

# Impact of Inclusive Higher Education



## BACKGROUND

- In 2016, *Colorado SB-0196 Inclusive Higher Education Act* was passed, allowing IN! to facilitate the creation of three pilot inclusive higher education programs for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) at ACC, UCCS, and UNC. Colorado formally joined the now 313 inclusive higher education programs nationwide.
- Since the piloting phase, all three programs have become self-sustaining and successful in their inclusive programming for students with ID.
- Both nationally and locally, when given the opportunity, students with ID are reaping the benefits from post-secondary education, including, increased access to competitive employment, increased socialization, community belonging and greater independence.

## CURRENT PROGRAMS

- Today there are over 70 students from 15 counties and 4 states enrolled in 4 inclusive higher education programs at ACC, UCCS, UNC, and Regis University.
- Each program participates in a statewide Inclusive Higher Education Consortium that is nationally recognized and led by IN!. The consortium ensures programs maintain best practices, research-based programming, and commitment to an inclusive model that focuses on four pillars of support: Academic Growth, Social Development, Career Advancement, and Independence.

PILLAR	IMPLEMENTATION	IMPACT
Academic	<p>Students are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fully matriculated and 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                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2-3 traditional courses/semester, 1 specialized course/semester</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Accessing individualized accommodations and modifications</li> <li>● Earning college credits toward a CDHE approved certificate aligned with their career goal (transferable only amongst other inclusive higher education certificate programs)</li> </ul>	<p>“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>
Social	<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>- Parent</p>
Career	<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 inclusive higher education staff</li> </ul>	<p>“It [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>
Independence	<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 residential staff, peer mentors, and inclusive higher education 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>

## OUTCOMES

**The power of inclusive higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities cannot be overstated!** These students, once denied access to higher education, are now integrated into traditional classrooms, living inclusively on campus and preparing for life in the same ways as their peers. Students who participate in such programs are more likely to experience:

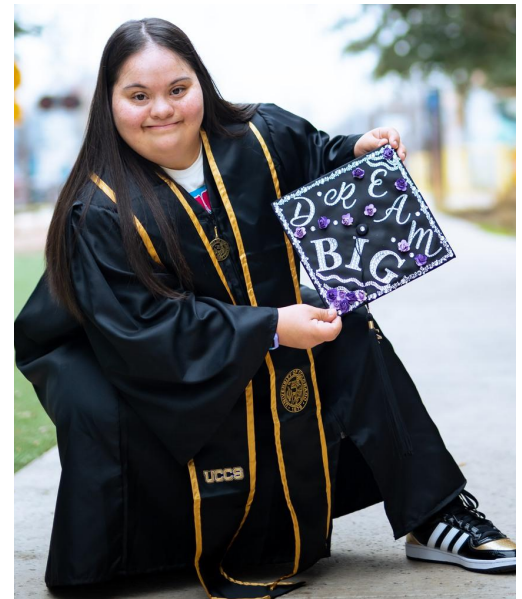
- Improved outcomes in career pathways, competitive and integrated employment, and independent living
- Increased inclusion, social interactions, and opportunities for meaningful contributions within their community
- Decreased reliance on family supports, community resources, and government funding

A national study found that students with ID given an opportunity to complete inclusive higher education achieved:

- 70% employment rate, standing in stark contrast to the 18% employment rate for individuals with ID (National Core Indicators, 2019)
- Substantial increase in job diversity, including 28% decrease in food preparation jobs, 59% decrease in cleaning roles, and 300% increase in healthcare professions

Since 2020, Colorado has seen 32 students with ID graduate from inclusive higher education programs with:

- Over 75% employment rate in meaningful vocational settings
- Certificate credentials in healthcare, advocacy, communication, human services, and more
- Anecdotal evidence of increased confidence, community engagement, and daily independence



## BENEFITS

The positive impacts of inclusive higher education extend well beyond the participating student, including:

- College campuses are enriched by the added diversity of the student body and able to further their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.
- Faculty and staff increase their understanding of how to engage diverse populations inside their classrooms, ultimately becoming stronger educators and advocates.
- College peers experience the mutual benefit of inclusion and are better equipped to successfully engage individuals with disabilities in their prospective fields and amidst an increasingly diverse world.
- Employers have access to a historically untapped workforce that are now entering their fields with in-demand, relevant skills.
- Local agencies and college staff work collaboratively to better serve their communities.