

# College and Career Ready: Transition from High School to College Student

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# As a result of this session participants will:

- Examine the time students need to learn to become college students.
- Discuss college and career skills.
- Explore what students need to have a successful transition from high school student to college student.



# Concordia University

## ■ Concordia University, Mequon, WI

- \* Private, not-for-profit university founded in 1881.

- \* A Lutheran university with more than 8,000 graduate and undergraduate students. About 2,500 are traditional undergraduates on-campus.

- \* In collaboration with a non-profit organization, CU hosts a two-year post-secondary certificate program.

- \* In Mequon, WI, a Milwaukee suburb on Lake Michigan.

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# What is Transition?

- The process of moving from one status to another.
- Transition = Change
- Question for students:
  - “What am I going to do after high school?”
  - “What am I going to do after college?”
- Transition planning is a subset of planning for adult life.

# One Perspective

- **Students need transition time:**
- The transition from high school to college student is difficult for any freshman, but with a significant disability it can be even harder.
- Students in high school who transition to college are accustomed to inclusive school communities.
- While they may be unprepared for college, taking the time to learn from their peers at college helps them fit in and “learn the ropes” of how to be a college student.
- Teachers in the K-12 system are also important partners because as they learn what students with significant disabilities need in college they will be better able to prepare them with college and career ready skills.

# One Perspective

- Students need transition time:
- These students need time to make the transition:
  - from high school where many people do things for them and the school day is very structured
  - to being a college student who is independently responsible for their own schedule, academics, living situation, and social life.
- The move from high school to college academic rigor is significant and students of all kinds need time to process and learn to be a college student.

# A Student Speaks...

“Specifically for most of us with disabilities, living independently is like taking a leap off of a cliff without a parachute because this [college] is the first time practicing true independence without the help of parents or a full time aide in the classroom...

Unlike our able-bodied peers who get forced to set their own alarm clock, get dressed, do laundry, prepare meals, and slowly work into independence two or three years before they leave home at the start of their high school career.

This is due to the inherent thought processes of our parents that their son or daughter with a disability will never leave their care.”

# One Perspective

## Students need transition time:

- Time is key to preparing students with disabilities to further their education as a degree-seeking student, or in a career path and community living as successful, productive adults.
- If these students took longer to learn things in grades K-12, it is reasonable to think they will need more time to learn things after high school.
- Some college programs for students with significant disabilities provide this extra time (2 or more years) without the pressure of degree enrollment or GPA worries to allow students to learn how to be a college student and an adult.



# One Perspective

- **Students need transition time:**
- One of the best outcomes of having an inclusive college community where everyone belongs is the benefit to the whole campus that students with significant disabilities provide.
- Many students without disabilities say their friendships with students with significant disabilities changed their life, and that their new friends taught them far more than they taught the students with disabilities.
- Because school has been inclusive these students have the opportunity to help campuses better pursue the goal of an inclusive campus.

# Transition

- **Transition essentials:**
- According to the National Center on Learning Disabilities (NCLD) (2008) transitioning students need to:
  - 1) know about their disability and how it affects them;
  - 2) know the accommodations they use and why;
  - 3) learn and practice self-determination and self-advocacy skills beginning in elementary school;
  - 4) attend and actively participate in IEP and transition meetings from a young age.
- Better IEPs mean students are better prepared for college.
- The U.S. Department of Education recommends school personnel be familiar with the transition needs of students and help them prepare for the transition to college and adult life.

# Preparation

## ■ College and Career Ready:

### ■ According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI):

“...college and career ready students with disabilities should have both the academic and functional proficiencies needed to demonstrate *independence, self-determination, critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, creativity, responsibility, and persistence.*”

### ■ College and career ready Individualized Education Plans are used to better prepare students with disabilities for a future after high school in culturally responsive practice that align with transition plans (WI DPI, 2016).

### ■ Students begin learning college and career skills in elementary school focused on curricular skills.

### ■ This should help students with significant disabilities better prepare for college than previous generations.

### ■ This is needed because many students are unprepared for college.

# Preparation

- When K-12 teachers are aware of the skills and demands college requires of today's students with significant disabilities they write better IEP goals and transition plans that lead to students' improved preparedness as independent learners and adults in college and employment.
- This new awareness, that was not available when many teachers went through teacher training in college, is the reason some college programs reach out to teachers to visit campus.
- Viewing the 'other end' where the outcomes of special education are seen in college students enables teachers to broaden their perspective of the importance of what they do to prepare their students for life after high school.
- It is one way to help improve the college readiness of students with disabilities which impacts disability services in college.

# A Student's View

“Self-advocacy is something that needs to be taught to us long before we reach college. It should begin at around 14 years of age when we are supposed to become an active participant in our own Transition planning at the IEP meetings.

Unfortunately, most people with disabilities sit in those meetings while everyone else decides our fate. This encourages and perpetuates ‘learned helplessness’.

Then, we reach college...or the workforce, and have no idea what to do, let alone how to do it! We need to be taught, starting at an early age, to make choices and take care of ourselves!”

# 12 Core Component Skills of Self-Determination

- **Choice making** – give student two known options
- **Decision making** – give two known options and information about consequences
- **Problem solving** – give a situation where solutions are not known
- **Goal setting and attainment** – determine steps necessary to meet goal; set start and end dates
- **Risk taking, Independence and safety** – determine understanding of safety issues and how to address them
- **Internal self-regulation; locus of control** – Assess progress toward meeting goals; understanding that one's actions influence the world
- **Self-instruction** – increase independence in learning and practicing new skills
- **Positive perceptions of self-efficacy and outcome expectancy** – one has the ability to do a task, and if one uses that ability, one will be successful
- **Self-advocacy and leadership** – ability to speak for oneself, to assert rights, and to guide the actions of others
- **Self-awareness** – understand one's own strengths and weaknesses
- **Self-advocacy** – ability to use knowledge of self to increase one's quality of life

(Wehmeyer, 2000)

# Self-Determined Learning Model Of Instruction (SDLMI)

## **PHASE 1 – WHAT IS MY GOAL?**

- What do I want to learn?
- What do I know about it now?
- What must change for me to learn what I don't know?
- What can I do to make this happen?

## **PHASE 2 – WHAT IS MY PLAN?**

- What five things can I do this week to work toward my goal?
- What could keep me from taking action?
- What can I do to remove these barriers?
- When will I take action?

## **PHASE 3 – WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?**

- What actions have I taken?
- What barriers have been removed?
- What has changed about what I didn't know?
- Do I know what I want to know?

## **REPEAT - PHASE 1 – NEW GOAL?**

# College Benefits

- An article published by the Institute for Community Inclusion states:

“The growth that students experience in college can be measured in a number of areas, including academic and personal skill-building, employment, independence, self-advocacy, and self-confidence...

Being part of campus life, taking classes (whether auditing or for credit), and learning to navigate a world of high expectations develops the skills needed for successful adult life” (Hart et al., 2006).



# A Student's Thoughts About Finding A Place In The World

“We should learn to examine our disability and accept its limitations within our particular culture and society...learning to celebrate what we do have...our abilities as well as our differences...with pride and without humiliation...to celebrate our piece of the human mosaic is what empowerment is all about...differences are essential to beauty.

There is a place for us in the world!”

# Research

- “Students with intellectual disabilities who had some type of college experience were much more likely to obtain competitive employment, required fewer supports, and earned higher wages.
- Additionally, students had increased self-esteem and expanded social networks that included students without disabilities” (Hart et al., 2006, p.3).
- “An important question not just “How are we helping students develop” but more specifically **“how are we helping students develop *in the context* of the social systems to which they *do* belong and *will* belong?”**” (Moore and Schelling, 2015, p.5).
- This raises the issue of learning in natural environments such as a university campus to assimilate students with significant disabilities into the whole campus community because they will be living in the dorm with others with and without disabilities.
- **These are the adults from whom students with disabilities learn and who will be their neighbors and friends after college.**  
(Moore and Schelling, 2015, p.5).

# College Adjustment

- Maconi (2016) indicates that students who identify as having a disability in order to seek accommodations in college view themselves as more hard working than their non-disabled peers.
- Wallace (2016) surveyed students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and found that they acknowledge the difficulty in adjusting to college academic requirements such as attendance, and assignment deadlines; and that self-advocacy is vital to college success.

# College Adjustment

- These findings support evidence that college students with significant disabilities tend to require:
  - \* extra time
  - \* support
  - \* peer mentoring to learn how to:
    - be a successful college student (study, socialize)
    - maneuver the high expectations of academics (do homework, study)
    - use self-determination skills (decide how to spend time)
    - be a self-advocate (talk to professors about what they need)
    - prepare for the adult world of career, community living and involvement.

# What CUW Students Say...

- “Students are more than students with disabilities. They are my friends.”
- “I’ll be a more effective teacher because of this experience with students.”
- “Giving students choices helps them be more engaged. I now realize that.”
- “This experience changed me. I would have never thought to focus on transition and the possibility that students with disabilities could go to college.”

# Surprises

- Students unprepared from high school and transition programs
- Had to go back and teach/reteach basic skills
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Math, especially money
  - Technology-added Technical Computers class
- Students unaware of their accommodations
- Students unable to use accommodations because they had an aide who did it for them
- Faculty uneducated about students with disabilities and hesitant to have them in class.

# What We Learned

- Students need these two years to grow and learn how to be a college student/adult by observing their peers
- Students need supports in class and socially to be successful
- Transition skills need to be taught early to have time (years) to practice and increase skills
- Dormitory living is one of the most important aspects of the program due to skills learned and used to gain independence and successfully live in an adult community
- The students have enriched the entire campus and provide a means for natural inclusion in a normalized environment for everyone on campus-students and faculty, often for the first time in their lives
- Many faculty did not go to school with people with disabilities so they are not as welcoming or knowledgeable about people with disabilities as are college students. Once educated many ask for students to be in their classes.

# Preparing for the Future

## ■ Students need these 2 years to learn how to:

- *make good decisions on their own*
- *use time management skills*
- *follow their schedule independently*
- *explore a career path*
- *ease into academic classes*
- *be a college student*
- *maneuver academic, social, and other activities to live on their own*



# Tips for Working With Students

- Begin early planning for college.
- Students need a firm foundation in basic skills-math, reading, writing, communication, social skills.
- Use and teach technology. It is a tool for accommodations and academic success.
- Learn about guardianship - if any is needed at all.
- **Complete a Triennial Review or Reevaluation every three years throughout the school years, especially in high school - it becomes the pathway for accommodations at college and work.**
- Ask students what works for them and what they need.
- Educate students about their disability and accommodations.
- Teach self-determination and self-advocacy skills.
- Learn the difference between services in K-12 under IDEA and college without IDEA; college is an access system, not an entitlement system.
- Empower your student to work with professors to get the help they need.
- Keep the long view in mind. Every minute of every day matters.

# Beginnings...

“When I started last year I was scared out of my mind and I thought to myself ‘this place is not for me’ – I wish I could just leave and go to an actual four year college. But I knew that was not a possibility for me.

So, I tried my best to get used to living away from home even though I was not that far away from home it still felt like it. I was homesick a lot last year so I didn’t talk to anyone at all because I thought to myself that no one was going to like me if I was sad and mooney all the time.

I kept my opinions to myself and just stayed in my room and did homework and laundry all the time.”

Then things changed...

# ...Then Things Changed

“One day I decided to come out of my room and explore everything such as getting to know the students. I did meet a lot of new friends and I also met my boyfriend Ben and we are still close to this day. I met everyone and became friends. Some, like Stephanie, are literally sisters to me. After a while I got used to everything.

Now, I am more at peace, and I feel I have changed a lot, too. I started my own little business making no-sew fleece blankets with my friends in the dorm. I talk on my phone a lot more with friends, and I joke around a lot more.

Although I still love my Mom and brother, I have grown up a lot and have my own life now. I am an Ambassador in the program, a leader and role model and I am planning to live in my own apartment next year. I am a new person thanks to this program. I am very blessed and happy now!!”

# Thank You!

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