

An Aspiring DJ Makes His Own Path

by Ross Hooley

Patrick always had a passion for video and radio production, and from an early age his dream was to have his own radio show. He excelled in his TV/video production class in high school, and for 3 years was responsible for recording school meetings and the occasional sports event that was sometimes broadcast live on the local cable station.

GOALS

1. To attend college.
2. To pursue a career working in radio and have his own radio show.
3. To develop skills in radio production.

LEARN

In Patrick's first year at Bridgewater State University he audited two courses, radio production and computer science, as part of the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative. On one occasion, I filled in for Patrick's educational coach and had the pleasure of sitting in on his radio production class. Patrick and his classmates were critiquing the 10-minute radio shows they had each produced. At the end of his presentation, the class gave him a round of applause. **The feedback from the instructor was enthusiastic: "Feels like a real radio show, the transitions were good, it was funny and had great sound effects."** Patrick excelled in class. He was quiet, but responded thoughtfully when asked a question.

In his final assignment, he worked in a group to produce a radio drama. This required coming up with an idea, writing a script, and creating the sound effects. Patrick was responsible for the sound board and showed himself to be extremely competent and comfortable in using the equipment. His group received positive feedback from the instructor, and Patrick received an A for the class. In fact, his teacher was so impressed that he recommended to the college radio station manager that Patrick produce promos for the station.

The Think College Transition (TCT) project is an inclusive dual-enrollment transition model designed to improve post-school outcomes for students aged 18 to 21 years who have intellectual disability and autism. The key feature of this model is assisting students to be involved with college classes, work experiences, and social networking opportunities on a college campus with their same-age peers, rather than having typical transition services in a high school.

SUPPORT

In his second semester, Patrick struggled in his computer science class, partly because there was so much math to learn (not one of his strong points). Despite this challenge, he was thoroughly engaged in the class and lab, and was determined to increase his understanding of computer programming.



Patrick received support from his educational coach in his classes and at his internship with the radio station. His coach would take notes in class and review the material with him. When Patrick did the computer science lab, his coach encouraged him to ask for help from the instructor if he was unsure about a problem. The coach also provided transportation to and from campus.

WORK

Patrick was most comfortable at his internship in the college radio station. On Friday afternoons, he and another student produced the 2-hour "I don't have a name for it" radio show. In the first hour, Patrick observed his partner and provided assistance. Then he was the lead DJ in the second hour.

It was exciting to see Patrick interact with his co-DJ. He provided great transitions from song to song, and quickly became familiar with the computer technology in the studio. Often, he would be asked to fix technical issues for the other DJs. Patrick was so motivated by this work that on Saturday evenings, he assisted in the production of another radio show that aired from 5–11 pm.

One of the highlights for Patrick in his first year was receiving his DJ certification. This involved completing a verbal test with the station manager. Patrick is now eligible to have his own show on WBIM, and next semester will be taking over the 7–9 pm Saturday show, which he plans to call “The Metal Blockchain.” He has also been appointed the station’s director of audio promotions and station technician. This position involves recording and editing promos, and then importing them into the automation system.

PLAN

In his next semester, Patrick has decided to take classes in television studio production and American Sign Language. He will be supported to live on campus, but will continue to fulfill his video duties for the high school by working remotely.

Patrick’s story highlights the benefits of going to college: the direct relationship between the classes he has chosen and the career he wants, the job skills he has learned, and the network of supporters he has developed.

OUTCOMES

One Friday, I met Patrick at the radio station, where he had just finished producing a couple of promos. He was getting ready for his weekly show, which included a 10-minute piece on the pros and cons of the new iPhone X. I sat back and enjoyed the show, and reflected on the wonderful opportunities that Patrick has created for himself and how he is using his college experience as a stepping stone toward his future career.

PATRICK’S COURSE OF STUDY

	PLAN	LEARN	WORK	SUPPORT
High School	Initiated enrolling in class after suggestion from guidance counselor.	TV/Video Production class	Recording high school meetings; sports events. Assisted with studio’s social media channel	Project support: instructor
Fall 1	Developed person-centered plan with transition team. Class selection finalized with coordinator.	Radio production	Internship at college radio station; volunteered to record promos for other DJs.	Received 1:1 support from educational coach in class and internship. Quickly became independent navigating campus.
Spring 1	Reviewed short-term academic, social, and vocational goals with program coordinator and career development specialist.	Computer science	Awarded DJ certification. Continued internship on campus.	Received extra support in class. Support provided at radio station internship. Independent in other radio station activities.
Fall 2	Class selection aligned with career goal.	Television studio production and American sign language	Has his own radio show. Appointed station technician and director of audio promotions.	Continued support in class. Independent in radio station activities.

