EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXCELLENT EMPLOYMENT
PROMOTING INCLUSIVE CAREER PREPARATION FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

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https://www.eskenazihealth.edu/programs/Fehribach-Center

AHEAD Conference (July 22, 2022)

LEARNING GOALS

Learning Goal 1 – Participants will expand their understanding of systemic barriers to effective career preparation.

Learning Goal 2 – Participants will identify 3 strategies they could employ on their campus.

PROBLEMATIC REALITIES

• 17.9% of working-aged adults with a disability were employed in 2020 compared to 61.8% without a disability.
  - U.S. Department of Labor (2021)

• College graduates with disabilities find it more difficult to secure jobs in careers related to their majors or at income levels comparable to nondisabled peers.
  - Fioren et al. (2012); Mezzo & Petrachiou, 2014

• Explicit and implicit bias can disproportionately affect job seekers with apparent disabilities.
  - Fige (2020)

• Disabled adults are less likely to work full-time, thus limiting their access to employment benefits and to express high levels of job satisfaction.
  - Brooks (2019); Sundar et al. (2018)
THE GOOD NEWS

• Growing numbers of disabled students pursue and complete higher education.
  • 19% of undergraduates
  • 14% of graduate students
  
  [Postsecondary National Policy Institute](https://pnpi.org/students) with disabilities in higher education

• Paid work experience and a college degree are the two most significant predictors of employment success.  
  - Marse et al. (2018)

Voris (2016)

• Productive partnerships can lead to more positive outcomes.

OUR MISSION

By partnering with students, their families, employers, educational institutions, researchers and policy makers, the Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health promotes and equalizes the opportunity for economic independence, equitable employment, and full economic and civic engagement of college graduates with physical disabilities in communities in Indiana and throughout the United States.

The Center’s key components:
  • internship program
  • research
  • educational outreach
  • policy

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The core of the Center’s work is a paid internship experience:

• 8 weeks summer (some also offered in spring and fall)
  • Internships are strongly linked to the student’s field of study
  • Weekly professional development workshops
  • Housing provided (IUPUI student apartments)
  • Accessible transportation provided
  • Center staff works with interns and employers to implement accommodations/AT solutions as needed
  • Social events
  • Ongoing data collection
**GROWING NUMBERS**

- The internship program has facilitated 319 paid internships for 163 students from 36 different colleges and universities.
- Eskenazi Health and 31 additional employers have hosted Fehribach Center interns.
- The Fehribach Center funds three $10,000 research grants annually. Members of its national Research Advisory Board are the PIs. Six studies have been funded to date.
- The Center provides education to employers, postsecondary professionals, K-12 educators, and families.

**BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT**

- 27.7% of college graduates (Bachelor's degree) with disabilities were employed compared to 73.2% of college graduates without a disability in 2021. [Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022)]
- Undergraduates with disabilities underutilize career services less often than nondisabled peers and often graduate with limited work experience. Additional time needed to address daily living tasks. Limited accessibility of transportation and office locations. Primary focus on academic activities and success. Family belief that a college degree will be sufficient to launch careers. [Parker & Markle (2020); Pilette (2019)]

**BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT**

- Poor transition planning remains common in K-12 settings (Lindstrom et al., 2011) where students with physical disabilities often lack access to effective assistive technology training and accommodations. This barrier is particularly true in STEM areas. [Oswald et al. (2015)]
- Oswald et al. (2015) found that only 26% of 2- and 4-year campuses provided career services that were targeted to college students with disabilities. “There may be no, or only passing interest, in the role of building skills and understanding the impact and role of accommodations in future employment situations” (p. 86). [Motlau (2006)]
BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Once on the job, accessible transportation to and from work can be another significant barrier, particularly outside of large urban centers. - Campbell et al. (1987); Cmar et al. (2018)
- College graduates with physical disabilities may find it difficult to locate adequate attendant care, thus limiting where they might secure a job or their ability to show up for work on time. - Wessel et al. (2015)
- Coordinating care from adult service agencies and finding effective augmented communication systems and adaptive equipment as additional barriers to independent living and employment. - Cmar et al. (2018)

INTERSECTIONALITY ISSUES

All Fehribach Center interns must have some form of a physical disability (i.e., mobility, hearing, visual, or orthopedic in nature). As of 2021:
- 74 of the 131 interns have mobility and/or orthopedic disabilities (56%)
- 33 are blind or visually impaired (25%)
- 24 are deaf or hard of hearing (18%)
- 78 of the interns are female (60%); 53 male (40%)
- Ninety-nine of the interns identify as White (76%); 15 as Asian (11%); 10 as Hispanic (8%); and 7 as African-American (5%)
- 35% of people who are black, indigenous, and people of color lost their jobs in 2020.
- 35% of nondisabled adults have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 15% of disabled adults. - National Disability Institute (2021)
- White men earn bachelor’s degrees in engineering at roughly six times the rate of Hispanic women and more than 11 times the rate of black women. - Center for American Progress (2018)

REFLECTION POINTS

- How often do you discuss career preparation with students with disabilities?
- What barriers (physical, technological, or attitudinal) might students with disabilities experience on your campus relative to career services?
- How do you and members of your team interact with career services colleagues?
**INTERNS' EXPERIENCES**

We are learning a great deal:

- Screening interviews
- Anecdotal feedback and observations
- Weekly journals (Dr. Roger Wessel)
- Pre- and post-surveys (Dr. Wessel)
- PICSS follow-along evaluation data (Dr. Wessel)
- Student panel discussions
- Participation in multiple internships
- Research studies (RAB members)

**EVALUATION OUTCOMES**

- Roger Wessel, Ph.D. conducts annual internal evaluations of internships. These include data from interns and their employers.
- He launched PICSS (follow-along evaluation) in Fall 2021.
- Evaluations use pre- and post-internship surveys of interns, post-surveys from employers, and a qualitative analysis of interns' weekly reflection journals.
- Dr. Josh Mitchell (RAB member) is currently studying the above data with deeper levels of analysis.

**INTERNS' EXPERIENCES**

- Interns reported higher levels of autonomy and self-determination, professional development and empowerment for career readiness after completing the internship.
- Interns reported a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of their internships (First-time interns 4.778/5; Returning interns 4.5/5)
- Both new (4.778/5) and returning (4.611.5) interns reported feeling they were able to perform their internship well.

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*2021 Annual Evaluation Report*
INTERNS’ EXPERIENCES

“As for my internship, it has allowed me to gain extremely valuable real-life experience without worrying about accommodations for my disabilities and fear of retribution by my employer. The internship program’s weekly program meetings were also beneficial for me, as they opened my eyes to things I was not aware of before. The work I have been doing is significant and helpful to my employer, setting me up well post-graduation. The Fehribach Center has done a great job setting up a program for anyone with a disability, and I could not recommend it more.”

- IU intern (8/3/2021)

EMPLOYERS’ FEEDBACK

• Supervisors reported that their interns did their duties well (4.7/5).
• Supervisors and co-workers reported a high level of comfort working alongside individuals with physical disabilities (4.4/5).
• Supervisors and co-workers reported that they believed their workplace was accessible and inclusive for interns, both in terms of physical and technological access. Interns confirmed this by reporting very few barriers in the workplace.

Responses to Survey Questions:
• Rank your knowledge of accessibility issues for individuals with physical disabilities (3.9; 5 = Very Knowledgeable)
• Work culture is inclusive of individuals with physical disabilities (74.3% Yes, 25.7% Somewhat)

- 2021 Summer Internship Evaluation

OVERALL EXPERIENCE
My intern is amazing!! She is expanding her abilities and duties every year that I have her. I’ve seen amazing growth in her maturity and willingness to try new tasks and take on new responsibilities.

GREATEST BENEFITS
In addition to adding Intern to the team, who brought so much energy to her work, she brought a diverse perspective that enabled us to think holistically about how to support our Employer candidates.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES
Not having had an individual with a physical disability on the team previously, we needed to learn about the accommodations necessary to ensure Intern’s success. Employer learned a lot from Intern on that front which was extremely helpful as we navigated her internship.
FUNDED RESEARCH

- Our priorities:
  - Efficacy of Center programming
  - Help fill the many gaps in the research on employment outcomes of college graduates with physical disabilities
  - Longitudinal study of early career experiences
  - Intersectionality of race, gender, disability and employment
  - Better understand the lived experiences of subgroups of our targeted population (e.g., deaf/HH interns)
  - Identify effective “pipeline” strategies
  - Use research findings to inform policy work

FUNDED RESEARCH

- National Research Advisory Board (RAB) in its 3rd year.
- RAB members encouraged to apply for annual $10,000 research grants.
  - Year 1:
    - Dr. Pam Luft (career readiness; barriers of interns who are deaf/HH)
    - Dr. Allison Fleming (self-determination outcomes)
    - Dr. Melinda Messineo (BSU graduates’ use of college services prepare for employment success)
  - Year 2:
    - Dr. Joe Madaus (meta-analysis of college barriers and drivers for students with physical disabilities)
    - Dr. Josh Mitchell (qualitative analysis of interns’ experiences)
    - Dr. Jayanthi Kandiah and Dr. Diana Saiki (perceptions of aesthetic bias)

RESEARCH ON INTERNS’ EXPERIENCES

- “Despite these outlying responses, there is a clear pattern of growth across the 26 interns. There was an overall substantial and statistically significant increase in their ratings of career preparedness (p < .001) with 22 of the 26 respondents (85%) showing an increase. The remaining four (15%), whose scores all appeared below the lower confidence band, were the exceptions to the general trend. Furthermore, two of the interns whose lower post-presentation rating saw decreases of less than 1 point across the 4 rated items.”
  - Pamela Luft, Ph.D. (2021)
RESEARCH ON INTERNS’ EXPERIENCES

1
Students were satisfied with the quality of their internship experience:
Rated 4.84/5 on likely to recommend
No difference in satisfaction for

2
Significant changes in self-determination corresponding with the internship experience:
Total SD, belief in themselves and their value, and ability to take action towards their goals

CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS

- Virtual “Campus Collaborations” Community of Practice (CoP) with DRS and Career Services professionals at 3 universities
- Promote evidenced-based “cross training” to enhance effective career development for SWD’s
- NACE Competencies for Career Readiness/Professionalism (2021)
- Disability literature recommendations
- Quarterly meetings: one campus focus/session
- Share successes, challenges, evaluation methods for their partnership approach
- Drop-box site for shared resources
- Year-end report (reflection, planning ahead, artifacts)

In most instances, it took significant effort and multiple outreaches by the disability services staff before a student agreed to make an initial appointment or committed to attending a career event. Lack of time and difficulty shifting their focus from academics were the primary reasons our students were resistant. In addition, some students were anxious about working with a career counselor because they did not have prior work experience. In response to these concerns and difficulties, we met with the career development staff multiple times throughout the year to learn more about ACE Pathway and collaborate on disability awareness events. Since our departments are adjacent, it was easy for us to also meet informally as needed. Because we had a better understanding of their programs and events, we were able to inform and prepare our students in advance, alleviating their anxiety and increasing their use of career services.”

- University of Evansville

Indiana University
Rose-Vilman
University of Evansville
CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS

Next Year's Goals (IU CoP Team):
• Video clips (and quotes) of Fehribach interns to aid in marketing
• CDS website: add info about self-disclosure and advocacy to affinity page for students with disabilities
• Welcome email from DSS or joint newsletter that targets career services for SWD
• Highlight disability services best practices in DEI Career Services Committee
• Explore connections with DSS and families during new student orientation
• CDS will host a Diversity Career Expo on November 3rd.
• Identify SWD who would agree to serve as "success story" mentors
• The CDC office is conversing with other neurodiverse groups to create documents and events to support their identified needs

NEXT STEPS

• Internships: Explore internships for students from HBCU's
• Research: Develop a special issue for the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability
• Educational Outreach: Create a high school pilot project ("Disability as Diversity")
• Policy: Work with external consultants; write a policy paper on barrier reductions

QUESTIONS

• What questions do you have?
• What suggestions would you make?
THANK YOU!

- We appreciate your interest in this topic and our work. Refer to the Resource Handout for more information.
- We welcome the chance to hear from you. Let’s discuss partnerships or learn more about your own approach.
- Watch for more information about the Fehribach Center’s work in JPED and on our expanding website.

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