

REALTIME FILE

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION - UMASS BOSTON
HOW INCLUSIVE COLLEGE PROGRAMS DO ADMISSIONS
TIPS AND INSIGHTS
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>> HOST: Hi, everybody. Just getting it organized here. I'm going to hit record because I usually forget to do that, and we'll get started. It's just 2:00, welcome today. My name is Rebecca Lazo, I'm the associate for Think College. For anyone not familiar with Think College, we're a national organization dedicated to developing and expanding and improving inclusive higher education for people with intellectual disabilities.

I'm happy to introduce the webinar, how inclusive college programs do admissions, tips and insights. Our invited speakers are Kelly Kelley, Jessica Mattis from Arcadia University and Misty Parsley from Lipscomb University. They're identified as well-established good inclusive higher education programs and they were willing to share their information. You hear more from Kelly, Jessica and Misty in a moment.

By now most people are familiar with Zoom, but if not you should see a black bar at the bottom or top of the screen where you have controls over seeing the chatbox and things of that nature. If you have any questions throughout this webinar, you may put them in the chatbox. I'm here to help with technical support and sort of be a liaison with the speakers today.

If you do put a comment in the chatbox, try to remember to select all panelists and attendees so everyone can see the comment. You're not enabled to speak during this presentation as an attendee, but we want to try make this as community-like as possible. Today's webinar is being live captioned, and I'm going to put those -- that link in the chatbox right now for

anyone that needs it.

There will also -- the recording will be posted on our website later today or tomorrow, and so will the Power Point and the -- if anyone needs a certificate of attendance, let me know about that. So each presenter is giving an overview of her program and the admissions process there, and after that, there will be time for questions.

Our team at Think College came up with a few, but we hope that you in the audience have questions as well. So our speakers are ready to do that. I think that's it for now.

Actually, before I let anybody start talking, how about first we do a quick poll to find out who is here today. Just helpful for us to know and kind of sort of nosey to know who is attending the webinar. If you've taken a Think College webinar before and what your background is, that might help our presenters to know who is in the audience.

So great. Feel free to say hi in the chatbox if you want. Great. It will be just another minute or so or some seconds. Family researcher, higher education program staff, higher education staff or faculty, which I realize that could be the same thing, same person. Okay.

Thank you, everyone, for participating in the poll. We're going to close that out. We'll get started. I think Kelly -- oh, well, so there's our presenters again. I already said what they were and they're on camera here. There's everyone. I think Kelly is up first.

>> KELLY KELLEY: All right. So I'm from Western Carolina University. We've been an established two-year program, and we're an inclusive program for college-aged students so 18 to 25 is typically the age range. We will talk more about the admission criteria in a second. It's a residential program also, so our students live on campus with other people in different dorms across the college.

We started out as a pilot program in 2007 with one student. We weren't really sure what we were doing. There was not really much from Think College, and that was about 24 programs at the time. So we didn't have a whole lot for our admission guidance at that time, so I'm happy to be here and share some of our lessons learned as we were building the airplane as we were flying it during our pilot years. So we've been around quite a while.

Also, after we had one student, we went to two students, four students, and eight students. So we've went up in pretty equal increments since that time. That's based on some funding streams that we've had and some not funding streams. We started

the program with no funding, and so then we were able to get a TIPSID funding through OSEP, so we got that, office of special education programs. Try not to use acronyms, but we expanded to eight students once we got the model demonstration monies in 2010 from the first TIPSID. From that time we have our student body, just to compare and give you a little bit of the university background, we're up to about 12,000 students. We're in a pretty rural setting, so residential is more appealing for a lot of our students because it takes a little while to get to our campus.

We also don't have a whole lot around us, so the college is located in wonderful, beautiful mountains of North Carolina. So that gives you a little background. I know we don't have a whole lot of time, and I'll be up for questions about our program in just a little bit.

We'll go on. So when we look at our admission requirements, a lot of our admission requirements are based on some things specific to North Carolina, so I'll use our terms but try to parallel those to what other states might call them. So when students are -- the admission age range is 18 to 25 at the time of admission.

A lot ask why. We're a transition program, but we're a residential program so our students in the dorms are typically all that age range, so that helps to keep it in the specific age range. We are also taking students who have something that does not lead to a completion of high school diploma, however, in North Carolina it gets a little tricky because we have the occupational course of study, which is employment-focused, so you may have some career training diploma, which is looked at in North Carolina specifically as a regular high school diploma with a career focus. So we don't want to eliminate those students who might not typically be able to meet admission criteria to the colleges.

So we will look at students with a regular high school diploma who have that career track as well as students who are on a certificate track. So a certificate of attendance. We also look at adequate communication and socially acceptable behavior.

A lot of people say, how do you do that? It's a little tricky, but we have certain admission requirements as well as artifacts that we look at for that. We also bring our applicants and families on campus to look through some of that as well as some reference letters from some people in the community professionally. So we try to assess that pretty well.

We look at motivation to learn and benefit, and that's kind of hard sometimes. We look at their resumes and previous

community experience as well as their employment background. The biggest thing there is to make sure that they're motivated and want to learn and be in the college experience and they're not pushed by somebody else or a family member, because we've learned that that doesn't always work out a couple months into it when it gets really hard. So we're really looking for motivation to learn and benefit from the applicant themselves during the admissions process, through our open houses and video samples and different things like that.

We also look heavy with our family piece of this. We want to see that they're interested in living and working as independently as possible in the community. So we're very straightforward with our families and our partners from the very beginning to say, we want this to look different when they leave from two years in the program that they're competitively employed and living differently than what they came to the program.

The living differently might be with a roommate or in their own apartment with technology. We've had some who signed leases with some of our students, but they typically aren't going back home in most cases. We have over half of our graduates who live differently than when they came in. We want to make that a partnership at the very beginning.

We share that part of our admission criteria up front at the very beginning with our applicants and families. Okay?

So when we break down our recruitment and admissions guidelines through the program, we look at three specific areas, outreach and recruitment. We look at systemically reviewing the applications and applicants and having a committee to do that and rank those.

We look at final evaluation and selection to say, let's try on college before we have to pay the bill, because that can get a little pricey if they're not really sure if they want to go to college.

When we look at the outreach and recruitment, we look at making sure we develop the visibility through the Think College database, that we have our own website set up so it's up.wcu.edu, and we provide outreach to conferences in the community with brochures and transition fairs. We also use our alumni to do some transition fairs and go talk to specific high schools about their college experience. So that's pretty powerful.

It doesn't cost anything, because right now we're also not grant-funded, so our university is sustained through the university itself with some small amounts of funding. We also offer an open house, and we try to promote that through our list

serves and newsletters we have. It's hard to get newsletters out allot, so sometimes we do videos and a lot on social media to help our outreach and recruitment.

That's part of the outreach and recruitment part. As we look through the systemic review and moving into, you know, the open house part of it, we have specific thing that is we do in the open house that help us meet all of our applicants and their family members as well as let them see what the program is about. If you have more questions about open house, we can talk through that towards the end of the webinar.

When we get into the systemic review process, we look at a lot of application materials, and during that process we look at an admissions applications parallel to our admissions for any student in the university. We look at their resumes. We look at their letters of recommendations.

We look at their psychologicals and IEPs, and we look at personal skills inventory things as well as some videos from the applicant and their family members. We also let them know -- sorry. There's my timer.

We let them help with a lot of different things as far as sending different artifacts in that stand them apart from other applicants. So we've had people send in art projects or different kinds of videos or different kinds of things they feel like they did well in high school they want to showcase.

Once we get through that process, we have a committee and we can talk more about the committee. We have a lot of the people in the university that review the applicants and their materials after we reviewed them, screening them for missing items, looking at some kind of assessments is summaries as well as determining any areas of concern that we want to discuss, you know, previous history and then preparing the top applicants for the committee to look at.

That's part of our initial review and ratings. Our committee members will go into that later and give you specifics on some of those people if you have specific questions there, because I know I'm almost out of time.

Then we also invite them to an orientation camp, and that orientation campus is where we let them try on college. They stay overnight, and some of our students have said, whoa, this was not what I thought it was. I'm ready to go home. Please, I don't want to do the college experience. I'm not ready yet.

That's really eye-opening for them to be offered an orientation camp where we talk about safety and all the things to get them ready for college. Then once they've completed the camp, we accept our new students based on their performance in the orientation camp as well as providing some also artifacts

and different options for those that might need to re-apply or some goals to work on for the following year or other resources in a state that they can look into.

So that's basically our recruitment and admissions very quickly, but we hope to open it up for questions in just a little bit.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: I'm Jessica Mattis, and I'm the director of the real certificate program at Arcadia. To give you a quick overview, the raising expectations for academic learning or real certificate is a program at Arcadia University located in Glenside, Pennsylvania. So we're right outside of Philadelphia.

Arcadia is a liberal arts university with about 2,000 undergraduate students and the real certificate is part of the school education and is a two-year, four-semester program. We began in 2013, and we accept on average about five students each year. For the past six years students had to commute to campus, but now they have the option to live on campus. About half of our students have chosen that option, to live in residence halls.

Students in the real certificate take two classes each semester and an individualized college plan is created with each student based on short and long-term goals. The students choose classes based on their interests and their college plan. The first semester it's basic college writing and a first year seminar. More the most part students audit classes in the program.

So you get academic support from peer tutors and students participate in work experiences. This could be an unpaid internship or competitive employment. It really depends on the student and their goals.

Along with work and class is a social component, and that's a big part for most of our students. The social component is inclusion in the college world beginning with orientation before the semester and they're paired up with peer mentors throughout the semester and meet with them and decide what they want to do, going to lunch or working out or eating lunch on the green. We have students that live on campus.

They can join any club on campus, and currently participate in about ten different clubs. Arcadia is also known for their study abroad opportunities, and this year two of our students are also participating in an international experience. So we try to help students just experience the whole college experience.

For the next slide we're going to talk about more for the admissions process. This gives a quick overview of the

eligibility criteria and these are some guidelines to help students and families see what we're looking for in an applicant. A lot of times we get specific questions of students or parents want to know if we're looking for a certain GPA or test score, but that's not what we're looking for. We're really looking for motivated students.

We also have an age range of 18 to 25. Arcadia is a pretty young campus, and this matches the students currently on campus. We are in Pennsylvania, so I think the requirements for high school and college vary a little. Our students coming from Pennsylvania do typically get a traditional high school diploma in Pennsylvania, and a big thing is they're not able to just access college by meeting the typical entrance requirements.

We want students interested in working while in the program and afterwards, and that we can work with to learn to navigate the college environment and be able to get to campus independently or live on campus.

Along with eligibility criteria, I just wanted to briefly -- we can go to the next slide. Sorry. I want to go on with some of our application requirements.

As you can see, we really do ask for a lot of information. Some of it mirrors the typical Arcadia application, but the REAL application is a lot more comprehensive. I noticed recently that some universities including Arcadia seem to be making their traditional undergraduate applications a lot simpler and quicker to complete.

As we're always looking to improve our process, and we're currently moving to an online application, we're re-evaluating if we need all of this information and how to better align it with the traditional application process. We ask for a lot of basic information. There's transcripts and a recommendation. We also have opportunities and parents fill out an inventory about the student and we ask for an IEP and some occasional value evaluations. Then we review this information before we meet with students for the interview process.

So this slide sort of shows our application process from the staff's point of view. Once we get the applications, they're currently due January 15th. They've always been due December 15th, but we get a lot of people interested in the December/January time, and we recently realized that, you know, we don't even have time to review them from December to January, so we wanted to give people more time. So we did push it back this year.

Before we receive applications, we do a lot of what Kelly talked about in terms of outreach and recruitment. I feel like open houses are one of our best recruitment tools, and we're in

an area with a lot of inclusive, postsecondary programs, so we really promote other schools and share information with other schools and programs and families so students can look at multiple schools. So once we receive applications in January, we really do review all of the applications and determine eligibility.

With all students that submit an application, as long as they're eligible to be in the program, we schedule an interview with the students and the family or their support team, whoever they choose to bring. In February we conduct those interviews. Each interview is probably about two or three hours and part of the time is with the student, and part of the time is just with the parent or guardian, and then we also -- the student goes on tours and interviews with other students who are currently in the program and peer mentors.

After we conduct all of our interviews, we have applications, summaries, and then we have an application advisory meeting. We have people throughout the campus who are part of our advisory committee. It can be staff or faculty members. We work with health services, student affairs. Now that we have students living on campus, housing is part of the process. Basically anyone who really wants to be part of the process and plays a role in our students' lives on campus we would like their opinion.

We send out our acceptance letters by the middle of March, and students can either be accepted to the program, they can be wait listed, or they're not accepted at this time. For students that are accepted they can attend scarlet and gray day which is for students and families just to get to know the campus. There's a lot of workshops and it's a good way for the students and parents to learn about the community at Arcadia.

After that deposits and notification of acceptance are due to the university, and if students choose to attend, we then start doing a lot more person-centered planning meetings and working with the student and family to plan for orientation, which begins in August. That's a really quick overview of what we do and the process, and I'm more than happy to later on talk about more specifics with our open house or any of those steps with the process.

>> HOST: Thank you, Kelly and Jessica. Now we'll hear from Misty.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: Hi, everyone. I'm from Nashville, Tennessee and we're a fairly small university. We're a faith-based liberal arts university and we have just under 3,000 undergrad students on the campus. We started in 2014 with three students, and then we jumped in August and took eight additional

students. So by the end of the year, we had 11 students.

Now we take 10 students a year. We were a TIPDIS recipient in 2013, so we're in the last year of funding for that grant. We have 19 current students first and second year, and we have an optional third-year program that students can participate in if they're ready to live off campus in a duplex and work part-time. Then they still have an internship -- I'm sorry. A practicum with us, and we still support them.

So that's kind of part of our TIPSID goals and pilot we're doing. We're still figuring it out. We have 19 first and second-years, and then we have a residential program. So we have 14 of our 19 first and second years living in the dorms.

That has been a very good addition to our program. We started that about two years after we started our program. We got our program organized and went in before we started the residential piece. All right. We are an inclusive program. We have 12 hours of classes that they audit in classes they're interested in, we call that a mini major. One of our associate provosts came up with that term. We appreciated his involvement, and we used that term.

We also have six hours of specialty courses they take on improvements and adult living skills with peer mentors involved as well. Then we -- all of our students have four internships. They have two on campus the first year and two off campus the second year. So they're expanding their networks and expanding their opportunities and their skills.

Our students spend about 90% of their time or month sometimes with peer mentors and we have over 100 peer mentors a semester that work with our students. They're volunteered and aren't paid. Our employment rate is right now around 80% for graduates.

We have one enrolled in a traditional college program and finishing a degree. We have a few that decided not to work. We had a few that worked and then have left their job and not found a new job. We're always tracking the employment rate, and it changes from time to time.

So next slide. I did not include our admission criteria, but it's very similar to the first two programs. We do take 18 to 26 instead of 25. It is for the exact same reasons because our students do live in the dorm, we want their ages for fairly compatible with the students that are also living in the dorm. You know, we also look at reservation, we look at their ability to be independent. We look at their parents' ability to promote their independence and encourage their independence.

So with our admissions process, we have them complete the university's online application first, and then at the get an

e-mail that says that their application was submitted and it includes some additional paperwork that we ask for. Some skill inventory and questionnaires and question request two references to provide more. We request their last IEP.

We request their evaluations. Then they submit an online video. We use a flip grid for that process.

So they can go on and submit and it has to be less than five minutes. We can watch that video, the admissions team can watch the video and get a picture of the student before we move forward. It's been really helpful. The video process has been really helpful for things like analyzing their communication skills and sometimes how much parents help them, because we can hear parents in the background prompting them with answers. Their ability to just share about themselves and to answer questions. So that's been a really interesting piece of our admissions process.

We do have a committee that looks at all of the stuff that comes in, and then we choose students who are going to move on to step 2. Sometimes we have multiple layers. Because we have another program just down the road from us, sometimes students we accept decide to go thru and we have some spots.

We do a multi-step process where we do steps 1 and 2 and then we go back and fix that one again. So when we get to step 2, that is coming and spending a day on campus, and they participate in a class-type setting.

They actually have to make a Power Point and do a presentation. They go to the cafeteria at a crazy time of the day and navigate that. They usually navigate campus. We give them a map and ask them to get from one place to the next. We have a variety of skills we're looking for that are real skills that students will use on campus. We used to do an interview first where the student just came and answered questions, and we just realized that we didn't get really good information. Sometimes the student was really nervous, and they wouldn't talk much.

Sometimes they had -- it was very scripted. They had practiced and it didn't feel real natural. So the experienced really see them on campus in a natural setting, you know, interacting with peer mentors and other students on campus. That's really much better information about how students will do.

We also have added a parent interview that we videotape, so that becomes a part of your admissions file and all of the staff as well as our admissions committee can review the parent interview. Step 3, if we need to decide between students or want more information, we want an additional interview with the

student. We also have called references.

Sometimes the references that we get are not real specific, and so we might call addition maybe they mentioned in something that we want more information about. So we do ask for their phone number and e-mail address and we call and, you know, get more information about the students. Then another part of our process that is not required but sometimes we suggest it, having them attend the week-long summer academy. Sometimes they have to come to summer academy before we admit them if we really wonder how they will do, and we want a better picture of their skills.

And then we do require any student accepted to attend summer academy. That way, the summer before they start the program, so we have a whole week of starting to work on their goals and figuring out what skills they're going to need and things like that. We use it in both ways. It's information gathering for students accepted, and we also use it as an information gathering for students considering acceptance. So that's kind of our process.

>> HOST: You all were masterful as succinctly sharing the admission processes and quick overviews there. Thanks to Misty and Kelly and Jessica for doing that. I have two questions through the Q & A, and we're opening it up to other attendees here. If you want to type your question in the chatbox, we will get to you.

Aaron asks, what is the acceptance rate for each of your programs? Misty, do you want to go first?

>> MISTY PARSLEY: Sure. Do you want me to answer the other question on the chat?

>> HOST: We'll get to that. Let's start with this.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: Okay. We generally have between 25 and 35 applicants. We don't do a lot of marketing. We just have, you know, now after five years kind of our name is out there. We do host high school groups on campus so that students can learn about college. We work with the school systems to make sure she have the information. We get 25 to 35 applicants each year.

It looked like our trend was a little higher this year because we had that number before the break, the holiday break, which is a lot. We accept 10, so somebody else can figure out that out. Is that about 35%? That's all I know.

>> HOST: Thank you. Kelly.

>> KELLY KELLEY: With us, it depends on the year. As we look, we only accept four every fall semester because we have four returning students and four new students. So some years it can be five times the applicant pool, like it's similar to

Misty's numbers, and sometimes it's more than that. It depends on the year. In most cases it's usually around the five times more per year.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: I think ours is pretty similar and also depends on the year. We accept five for every fall, and we get about 20 applicants on average a year.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: I meant to say, too, this is probably the hardest part of my job. I'm sure these ladies will agree that it is -- there are so many amazing students or applicants who come to us. We're so limited on our campus and probably the other two campuses, too, just with space. If we took more, I don't know where we would put everything. So, you know, I constantly advocate for other colleges to start programs because we need more spaces.

>> HOST: Thanks, ladies. Another question through Q and A. Susan asks if you provide in class coaches for coursework. I think I know the answer to that. Jessica, you want to go first?

>> JESSICA MATTIS: We don't have in-class coaches, so they go to class independently. Sometimes there's an exception if the student is working on a specific thing and the student or professor asks for a coach to attend one or two sessions, but our academic peer mentors provide support outside of class time.

>> KELLY KELLEY: Ours is a little different, and we find a person in the class that's already enrolled in the class. They serve as a class support to help them with group projects, any note taking that they might need or any kind of distracting behaviors, to give them some cues. Then they also work outside of class for an hour a week on homework outside of the class. So they do that together, and it's an actual student enrolled in the class for credit that works with our students who are also auditing alongside of them.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: Ours is more like Kelly's as far as we look for peer mentors in the class. We then -- if there's not any peer mentors we know of, we -- it feels like at our university there's just students that gravitate towards the ideal students, and so we'll have just a peer mentor or not a registered peer mentor but a student who sits with them and supports them.

Most of our students, though, are independent. We have had some -- a few situations where the professor says, I really just feel like they need someone in this class to be successful. We had a student with autism who was in a social work class, and he was very upset by social justice issues. That's what the class was about.

So he would get very upset on certain topics, so we actually

added a peer mentor to the class.

That's not our preference, but is that way the peer mentor could help -- could help him take a break if he wanted a walk or talk outside in the hallway about whatever the topic was. That helped him be more successful in the class. We didn't want to ask a student from the class to leave the classroom with other ideal students. So there's been rare occasions where we have added someone.

We also have academic peer mentors that work with students on class work after class. It does work better if they've been in the class, because then they've gotten the same information. That doesn't always work.

>> HOST: Okay. Thank you all for those answers. Musty, you might have missed one question until the chatbox before. They ask about out-of-state tuition.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: It's the same in state or out of state because we're a private university. We accept students from out of state. Our tuition is different from the traditional student's tuition, but it's the same whether they're from in state or out of state. We have a tuition rate and then we have the residential cost if they live in the dorm.

>> HOST: Another question from Jeremy in the chatbox. He said thank you for being here. Can you speak about the pros and cons about having this program first versus the IHC showing first? I guess this is sort of your thoughts on this. So share what you can.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: You want me to go?

>> HOST: Sure.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: I didn't talk much about that, so I felt unclear about the timeline. We make the decision together. Part of the reason we don't take all the applicants is a time constraint for a lot of people on the committee.

We take the top ones, and they look at those and rank them as part of the admission criteria. They're already part of our admissions for all students in the university. I feel like we make that decision together with them.

We take our ten applicants or so to the committee and look at these. I don't want to blindside people and bring them in that they might not already know about. They look at our applicants through a different lens than I do, and that's very valuable for our higher education to look at.

Residential living, they look at it different than my eyes as a program person. So I feel like we're very good about making the decision together based on the top applicants that go in so they have to make decisions with us.

We have our person from disabilities services as well as a

lot of people from financial aid, since we're a CTP, a comprehensive transition postsecondary program to look at some of those criteria with us. We can't see everything, so it's a joint decision in our situation.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: We also have people throughout campus on disability support services, on student affairs housing. Our committee does make the final decision to it, but I guess it's mostly a program decision but we take input from everyone on campus. We also fending on our number of applicants sometimes only bring -- if we accept five, we'll bring our top ten applicants to our committee because it's a time con straight for everyone that's willing to participate.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: It's interesting hear their answers because we haven't involved other people, and our office is understaffed for the number of students on campus. I can't ask them to give time. There's one person, I can't ask her to give time when we don't have enough staff members. I guess for time's sake and, you know, we just have kept that in the house.

>> HOST: Susan is asking if you charge a program fee for attending above the tuition costs? Misty, do you want to answer that?

>> MISTY PARSLEY: Yes. We have a tuition rate separate from the university tuition rate, and that's our rate. We don't have any additional fees on top of that.

>> HOST: Kelly?

>> KELLY KELLEY: At western we put a link in the chatbox for what typical all students pay. So it's in state or out of state with that and we charge 2500 per semester as a service fee because we don't get tuition and fees.

We need for that to operate our program. We don't get them back because our students are in the other classes with all the other college students. We can't charge a separate fee for the class because it goes back to with all other college classes. We have to change a program fee on top in order to pry and provide supports in classes, residential, all of other coordination and schedules that we too -- do. So it's 2500 per semester.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: The real certificate has a cost per semester, and that includes traditional undergraduate classes and also academic support and peer mentor. It's all wrapped into one fee, and it's separate than the traditional undergraduate costs. For students on campus, that's the same for room and board as all the students on campus.

>> HOST: Thank you. I'm learning a lot in this webinar today.

Eric is asking what specific assessment tools have been found to be considered best practices? Jessica.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: Is that in term was our admissions process?

>> HOST: Yes.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: We have a few surveys we give out, so our letters of recommendation, we have specific questions that we ask and found that helps and we have surveys that teachers fill out and the students fill out. I think we just got them mostly from other universities and probably from Kelly and started. We don't use any specific assessments our request that. For college readiness, we work the students sort of once they're here and we do person-centered planning. I don't know if that quite answers it.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: I'd love to know if anyone knows of one. We've thought a couple of things. The transition type assessments, the skills aren't high enough for what we need here. I haven't seen an assessment that really would be useful for our students.

>> KELLY KELLEY: We haven't seen anything either, so we created our own. When you don't find, you create your own. We have our personal skills inventory that we tweaked from a model, but we also have an academic road map that we designed with the students, and it's a pretty informal assessment inventory. We found informal is better than the formal ones. We did transition skills and inventory, and I was like, this is not working. We tried our self-determination skill, just the college version and we were like this isn't even touching it.

So there's not a whole lot out there. We made our own because it makes sense and we give some instruments to our parents and students and applicants to see if there's on the same page to begin with when they're coming in to see if they're ready and they know what their goals are when they finish.

>> HOST: Thanks, ladies. Another question from the Q and A from Aaron. How detailed are you when parents ask why their student was not accepted?

>> KELLY KELLEY: That's the hardest part of our job, I think.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: Kelly, you start.

>> KELLY KELLEY: Okay. I'm like the oldest one here with the program. You start on that one. We actually have a pretty thorough process, which nobody likes that kind of news ever. So that's my day to really hate my job. That's about the only day I really hate my job because I want to take all of them. We have a letter that we send, and I'm not trying to toot-toot, but if you look in this book, the letter is

in there as well as the resources.

We have a whole admissions chapter in the book, so check it out. There's documents in there. I can send you more they wouldn't let me put in there based on the word limit. It outlines some of the resources beyond college.

What we do especially if they came to the orientation camp because that's a touchy time. They just came to college, and maybe this is not the year for them. It makes it really hard.

Some people hide behind e-mails and letters, and we have chosen to be translucent in that process and really transformational to see here's what you need to work on if you want to apply to any college programs. Here's the goals specifically, and we give them the goals after camp to work on to be a strong candidate in any college program they re-apply to.

If they're not interested in college, we give them other resources in the state surf at project search and other postsecondary programs or community college kinds of start if they're not ready for that big jump of living on campus. We give them a letter if they haven't made it to camp. It gives them a lot of resources under postsecondary ed and employment and as well as some independent living resources as well as some family organizations like family support network and different things for the families. It's not just about the applicant. The families are really wanting resources as well.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: It is definitely the toughest part. Ours depends on our relationship with them. I totally agree with Kelly.

When they have come to summer academy and spent a whole week with us, those are really the tough ones. Sometimes we spend a week with them, and we're like, wow, here are some skills that if they master these skills or work on these skills and show growth in these skills, I think they would be ready. Sometimes you see some red flags, especially with living in the dorm. We have taken students into the program but not accepted them in residential. It does not necessarily go hand in hand in our program.

We also have asked students -- we've not accepted them for that year, but we ask them to come to summer academy so we get more information. Sometimes we are able to reject students the easy ones are when they don't meet criteria and don't have an intellectual disability or, you know, they -- we feel like -- we've had students apply that had a 17 on the ACT. They can go to another college program. They can go to community college. They could probably go and succeed in a regular college program with supports.

So those are the easy ones. We have a clear reason. Then sometimes it is just, you know, helping them understand that the level of independence that we are expecting on a college campus, you know, that their student is not ready for or doesn't have -- sometimes age is a factor. So, you know, if they come to us and they're 25 and they need more time, I mean, they don't have more time.

There's so many factors, but generally our rejection letters are pretty straightforward, and then when parents ask for more detail, we do provide as much as we can, you know, to be helpful. We want to be helpful and give them things to work on in case they want to apply somewhere else or try a different program. It's tough.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: I agree. It's a really tough time and upsetting. We do send a rejection letter, and if students and families reach out we provide a lot of other resources if they want to listen and talk about other programs. We also try to really work with students and families before they apply to make sure it's the right fit.

We're a small, liberal arts college and a lot of people come on tours and they only want culinary arts classes. We the don't have that at Arcadia. We work with them to find better programs that are better fits ahead of time, and that works sometimes. Sometimes it doesn't. We're lucky we're outside of a big city, so there's five other programs within our area. So there are other resources. We really encourage students and families to apply to more than one school. Most take orientations and some don't.

It's getting easier because there are more programs available. Then just with the different state agencies and service providers hooking students and families up and making sure share connected and have resources. It's usually a really hard, upsetting day.

We don't even see students for a whole week. We don't have that. I can't imagine that part.

>> HOST: Thank you, Jessica and Kelly and Misty. Another question came into the Q & A not specifically about admissions, but I'll throw it out there. How do you recruit the peer mentors? Jessica, you have peer mentors, right?

>> JESSICA MATTIS: Sure. We have a lot of peer mentors. This past summer we started to pay them, but the majority are still volunteers.

We have an application process, so it's a Google survey we made. We recruit through the school of education and the psychology department. Then we also work with sort of our school ambassadors and the orientation leaders and we have an

interview process for our paid ones and for our students who just volunteer one hour a week, they fill out an application if they're interested and why they want to volunteer. Then we do a training.

We don't have that much difficulty finding too many peer mentors. Sometimes we partner with classes. That helps if we're low on numbers and students are required to do one or two hours a week. We also advertise at the activities fair at the beginning of each semester. We have our students sit at a table and recruit peer mentors.

Then often we get just friends of our current peer mentors, and most of our peer mentors who start in the beginning as a first year stay with us the whole time. It's tricky when they go away to study abroad for a semester or student teach, but we have returning peer mentors most years.

>> HOST: Thank you. Kelly.

>> KELLY KELLEY: We have a lot of class partners and a community center for learning. We have a lot of peer mentors coming through the classes so I can provide a huge class training for a lot of volunteers at one time. We recruit from like recreational therapy, social work, inclusive education, special education, communication sciences and disorders, which is speech, psychology. So we have a lot of different majors here that we can pull from.

We typically on average have 225 every semester for all of our students. It's pretty eye-opening for them to take 10 to 15 hours unpaid because they're like, I eat lunch, and I want someone to eat with. This is cool. I like this. There's a lot of opportunity, I think, for a lot of people to make a difference if they want to, and they can get involved as much as they want to.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: We have service learning credit at our university that's required for graduation, so a lot of times that's where we get in with peer mentors. They stay because they love it.

We have, you know, people come and go. If they have a semester where they're studying abroad or a semester they're really busy, but they come back. They'll tell their friends and bring their friend to their peer mentor time.

You know, it's really just -- our program has become such a part of campus, we finally started to hear high school seniors say, I'm coming because I came to an admissions day and I met some ideal students and I want to be part of that program, which is really cool. We have an intern that's in admissions every semester, and so, you know, they're starting to come because it's a great university and because we have an inclusive program

and they want to participate in it. So it's really evolved very naturally.

>> HOST: Thanks. Kelly, your comments are going just to the panelists. About peer mentors and students, Kelly says there are eight students and 225 unpaid on average. So typically two hours per week for unpaid services.

There's a question in the Q & A before we have to close down. Someone is asking, how much influence does the family interview piece of your process have on the overall acceptance of your applicants?

>> MISTY PARSLEY: We're all laughing because we had this conversation in our planning session. I'm happy to start on this one. I won't make Kelly start on this one.

You know, I would say quite a bit. That's because the goal of our program is independence. If I feel like a family is not ready for their student to be independent, my five years of experience, which is not a lot, but my short experience has told me that parents who aren't ready for their child to be independent will be a hindrance for their attendance.

I think sometimes -- that's what the rejection letter sometimes is, you know, I'd like to see him get a job or volunteer somewhere or have an opportunity that's outside of school or parents. You know, sometimes there needs to be some experiences that are -- that the student has so they're ready to come and be on campus.

We ask questions like, how involved will you be in the decisions made for your student while on campus? I don't want parents deciding what classes the students take. They can have input, obviously, and we all ask our parents things. Even as we become adults we still ask for input from parents, but I don't want the parent's decision to overrule what the student wants.

So, you know, we've learned to look for red flags with families that just aren't quite ready for the independence process.

>> KELLY KELLEY: At Western we focus on dignity of risk and if they're ready to take that dignity of risk. We feel like none of our applicants are perfect. We're not looking for air perfect applicant. I don't want that to be the impression today.

As far as families, we definitely need families who are willing to allow that dignity of risk, which is allowing them sometimes to fail and not swooping in to save the day, because it doesn't help us learn or the student learn.

Not only making decisions for them, but allowing some of the consequences to happen. That would naturally occur if we made certain decisions to learn from those. We really focus on

dignity of risk, and we do talk to our families but we also walk that fine line of really letting our students make the decision and be in the driver's seat of their lives.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: And during our interview process, we really talk about that with the parents. We talk about how the communication process works at a college level, how there's no IEPs anymore and we don't call them if something goes wrong necessarily. It all goes through the student. Sort of seeing how the family responds to that.

That's a big part, and talking about that. We have some parents that sit in the meeting and say that's not acceptable and doesn't work. That sort of makes the decision for us. Also a red flag, same thing. Something we notice, we're in a suburb outside of Philadelphia, and we're a small, quiet campus.

Sometimes when I encourage students to apply to other schools that are located in Philadelphia, parents say, no, they're only applying here. I only want them in a safe place, so we talk about what the student's experience is going to be like. We just gauge parents' responses.

>> HOST: There's lots going on here. There's another question -- Jessie Harris, how do I set up an open house and which college in Philadelphia? Jessie, the recording will be posted our website, but Jessica is talking about Arcadia University just outside of Philadelphia. There's one good question I want to get here before everyone gets off if it's possible. Amy asks what kind of supports are put in place to ensure the safety of the students?

>> KELLY KELLEY: Being a residential program, we have a lot of students who are kind of designated in each of the dorms to help with safety overnight. So we have residential suite mates who understand our students, but they serve as kind of an RA on the hall. Along with the RAs already there, so we train our RAs as well.

We also educate our campus police as well as our emergency management team here for any kind of emergencies like that. We have a UP emergency phone that one faculty carries all the times. There's a safety article published that had we just did, so it's a three-tiered safety approach for campus. So most of our students get the same safety as everybody else, but we also have a tier 2 and tier 3 in case our students need that safety.

>> HOST: Thanks, Kelly. Jessica.

>> JESSICA MATTIS: Our students have mostly -- this is the first year for us having residential, so it's been a bit of an adjustment. We have an emergency phone, cell phone that's always on us. But the students mostly go through the same as other students living on campus. Their first line of contact is

the RA and then their area coordinator and then the residential staff. They can also contact us, the residential staff will contact us. They go through the same process for health services and most other services on campus.

We don't provide much additional support in the evenings in terms of the residence halls. We do always have peer mentors available every evening in case our students want someone else to eat dinner with or someone different to eat dinner with. In terms of safety, we don't put anything much else extra in place, although we do some additional trainings with our students during orientation and also with other staff throughout campus just making them aware of any additional needs our students may have.

>> MISTY PARSLEY: I would echo what they said. I'm doing a little plug. There is a recorded webinar I'm assuming somewhere on the Think College page from last year on risk management. So my advice to all programs would be know who your risk management person is on campus and have a great relationship with that person and talk about any risks that may be apparent or that you need to address and even problem solve when things occur. Secondly, know your security staff.

All of our -- we actually have an intern in our security office, so they know the ideal program and our students. If there's a safety issue, we can call them and tell them, here's what's going on and they're so, so helpful. So, you know, I think our campuses are fairly small, so -- thank you, Rebecca. So I think that that helps and people come -- parents come to us because we're a small campus. We're a very safe campus. For parents still on you may or may not know that every university is required to post a safety report every year.

It has how many incidences, how many issues occurred and all of that. You can ask for that from the university you're looking at if it's not posted on their website somewhere.

>> HOST: Thanks, Misty. If you didn't make a plug about that webinar, we would have. While we wrap it, I know people have to go. I'd appreciate any attendees still on to take this webinar evaluation before you exit, if you have a minute.

So my Power Point shut down, so I can't put the slides back up, I regret to say. I imagine that these presenters are happy to have you contact them with questions and this Power Point will be posted on our website today and a recording will be posted as well. I know I'm grateful that the three of you shared today. I think this is a really informative webinar and kind of a fun format. So I appreciate you preparing to take questions on the fly and respond to as many as we did. I think it was a really productive and informative program today.

Kelly, thanks for putting the TA e-mail in there as well. I think that's it. Again, thank you attendees for being here. Thank you, presenters, for being here as well, and we'll see you next time.

(The webinar concluded)

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