

# HB22-1107 Inclusive Higher Education (IHE) Opportunities: Establishing New IHE Programs in Colorado



## BACKGROUND

In 2008, the *Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act* launched a national initiative to provide inclusive college programs for students with intellectual disability (ID). In 2016, Colorado was the last of three states to join the movement. The *Colorado SB-0196 Inclusive Higher Education Act* established three pilot inclusive higher education programs across Colorado colleges. Today Colorado offers eight inclusive higher education options, joining the now 320+ programs nationwide.

Both nationally and locally, when given the opportunity, students with ID are reaping the benefits from post-secondary education. In addition to increased community belonging and independence, Colorado IHE graduates proudly achieve a 75% employment rate, standing in stark contrast to the 18% employment rate for individuals with ID that do not have access to higher education (National Core Indicators, 2019).

## PROGRAM PILLARS AND GUIDING MODEL

IHE ensures students with ID have all the rights, responsibilities, and benefits that result from higher education while simultaneously enriching the greater campus community and furthering institutional equity efforts. [IHE in Colorado is founded upon four pillars of support](#): academic growth, social development, career advancement, and increased independence. With robust support provided by dedicated program staff in each pillar, students with ID are fully matriculated and contributing members of the student body.

PILLAR	IMPLEMENTATION	IMPACT
<b>Academic Growth</b>	<p>Students are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrolled via alternative admission process</li> <li>Paying tuition with access to financial aid and scholarships</li> <li>Included in college courses alongside neurotypical peers without alteration to course content, instruction, or overall academic rigor</li> <li>Accessing individualized accommodations, modifications, and academic support both inside and outside of the classroom, provided by IHE staff</li> <li>Non-degree seeking</li> <li>Earning college credit toward a CDHE approved certificate</li> </ul>	<p>“I [now] see how capable these students are without changing the rigor or modifying the assignments. I can honestly say my perception has shifted 180 degrees. It has been a wonderful experience for the whole class and myself.”</p> <p>- Faculty</p>
<b>Social Development</b>	<p>Students are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% included across campus activities and programs</li> <li>Participating in an average of 4 social activities per week including student government, clubs, athletics, and Greek life</li> <li>Supported naturally by trained peer mentors</li> </ul>	<p>“I see a group of young women and men who feel a sense of belonging who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to belong.”</p> <p>- Staff</p>
<b>Career Advancement</b>	<p>Students are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged in career development via internships, career planning, and pre-employment training</li> <li>Meaningfully employed on campus and in their communities</li> <li>Connected to vocational supports from DVR and other community agencies in collaboration with IHE staff</li> </ul>	<p>“[Inclusion in college] gives you a neat opportunity to discover yourself and what your role is in this world.”</p> <p>- Student with ID</p>
<b>Increased Independence</b>	<p>Students are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged in person centered planning and self-advocacy development</li> <li>Navigating campus with independence</li> <li>Learning essential life skills such as financial management</li> <li>Living inclusively in dorms or student apartments at universities</li> <li>Supported naturally by peer mentors and program staff as needed</li> </ul>	<p>“We are truly seeing our son as an independent adult; as a result, our expectations have shifted profoundly. We are so grateful for this opportunity!”</p> <p>- Parent</p>

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### Funding

- Startup costs range from \$300,000-\$400,000 to establish a self-sustaining program within four years
  - IN! and CDHE will provide an initial \$267,000 grant to begin program development in years 1-2 for one Western Slope institution of higher education
  - IN! will identify avenues to meet remaining funding needs in years 3-4
  - \$0 match required by institution
- Participating students pay typical tuition and fees plus an additional program fee to ensure sustainability of program services and personnel
- [See program development proforma for example budget](#)

### Staffing

- IHE programs offer dedicated personnel to support students with ID across campus, increasing the bandwidth of disability resource offices and other campus departments
- IHE programs are typically staffed with 3 FTE, including an Executive Director, Academic Coordinator, and Employment Coordinator
- Startup grant funds pay for needed staff positions and expenses

### Planning

- IN! Staff will provide regular technical assistance and program guidance meetings
- IN! Staff will offer best practice research and materials, including connection with national subject matter experts
- Developing IHE programs will have access to resources and expertise from other IHE program staff and college personnel (administrators, faculty, etc.) through participation with the Colorado Inclusive Higher Education Consortium
- Anticipated program development schedule
  - Fall 2024-Spring 2025: Identify institutional commitment and grant agreement
  - Fall 2025: Begin program development and technical assistance
  - Spring 2026: Serve small cohort of pilot students and refine program model
  - Fall 2026: Formal program launch

### Institutional Enhancements

- Join national and state movement. Increase notoriety as only western slope university serving students with ID
- Expand DEI progress and reinforce institutional values, increasing percent of underrepresented students served
- Receive financial influx from historically untapped population
  - Over 1,3000 students with ID in west central CO (CDE, 2021)
- Relieve disability service staff caseload and provide additional support staff to ensure less strain on faculty
- Offer meaningful practicum experiences to enhance existing education, psychology, and social work degrees
- Strategically meet regional employment needs and prepare students with in-demand skills
- Increase K-12 and other community agency partnerships
- Prepare all students to successfully engage in an increasingly diverse community and workforce