations.

The feedback from the students and faculty illustrates the positive impact these programs have at the university level. IPSE programs provide mutual benefits to the students enrolled and the greater institutions they are part of.

Deficiencies in Research

Inclusive education has many positive impacts, as illustrated by the research above. However, despite the studies about the positive impacts and long-term benefits, there are not studies that explore how these programs were started and maintained. The programs have many components, and can be extremely complicated to launch, especially at four-year universities. There are various questions that are not answered by the literature concerning the structural formation of these programs within the university, funding, hiring, where the programs are housed, and administration. Basically, the operational logistics from planning to continued implementation are missing. The research focuses on the effects of the inclusive education programs, but does not elaborate on the formation or maintenance of such programs. This background knowledge from successful IPSE programs is imperative to the creation and sustainability of future programs.

The research has illustrated that IPSE programs are a valuable tool for individuals with ID. However, there are only 266 IPSE programs through the US (Think College, 2019). This is not enough to serve the ID community, so a blueprint for how the programs develop and operate is needed. The goal of this thesis was to explore how existing programs make it work, with the intent to share the information with developing programs here in the US.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The study was conducted using survey methodology to document how different IPSE programs are set up and successfully implemented across the US. These programs were chosen based on their ranking as a Top 20 School of Education as listed in the US News and World Report. Once the initial survey was distributed and analyzed by the researcher, there was an option for follow-up contact by the researcher. However, based on the responses received, follow up was deemed not necessary.

Setting

This survey was distributed via an email link to the selected IPSE programs. The participants took the survey at their respective colleges. The survey was distributed to programs in the following schools (US News, 2019):

    (a) University of California at Los Angeles: Pathway at UCLA Extension

    (b) Vanderbilt University: Next Steps at Vanderbilt University

    (c) Northwestern University: Options for College Success

    (d) University of Texas at Austin: E4Texas: Educate. Empower. Employ. Excel.

    (e) University of Kansas: Transition to Postsecondary Education

    (f) Virginia Commonwealth: ACE-It in College

The survey was distributed from UNC-Chapel Hill, and the results were analyzed in Chapel Hill as well.

Participants

The study's participants were directors and administrators from IPSE options at top institutions throughout the US. The study targeted these individuals in an effort to record answers from subjects well-versed in IPSE. The inclusion criteria were schools that had a top 20

ranking in US New Report and also had operating IPSE programs. The programs must be designed for individuals with ID, and they must be inclusive.

Research Design

This study was conducted using survey methodology. The survey was emailed via a link to participating programs. It was administered via the Qualtrics platform. The survey questions were both open and close ended, depending on the topic covered in the question. The survey is designed to take about 10 to 15 minutes. The survey questions are listed in the appendix.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to expand the existing research surrounding IPSE options, especially in regards to information about the development and operations of these programs. This particular study was conducted in an effort to aid the HEELS UP Committee at UNC-Chapel Hill as it prepares to launch its own IPSE programs. As the HEELS UP Steering Committee develops its own program, this survey will serve as a guide to help answer remaining questions, give insights to the relevant issues, and support the endeavor.

Although this survey was developed to assist the HEELS UP program, the ultimate goal is that this research will be able to help other programs launch beyond UNC launch, serving as a summary of critical information to build off of. A comprehensive, condensed set of data that provides a succinct overview of how successful IPSE programs are run is important to expedite the development process of new programs that will provide students with ID with greater opportunities. Appropriate postsecondary education options should be available to all students, regardless of background. This study was conducted in an effort to ensure that the doors to higher education are open for all students.

Procedure

This was a study using survey methodology. No names or contact information were taken during the survey, only the higher education institution that the participant represented. The survey was administered via an email using the Qualtrics platform. The participants were informed that the survey was an opportunity to participate in an undergraduate honors thesis study about IPSE options.

Once a participant decided to join the study, they opened the link. The survey began with a consent page that informs the participants of the study purpose, design, and their ability to end the survey at any time. Each participant was permitted to take the survey once.

Once the participant agreed to the consent forms, the survey questions began. The questions were both open and close ended, depending on the question topic.

During the analysis, if deemed necessary by the PI, a phone call was made to the appropriate institution for follow-up questions. The purpose of the follow-up questions was for further elaboration on a topic, or if a response needed clarification. No follow-up calls were deemed necessary.

Data Analysis

Once the target number of responses were recorded, the answers from the participants were consolidated based on similarity. The answers were analyzed for common themes that would be the most helpful in creating new IPSE programs. Once the themes were identified, the data was formatted into a comprehensive report.

Following the completion of the report, this information will be shared with various groups. The initial group it will be shared with is the HEELS UP team at UNC-Chapel Hill. This

steering committee is working to launch HEELS UP, an inclusive higher education program at UNC-Chapel Hill. The results from this study will aid them in this process.

After the information will be shared with the Heels2Transition team and will remain available to any interested parties. Making the findings readily available will keep in line with the original goal of the study: helping create more IPSE options for students with ID.

Summary

To review, this was a survey administered to the top 20 Schools of Education that have an inclusive program within their college. The survey was provided to participants via an email link to the Qualtrics platform.

Once participants opened the survey, they completed the consent form and continued to the survey. The survey consisted of a maximum of 35 questions. The question topics included funding, support staff, housing design, VR supports, and the level of interdisciplinary collaboration. There was also a question consenting to potential follow-up questions.

After all data was collected from Qualtrics, the results were analyzed for common themes. These common themes were consolidated into a comprehensive report about the formation and functioning of inclusive postsecondary education. This report will be shared with the HEELS UP Steering Committee, but the information will be available to any interested institution.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results from this study explore the foundations and operations of inclusive postsecondary education programs. The research question for this study explored the following subject: what are key characteristics of effective inclusive postsecondary education programs at a 4-year institution of higher education within the United States? The study was conducted via a survey sent to directors of IPSE programs across the country at 5 different schools. The schools that participated in the survey were the following:

a) Virginia Commonwealth University, ACE-IT in College

b) Vanderbilt University, Next Steps at Vanderbilt

c) University of Kansas, Transition to Postsecondary Education

d) University of California at Los Angeles, Pathway

e) University of Texas at Austin, E4Texas

The survey questions examined the different aspects of these programs including the (a) operations, (b) the foundations, (c) the role of outside services, and (d) involvement on campus. Once the initial link was sent out, a follow up reminder email was sent out to programs. The survey link was open for one month. The response rate for the survey was 100%.

The following sections examine the response rates from the individual schools. There is an explanation of the responses from the individual schools. There is also a comparison between the schools and an exploration of the similarities and differences. This section intends to highlight the most important aspects of the responses from each individual school, as well as any other relevant information recorded.

Table 1.

Synthesis of Findings Based on Survey Results

Program	Institute of Higher Education (IHE)	Collaboration within IHE and Community	Funding	TPSID Grant?	Program of Study	Residential	Matriculation?
ACE-IT in College	Virginia Commonwealth University	Housed within Rehabilitation Research and Training Center within School of Education	Tuition to university + additional $5,000	Yes	Attend traditional classes though audit and inclusion. Independently determine course of study.	No	No
Next Steps	Vanderbilt University	Housed within the Special Education Department. Collaborate with	Unique cost to attend outside of regular tuition	Yes	Attend traditional classes through audit. Independently determine course of study.	No	No

E4Texas	University of Texas at Austin	Housed within the College of Education. Collaborate with social work, education, special education, nursing, child development	Unique cost to attend outside of regular tuition	No	Attend traditional classes through audit. Pre-established courses of study, student able to select which course of study.	Yes	No
Pathway	UCLA Extension	Housed within UCLA Extension	Tuition to university + additional program fee	Yes	Attend traditional classes through audit and inclusion. Independently select course of study.	No	No
Transition to Postsecondary Education	University of Kansas	Housed within School of Education.	Tuition to university + $6,000	Yes	Attend traditional classes with full inclusion.	Yes	No

Collaborates with other campus academic and student services.	Independently determine course of study.

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

The IPSE program associated with VCU is called ACE-IT in College.

Funding. The VCU program requires an extra $5,000 dollars per semester per student. Its funding comes from both private payment and funding through vocational rehabilitation (VR). The program did not require an additional payment until this year, previously they worked with VR to cover education and job coaches while students attended the program. The students pay regular tuition in addition to the extra fee; however, the tuition dollars do not come back to the program. ACE-IT receives no grant money. ACE-IT receives donations, but the donations are less than half of the funding. The program has received TPSID funding in the past.

Support. The ACE-IT program utilizes support staff in a variety of ways. The Disability Support Service Office "meets with students to determine accommodations, assist in technology assessments, and works closely with [the] staff to ensure students receive the resources they need." The program also utilizes university programs such as the Career Center, the Writing Center, and other resources to aid in academic support. The VCU program also involves students to act as peer mentors to the ACE-IT students.

Campus involvement is important for the students, but the ACE-IT program is not a residential program.

Program of study. The courses of study are independently established by each individual student. The students pick the course track based on their career interests. In addition to being involved with peer mentors, ACE-IT students attend classes with traditional students. Inclusion in the university classes vary. In some classes the students audit, and in other classes the students are fully included with the same expectations. Despite full inclusion in some classes, students are not allowed to matriculate into degree-seeking programs.

University involvement. The ACE-IT program is housed within the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in the School of Education. The school decided to house the program within the School of Education based on the TPSID grant received in 2010. The program continues to maintain a close relationship with the leadership of the university and other departments across campus.

Ultimately, the ACE-IT program works to help students prepare for "employment in a career of the student's choosing" (VCU). The focus on employment has led to a 95% employment rate among its graduates.

Vanderbilt University

Vanderbilt University houses the program, Next Steps at Vanderbilt.

Funding. According to the survey response, Next Steps students do not pay regular Vanderbilt tuition. They do not pay an extra fee to attend the program either. Further investigation revealed that the Next Steps program has its own unique price to attend the program. Next Steps receives grant money, including receiving TPSID funding in prior years. It also receives donations; however, the donations make up less than half of the funding.

Students in the program can receive additional funding from the state of Tennessee. Vocational Rehabilitation services also currently funds $6,000 per year for four semesters for eligible students.

Currently, Next Steps is building a business model where the cost to attend will fund the entire program. It will be a flat annual fee that will include the cost of recreation and activities, the cost of one credit hour for each university course they take, and the rest will be considered program fees.

The program is currently working with VR to expand funding after transitioning Next Steps from a two-year to a four-year program.

Support. Next Steps utilizes a variety of resources on campus to support their students. They have their own paid support staff and use the University Accessibility Services as well. Students can request note takers and alternate testing sites, and the office is hosting an intern from the program during the fall semester. University students are also involved in supporting the Next Steps students. Vanderbilt has a student organization that is dedicated exclusively to be peer mentors and friends to the students enrolled. Some of the activities the students do together include eating lunch, exercising, tutoring, creating daily planners, and engaging in campus life.

Program of study. The Next Steps students attend classes with the traditional students, but they audit the classes. There are no in-class supports, but students can request tutors and advisors to help them keep up with the rigorous university classes. The students from the program are not able to matriculate into a degree-seeking program. The students are able to determine their course of study independently, and the participants take a mixture of Career and Community Studies classes that are set in the program and one to two university classes a semester.

University involvement. Vanderbilt administration decided to house with Next Steps program within the Special Education department. Other departments assist the Next Steps program as well. The program has worked with the dietetic intern program, social work interns, and graduate students from other departments. The Next Steps students do not live in the dorms on campus.

The ultimate goal of the Next Steps program is to "provide students with ID the college experience, while also supporting them as they continue to expand in creating their best life ever."

University of Texas at Austin

The University of Texas at Austin houses the E4Texas program. E4 stands for: Educate. Empower. Employ. Excel.

Funding. The students do not pay an extra fee, and the respondent to the survey was unsure if participants pay regular university tuition. University level tuition dollars come back to the program, and the program does not receive grant money. E4Texas does receive donations, but donations make up less than half of the funding. E4Texas has also never been the recipient of TPSID funding. The E4Texas program is funded through the TWC (Texas Workforce Commission) and VRS (Vocational Rehabilitation Services).

Support. The program utilizes a variety of support staff that are both paid and unpaid. The University Accessibility Services are used minimally. The E4Texas does have programs that involves university students. The program encourages their students to make friends in the dorms, join clubs, and talk to their mentors and classmates.

Program of study. E4Texas's program allows students to audit classes with the traditional students, but they are not allowed to matriculate into a degree-seeking program. Mentors are utilized to assist the students with the rigorous college courses. The courses of study are pre-established, but students are able to choose which course of study they would like to follow.

The E4Texas program is residential, and the students are included within the larger student housing. This program did not begin as residential, and there are not any extra

precautions for students living in the dorms. Part of the cost for living in the dorms is covered by VR services.

University involvement. This program is housed within the College of Education, but other departments are involved in the functioning of the program. Other departments that are involved include social work, education, special education, nursing, and child development.

The ultimate goal of this program is to provide resources and support to any adult with ID seeking a college degree program.

University of California at Los Angeles

The UCLA program is called Pathway and is housed within the UCLA Extension program.

Funding. Students pay an extra fee to attend the program, as well as tuition to UCLA Extension. The program receives grant money, and it has received TPSID funding. Pathway also received donations, but they make up less than half of the funding. The Pathway program does not receive any government funding or any funding from UCLA.

Support. The program does utilize support staff, but since the students are not fully matriculated UCLA students, they do not receive services from University Accessibility Services. The program also utilizes Educational Coaches. The coaches are UCLA undergraduates who work one on one as peer mentors and tutors.

Program of study. The students attend classes and participate through both auditing and being fully included. Although they are included, students are not able to matriculate into a degree-seeking program. In order to assist the students with rigorous college courses, Academic Advisors and educational coaches meet with the students weekly. There is drop-in tutoring provided by the residential team and staff support for any online courses the students take. Some

of the course of study is pre-established. However, students are able to select the UCLA main campus courses they would like to audit and the UCLA Extension courses they would like to audit or take for credit. The students are also able to select any recreational courses they would like to take.

Vocational rehabilitation plays an important role in the Pathway program. VR is funded through an outside source, the California Department of Rehabilitation. This department funds independent living support for the students who are clients of the regional center.

University involvement. Other departments were involved in the launch of the program. The Tarjan Center at UCLA was important in the creation of the program, and they continue to act as the advisory board.

The ultimate goal of this program for students is to leave the two-year program and be able to live independently. Pathway also works to achieve the student's goal of working in a competitive environment or continuing their education at a two or four year university.

University of Kansas

The University of Kansas operates the Transition to Postsecondary Education (KU TPE) program.

Funding. The students pay an extra fee of $6,000 per semester in addition to regular tuition. The university level tuition dollars do not come back to the program. KU TPE does receive grant money. The program also receives donations, but donations make up "significantly" less than half of their funding.

Support. Paid support staff play a role in KU TPE. The University Accessibility Services are involved in the program on campus. The TPE program also utilizes university guidance and

counseling services, the applied behavior science department, the speech language department and the education program.

Program of study. TPE students attend classes with the traditional students, and they are fully included with the same expectations. They are not able to matriculate into the degree-seeking programs. In order to support the students in the rigorous college classes, the KU program has education coaching, coursework adaptations, academic guidance and Universal Design for Learning structure. TPE students are able to independently determine their course of study. Like most undergraduate or certificate programs in that there are some required core courses and a choice of electives.

University involvement. When the program launched, the School of Education's dean and program review committee offered their full support. The TPE program is housed within the School of Education. The program works with other campus academic and student services units to create an interdisciplinary network. This program does not utilize VR services.

The KU TPE program is a residential program, and the students live in dorms on campus. There are specific dorms for students in KU TPE who want to live on campus. The students have the opportunity to choose between a four-person, two-person, or single room arrangement. They also have the opportunity to identify a preferred roommate or attend a "potluck" to find a roommate that is a good match. The students that the KU TPE program live in dorms that have mainstreamed students as well. This program did not begin as a residential program.

The ultimate goal of KU TPE is to "give young adults with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to attend University of Kansas for academics, improved employment opportunities, leadership opportunities, and connect with other individuals on campus to enrich their life beyond college."

Common Themes

When comparing responses, the programs shared many similar traits.

Finances

All of the schools received donations, but for every school, donations made up less than half of the funding. The schools were evenly split as to how many had their students pay an extra fee. UK TPE, VCU, and UCLA Extension all required an extra fee for their IPSE program students. Only some of the schools receive grant money; namely, KU, Vanderbilt, and UCLA Extension. All of the programs except for UT Austin have received TPSID funding at some point during their duration.

Every program except for KU utilizes Vocational Rehabilitation services. Many of the programs use VR funds as a source of revenue.

Support from Staff and the University

All of the programs utilize paid support staff. There were varying levels of involvement from the University Accessibility Services, depending on the school. All of the schools have programs with students from the greater university to help as academic, social, and emotional supports. Every program is housed within their School of Education, except for UCLA Extension.

Every program incorporated attending classes with traditional students, however, the level of involvement of the students in the classes varied by program. Across the board, students in the IPSE programs surveyed are unable to matriculate into degree-seeking programs. Many of the universities utilize tutors, academic coaches, and mentors to support their students with the college classes.

The only programs that are residential are UT Austin and KU. At both of the universities, the students live within the larger student housing.

Many of the programs are interdisciplinary and work with departments across campus. For example, Vanderbilt involves interns from other departments such as social work. UT Austin works with social work, nursing, and the child development program.

The response to the survey highlights the diversity among IPSE programs and standard pillars that successful programs stand on.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study explores the foundations and operations of inclusive postsecondary education programs in top Schools and Colleges of Education the United States according to the US News and World Report rankings (2019). A survey was emailed to five Colleges/Schools of Education with questions inquiring about the development and operations of their programs. All of the contacted schools responded and gave insight into their programs. The following section discusses the answers from the schools, and the importance of this information. It also discusses future uses and implications for the data set.

Need for Study

The creation of new programs, particularly academic programs, is a complicated process in higher education. As such, this study reached out to existing IPSE programs to try and determine the best strategies for launching and running IPSE programs so other institutions of higher education have a better road map as they try to implement new programs. Current literature does not fully cover how these programs were started or the details of how they function day to day. This study fills the haps in the literature by providing a basic overview of top existing programs and how they serve individuals with ID.

Methodology

The research was conducted in a survey format. The schools surveyed were chosen due to their listing in the top twenty Schools/Colleges of Education in the United States, according to US News and World Report. One school was removed from consideration, Options for College Success, because further investigation into the school revealed that it is not a program run by Northwestern University, but rather an independent program affiliated with Northwestern and other universities in the area.

The participants were given one month to answer the 35 questions survey. Once all the results were in, they were analyzed for similarities, differences, unique ideas, and program operations and development.

Major Findings

The survey revealed a number of important findings for consideration.

Funding. Majority of the schools responded that they had received TPSID funding at some point. This indicates that TPSID is vital to special education initiatives across the country.

Vocational rehabilitation. Vocational rehabilitation is also an important aspect in the IPSE programs. Nearly all of the schools utilized VR in some capacity, either for employment support, funding, or academics, indicating its integral role in the success of inclusive programs.

Support staff. Support staff played an important role in all the programs, and students enrolled in the larger university also played a role in creating a welcoming atmosphere on campus across the board, assisting students with ID via mentor programs, beer buddies, and participating in university activities.

University involvement. All of the programs were interdisciplinary, reflecting a key aspect of supporting individuals with ID. The programs work with other individuals in the Social Work, Nursing, Nutrition, and Allied Sciences departments.

The close relationship with various departments across campus illustrates that it takes a team to create a successful program and accessible program that covers the needs of every individual enrolled.

Prior Research

Much of the prior research focused heavily on the impacts of the IPSE programs after their establishment.

Vocational rehabilitation. Examining the impacts of IPSE programs found that many students have more steady and meaningful employment after attending an IPSE program (Lindstrom, Doren, and Miesch, 2011). Prior research also explored the long-term outcomes of individuals with ID who have received versus those who have not received some form of postsecondary education. The literature also shows that students who participated in IPSE programs were less likely to be on Medicaid, receive vocational rehabilitation services, remained employed, and depend on social security income (Sannicandro, Parish, Fournier, Mitra, & Paiewonsky, 2018). Research also indicates that there are many benefits to vocational training, which is why nearly all of the programs, except for UK TPE, have a partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation. Employment is an important part of all the IPSE programs, and utilizing resources from VR is integral to many of the programs.

Course of study. Hart, Grigal and Weir (2010) examined what is needed within a program and found that person-centered, individual planning is necessary for the success of a program. The survey revealed that schools that utilize person-centered planning, when constructing courses of study, work best for individuals with ID . The Hart, Grigal, and Weir (2010) study also found that having some autonomy and variety among the course selections is one of the most important aspects of a successful program. This was also seen in the survey, as all the schools responded that their students were able to either independently select their course of study, or select from a variety of pre-established courses.

Student and staff involvement. Each school utilized support staff in some way. A study by Farley, Gibbons, and Cihak (2014) looked into the impacts of peer relationships among the students in IPSE programs and traditional courses of study. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with both peers and mentors greatly enjoying the programs. All of the schools

interviewed had some sort of peer mentor program with traditional students on campus, further indicating the importance of including the traditional students in the program.

Survey Purpose

This survey went beyond the impacts and looked in detail at the actual formation of the program. The purpose of the study was to determine what are the key characteristics needed to effectively create inclusive postsecondary education options for students with ID through surveying five different institutions of higher education. The five schools were chosen based on the fact they are ranked within the Top 20 Schools/Colleges of Education and would be considered institutional peers to UNC-Chapel Hill. This survey did not focus as much on individuals, but rather the operations and development of the individual programs.

New Findings

The survey results produced some unexpected results. The low number of programs that are residential surprising, with only UT Austen and KU responding that their students live in campus forms. This is unexpected because various studies discussed the positive social, emotional, and academic benefits from living in dorms (Uditsky & Hughson, 2008; PACER 2019). However, many of the participating schools did not have residential programs. It was also unexpected that only KU, Vanderbilt, and UCLA Extension received grant funding. The Higher Education Opportunity Act granted more Title IV funding to approved IPSE programs (HEOA, 2008), and it is unanticipated that some of the top Schools/Colleges of Education would not qualify or apply for this funding.

Contributions

The purpose of the study is to determine what key characteristics are needed to effectively create an inclusive postsecondary education options for students with ID. It was

important that the schools provide a snapshot of the negotiations and process that went into the creation of their programs. This survey was conducted in an effort to supply the HEELS UP Committee at UNC with consolidated, relevant information as it tries to launch an IPSE program at Carolina. This paper synthesizes existing research with the survey findings, offering a look at the positive impacts IPSE programs have on individuals with ID, how these programs are launched, and different ways successful programs are run.

Limitations

The survey was not without limitations. Given the inclusion criteria, only five schools' answers were considered when analyzing the results. A wider survey to more schools could have provided more information. There are also other possible topics that were not covered in the survey. Some examples of these topics include: (a) individual classes are conducted, (b) admission requirements, or (c) length of program.

Implications

The implications from the study are explored in the following sections.

For future programs. Although not directly studied in this research, the literature demonstrates that the impact of IPSE programs is overwhelmingly positive. This study provides a glimpse into how other programs are able to operate sustainably and strategies for programs trying to launch. The information provided by the schools demonstrates that top universities are willing to engage in meaningful conversations and actions surrounding IPSE. Multiple schools mentioned the support of the upper administration, as an integral part of being able to launch an IPSE program. Input and collaboration from multiple departments on campus was also mentioned as an important part in the formation of programs.

Funding can be a challenge to solve, considering the many resources that need a source of revenue. Although nearly all of the schools had received TPSID funding at some point, UT Austen did not. They receive their funding through Vocational Rehabilitation, demonstrating that money from the school is not always necessary to operate a program. The various ways that programs are funded provides insight for new programs trying to figure out how to finance their endeavors. This new information can be used by future programs to navigate the launch process and devise the best way to run their programs.

B-12 implications. For many students, college can seem like a natural progression in their educational experience. For students with ID, this may not always be the case. However, given the rising number of IPSE programs, it is important to start shifting parents' and caretakers' mindsets towards preparing their children for college. Information about how to prepare students for college should begin in the early grades. Most parents save for a child's entire life for them to go to college, and if parents of a child with ID are made aware that there are college options for their child, they will be able to do the same. There are also important skills that should be incorporated into a student's curriculum including independent living, academic, and self-advocacy skills. In many curriculums, high school is meant to prepare students with ID to get a job after they graduate. However, given the rising number of programs, schools should re-vamp curriculums to begin to include postsecondary education as an attainable goal for many of their students.

Parental implications. The benefits of IPSE for students with ID are clear, and parents should be aware of the positive impact early on. Funding was a primary topic in the survey, and nearly all of the programs required an extra fee. Parents should have the opportunity to start saving when their child is young in order to be prepared.

Research Implications. The survey demonstrated that further research into how IPSE programs operate would greatly benefit institutions developing new IPSE options. A wider study with more schools could provide a more comprehensive look at current programs. It could also provide examples for a wide range of program structures. While this study focuses solely on highly ranked institutions, more extensive research could paint a picture of a wider variety of IPSE options.

Conclusion

The study focused on the key characteristics of inclusive postsecondary education programs from five different schools across the country. The ultimate goal of this survey is to provide insight from other schools for the HEELS UP Committee at UNC Chapel Hill. This survey gave valuable insights on funding options, administrative strategies, and necessary resources to keep in mind as the committee takes the next steps in creating an IPSE program at Chapel Hill.

Although the survey did not analyze the impacts of IPSE programs, previous literature has extensively highlighted their benefits. In an ideal world, all students with ID would have the option of attending college. School systems across the country need to continue to develop and establish new IPSE programs to make college as accessible as possible. This survey was just a small snapshot into the world of inclusive programs, and continued efforts to research and launch these programs is a necessity for the United States education system. Everyone should have the opportunity to attend higher education, and by establishing successful IPSE programs, more students, regardless of background or ability, can reap the benefits of a college education.

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Appendix

1. Which university/college do you represent?

2. What is the name of your program?

3. Do the students pay an extra fee?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. How much is the extra fee?

5. Do they pay tuition?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

6. Do university level tuition dollars come back to the program?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

7. Do you receive grant money?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

8. Do you receive donations?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

9. To what extent do donations play a role in the finances of maintaining your program?
   a. Donations are majority of our funding
   b. Donations are about half of our funding
   c. I am not sure how much donations play a role in funding

10. Has your program ever received TPSID funding?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

11. Is there anything else you would like to add about funding?

12. How does your program utilize support staff?
    a. Yes

b. No
c. Unsure

13. Are they paid/unpaid?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure
14. How is Accessibility Services involved in your program?

15. Do you have any programs with other students from the university to help as supports-either academic, social, or emotional?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

16. What are some examples of these programs?

17. Are your students included in university classes?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

18. Do they audit or are they fully included?

19. Are your students able to matriculate (join) in degree-seeking programs?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

20. What supports do you have in place to assist the students with the rigorous college classes?

21. Do students independently determine their course of study or is it pre-established?
    a. Independent
    b. Pre-established

22. How was this decided?

23. Which department houses your program?

24. How was this decided?

25. Do your students live in the dorms on campus?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

26. Did your program begin as a residential program?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

27. Do your students live in their own dorm or are they included in the larger student housing?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

28. Does your program utilize Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services?
    a. Yes
    b. No

29. Does VR receive funds from your program funds or an outside source?
    a. Our program
    b. Outside source
    c. Both from my program and an outside source
    d. Unsure

30. What is the involvement of VR in your program?

31. To what extent is your program interdisciplinary?

32. Were other departments involved in the formation/launch of your program?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

33. To what extent is your program interdisciplinary currently?

34. What is the ultimate goal of your program?

35. Do you agree to be contacted after for potential follow-up questions?