

Project Abstract

This grant application to the Think College National Coordinating Center (NCC) seeks \$25,000 funding for a strategic capacity building project facilitated by the UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). Think College (TC) is an evidence-based transition model in its second round of funding under the federal Higher Education Act. The model, which complies with multiple sources of standards, provides comprehensive transition services to young adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) in college/university settings.

Project goals, consistent with those of the NCC, are (1) to promote greater knowledge across target audiences in CT (public and private schools, students with ID, families, IHEs, and policymakers about quality higher education programs as a tool to improve outcomes for students with ID and (2) to align state policies concerning TC-related transition services and develop a centralized mechanism for implementing those policies at the UConn UCEDD. These goals address the need for, and will result from, a cohesive structure housed at the UConn UCEDD via its website and group communication capacity, for coordination and information sharing,

We will convene multiple stakeholders including the other two organizations comprising the CT Developmental Disabilities Network, state and non-profit agencies, institutions of higher education, members of the business community, families, self-advocates, and other interested parties to form a Connecticut Think College Statewide Collaborative (CTTCSC). Major partners are already identified by name. The CTTCSC will a) devise a strategic plan for developing and implementing a Think College Model in CT and b) oversee the activities of multiple workgroups addressing the core elements of the TC model. These core elements include (1) family/self-advocate engagement, (2) leadership/sustainability, (3) Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) recruitment/retention, (4) supplemental TC curriculum, (5) public school roles/responsibilities, (6) alignment of policies/practices, (7) employment opportunities, and (8) evaluation/accountability. Workgroups will be established to develop action plans resulting in recommendations to address each of these areas. The process will be supported by technical assistance provided by NCC, housed at The Institute of community inclusion at UMass Boston, at no cost to UCHC.

A comprehensive formative and summative evaluation plan to monitor completion of project activities and attainment of project goals is in place. The plan for sustainability includes changes in policies and practices (e.g., within the CT Department of Developmental Services, IHEs, and transition services for individuals with ID), support for redirection of existing state and federal funding, and strategies for accessing financial aid for students with ID. Additionally, project results will position Connecticut to apply for, and increase the probability of receiving, a five-year federal Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant in addition to other grants to further TC goals of (1) developing quality higher education initiatives for students with ID geographically represented in the three regions of the CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and (2) enabling greater participation of students with ID in competitive integrated employment, valued community membership, and independent living as a result of participation in CT TC initiatives.