



**IN! Colorado Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education
d.b.a. IN! Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education**

7931 S Broadway #193

Littleton, CO 80122

720-629-0196

info@inclusivehighered.org

inclusivehighered.org

HB 22-1107 Inclusive Higher Education Opportunities

First Annual Report

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BACKGROUND & REQUIREMENTS

Historically, the education, employment, and independent living outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities have often been dismal. Further, challenges exist when accessing high-quality postsecondary education and training designed to meet their individual needs. These challenges add to poor outcomes concerning employment and independence.

In 2014, advocates for persons with ID began working to create inclusive opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities within Colorado. As a result, Senate Bill 16-196 enacted a five-year inclusive higher education pilot program at Arapahoe Community College, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and the University of Northern Colorado. As of 2022, approximately 70 students with ID were enrolled at institutions of higher education, participating in traditional classes and coursework, living inclusively on campus, participating in college social life, and preparing for their careers. While students with ID have historically been denied college options, inclusive higher education has proven that when given the opportunity, students are reaping the benefits from post-secondary education, including, increased access to competitive employment, increased socialization, community belonging, and greater independence.

The ongoing success of Colorado's first pilot programs and the many advancements that have been made for inclusive higher education within Colorado has led to significant demand for more opportunities throughout the state. As a result, House Bill 22-1107, the "Inclusive Higher Education Act," was signed into law in May of 2022, appropriating \$450,000 each year for five years to establish and expand college pathways for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) at state institutions of higher education across Colorado.

The act requires the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) to contract with an organization that has demonstrated success in assisting students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to attend institutions of higher education to administer the grant program, perform annual evaluations of the grant recipients, and produce an annual report. As the contracted administering entity, IN! Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education (IN!) seeks to leverage the resources offered by Colorado state legislation to promote access to higher education, competitive integrated employment, and independent living outcomes for students with ID.

HB 22-1107 included the following provisions:

- (1) There is created in the department the inclusive higher education grant program to provide grants to state institutions of higher education for the purpose of establishing, or expanding existing, inclusive higher education programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- (2) a state institution of higher education that receives a grant through the grant program shall use the money for the purpose of establishing an, or expanding an existing, inclusive higher education program.
- (3) to receive a grant, a state institution of higher education must submit an application to the administering entity in accordance with policies adopted by the commission.
- (4) the administering entity shall review the applications received pursuant to this section.

Evaluation and Reporting Requirements:

- (1) The administering entity shall perform an evaluation of the performance of the inclusive higher education program at each state institution of higher education that received a grant. The evaluation must:

- (a) review each inclusive higher education program and compare the programs to recognized accreditation standards and best practices;
 - (b) include comprehensive surveys of inclusive higher education program stakeholders, including students, students' families, peer mentors, faculty, and staff; and
 - (c) include assessments for students to demonstrate growth in independent living, including self-care, socialization, career readiness, healthy lifestyle choices, and financial literacy.
- (2) The administering entity shall perform a comprehensive survey of former students and former students' families. The survey must solicit information concerning the former students, including their housing circumstances, careers, and social activities or associations. The administering entity shall retain the surveys and evaluate successes that are a consequence of inclusive higher education programs and identify opportunities to improve outcomes for current and future students.
- (3) The administering entity shall submit a report to the department. at a minimum, the report must include:
- (a) a summary of the findings from the evaluation performed
 - (b) an analysis of the findings from the evaluations performed, including comparisons between the current year's and previous years' findings to evaluate the long-term impacts of inclusive higher education for current students participating in an inclusive higher education program and former students who participated in a program; and
 - (c) a description of expenses made with the grant money.

GRANT PROGRAM

In January 2023, IN! identified a dedicated staff to manage the grant program and further established a multi-disciplinary committee tasked with the development of the Inclusive Higher Education (IHE) grant program. Committee members include non-profit organizations, college partners, K-12 educators, an attorney, parent/family with a college-bound child with ID, and those involved in statewide and national work around Inclusive Higher Education. The committee collaboratively facilitated the outreach to higher education institutions across the state, published the grant applications and pertinent resources, oversaw the grant review process, and guided the contracting process with grant recipients.

In partnership with the Legislative Committee, IN! successfully established the Inclusive Higher Education Grant program to provide state institutions with a process by which they can apply and receive grant funding to implement an Inclusive Higher Education program on their campus. All grant program information was published at inclusivehighered.org/expansion and included several resources, such as frequently asked questions, recorded webinars, and grant applications. During each grant cycle, IN! held open informational sessions regarding the expectations of the grant program, the legislation, the development of IHE programs, and a review of financial considerations for program sustainability. Information regarding the grant program was disseminated across the state via IN! and CDHE. IN! continued to outreach to colleges and universities statewide to provide information and garner further interest.

Grant applications were reviewed and scored by an additional interdisciplinary review committee of local and national professionals from across K-12 and higher education fields. Each applicant participated in a 30-minute, virtual Q&A session with the review committee members prior to grant award determinations. All reviewer scores and meeting notes are available upon request.

All grant cycles were built upon the Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium's program model & pillars depicted in the graphic below:



Since the inception of the IHE grant program, IN! has completed three grant cycles and is actively running a fourth grant cycle. Details regarding the grant applications, grant recipients, and awarded funds for each cycle are outlined below.

First Grant Cycle: March 15, 2023 - May 1, 2023

The purpose of the first grant cycle was to provide funding to institutions seeking to establish new inclusive higher education programs across Colorado. Applicants were required to demonstrate a plan to develop an inclusive program that includes the following:

- Receiving program approval from president and top leadership.
- Demonstrating how students with ID fit into the broader university plan for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Assessing institutional policies and practices in order to determine adequate training, technical assistance and the capacity needed to provide inclusive higher education opportunities for students with IDD.

- Ensuring program outreach and enrollment to adequately support program sustainability with a focus on reaching Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), rural, and low-income communities.
- Developing normative, individualized programs and supports representing the four key pillars: academics, social, career, and independence.
- Developing alternative admission standards that do not require applicants to take a national assessment test as an admission requirement and allow for modified coursework.
- Creating and offering an institutionally approved credential for students with intellectual disabilities upon program completion.
- Integrating person-centered planning in the development of each student's postsecondary plan.
- Providing peer mentoring services for the students, ensuring normative support across campus.
- Offering post-graduation programmatic support that will ensure a successful transition of students into life after college (i.e. benefits counseling, community resources, etc.).
- Coordinating programs and support with available vocational rehabilitation through the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.
- Completing a budget and financial sustainability template, template provided by IN! as needed.
- Participating in the Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium, facilitated by IN! to obtain guidance, evaluation, and program development support.

For further details regarding the grant application, see: [IHE Grant Cycle 1 RFP](#)

Grant Recipients: CSU & MSU Denver

Colorado State University (CSU)

Amount Granted: \$449,636

Grant Duration: June 2023-June 2028

CSU was awarded an inclusive higher education grant to fund the five-year development of the RAM Scholars program, which will take a unique, innovative approach to inclusive higher education with a focus on career development in the STEAM and Agriculture fields. Quarterly reports from CSU regarding program progress and key milestones are available upon request.

Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver)

Amount granted: \$370,000

Grant Duration: June 2023-June 2028

MSU Denver was initially awarded a provisional grant of \$55,000 to be used for a feasibility study and additional review of their initial plan to establish an inclusive higher education program. After six months of review and a brief re-application, MSU Denver was awarded the remaining \$315,000 to fund the five-year development of the Inclusive Higher Education Solutions (IHES) program. IHES aims to improve the postsecondary outcomes for students with ID by providing a supportive transition from secondary school programming to inclusive higher education academics, independent living, community inclusion, and meaningful employment. Quarterly reports from MSU Denver regarding program progress and key milestones are available upon request.

Grantee Progress

Both CSU and MSU Denver began their regularly scheduled technical assistance meetings with IN! staff and participation in the Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium in the summer of 2023. These meetings offered necessary support and guidance as institutional staff began their initial year of program

development. Both grantees successfully recruited and enrolled their first cohort of inclusive higher education students during Fall 2024, providing inclusive access to college coursework, peer mentor support across campus, and career exploration. Neither program has on-campus living opportunities, though CSU intends to develop a residential component in the next few years. Both CSU and MSU Denver are in the process of completing their Certified Transition Program applications and institutional approval of their Comprehensive Higher Education Certificates.

As CSU and MSU Denver have not yet had graduates to survey and/or had a formal cohort of enrolled students during the stakeholder survey process (Spring 2024), both institutions were not formally included in the first year's evaluation. They are receiving guidance surrounding best practices in alignment with national accreditation standards and will participate in the Spring 2025 stakeholder survey evaluations.

Second Grant Cycle: July 17, 2023 - September 1, 2023

The purpose of the second grant cycle was to increase equitable access to existing inclusive higher education programming with a focus on reaching students facing additional barriers to IHE, including but not limited to students from BIPOC, rural, or low-income communities. Qualified existing inclusive higher education programs in the state of Colorado (Elevate at ACC, Office of Inclusive Services at UCCS, and GOAL at UNC) were able to apply for needed funding to further expand and/or diversify student enrollment. Applicants were required to submit a proposal that included the following:

- Clearly defined definition of program expansion and/or diversification
- Assessment of institutional and/or programmatic practices that pose barriers to equal access for students with IDD and how proposals will meet identified needs.
- Measurable outcomes and timeline of proposal implementation.
- Attached budget.
- Letter of support from the institution of higher education.

For further details regarding the grant application, see: [IHE Grant Cycle 2 RFP](#)

Grant Recipients: UCCS & UNC

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS)

Amount granted: \$40,000.

Grant Duration: November 2023-October 2024 UCCS' Office of Inclusive Services was awarded an inclusive higher education grant to fund one year of program expansion and diversification efforts with a specific commitment to building community partnerships to increase the diversity of the student population, providing targeted job coaching, and enhancing independent living services. Progress reports from UCCS OIS regarding key milestones are available upon request.

It is important to note that during this grant period, UCCS' OIS became a fully accredited inclusive postsecondary education program from the Inclusive Higher Education Accreditation Council. They are the second in the nation and first in the state of Colorado to earn this esteemed status. The OIS program director and staff have been pivotal in guiding IN!'s assessment of all-inclusive higher education programs in alignment with national accreditation standards, and they continue to be leaders of best practice within Colorado and the nation, more broadly.

University of Northern Colorado (UNC)

Amount granted: \$40,000.

Grant Duration: November 2023-October 2024

UNC GOAL was awarded an inclusive higher education grant to fund one year of program expansion and diversification efforts with a specific commitment to equitable recruitment and outreach, inclusive curriculum and programming, faculty and staff development, and community partnerships. Progress reports from UCCS OIS regarding key milestones are available upon request.

Grantee Progress

UCCS OIS and UNC GOAL were two of the first pilot IHE programs in the state of Colorado and were each awarded a total of \$125,000 from Senate Bill 16-196 to help establish an inclusive pathway on their campuses from 2016-2020. Since their initial funding, both IHE programs have become self-sustaining and do not rely on outside grant funding to provide the essential supports to enrolled students. Due to their ongoing efforts and success, both UCCS and UNC sought HB 22-1107 grant funding to develop additional services that might increase enrollment and diversity of students served.

Both UCCS and UNC have shown substantial progress toward their grant program goals primarily in the area of increasing community partnerships with local school districts and agencies that will lead to greater diversification of student enrollment. Both institutions have successfully awarded scholarship funds to students in need and continue to ensure program information is accessible to Spanish-speaking families. It is important to note that UNC has faced significant staff challenges during the 23-24 school year that has impeded their original timeline, though they intend to attain program goals by the end of the grant period.

Third Grant Cycle: January 17, 2024 - April 15, 2024

The purpose of the third grant cycle was to provide funding to institutions seeking to establish new inclusive higher education programs within rural or community college settings. In an effort to address ongoing barriers to inclusive higher education, only institutions within rural/Western Slope settings or a part of the Colorado community college system were eligible to apply.

It was made clear throughout the third grant cycle that many rural or western slope institutions have limited knowledge about inclusive higher education and therefore require far more guidance and education surrounding the development of an IHE program, both during the grant application process and into the implementation phase.

Applicants were required to demonstrate a plan to develop an inclusive program that includes the following:

- Receiving program approval from president and top leadership.
- Establishing alternative admission standards that do not require applicants to take a national assessment test as an admission requirement and allows for modified coursework.
- Demonstrating how students with ID fit into the broader university plan for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Developing programmatic support within the four pillars of inclusive higher education represented in the Program Model & Pillars graphic below.
- Providing person-centered planning and peer mentoring services for students to ensure normative support across campus.
- Creating and offering an institutionally approved credential for students to earn upon program completion.
- Taking necessary steps to become a Certified Transition Program (CTP)
- Participating in monthly Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium meetings, facilitated by IN!, to obtain guidance, evaluation and program development support.
- Participating in annual evaluation requirements

- Ensuring program outreach and enrollment that meets the needs of your region with a focus on reaching black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), rural and low-income communities.
- Completing a budget and financial sustainability template (template and guidance provided by IN! as needed).

Attention was given to increasing diversity and accessibility within expansion efforts. While expanding inclusive higher education pathways, program development should also look to focus on creating opportunity and increasing equity for students with ID potentially facing barriers to accessing inclusive higher education in rural, low-income and BIPOC communities.

For further details regarding the grant application, see: [IHE Grant Cycle 3 RFP](#)

Grant Recipients: LCC & PPSC

Lamar Community College (LCC)

Amount granted: \$250,000

Grant Duration: June 2024-June 2029

LCC was awarded an inclusive higher education grant to fund the five-year development of the Cultivate@LCC program. LCC strategically serves diverse student populations and provides greater access to students with ID within rural communities. While LCC's funding is less than other program development budgets, IN! is collaborating with LCC and local community partners to identify additional funding sources as needed.

Pikes Peak State College (PPSC)

Amount granted: \$303,000

Grant Duration: June 2024-June 2029

PPSC was awarded an inclusive higher education grant to fund the five-year development of the ASPIRE Scholars program. PPSC seeks to strategically offer a two-year pathway to students within Colorado Springs as a potential stepping stone to the four-year university experience at UCCS, as is the normative pathway for many college students.

Grantee Progress

Both LCC and PPSC began their regularly scheduled technical assistance meetings with IN! staff in the summer of 2024; they will begin engaging in the Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium during the fall of 2024. Both grantees have begun their initial year of program development with a specific focus on hiring for key positions and establishing interdepartmental relationships to ensure the success of program launch at each institution. Additionally, both grantees have engaged in partnership meetings with other inclusive higher education directors and have ongoing access to IN! database of program development resources and guides. LCC & PPSC will plan to enroll their first cohorts in the fall of 2025.

As LCC and PPSC will not yet have graduates to survey and/or have a formal cohort of enrolled students until Fall of 2025, both institutions will not formally be included in the Spring 2025 stakeholder evaluations. They are receiving guidance surrounding best practices in alignment with national accreditation standards and will participate in the Spring 2026 stakeholder survey evaluations.

Fourth Grant Cycle: July 1, 2024 - Current

Based upon a thorough needs analysis and statewide stakeholder feedback, the remaining legislative funding appropriated for program development, totaling \$267,000, has been reserved for a Western Slope

college or university to develop an inclusive higher education pathway. IN! is actively working with the Western Slope community to identify next steps in providing grant funding to the appropriate institution.

Therefore, the fourth grant cycle, the Western Slope Initiative, will only be awarded to one public institution of higher education on the Western Slope of Colorado to be used throughout a 4-year development period. The recipient will receive an initial \$267,000 grant to begin program development (years 1-2). IN! and a dedicated advisory committee will work to raise remaining funding needs (years 3-4). For further details regarding the grant purpose, see: [Western Slope Initiative Overview](#)

Grant Program Summary

Since the launch of the Inclusive Higher Education grant program, \$1,452,636 has been awarded to six institutions of higher education committed to inclusively serving students with intellectual disabilities. As of Fall 2024, there are six inclusive higher education programs with enrolled students, totaling 100 students with ID attending college statewide. Of the 100 enrolled IHE students, 58 are living on campus in either a dorm or a campus apartment, and 6 are living off-campus independently. Students represent 17 Colorado counties and 5 students are coming from out of state. Since May of 2024, 63 students with ID have graduated from inclusive higher education at ACC, Regis, UCCS, and UNC, receiving their Comprehensive Higher Education Certificates in over 17 different areas of study.

After the fourth grant cycle, there will be a total of nine inclusive higher education programs, all of which will actively participate in the Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium and pursue self-sustaining funding models to ensure the permanency of high-quality IHE pathways for students with ID. IN! continues to pursue strategic expansion efforts that meet the needs of students with ID throughout Colorado while ensuring strategic program development and improvement, helping students with ID inclusively access academic development, social engagement, independence, and career advancement.

Table 1: Fall 2024 Enrollment Demographics

Students Enrolled	
ACC	17
CSU - Grant Recipient	11
MSU Denver - Grant Recipient	4
Regis University	23
UCCS - Grant Recipient	23
UNC - Grant Recipient	22
LCC - Grant Recipient	NA - program launch FA25
PPSC - Grant Recipient	NA - program launch FA25
Gender	
Male	58
Female	38
Not Reported	4
Race	
White/Caucasian	64
Black	7
Latino/Hispanic	7
Pacific Islander	1
Asian	2
Multiple Races	1
Not Reported	18

Table 2: Description of Expenses

Expense Description	Expense Amount
Grant Awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSU: \$305,000 of \$449,636 • MSU Denver: \$250,000 of \$370,000 • PPSC: \$153,000 of \$303,000 • LCC: \$150,000 of \$250,000 • UNC: \$40,000 of \$40,000 • UCCS: \$40,000 of \$40,000 	\$938,000
Program Manager Salary & Benefits/Taxes	\$96,535
Database/Evaluation	\$5,250
Materials	\$2,250
Computer/Software	\$2,250
Travel	\$4,945
TOTAL	\$1,049,230

Quarterly invoices and progress reports have been submitted to CDHE and are available upon request.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Evaluation Approach

A priority of the legislation is to evaluate the performance of and outcomes associated with each inclusive higher education program in the state of Colorado. IN! is committed to measuring the impact of its work and the work of the grant recipients, which involves the active participation of multiple stakeholders at partnering institutions of higher education, Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium members, and other IN! stakeholders as deemed necessary. The evaluation plan for the Inclusive Higher Education grant program, as outlined in legislation, includes three strategies that seek to holistically measure the development and success of each IHE. All three evaluative strategies are based upon the national coordinating center for inclusive higher education research and best practice, Think College, and their [published accreditation standards](#). This legislative report includes the first iteration of each evaluative effort for the grant recipients that currently have enrolled students. Future legislative reports will include comparisons between the current year's and previous years' findings to measure the long term impacts of IHE and the ongoing improvement of each program.

Strategy 1: Comprehensive Survey of Current Stakeholders

During the Spring of 2024, IN! developed a comprehensive survey for Inclusive Higher Education Program Stakeholders, including students, students' families, peer mentors, faculty, and staff. The anonymous, online survey was disseminated in April 2024, on IN!'s behalf, by school partners to required stakeholder groups, including:

- All students enrolled in IHE in Colorado during the 23/24 school year
- All families with a student enrolled in IHE during the 23/24 school year
- Faculty who have had an IHE student in class during the 23/24 school year
- University staff (minimum of 10 per campus) who work with IHE students/staff
- All peer mentors who worked with IHE students during the 23/24 school year

At the time of stakeholder survey dissemination, UCCS and UNC were the only grant recipients with enrolled students. While it is only expected to report on the grant recipients, some evaluation data will reflect the other existing IHE programs with enrolled students that participated in the stakeholder evaluation process (ACC and Regis University). In 2025, CSU and MSU Denver will participate in the stakeholder evaluation process, and LCC and PPSC will begin their stakeholder evaluation process in 2026.

The 2024 Stakeholder Survey was created utilizing feedback from the Colorado UCEDD and Think College National Coordinating Center. Questions were designed to align with [national accreditation standards](#) as set forth by the Inclusive Higher Education Council. The survey questions focus on the four pillars of IHE in Colorado (see graphic on page 5) and reveal overall satisfaction rates regarding services provided by each IHE program. Stakeholder surveys include both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods. The quantitative data is directly reflected within the attached school-specific reports. The qualitative or short answer responses were reviewed and summarized within the reports to maintain anonymity while highlighting key themes of success, growth, and recommendations. To review the full list of survey questions and correlated accreditation standards, see: [2024 Stakeholder Survey Questions](#).

The table below provides the number of respondents within each stakeholder category. While the responses represent only a small sample size, the data and conclusions drawn help to highlight strengths and growth areas within each IHE program.

Table 3: Stakeholder Survey Respondents

Survey Respondents by Stakeholder Category	UCCS	UNC	ACC	Regis
<u>Students</u>	19	5	14	6
<u>Families</u>	9	7	10	4
<u>Faculty</u>	3	3	16	3
<u>Peer Mentors</u>	4	3	4	7
<u>Institutional Staff</u>	0	4	6	5
Total	35	22	50	25

IN! and national experts place the highest value on student and family satisfaction responses, as they are the primary beneficiaries of inclusive higher education programming. With this in mind, a brief summary of overall satisfaction from students and families within each pillar of IHE is represented in the tables below. UCCS and UNC satisfaction rates are compared to the statewide satisfaction rates in each category.

Table 4: Satisfaction Rates in Four Pillars of IHE Support

Satisfaction with IHE program's		UCCS	UNC	State Average
Academic Supports	Student Response	89.5%	80%	90.6%
	Family Response	88.9%	28.6%	79.4%
Social Supports	Student Response	89.5%	60%	87.4%
	Family Response	88.9%	42.9%	74.2%
Vocational Supports	Student Response	89.5%	80%	87%
	Family Response	66.7%	14.3%	47.8%
Independence Supports	Student Response	84.2%	80%	83.9%
	Family Response	88.9%	57.1%	73.3%

Table 5: Student Goal Attainment in Four Pillars

Agreement that IHE helps students meet their		UCCS	UNC	State Average
Academic Goals	Student Response	89.5%	100%	97.4%
	Family Response	88.9%	57.1%	80.25%
Social Goals	Student Response	94.7%	80%	93.7%
	Family Response	88.9%	57.1%	80.3%
Vocational Goals	Student Response	100%	80%	83.5%
	Family Response	100%	16%	83.2%
Independence Goals	Student Response	100%	80%	95%
	Family Response	88.9%	71.4%	87.6%

Survey Analysis

All stakeholder responses are summarized and reported within the attached school-specific reports. For detailed analysis, see **Attachments A & B: Stakeholder Survey reports for UCCS & UNC**.

As part of a holistic evaluation process, IN! provided individualized Stakeholder Survey Reports to each IHE staff to review. Subsequently, IN! coordinated an in-person meeting with IHE directors and key staff to collaboratively discuss the results and ways to continue implementing high quality programming.

Overall, stakeholders from the four IHE programs with enrolled students during the 23/24 school year report significant success and growth for students with intellectual disabilities across all four pillars. Academically, students are being included and challenged across a wide range of courses that are geared toward their career goals. Statewide, 90% of faculty respondents indicated that they would readily welcome IHE students in their future classes, and 100% stated that non-IHE peers are accepting and inclusive. Socially, IHE students are participating in campus activities and social settings alongside their college-age peers, further developing their community connections, self-advocacy, and confidence. Vocationally, all IHE students are actively engaged in a progression of career readiness experiences including career exploration/assessments, resume development, internships, and paid employment. Stakeholder survey responses indicated that nearly 70% of enrolled students were actively participating in an internship or paid employment at the time of the survey. Independently, 85% of IHE students enrolled in residential programs were living in on-campus housing and receiving support from peer mentors and/or staff. Additionally, 100% of all IHE students statewide participated in specialized courses and/or person centered planning meetings that address key skills for independent living.

It is evident that IHE programs are providing valuable supports for students with ID to develop the necessary skills for a more autonomous and successful life. Stakeholder comments include gratitude for the ways students have holistically grown and been authentically included in college. For example a family member stated, “I can't begin to express how happy we have been with this experience. Our student has been given the opportunity to reach for her goals and surpass them. It has been a wonderful experience for all of us.” And a student stated, “ From my college experience, I love that I have many wonderful friendships with people that are like me and that I feel less alone.”

While the majority of comments and responses indicate satisfaction with support and attainment of student goals across all four pillars, the data reveals a clear discrepancy between student satisfaction and family member satisfaction in several categories. Specifically in the category of vocational support and job experiences, students report high levels of satisfaction with their job experiences and career skill development, but many family members indicate a desire for more diverse and challenging job placements for students during their time in IHE. While all IHE programs strive to provide job placements/experiences that more closely align with student career goals, there are several barriers that program staff are actively working to overcome, including but not limited to, student desire for specific job placements, limited availability of open positions or work study opportunities, and limited awareness of inclusive hiring practices. It is important to consider that experiencing various levels of employment opportunities is normative for any college student, though IHE staff are dedicated to increasing access to meaningful internships and employment opportunities for their students. This is a focus area for all IHE programs in the coming years.

Regarding UCCS responses specifically, stakeholders are overwhelmingly satisfied with the level of support provided to students within the Office of Inclusive Services, with the majority of questions scoring at or above the state average. UCCS prioritizes student-driven planning and seeks to provide individualized support to students in each pillar to the greatest extent possible. Areas of growth for UCCS include continued training for peer mentors and greater diversity of employment opportunities, both of which are actively being pursued this academic year.

Regarding UNC responses specifically, students indicate clear satisfaction with the support provided by the GOAL program in nearly all categories. However, UNC family respondents indicate clear dissatisfaction compared to the state averages in all categories. In particular, many concerns regarding the lack of support for GOAL students when engaged in disciplinary processes and poor family communication arose during the stakeholder survey process. It is worth noting that UNC GOAL is the only IHE program in the state that requires students to be their own legal guardians, strongly advocating for students to be the primary, if not only, point of contact for the institution. It is a stance that UNC as a whole has chosen to take since the inception of GOAL and will continue to do so. With this in mind, the stark contrast of student satisfaction and family satisfaction with GOAL support may indicate that students value the clear separation from familial involvement.

However, due to the high levels of concerns brought forth in UNC GOAL's stakeholder evaluation and lessened student enrollment in the Spring of 2024, IN! coordinated an in-person meeting on July 23rd with GOAL Staff and other institutional leadership, including the Executive VP of Academics, Associate Dean of the College of Education, General Legal Counsel, Interim Dean of the College of Education, and the Vice Provost for Academic Resources and Faculty Affairs. This meeting addressed in greater detail the concerns presented by family members of GOAL students and strategic recommendations for addressing them. IN! provided the below meeting recap and feedback for GOAL staff:

Action Items/Recommendations Refined:

1. Grievance/disciplinary/crisis support
 - o UNC is working to simplify/clarify current code of conduct. Send finalized copy to students and families routinely and address it clearly in orientation programming.
 - o Ensure GOAL staff is notified when students enter into any of these processes in order to actively support students in the process. Add GOAL staff into EAB Navigate system as care team members for all GOAL students.
2. Inter-departmental partnerships
 - o Work to identify points of contact/champions across key departments.
 - o Hold regular training/advisory committee meetings for champions and other campus staff to stay up to date on GOAL happenings and needs.
 - o Send early-semester communication (2-3 weeks in) to all faculty with GOAL students to elicit feedback and open the lines of communication early on.
3. Parent Communication
 - o Create a calendar of committed communication to parents that includes students (i.e. orientation information, mid-semester check ins, etc.). This will be an avenue to keep parents aware of expectations for students and keep them up to date on the supports GOAL is providing.
 - o Refine/clarify communication agreements amongst students and families. [Use this think college worksheet as a guide.](#)
4. Staffing Levels
 - o Work toward hiring the 3rd FTE to meet campus engagement and employment needs for GOAL students.
 - o Provide GOAL families with clear outlines of supports provided in each pillar.

Since July, GOAL has taken steps toward improving its support and communication including the implementation of mid-semester check in meetings that students are able to invite family members to, receiving notice when students are in the care or discipline process, refining the parent and student handbooks, providing an online communication tool for families, and securing additional residential supports. IN! continues conversations and regular check-ins with GOAL staff to ensure growth toward

best practices. Both IN! and UNC look forward to stakeholder data in the coming year to show improvement and/or need for additional guidance.

Strategy 2: Comprehensive Survey of Graduates and Graduate Families

The graduate survey evaluation will not reflect data from newly developed IHE programs, as many will not have a cohort of graduates to survey until the summer of 2028. However, IN! seeks to continuously gather statewide graduate outcomes from all existing IHE programs (ACC, UCCS, UNC, and Regis University) to show the benefits and impact of IHE programming and to inform program development at new institutions. This first report includes an analysis of the initial graduate survey completed in the summer of 2023. The second iteration of graduate surveys was disseminated in the summer of 2024; responses have been received as of September 2024. Results are currently being analyzed and compiled and will be included in next year's report.

The graduate survey questions were designed to reflect the four pillars of Colorado's IHE model, addressing both graduate and graduate family members' satisfaction with academic, social, career, and independent experiences since graduating from college. Survey questions solicited information about the former students' housing circumstances, jobs, and social lives. Although the surveys were nearly identical, graduates and parents filled out separate surveys for ease of data analysis and to better reflect student satisfaction with personal goal achievement. Surveys collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is directly reflected within attached school reports. To review the full list of survey questions, see: [2023 Graduate Survey Questions](#).

At the time of the surveys, there were 44 IHE graduates across three institutions; UCCS and UNC were the only grant recipients with enrolled graduates. The table and graphic below provides the number of respondents and their reported demographics. The responses represent only a small sample size and may not reflect the positive outcomes that IHE staff anecdotally track. Regardless, the data and conclusions drawn help to highlight strengths and growth areas within each IHE program. It is important to note that each of the first 44 graduates experienced the effects of COVID-19 at some point in their college tenure, which means many of their experiences were unique and, therefore, may not be represented in future reports. Over time, future surveys will hopefully begin to paint a clearer picture about the lasting impact of inclusive higher education as well as ongoing trends among graduates.

Table 6: Graduate Survey Respondents

Graduate Survey Respondents by School		Number	Response Rate
UCCS	Graduates	6	35.3%
	Families	4	23.5%
UNC	Graduates	4	36.4%
	Families	7	63.6%
ACC	Graduates	9	56.3%
	Families	3	18.8%
Total	Graduates	19	43.2%
	Families	14	31.8%

A brief summary of overall satisfaction and outcomes within each pillar of IHE is represented in the tables below. UCCS and UNC satisfaction rates are compared to the statewide satisfaction rates in each category.

Table 7: Satisfaction Rates with Outcomes in Four Pillars

Satisfaction with IHE Graduate's		UCCS	UNC	State Average
College Education	Graduate Response	83.3%	100%	89.5%
	Family Response	75%	57.2%	71.4%
Current Social Life	Student Response	66.7%	50%	63.2%
	Family Response	50%	28.5%	28.5%
Current Employment	Student Response	66.7%	50%	84%
	Family Response	75%	43%	57%
Current Living Situation	Student Response	50%	100%	89.4%
	Family Response	66.7%	71.4%	71.5%

Table 8: Statewide Student Reported Outcomes in Four Pillars

Academic Outcomes	
Earned a certificate (modified)	89.5%
Earned a degree (non-modified)	10.5%
Social Outcomes	
Keeps in touch with college friends	73.7%
Socially engages in community	89.5%
Employment Outcomes	
Currently Employed	84.2%
Currently looking for a new job	36.8%
Working multiple jobs	37.5% of employed graduates
Average hourly wage	\$16.48
Average hours worked per week	16.5 hours
Independent Living Outcomes	
Currently living with family	73.2%
Currently living independently	36.8%
Independently grocery shops	31%
Independently cooks	42%
Independently cleans	78.9%
Independently manages bank account	21%
Independently pays bills	15.7%
Independently manages benefits	5.3%

In addition to qualitative data, respondents provided both positive and constructive feedback within long form responses. Several comments addressed how IHE helped students develop critical soft skills that are valuable in their adult lives, including:

Graduate Comments	Family Comments
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I am more independent and my education helped me get a job.	During college, he grew leaps and bounds in confidence, independence and self-advocacy.
The program helped me become an independent adult and an advocate for myself.	He has gained many more independence skills. He is more responsible. He advocates for himself more.
The program help me make friends in my classes and to have good communication skills.	College was the toughest time in her life... It taught her grit.
They helped with some of the learning of being independent like managing your credit, how to manage a Check, how to be more social, etc.	It enabled her to get her degree, it provided ways for her to grow emotionally, it gave her some good job experience. I would love it if there was more support in accessing a suitable career and independent living skills.
The best thing that has ever happened and been offered. I have friends now, I have belief in myself.	It has helped her mature and blossom into a resilient young adult.
I feel like college has shown me what it's like to be attending classes on our own schedules and taking small steps into caring for your well-being in the future.	Should be an opportunity for every student/family if they desire, inclusive, authentic and equitable.

Survey Analysis

All graduate and family responses are summarized and reported within the attached school-specific reports. For a detailed analysis, see **Attachments C & D: Graduate Survey reports for UCCS & UNC**.

The first iteration of the graduate survey yielded several lessons learned. After receiving survey responses, it was clear that the survey was lengthy and slightly confusing for graduates, which may have been a cause for the low response rates. IN! has since simplified the graduate survey questions to better reflect the impact of IHE on graduates and their families. Additionally, IN! has learned the importance of understanding students' personal goals in each pillar compared to the goals family members or support staff have for them. A foundational element of inclusive higher education programs is person-driven planning, which is the prioritization of the student's voice and choice regarding their goals and desired outcomes in each pillar. While IN! and IHE programs desire graduates to experience all of the benefits of a college education, it is imperative to allow the graduates to be the drivers of their goal attainment and outcome measurement. Lastly, the impact of COVID-19 on the graduate respondents was evident within survey comments and should be considered when reviewing the data.

IN! is proud of the remarkable outcomes of IHE graduates in all four pillars. Graduates from across the state reflect satisfaction rates of 84% or higher with their educational experience, current employment, and current living situations. With significantly lower satisfaction rates in graduates' social life, IHEs are implementing new support services to help students develop transferable social skills. Below is a review of outcomes and recommendations in each pillar.

Education:

100% of IHE graduates in Colorado proudly earn a college credential. Whether students attain a modified certificate or non-modified degree, all IHE students take inclusive college courses for credit and are challenged academically. Graduates either earned a Comprehensive Higher Education Certificate or an Associate's degree in their selected area of study, taking classes that developed in-demand job skills and supported the development of collaboration, communication, and time management. One graduate went on to earn a bachelor's degree from a different state institution, while other graduates also continued their education after completing the Inclusive Higher Education program, such as training programs to pursue

certifications in specific vocational industries. As graduates and families reflected on their educational experience, both respondent groups report satisfaction with access to an inclusive college education and meaningful courses that helped students prepare for their desired career field. When asked if attending inclusive higher education was helpful in achieving educational goals, 94.7% of graduates selected, “yes.”

Employment:

84% of graduate respondents were satisfied with their current employment after graduation. Comparably, national research indicates that students with intellectual disabilities who do not pursue postsecondary education achieve a 34% employment rate—half of whom receive earnings at or below minimum wage (Avellone et al., 2021). Colorado IHE programs report an impressive 84.2% employment rate among graduates with an average wage surpassing \$16 per hour. Graduates report working as administrative assistants, dietary technicians, educational aids, servers, ushers, and more. Among graduates who held jobs and indicated satisfaction, they listed the following reasons: working in the field of study, enjoying the employer and coworkers, learning skills in “how to be a good employee,” earning money and benefits, and “being busy.”

While graduates are satisfied with their employment outcomes, many family members desire job settings that are more challenging and/or that offer increased work hours. When asked about graduate work schedules, all graduate and parent respondents indicated part-time schedules. Common schedules included shifts lasting 3-6 hours each, 2-4 days per week. Of the employed graduates, 37.5% stated they did not want to work more hours and an additional 37.5% indicated that they might consider working more hours, but it was not a priority. Some parents expressed that they would like their graduates to find full-time work so they can receive more pay and benefits.

Of the 16 graduates currently employed at the time of the survey, more than half believed their internships prepared them for their current roles. Graduates stated that their internships prepared them for their jobs by teaching them trade-based skills, the importance of punctuality, checking emails, and using a calendar. Parent feedback was extremely similar, with one respondent writing that the benefits of the internship included, “maturity gained, responsibility gained, [and] self advocacy,” while other parents noted professionalism and “communicating with coworkers” as important competencies learned.

While IHE programs cannot guarantee post graduate employment more so than any higher education institution, it is a priority of IHE programming to continue increasing the diversity of job attainment post graduation. The employment rate of graduates is remarkably higher than those with ID not attending higher education and internships/job experiences during college represent unique employment opportunities, yet there is more work to be done in ensuring competitive employment opportunities post graduation. IN! anticipates seeing an increase in job diversity in future graduate surveys as the effects of COVID on the employment sector fade. Furthermore, all IHE programs actively engage in partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure ongoing support of graduates in their career goals.

Living:

While only 36.8% of graduate respondents report living independently from their families after graduation, nearly 60% of enrolled IHE students lived away from family and experienced on-campus housing during college. At the time of the survey, all but two graduate respondents reported feeling “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with their living arrangements. Six graduates specifically mentioned how much they enjoyed living with their families while other graduate respondents shared how much they liked living independently from their families. Several graduates that currently live at home wish to pursue independent living in the next few years. Individuals with ID face additional barriers to housing and often require additional time to coordinate the necessary services. While the majority of graduates may not live

independently yet, nearly all graduates and families report high levels of increased independence, self-advocacy, and emotional maturity - all of which are valuable skills for an independent life.

When given a list of more concrete independent living skills such as grocery shopping, cleaning, and money management, graduate and parent respondents agreed that most graduates completed cleaning tasks independently. They also agreed that most graduates needed additional support in managing a bank account, paying bills, and managing benefits. While all IHE programs discuss these skills within their specialized coursework, it is IN!'s recommendation that IHEs provide hands-on practice of each skill at several points throughout a student's enrollment. UCCS is specifically addressing this area by offering additional seminars and workshops for students to practice essential living skills with support, including driver's education, budgeting, and cooking. An area of increased need is guidance with benefits. IN! is working alongside each IHE to resource graduating families with connection to benefits counselors in the final semester of students' senior year. This is being facilitated using an online learning management system that allows students and families to access on-demand resources and guidance.

Social:

Graduates and families alike report lower satisfaction rates in their current social life since graduation, which is largely due to the high levels of socialization students experienced during their IHE program that naturally lessens as they move off campus. Many families indicated a desire to see graduates initiate social events on their own and spend more time connecting with friends in person rather than electronically. However, 73.7% of graduates indicate that they keep in touch with college friends and the majority of graduates are satisfied with their social lives. Graduates report engaging in their communities via volunteering, playing in sports leagues, participating in local nonprofit work, attending religious gatherings, going to restaurants and breweries, and more. Additionally, several graduates report connecting with friends via video games and texting. Graduate respondents expressed frustration about living far away from their college friends, the effects of COVID on social opportunities, and not seeing friends often enough. Parent respondents echoed almost all of these concerns. Some parents recognized their own dissatisfaction with their graduate's social life even though the graduate seemed happy. One such parent indicated that "I would like her to be more social, but ... she seems to be happy with the amount of socializing she is getting." Overall, the vast majority of both parents and graduates felt that the inclusive higher education program helped prepare the graduate for social and community engagement.

In the hope of seeing social engagement increase post-graduation, UCCS and UNC are specifically supporting students in planning their own social event each semester to learn the various steps of coordinating time with friends. With repetition and support, the skills for initiating a social gathering will be transferable to post-graduation life.

Overall:

Graduates and parents had the opportunity to share any other thoughts on how college impacted the graduates' lives. Both graduate and parent respondents shared general thoughts about how students "enjoy talking about going to college, like other young adults." Other common refrains focused on college being "the best thing that has ever happened." Many graduate answers focused on academic and social development, as well as independent living. Parent responses mentioned resilience, agency, confidence, and phrases like, "she has grown leaps and bounds." There were also many sentiments from parents about the hope for more students to have access to "inclusive, authentic, and equitable" college experiences.

While the responses represent only a small sample size, the data and conclusions drawn help to highlight successes that are a consequence of Inclusive Higher Education programs including increased employment rates, levels of independence and self-determination, and academic engagement. Subsequently, the data and conclusions also address opportunities to improve outcomes for current and

future students specifically regarding the development of social initiative, autonomy with concrete living skills, and attainment of more competitive employment.

Strategy 3: Identify Student Assessment Methods at Each Program

IN! initially intended to establish a statewide student assessment method that uniformly tracks student growth in independent living, socialization, career readiness, healthy lifestyle choices/self-care, financial literacy, and other key skills. In an effort to do so, IN! established an Inclusive Higher Education Consortium work group dedicated to formalizing student assessment methods across all IHE programs. After the first several meetings and discussion with national experts, it was identified that all IHE programs can agree upon what competencies should be assessed, but each institution will have its own preferred method for how to measure said competencies. Some institutions will gather quantitative data, while others focus on qualitative data, both of which are acceptable for accreditation purposes.

This third evaluation strategy is in the development phase as the consortium work group continues to build tools and materials, in accordance with national accreditation standards, that provide guidance for programs in their student assessment practices. In its current state, each grant recipient with enrolled students has indicated their current methods or plans for tracking student outcomes, which are summarized in **Attachment E: Student Assessment Methods at CSU, MSU Denver, UCCS, and UNC**. In future iterations of this evaluation strategy, each IHE program will provide a brief summary of outcomes from their assessment data, indicating student growth across all pillars. Additionally, IN! and the consortium will provide a list of assessed student competencies across all IHE programs and recommended forms of gathering data.

CONCLUSION

As a direct result of HB22-1107, students with intellectual disabilities throughout Colorado have had increased access to inclusive college pathways, boasting high levels of satisfaction and student skill development in academics, social life, career readiness, and independence. Since 2022, the number of Inclusive Higher education programs in Colorado has more than doubled, adding four new IHE programs in this past academic year alone. IHE offerings now span beyond the Denver Metro area, ensuring regional accessibility. And three of four new programs are strategically spanish-speaking and low-income serving institutions, actively working to remove barriers to postsecondary education for all students. In the fall of 2025, it is projected that more than 130 students with ID will be enrolled across three community colleges, four to five public universities, and one private university. All IHE programs are making progress in their efforts to solidify high quality inclusive higher education and graduate students with ID prepared to work, live, and engage in the community with independence.

This first legislative report is largely focused on the development of new IHE programs and supporting their implementation of high quality services. Future legislative reports will provide a contrast between this year's data and subsequent years, seeking to show continued improvement of program services and student outcomes.

IN! is dedicated to supporting the ongoing efforts of inclusive higher education, tracking outcomes, and increasing access statewide. As Colorado continues to observe the mutual benefit of inclusive college campuses, workplaces, and living environments, IN! is confident that our vision will come to fruition:

Students with intellectual disabilities will be welcomed on college campuses and allowed to continue their education and preparation for life, as inclusive pathways become part of the fabric of all colleges and universities throughout Colorado.