

MEMO

To: Office of Management & Budget
From: Brian J. Hartman, on behalf of the following organizations:

Disabilities Law Program
Developmental Disabilities Council
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

Subject: Division of Developmental Disabilities Services FY 12 Budget
Date: November 16, 2010

Please consider this memo a summary of the oral presentation of Brian J. Hartman, Esq. on behalf of the Disabilities Law Program ("DLP"), Developmental Disabilities Council ("DDC"), Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens ("GACEC"), and the State Council for Persons with Disabilities ("SCPD"). We are addressing one (1) component of the DDDS budget, vocational programs for transitioning special education students, a/k/a "special school grads".

Both the Federal and State governments invest considerable resources in the education of students with developmental disabilities. In June, the Governor signed legislation (H.B. No. 328) confirming that special education students in Delaware should expect a program providing "significant learning" and "meaningful benefit...gauged to potential". Students completing such robust educational programs look forward to productive vocational opportunities based on participation in mandatory transition planning in which post-21 supports are identified and affirmatively linked to students exiting the special education system. See 34 C.F.R. §§300.320-321.

Historically, the State has provided funding for vocational and day habilitation services for students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities "aging out" of the special education system. Services are subsidized by Medicaid funds for most, if not all students. In FY 12, the Division projects that up to one hundred and forty-one (141) special education graduates will be eligible for such services. Recognizing that the FY 12 budget will necessarily disfavor program expansion, we nevertheless encourage inclusion of funds to serve the graduates.

We have the following observations.

First, in recent memory, there has never been a Division waiting list for vocational programming for special education graduates.¹ Once initiated, waiting lists tend to grow into systemic anomalies which become increasingly difficult to eliminate. For example, if a student leaves school "ready" for work, and then languishes at home for a year or two, extra retraining and motivational services will be required to recapture the same "readiness" level.

¹On some occasions, the Governor has omitted funding for special school graduates in the proposed budget. On such occasions, the funds have been incorporated into the final budget by the Joint Finance Committee.

Second, the Federal Government is actively promoting reduction of the SSI/SSDI rolls through implementation of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (“TWWIA”). That Act is designed to foster employment of SSI/SSDI beneficiaries. The elimination of vocational opportunities for young adults who could be entering the workforce would undermine this effort. We need to promote a positive expectation that favors employment rather than a “stay-at home” welfare mentality in these impressionable young graduates.

Third, alternative sources of vocational opportunities are no longer readily available. Historically, adults with disabilities seeking vocational training and job opportunities could turn to the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (“DVR”). Unfortunately, for the first time in its history, Delaware’s DVR instituted an “Order of Selection” effective November 17, 2008. Under the “Order of Selection”, individuals with mild to moderate disability profiles are denied access to a wide range of DVR-funded post-secondary vocational and educational opportunities.

Finally, DDDS should be encouraged to ensure “bang for the buck”, i.e., meaningful and productive vocational opportunities commensurate with each client’s potential. At present, less than 20% (365/1,843) of DDDS clients enrolled in day programs are in supported employment in the community.² There is some “tension” between low community-based supported employment opportunities and State statutory guarantees:

§5502. Development of abilities.

Persons diagnosed with mental retardation or other specific developmental disabilities have the right to proper...education, training, habilitation and guidance as will enable them to develop their abilities and potential to the fullest possible extent, no matter how severe their disability may be.

§5503. Economic security and meaningful occupations.

Persons diagnosed with mental retardation or other specific developmental disabilities have a right to strive for productive work in meaningful occupations, economic security and a decent standard of living.

Title 16 Del.C. Ch. 55, Subchapter I, Declaration of General and Special Rights of Persons with Mental Retardation and Other Specific Developmental Disabilities.

There are two initiatives which would support DDDS provision of high-quality vocational opportunities.

²A DDDS day program statistical compilation is appended as Attachment “A”.

First, by statute and executive order, State agencies are encouraged to participate in the “Selective Placement” and “Agency Aid” programs to add persons with disabilities to the State workforce. See Attachment “B”. These programs have been historically underutilized but could provide a valuable source of employment for qualifying special school grads.

Second, the University of Delaware has just been awarded a \$2.3 million grant to fund a 5-year education program to expand postsecondary opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities. See Attachment “C”. Qualifying students will be enrolled in a 2-year Career and Life Studies Certificate program designed to strengthen employability. This is part of a national initiative highlighted in a News Journal article last month. [Attachment “D”] The grant offers a promising collaborative opportunity to provide high quality postsecondary education to DDOS clients.

Recommendations

In closing, we support inclusion of sufficient funds in the FY12 budget to ensure the provision of vocational and employment programs for up to 141 special education graduates eligible for DDOS services.³ We also recommend that DDOS be encouraged to promote meaningful vocational and employment opportunities commensurate with the true potential of the transitioning students.

Thank you.

Attachments

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³The Division will also need funds to annualize the partial year costs of the special school graduates added in FY 11.

STOCKLEY CENTER POPULATION		Last Month:	70	This Month:	70	
B. C	SERVICES POPULATION RESIDENTIAL	NEW CASTLE	KENT	SUSSEX	TOTAL	
SHARED LIVING						
Community Services		24	57	64	145	
NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES						
Neighborhood Home		429	41	106	576	
Community Living Arrangement						
CLA		114	28	10	152	
GRAND TOTAL						
SUPPORTED LIVING		12	9	8	29	
OUT OF STATE		20	0	0	20	
ETLA		5	1	1	49	
DPC		7	0	0	7	
SUB-TOTAL		579	135	188	902	
FAMILY SUPPORT						
Family Support		1175	489	485	2,149	
TOTAL					3,051	
C. EARLY INTERVENTION		NEW CASTLE	KENT	SUSSEX	TOTAL	
Caseload		46	24	25	95	
D. OBRA		NEW CASTLE	KENT	SUSSEX	OUT OF STATE	TOTAL
Caseload		13	7	23	0	43
DAY PROGRAMS						
Day Habilitation Programs					423	
Special Populations					1	
OBRA					20	
Pre-Vocational Programs					936	
Special Populations					97	
Supported Employment					365	
Special Populations					1	
TOTAL					1,843	
E. REGISTRY (Family Support only)		NEW CASTLE	KENT	SUSSEX	OUT OF STATE	TOTAL
EMERGENCY		2	2	2	0	6
HIGH RISK		122	15	29	2	168
INTERMEDIATE RISK		61	10	6	0	77
LOW RISK		3	2	1	0	6
SPECIAL GRADS						
TOTAL						257
F. HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED WAIVER		NEW CASTLE	KENT	SUSSEX	SPECIAL POP	OF STATE
Individuals		427	129	210	99	
G. RESPITE SERVICES		NEW CASTLE	KENT	SUSSEX	TOTAL	
Individuals/Families Served		134	38	39	211	
Respite Requests Received		126	38	37	201	
I. DAY PROGRAMS (POPULATION)		BEGINNING	END OF	NEW	TRANSFER	
DAY HABILITATION PROGRAMS		OF MONTH	MONTH	ADMISSION	OUT	
		66	66	0	0	
First State Senior Center (K/S)		34	33	1	2	FL
Georgetown Center (K/S)		39	38	0	1	GI
Woodside Center (K/S)		32	33	1	0	
Bancroft		1	1	0	0	

§ 5904A. Exceptional employment.

Employment of persons with mental or physical disabilities in a Selective Placement Program or an Agency Aide Program shall be administered by the Human Resource Management Administrator or the Administrator's designee. Such employment shall be by appointment without competitive recruitment and without listing on a referral list. Employment through the Selective Placement Program is limited to 12 months. Each appointee in the Selective Placement Program who successfully completes a trial work period, or passes a competitive examination, may be considered for permanent employment or probationary employment in the classified service. An appointment through the Agency Aide Program is of indefinite duration. Before any appointment is made, the Human Resource Management Administrator or their designee shall advise the applicant of the availability of benefits counseling resources, which offer information or guidance on the effect of employment on public benefits including income from the Social Security Administration.

74 Del. Laws, c. 164, § 3; 75 Del. Laws, c. 88, § 20(6); 75 Del. Laws, c. 350, § 85; 76 Del. Laws, c. 124, § 1.;

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Executive Order Eight - Our continuing commitment to equal opportunity hiring standards and best practices of human resources management in the executive branch

TO: Heads Of All State Departments And Agencies

RE: Our Continuing Commitment To Equal Opportunity Hiring Standards And Best Practices Of Human Resources Management In The Executive Branch

WHEREAS, Delaware law, executive order and/or Merit Rules prohibit discrimination in state employment based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status; or genetic information; and

WHEREAS, the State of Delaware is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all Delawareans; and

WHEREAS, all Delawareans are indebted to the servicemen and servicewomen of our armed forces, and the State of Delaware is committed to honoring that service by ensuring equal employment opportunities to all members of the Armed Forces, Reserves, National Guard and veterans; and

WHEREAS, the State of Delaware remains committed to maintaining a high quality workforce that draws upon the talents of our diverse citizenry to operate our government effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the State's citizens; and

WHEREAS, the State of Delaware has succeeded over the years in diversifying its workforce; and

WHEREAS, the State of Delaware must continue vigorously to promote equal employment opportunity and workplaces free of unlawful or improper discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the State of Delaware can achieve equal opportunity and a diverse workforce only by continuing and improving an equal employment opportunity program that enforces fair recruitment, hiring and promotional practices throughout state government.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JACK A. MARKELL, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Delaware, do hereby DECLARE and ORDER that:

1. The State of Delaware's commitment to equal employment opportunity is hereby affirmed and heads of each Department and Agency within the Executive Branch (collectively "Executive Branch Agencies") are directed to pursue diligently the recruitment and promotion of qualified applicants from diverse backgrounds and to be vigilant in complying with the laws prohibiting discrimination in employment.

2. The work atmosphere in Executive Branch Agencies shall be one

that fosters mutual respect and understanding among persons of different gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or military or veteran status.

3. Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Executive Order are directives from the Governor to Executive Branch Agencies. They will be vigorously enforced by the Governor. However, they are not intended to and shall not create independent causes of action for or on behalf of persons who allege a lack of compliance with those paragraphs.

4. The Governor's Council on Equal Employment Opportunity (hereinafter "Council") is continued. The function of the Council shall be to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of the Executive Branch Agencies' implementation of and compliance with this Executive Order, and to provide advice and recommendations to the Director of the Office of Management & Budget and the Governor.

a. The Council shall consist of eight members. One half of the Council's members shall be members of the Delaware Human Relations Commission, who shall be nominated by the Chairperson of the Human Relations Commission and appointed by the Governor. The remainder of the Council's members shall be appointed by the Governor. All members of the Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Chairperson of the Council shall be appointed by the Governor from among the Council's members, and shall serve as Chairperson at the pleasure of the Governor.

b. The Council shall receive staff support from Human Resource Management and the Office of Human Relations. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation shall advise the Council on matters regarding persons with disabilities.

c. The Council shall furnish each year a written annual report to the Governor and the Director of the Office of Management & Budget on the progress being made in improving the diversity of the State's workforce. Further, the Council should include in its report recommendations to advance cohesion and understanding among current employees, address the effects of implicit bias, and to foster an environment of inclusion. In its report, the Council shall recommend any additional action which, in the Council's judgment, should be undertaken. Such report shall be available to the public.

5. On behalf of the Office of Management & Budget, Human Resource Management shall maintain the central managerial role over all diversity and equal employment matters in the Executive Branch and shall accept overall responsibility for the implementation and management of the policies and procedures set forth in this Order. The Director of Human Resource Management shall:

a. establish the duties and responsibilities of the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Administrator and of Agency equal employment officers ("EEO officers");

b. prepare and submit an annual Executive Department Affirmative Action plan, to include short and long term strategies;

c. hold Agencies accountable for their implementation of this Order;

d. act as the State of Delaware's liaison with the EEOC for federal reporting requirements; and

e. communicate and coordinate diversity and equal opportunity initiatives across Agencies.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS

6. The head of each Executive Branch Agency shall maintain an Affirmative Action Plan, which shall be filed annually with Human Resource Management and the Council on or before September 15.

7. Each Affirmative Action Plan referred to in paragraph 6 shall be in a form prescribed by Human Resource Management to ensure compliance with federal laws, state laws, and this Order. Each plan shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following provisions:

a. A specific statement of goals and objectives designed to assure equal employment opportunities in hiring and promotion and to eliminate any unlawful discrimination in Agency employment;

b. A specific statement of action steps designed to address any documented under-representation of minorities or women in the Agency as compared to Delaware's labor pool. Such action steps shall include:

(i.) Specific proposals for recruiting minorities and women for employment in the Agency to the extent that they are underrepresented in the Agency when compared to the relevant statewide labor market.

(ii.) Specific proposals for assuring that hiring practices are conducted consistently with the objectives of this Order.

(iii.) Specific proposals for assuring that all promotional opportunities are offered in a manner consistent with this Order.

(iv.) Specific proposals for staff participation in training programs on interview techniques and acceptable hiring practices.

(v.) Specific proposals for employee participation in career enhancement programs and seminars.

(vi.) Specific statements regarding the applicability of the following outreach, training, and accountability measures to the Agency's recruitment and retention efforts:

A. Job fairs

B. College and university outreach

C. Professional group outreach

D. Advertising

E. Employee recognition programs

F. Formal and informal mentoring

G. Internal leadership programs

H. Participation in statewide programs

I. Professional development for existing staff, including tuition reimbursement programs, attendance at conferences and seminars, and internal training opportunities.

J. Inclusion of recruitment and retention of women and minorities in Agency's strategic and staff plans.

K. Statements of Agency policy

L. Creation or continuation of Agency diversity committees.

M. Specific efforts of top leadership within the Agency

N. Internal communications efforts within the Agency

c. A designation of the EEO officer within the Agency to carry out diversity and equal employment opportunity functions for the Executive Branch Agency.

8. Each Executive Branch Agency shall make available a summary or full copy of its Affirmative Action Plan to any employee upon request.

RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

9. To support the recruitment of a diverse workforce, the Director of Human Resource Management or designee shall:

a. Assist Executive Branch Agencies in updating their Affirmative Action Plans in accordance with federal guidelines;

b. Develop, coordinate, and implement professional recruiting efforts throughout State government designed to increase the number of qualified women and minority candidates for State employment for positions and opportunities where women and minorities are under-represented. Human Resource Management shall develop a statewide directory of organizations that can serve as resources for the identification of qualified women and minority candidates in particular fields, so that these organizations can be notified regarding specific vacant positions;

c. Review and revise employment hiring procedures and Merit Rules to ensure a selection process that is fair, non-discriminatory and equitable;

d. Require Agencies filling merit positions at paygrade 15 and above to use an interview team of at least three members. Such a team should be diverse in its composition;

e. Work with the State Manager of Training and Development to facilitate Statewide training and technical assistance programs to ensure compliance with State and Federal equal opportunity laws and this Order, and to inculcate effective recruitment and career development procedures; and

f. Work with the EEO officers and personnel officers of the various Executive Branch Agencies to review job classifications within those Agencies, and the qualifications of the employees of such Agencies, with a view toward eliminating any artificial barriers to hiring and promotion, and targeting appropriate employee career development, mentoring and workforce development plans.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

10. Each Executive Branch Agency shall:

a. Be held accountable for compliance with this Order by including the measures and statements required in this Order in each manager's performance plan and each relevant Agency strategic plan;

b. Retain a record of all applicants who voluntarily divulge protected class information. The information required shall be prescribed by Human Resource Management and, to the extent practicable, shall be in a format consistent with the terminology and categories used in federal EEO standard forms;

c. Ask each terminating employee to participate in an exit interview to determine the reasons for that employee's termination and retain records of such interviews; and

d. Report to Human Resource Management information requested by Human Resource Management concerning the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan.

11. Human Resource Management shall:

a. Maintain a comprehensive, statewide, on-line, user-friendly system that allows continuous monitoring of the diversity of the State's workforce across all paygrades;

b. Work with the Council to ensure the publication of clear information regarding the composition of the State's workforce;

c. Submit a quarterly report to the Council; and

d. Assist the Council in preparing its annual report.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

12. The Council, with the assistance of Human Resource Management and the Human Relations Commission staff, shall:

a. Establish a schedule for conducting an intensive review of each Executive Branch Agency in need of review based on criteria established by the Council, to assess compliance with the terms of this Executive Order, the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan, and equal opportunity laws. The review criteria shall be used to determine which Agencies will appear before the Council in priority order. The review shall involve an in-depth consideration of Agency promotion, hiring and recruiting practices. Each reviewed Agency shall receive a detailed report identifying those practices and policies of the Agency that are constructive and those practices and policies which need improvement or elimination, with specific recommendations for the Agency to consider. The Council shall incorporate a summary of the results of these reviews in its annual report, as required by paragraph 4 of this Order. From these annual reviews, Human Resource Management shall submit to each Executive Branch Agency a guidance memorandum identifying successful practices used by the reviewed Agencies to increase the diversity of their workforce and examples of policies and practices that hindered the State's attempt to create a more diverse workforce.

b. Publish, as a part of its annual report, an overall report on the composition of the State's workforce and the State's effectiveness in complying with equal employment laws and this Order.

COMPLAINTS

13. Each Agency shall include in its Affirmative Action Plan a description of a mechanism or complaint procedure to permit and encourage employees to discuss any problems resulting from alleged bias, discrimination, lack of equal employment opportunity or any similar matters with appropriate division or Agency supervisory personnel. The procedure shall provide for the lodging of employee complaints and for a response to be made within a specified

reasonable period of time. Employees shall be advised of their right to file a formal complaint with the Office of Anti-Discrimination of the Department of Labor. Employees shall receive such assistance with the complaint as may be requested from their Agency EEO officer.

14. Human Resource Management shall:

a. Post a public notice, in conspicuous locations or bulletin boards, of all cabinet Departments, major offices, divisions or Agencies which shall affirm the State's commitment to equal opportunity and advise all State employees and applicants for State employment that any complaints of discrimination should be promptly reported to the State Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program Administrator and the Office of Anti-Discrimination of the Department of Labor; and

b. Provide on the application form for state employment a statement of the state's commitment to equal employment opportunity and instructions as to how complaints of discrimination may be reported.

15. The complaint process for employment discrimination cases shall fall into two categories: informal and formal.

a. An informal complaint is filed with Human Resource Management by written or oral communication with the State Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program Administrator requesting the State Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program Administrator to attempt to facilitate resolution of the complaint. Human Resource Management will determine whether or not the complaint appears to fall within the jurisdiction of the Office of Anti-Discrimination of the Department of Labor and may require a formal charge of discrimination within the time limits prescribed by statute.

b. The State Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program Administrator will inquire into such cases by working through the designated Agency EEO officer and appropriate management staff, as deemed appropriate by the Cabinet Secretary. Based on the determination, the State Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program Administrator will respond in writing to the complainant. For allegations of violations to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 as amended, Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1979, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, or Title 19 of the Delaware Code relating to discrimination in employment, the complainant will be advised and/or referred to the Office of Anti-Discrimination of the Department of Labor for investigation into filing a formal complaint even if a resolution is reached through Human Resource Management. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to bar mediation of a complaint by the State Human Relations Commission; however, such mediation shall not affect or in any way toll relevant time limitations.

REPEAL OF PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE ORDERS

16. Executive Order No. 81, dated February 1, 2006, and Executive Order No. 86, dated May 2, 2006, are hereby rescinded.

APPLICABILITY OF EXECUTIVE ORDER

17. This Order shall apply to all Cabinet Departments and Executive Agencies of the State. The members of the General Assembly and the Judiciary are also encouraged to adopt this Order.

18. No provision of this Order is intended to or shall create any

individual right or legal cause of action that does not already exist under state or federal law.

APPROVED this 11th day of August, 2009

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UDaily



\$2.3 million grant funds UD certificate program for students with disabilities

9:15 a.m., Nov. 11, 2010—The U.S. Department of Education has awarded the University of Delaware a \$2.3 million grant to fund a five-year education project designed to expand postsecondary opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities (ID).

This model demonstration project will give students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to enroll in a two-year Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program. The CLSC certificate is designed to provide a meaningful credential to students and help them move on to gainful employment.

The project is designed to positively impact a student's successful transition into adulthood and, at the same time, allow researchers to examine the factors that facilitate or impede those transitions.

It involves a large amount of University-wide and eventually, statewide collaboration. Within the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), Laura Eisenman, associate professor in the School of Education, is overseeing the project. Beth Mineo, center director for the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) and associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS), will serve as the faculty adviser.

The program involves additional staff from CDS and is also coordinating with the Division of Professional and Continuing Studies at the University.

"We view it as a natural extension of the work that's been done here on campus, in partnership with school districts and community agencies," said Eisenman. "What the model program allows us to do is create a more comprehensive program and plug in the additional supports that will make for a meaningful experience."

For more than 15 years, UD has collaborated with school districts in the state to provide campus- and community-based education services to young adults who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Additionally, working with transition programs and employment services, like the Swank Employment project, has helped the University lay the framework needed to establish a model demonstration program for postsecondary education.

The two-year program will offer a specialized career studies track and life studies track, as well as other inclusive learning opportunities for students on campus. Each student will have an individualized plan that includes peer mentoring and staff coaching. The students' academic year will begin in the summer with an orientation and other sessions, which will allow them to become acclimated to campus life.

"This program is going to be a game-changer," said Mineo. "One of the key tenets is integration, so we are going to be working hard to ensure that the students have a full, meaningful campus experience, both academically and socially."

Program organizers hope to admit 15 students into the first cohort for fall 2011. Details about eligibility and the admissions process will be available by February.

While there have been specific postsecondary opportunities for students with ID in terms of academic tutoring or employment training, the state has never been able to offer such a comprehensive, integrated program at the postsecondary level specifically for people with intellectual disabilities.

"Professional and Continuing Studies is honored to work with CEHD in offering this innovative and important certificate program," said James Broomall, assistant provost, Division of Professional and Continuing Studies. "Our units partners with each of the seven academic colleges to meet the learning and career goals of adult and nontraditional students. The U.S. Department of Education funded program for students with disabilities is a special opportunity to meet their needs. We look forward to providing the administrative, marketing, and program support for this unique certificate program."

Although the grant is designed to fund the program for five years, it will also establish partnerships between UD, Delaware State University, and other institutions of higher education in an effort to promote the sustainability and replication of the program.

"College wasn't an option before for students with ID at the post-secondary education level," said Eisenman. "The idea is to mirror the options available to other people in our community without disabilities. This is one that we are very excited about being able to offer."

In October, the U.S. Department of Education awarded more than \$10.5 million to 27 two- and four- year institutions of higher education or consortia of institutions as part of the Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) and established a national coordinating center.

Article by Cassandra Kramer



The CLSC program is an option for someone like Andrew Netta, a student who is currently in the Community-Based Education Alliance through Delcastle High School and UD's Center for Disabilities Studies.



Laura Eisenman



Beth Mineo

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Attachment "C"



More colleges accommodate disabled

Grants, work-study newly allowed

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH • Associated Press • October 17, 2010

Zach Neff is all high-fives as he walks through his college campus in western Missouri. The 27-year-old with Down syndrome hugs most everybody, repeatedly. He tells teachers he loves them. "I told Zach we are putting him on a hug diet -- one to say hello and one to say goodbye," said Joyce Downing, who helped start a new program at the University of Central Missouri that serves students with disabilities.

The hope is that polishing up on social skills, like cutting back on the hugs, living in residence halls and going to classes with non-disabled classmates will help students like Neff be more independent and get better jobs.

Eight years ago, disability advocates were able to find only four programs on university campuses that allowed students with intellectual disabilities to experience college life with extra help from mentors and tutors. As of last year, there were more than 250 in three dozen states and two Canadian provinces, said Debra Hart, head of Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

That growth is partly because of an increasing demand for higher education for these students and new federal funds that allow students with intellectual disabilities to get grants and work-study money.

The college programs vary. Generally the aim is to support the students as they take regular classes with non-disabled students. Professors sometimes are advised to shift from all lectures and add more group projects. Sometimes disabled students are paired with non-disabled students.

Disability advocates say only a small percentage of these students will receive degrees, but that the

programs help them get better jobs.

Historically, adults with intellectual disabilities have been restricted primarily to jobs in fast-food restaurants, cleaning services and "sheltered workshops," where they work alongside other disabled people and often earn below-minimum wages, said Madeleine Will, vice president of the National Down Syndrome Society.

With additional training, Hart said, participants can be a librarian's assistants or do data-entry work in an office.

Besides allowing for federal financial aid for these programs, Congress also has appropriated \$10.56 million to develop 27 model projects to identify successful approaches. The infusion of federal money has generated some criticism. Conservative commentator Charlotte Allen said it's a waste to spend federal tax dollars on the programs and insisted that calling them college dilutes the meaning of college.

"It's a kind of fantasy," said Allen, a contributing editor for *Minding the Campus*, a publication of the fiscally conservative Manhattan Institute. "It may make intellectually disabled people feel better, but is that what college is supposed to be all about?"

Some school districts have partnerships with nearby colleges under which the district pays for their 18- to 21-year-old students to take higher-education classes.

In other cases, college costs are paid for by the



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parents. Their children previously haven't been eligible for grants and work-study money because they generally weren't seeking a degree and wouldn't have been admitted to college through the typical process.

Back at the University of Central Missouri, Neff and another participant in the program for students with developmental issues, Gabe Savage, laugh with friends during a recent lunch in their residence hall cafeteria.

Savage, a 26-year-old from Kansas City, is grateful for it all – new friends, the chance to try out for a school play, brush up on his computer skills and even take a bowling class with non-disabled students looking to earn a physical-education credit.

"It's an answer to my prayer that I am here," he said. "I always wanted to do this."

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