

# Inclusive Postsecondary Education: A Scoping Review of the Research and Recommendations for the Future

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## Abstract

The field of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) has grown significantly since its early inception, alongside a developing body of empirical and conceptual research. This scoping review was designed to catalog and analyze the entirety of peer-reviewed research in the field of inclusive postsecondary education available in English to explore themes, subtopics, methodologies, and trends over time. Guided by the PRISMA-ScR framework, we analyzed 498 peer-reviewed studies published between 1976 and 2024. A thematic review of the research was also conducted and is partially presented here. Overall findings indicate a substantial increase in IPSE research over time, as well as changes in focus from program development to more outcome- or support-focused research. Gaps in the research are identified, and recommendations for the field are provided.

*Keywords: intellectual disability, inclusive postsecondary education, inclusive higher education, literature review*

## Introduction

### Rationale

Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) is a rapidly growing field with a burgeoning research base (Whirley et al., 2020). However, there are recognized research gaps, and more research is needed, particularly to support strong practices in program design and full university inclusion (Madaus et al., 2024). While some have called the field of inclusive postsecondary education an emerging area of research (e.g., Smith-Hill et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2021), a case can be made that this field is no longer emerging and is now established. IPSE has a dedicated journal (*Journal of*

*Inclusive Postsecondary Education*), an independent accreditation body (The Inclusive Higher Education Accreditation Council [IHEAC], 2024), a national professional conference since 2010 (The State of the Art Conference), a national coordinating center for 15 years (<https://thinkcollege.net/projects/ncc>), and international collaboration (JoinIn). A searchable list posted on the Think College website indicates over 139 peer-reviewed articles as resources, in addition to books or book chapters, legislation, presentations, guides, webinars, and other materials (Think College, n.d.). Many of these resources have contributed greatly to the development of inclusive higher education across the United States and beyond.

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IPSE refers to programs that support access to higher education for students with intellectual disability, often through alternative enrollment pathways. While programs can vary regarding course access, degrees and certificates, housing, and more, IPSE is college access with peers for students with intellectual disability (Stinnett et al., 2023). These programs have expanded in the past decades, reflecting increasing enrollment of students with intellectual disability in colleges and universities. However, the IPSE field is complex and evolving, with ongoing challenges around program design, equity, and outcomes. While several previous literature reviews have been done, none have explored the entire scope of IPSE research. Existing reviews instead address a specific span of years (such as Papay and Grigal's 2019 study examining research from 2010-2016, or Whirley et al.'s 2020 examination of papers from 2008-2018), or a specific subset of the literature, such as research on self-determination (Burke et al., 2024) or faculty attitudes (Alanazi & Gadelmawla, 2021). There is a need for a comprehensive synthesis of the literature to identify what is known and to highlight gaps, especially regarding the inclusion of diverse student populations and theoretical foundations for the work. The purpose of this scoping review is to provide an overview of existing IPSE research, summarizing key themes, methodologies, trends over time, and gaps in knowledge.

## Objectives

This review addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the key research themes and subtopics in the field of IPSE?
2. What research designs and methodologies have been commonly used in IPSE research?
3. Are there any emerging trends or changes in the focus of IPSE research over time?
4. What are the identified gaps in the literature, and what areas require further research?

## Methods

### Protocol and Registration

We conducted a scoping review guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines to enhance methodological rigor and transparency (Page et al., 2021). A detailed protocol outlining the search strategy, inclusion criteria, and methods for data extraction and synthesis was developed a priori by the first and second authors.

### Eligibility Criteria

For this review, we included peer-reviewed studies that focused specifically on postsecondary or higher education for students with intellectual disability. No date restrictions were imposed to comprehensively capture the historical and contemporary developments in the field.

Publications were excluded if they did not focus explicitly on college or university settings or on preparing students with intellectual disability for postsecondary education (e.g., programs exclusively covering K-12 or vocational training) or on the transition out of college after IPSE program completion. Studies focusing on disabilities other than intellectual disability were excluded to maintain specificity and relevance to the target population. Non-research publications such as journal introductions, speeches, or announcements were excluded to ensure methodological rigor. Non-empirical research, such as program descriptions and theoretical papers that met the peer-reviewed criteria, were included because they provide valuable insights into the breadth of the field, contributing to an understanding of inclusive higher education for individuals with intellectual disability. Articles not available in English were excluded due to practical constraints in translation resources. Dissertations, while not specifically excluded, did not pass through the peer-reviewed criteria during the database search.

### Information Sources and Search

A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple databases, including Education Source, ERIC, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Scopus, with coverage dates extending from database inception to the date of the final search. The search strategy was collaboratively developed with a librarian and included keywords related to intellectual disability, postsecondary or higher education, and inclusion. Database searches were performed independently by the first through fourth authors between January 11, 2024 and August 27, 2024, with an additional search executed on October 9, 2024. To ensure comprehensiveness, manual searches of reference lists and specialized resources, including the Think College resource library, were also performed. Additionally, on October 10, 2024, the second author manually reviewed and included relevant articles from volumes one through six of the *Journal of Inclusive Postsecondary Education* (JIPE). See Appendix A for the full electronic search strategy used, including all search terms and parameters to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

### ***Selection of Sources of Evidence***

All identified records were imported into the online Covidence software (Covidence, 2025) for deduplication and screening. Duplicates were first removed automatically by Covidence, followed by an additional manual check by the first and second authors to ensure completeness. The first and second authors independently conducted initial screening of titles and abstracts to assess each source's relevance to inclusive higher education involving students with intellectual disability. Articles focusing explicitly on inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability were included for full-text review. Disagreements or discrepancies encountered during both screening phases (title/abstract and full-text review) were resolved through discussion and consensus meetings between the same two authors. A PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) provides a summary of the selection process, including the number of sources assessed at each stage and reasons for exclusion. Although we did not calculate formal interrater reliability statistics, we used ongoing consistency checks throughout both screening phases, including independent dual review and structured consensus meetings to resolve discrepancies, aligning with recommended scoping review practices.

### ***Data Charting Process and Data Items***

A standardized data extraction form was developed to systematically chart key information from each included source of evidence. The form captured the following data fields: title of the study, stated research question(s) (or "not found" if not explicitly stated), country or location of the study, year of publication, and type of publication, including whether it was classified as research. For non-research publications, the form recorded the nature of the source (e.g., speech, introduction, letter). Methodological details were documented, including whether the approach was qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, or other, along with specific methods used (e.g., interview, focus group, narrative, ethnography, survey, Delphi).

The use of a theoretical or conceptual framework was also recorded or marked as "not found" if not identified. The form included detailed study focus categories such as academics, program design or development and IPSE overview, policy, transition into or out of IPSE, employment, support (including peer support), social or student engagement and campus involvement, residential, campus, or independent living and life skills, and literature reviews. Additionally, population focus was documented, including students with intellectual disability, students without intellectual disability (peers), faculty, instructors, or

staff, family members, parents, caregivers, and others as applicable.

Each source was also reviewed for any mention of race. A low threshold was used for this category; any mention of race or racial identity, including in participant demographic descriptions, was coded as "Yes." Inclusion in this category did not require that race be analyzed or discussed in the findings or interpretation. We adopted a low-threshold approach to race coding to ensure that the review captured even minimal attention to racial or ethnic identity, allowing us to document foundational patterns in whether race was acknowledged at all. However, we recognize that this approach may overlook deeper analyses of racialized experiences, intersectionality, or equity-oriented interpretations within studies. All authors contributed to piloting and refining the data extraction form to ensure clarity and consistency. Data charting was conducted in duplicate, with two authors independently extracting data from each article. Following this, the second author reviewed all entries for accuracy and consensus. Discrepancies were resolved through team discussion. This rigorous process ensured transparency and reliability in the extraction and synthesis of data. The full data extraction framework is presented in Appendix B.

### ***Synthesis of Results***

After reaching consensus on all extracted data, we applied both descriptive and thematic analysis techniques to synthesize the charted information. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize key study characteristics in aggregate form, including frequency of methodologies, publication years, and geographic distribution (see Results). We then conducted thematic analysis to identify and categorize studies based on primary focus or research questions. Within these categories, we identified overarching themes and subtopics and recorded frequency. This process allowed us to map the distribution and prominence of specific topics over time or geography. After discussion and modeling with the research team, each author analyzed one of the thematic groups for key insights, recurring patterns, areas of concentration or gaps, shifts in focus over time, or differences in topic emphasis by country. The first and second authors then cross-checked findings to ensure themes were analyzed consistently. This dual approach of quantifying descriptive features while qualitatively interpreting thematic content supported a more comprehensive understanding of the field. We identified themes through an iterative, team-based coding process in which all 498 studies were grouped by their primary focus, and these themes were selected because they represent the most con-

sistently recurring and foundational areas of IPSE research. This process ensured the themes reflected both the historical trajectory of the field and the issues most essential to understanding current practices, gaps, and future directions.

## Results

A total of 14,736 records were identified through database searches. After the removal of 6,589 duplicates by Covidence and an additional 15 identified manually (total 6,604), 8,132 unique records remained for title and abstract screening. A substantial number of studies ( $n = 7,573$ ) were excluded during this phase for not meeting the inclusion criteria. This was partly due to the initial inclusion of the search term “learning disability,” used in the United Kingdom to label intellectual disability. However, in the United States context, “learning disability” refers to a different category of disability (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia). While the use of this term ensured relevant studies from the United Kingdom were captured, it also resulted in the inclusion of many unrelated articles which needed to be screened. The remaining 559 studies were retrieved in full-text form for further assessment. None were excluded due to retrieval issues. During full-text review, 61 studies were excluded for the following reasons: not focused on intellectual disability ( $n = 25$ ), not classified as research ( $n = 21$ ), not related to college or university settings ( $n = 4$ ), not published in English ( $n = 1$ ), or not specifically addressing college students with intellectual disability ( $n = 10$ ). It should be noted that while 21 of these articles were included in peer-reviewed publications, they did not meet our criteria as research, even as early descriptive research and were subsequently excluded from this study. These manuscripts included items such as journal introductions, award announcements, and opinion pieces that did not include a research study. In total, 498 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final scoping review. A PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) provides a visual summary of the study selection process, including reasons for exclusion at each stage.

### Methodological Characteristics of Included Studies

A range of methodological approaches was found in the literature. Of the 498 articles included in this scoping review, 418 of 489 (85%) were identified as empirical studies while the remaining publications comprised conceptual analyses, program descriptions, or briefs. Among the empirical studies, qualitative methods were the most frequently used,

appearing in 198 studies (47%). Common qualitative designs included case studies, individual and focus group interviews, observations, and ethnographic or narrative analyses. Many of these studies focused on collecting qualitative data from students with intellectual disability, peer mentors, or faculty members to explore personal experiences and perspectives within inclusive college settings.

Quantitative methodologies were used in 148 studies (35%) and utilized surveys, standardized assessments, or statistical analyses to examine patterns, outcomes, or group differences. Surveys were especially common, with data collected from students, program staff, or families to measure outcomes and perceptions. Some studies used correlational or regression analyses to examine predictors of success or to analyze large secondary datasets, such as national longitudinal studies. A smaller subset of studies used experimental or quasi-experimental design, such as single-subject experimental design to evaluate specific interventions, and pre/post-test or quasi-experimental group designs to assess program effectiveness. Few randomized controlled trials were found and can be considered rare in IPSE research.

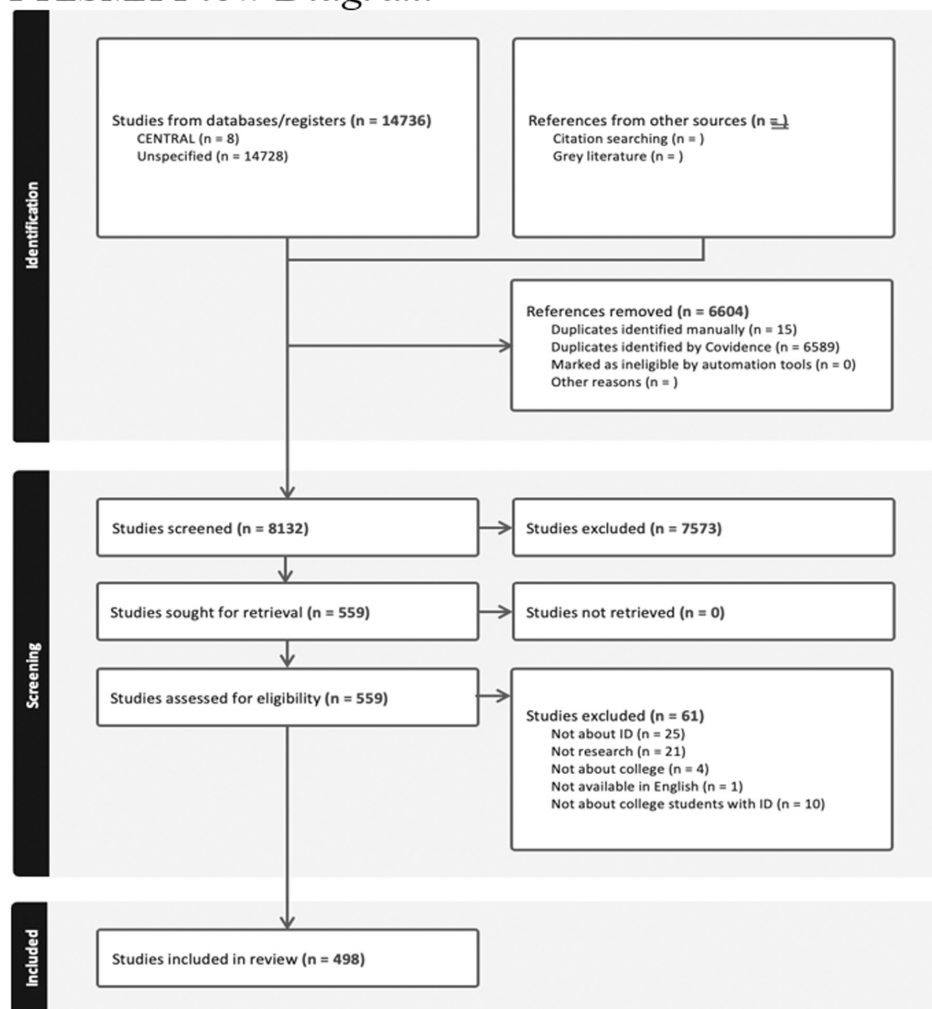
Mixed methods approaches were utilized in 72 studies (17%), combining quantitative and qualitative methods. These studies often merged survey or performance data with interview or focus group findings. This approach was especially common in program evaluation research, where studies included quantitative indicators such as graduation rates or employment outcomes alongside qualitative information from participants about their experience.

Finally, 80 studies (16%) were categorized as “other” or “not specified.” These included publications where the methodology was either unclear or not reported, as well as non-empirical manuscripts such as program descriptions, theoretical commentaries, practice briefs, and conceptual papers.

### IPSE Research Over Time

The volume of published research on IPSE has increased significantly over the past several decades. The earliest identified publication included in this review dates to 1976 and was the only article from that decade. Only two articles were identified from the 1980s, published in 1981 and 1988. While publication activity increased over time, there was sparse scholarly activity in the IPSE field through the 1990s and 2000s, with only 42 published studies in these two decades. Between 2010 and 2019, 208 articles were published, representing a sharp and sustained increase in literature production within the field. Publication numbers fluctuated slightly but remained



**Figure 1***Results and Characteristics of Individual Sources of Evidence**PRISMA Flow Diagram*

consistently high, with approximately 42 to 57 studies published annually between 2020 and 2024. One outlier in the data was a study pre-published in 2024 with an actual publication date of 2025. See Table 2 for the number of research publications by year.

In addition to the increase in research volume, the thematic focus of IPSE scholarship has broadened and evolved as the field has matured. Publications prior to 2009 were focused predominantly on program design and development. The most frequently addressed topics included program overviews, structural components, and the transition of students with intellectual disability into postsecondary education. Early IPSE literature documented program establishment and feasibility, often making the case that college was even possible for students with intellectual disability. This early focus reflects the field's

developmental stage, in which researchers and practitioners were engaged in documenting pilot initiatives and conceptualizing potential IPSE models.

Entering the 2010s, the scope of IPSE research began to expand beyond program development and proof of concept. During this time, there was an increase in studies examining academic access and transition planning. Research also emerged on support systems and social inclusion, including investigations into peer mentoring and the social experiences of students with intellectual disability. The focus began to shift from program engagement and success to student engagement and success.

Between 2016 and 2020, the scope of IPSE research expanded considerably, reflecting the field's growth and evolution. Program design was no longer primary, as research examining academic engage-

ment, social inclusion, support services, independent living, and post-graduation outcomes increased. Notably, research addressing academic components of IPSE nearly doubled compared to the earlier period, and investigations into peer support and social experiences within college settings also grew significantly. Career readiness was also a major focus, with research examining employment outcomes.

The years between 2021 and 2024 have continued the trend toward greater diversification in IPSE research. During this period, studies focusing on support strategies, including technological aids, mental health services, and social engagement have become as prevalent as those examining program design. In the most recent years' publications, there has been an emerging critical perspective, for example, questioning how inclusive current programs truly are, analyzing representation issues (who is being served by IPSE), and calling for more student-centered and equitable approaches. This shift indicates a broadening of focus from simply "establishing" IPSE programs to critically evaluating their quality and inclusiveness. Moreover, issues of equity and diversity have begun to receive increased scholarly attention. Recent studies have explored topics such as racial diversity within IPSE programs and the implementation of culturally responsive practices, areas that were largely overlooked in earlier decades.

The data reveal a notable increase in the number of studies referencing race or including racial demographics after 2018. Prior to 2004, none of the included studies acknowledged the racial or cultural backgrounds of participants, and such considerations remained infrequent throughout the early 2000s. However, between 2021 and 2024, approximately half of the studies published each year included some mention of race or ethnicity. It is important to clarify that the criteria for identifying a study as addressing race were broad: studies were counted if they referenced racial or ethnic identity in any form, including mentions limited to participant demographic information. In many cases, these variables were not integrated into the study's analysis, interpretation, or discussion. See Table 1, which shows the increase in research including race over time.

### Thematic Findings

From the content analysis of 498 publications, articles were categorized by major thematic groups often overlapping with one another. Table 3 summarizes the primary themes and their frequency of occurrence in the literature; it should be noted that many studies addressed multiple themes and categorization reflects as such.

### Program Design and Development

The research team coded 161 articles focused on program design, program development, and overviews of IPSE, beginning in 1981 (Little, 1981). Of these, 119 articles were focused on programs in the United States, 11 in Ireland, three articles in unknown countries, and the remaining 28 articles were focused on programs in 16 other countries. Of the 161 total articles, the two most prevalent methodological approaches were qualitative (66) and non-systematic or descriptive research (52), with the remaining 43 articles employing a quantitative research design.

The literature also highlighted how purposeful inclusive program design with an integrated support system can support academic access, development, community involvement, professional training, and interpersonal connections (Hafner et al., 2011; Little, 1981). Additionally, inclusive programming was associated with a positive impact on social connectivity, student learning, decision-making, emotional recognition, and self-determination (Becht et al., 2020; Hafner et al., 2011; Little, 1981).

### Academics

The research team coded 116 articles focusing on academics. Of those, 71% were focused on the United States, 8.8% on Ireland, and 2.6% on places not named. The other 17.6% of articles were focused on 13 other countries. The methods of these articles consisted of the following: 54 qualitative, 40 quantitative, 12 mixed methods, and 10 that were not systematic research. Research articles about the topic of academics have increased over time, from one article in 2001 to 11 articles in 2024. The majority of the articles about academics ( $n = 91$ , 78%) had no explicit theoretical framework, highlighting a gap across the field. Theories were mentioned in a few articles, such as grounded theory, Universal Design for Learning, and self-determination theory (e.g., Kamperman, 2020; Kubiak, 2024; Paiewonsky, 2011; Potts et al., 2024; Smith & Myers, 2024). Forty-four of 116 articles focused on academics specifically mentioned race.

The three main categories of research related to academics were (a) how to increase content area knowledge of students with intellectual disability (e.g., Carpenter, 2015; Madden et al., 2021), (b) studies discussing faculty pedagogy and classroom accommodations (e.g., Brendli et al., 2021), and (c) studies analyzing the attitudes of various stakeholders towards the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in college (e.g., Kubiak, 2015a, 2015b).

**Table 1***IPSE Studies by Method*

| <b>Method</b>      | <b>Frequency Used</b> | <b>Percent of Studies</b> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Qualitative        | 198                   | ~ 40%                     |
| Quantitative       | 148                   | ~30%                      |
| Mixed Method       | 72                    | ~14%                      |
| Other <sup>1</sup> | 80                    | ~16%                      |

*Note.* <sup>1</sup> Non-empirical but peer-reviewed work and publications with unspecified methods

**Table 2***Year Published and Inclusion of Race*

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Number<br/>of Studies<br/>Published</b> | <b>Articles<br/>Mentioning<br/>Race</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Number<br/>of Studies<br/>Published</b> | <b>Articles<br/>Mentioning<br/>Race</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1976        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2010        | 4                                          | 3                                       |
| 1981        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2011        | 9                                          | 5                                       |
| 1988        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2012        | 22                                         | 5                                       |
| 1991        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2013        | 18                                         | 5                                       |
| 1992        | 2                                          | 0                                       | 2014        | 14                                         | 8                                       |
| 1993        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2015        | 23                                         | 8                                       |
| 1994        | 3                                          | 0                                       | 2016        | 16                                         | 6                                       |
| 1996        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2017        | 29                                         | 11                                      |
| 2001        | 3                                          | 0                                       | 2018        | 34                                         | 19                                      |
| 2002        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2019        | 39                                         | 15                                      |
| 2003        | 1                                          | 0                                       | 2020        | 46                                         | 16                                      |
| 2004        | 9                                          | 2                                       | 2021        | 57                                         | 26                                      |
| 2006        | 4                                          | 0                                       | 2022        | 42                                         | 19                                      |
| 2007        | 2                                          | 0                                       | 2023        | 43                                         | 22                                      |
| 2008        | 6                                          | 4                                       | 2024        | 54                                         | 31                                      |
| 2009        | 8                                          | 0                                       | 2025        | 1                                          | 1                                       |

**Table 3***Research Themes and Frequencies*

| <b>Research Theme</b>                                                | <b>Frequency of Studies</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Program design & development (models, implementation, overviews)     | 161                         |
| Academics (course access, curriculum modifications, performance)     | 116                         |
| Support (peer mentoring, coaching, accommodations)                   | 102                         |
| Social or student engagement & campus involvement                    | 88                          |
| Residential/campus living/independent living                         | 75                          |
| Employment (career development during & after IPSE)                  | 73                          |
| Transition into IPSE (college preparation, K–12 transition planning) | 72                          |
| Transition out of IPSE (post-program outcomes, life after college)   | 54                          |
| Literature review                                                    | 24                          |
| Policy                                                               | 14                          |

*Notes.*  $n = 498$  studies included in the scoping review. Studies could be categorized under more than one theme.

**Support**

The research team identified 102 studies focused on supports for students with intellectual disability. Studies on this topic date back to 1991 (Strully & Strully, 1991). Of the 102 articles reviewed, 88 were from the United States. Other countries included Spain ( $n = 3$ ), Canada ( $n = 2$ ), Ireland ( $n = 2$ ), Australia ( $n = 3$ ), Sweden ( $n = 1$ ), Turkey ( $n = 1$ ), and Saudi Arabia ( $n = 1$ ). The majority of studies focused on students with intellectual disability ( $n = 66$ ); however, far fewer studies centered on the lived experiences of IPSE participants ( $n = 26$ ). Remaining articles focused on peers without intellectual disability ( $n = 35$ ), staff and faculty ( $n = 29$ ), and family, guardians, and caregivers ( $n = 11$ ). The methods consisted of 50 qualitative, 28 quantitative, and 13 mixed-methods studies. The other eight articles were narrative or non-empirical works. Fifty of 102 articles focused on support specifically mentioned race.

Of the reviewed articles, peer mentoring was the most extensively researched support strategy ( $n = 46$ ; e.g., Fisher et al., 2020; McLendon et al., 2024). Peer mentors were mentioned individually and in combination with every other support studied; identified outcomes of peer mentoring included increased confidence, motivation, and feelings of belonging for both IPSE students and peer mentors (Fisher et al., 2020) as well as improved academic skills such as note-taking and vocabulary comprehension (Giust & Valle-Riestra, 2017). Other supports present in this category were family support systems ( $n = 17$ ;

e.g., Plotner & May, 2019; Rodríguez Herrero et al., 2021), teaching supports ( $n = 15$ ; e.g., Shikarpurya et al., 2024), communication supports ( $n = 14$ ; e.g., Fisher et al., 2020; Watts et al., 2023), assistive technology/online alternatives ( $n = 13$ ; e.g., Lansey et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2022), and hands-on experiences or workshops ( $n = 11$ ). Less named supports included wrap-around or UDL services, sexual health and intimacy supports, and faith-related support (e.g., Stinnett et al., 2023). Few articles focused on embedded supports on the college campus, including counseling and the disability resources office, which was identified as a gap in the research.

**Social Engagement and Campus Involvement**

The research team coded 88 articles focusing on topics related to socialization, student engagement, and campus involvement. Seventy-one were focused on the United States, five on Spain, one had no country named, and the other 11 were focused on seven other countries. The methods of these articles consisted of 51 qualitative, 23 quantitative, 13 mixed methods, and one that was not systematic research. The earliest articles in this category were published in 2003 (Hamill, 2003) and then in 2009 (Carroll et al., 2009), with one article in both years. This long early gap in this area of research indicates the field had not yet matured; many articles at the time were still focused on program development (see discussion below). Most of the articles ( $n = 58$ ) about social/student engagement and campus involvement did not



have a theoretical framework. Those that did were framed with theories such as self-determination theory (e.g., Francis et al., 2018), social model of disability (Oakes et al., 2020), grounded theory (e.g., Smith Hill et al., 2025), contact theory (e.g., Shikarpurya et al., 2024), Disability Studies in Education (e.g., Ducett & Myers, 2023), and Tierney's Individual Institutional Culture Framework (Oakes et al., 2020). Notably, 50 articles (57%) within this topic mentioned race.

Within this topic area, articles fell within three major categories: intervention, program design/historical context, and attitudes. Interventions, found in a quarter of articles in this overall topic area, focused on outcomes for students with intellectual disability explicitly related to social skills and social networks (e.g., Eisenman et al., 2013; Kearney & Torres, 2022; Spencer et al., 2021). The largest group of articles within this overall category ( $n = 49$ ) highlighted the perspectives of stakeholders towards the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in college. The attitudes of people with intellectual disability towards IPSE programs were examined in 17 of these articles (e.g., Ducett & Myers, 2023), with over half of the articles discussing the attitudes of other stakeholders towards inclusion in college, most commonly faculty and peers (e.g., Griffin et al., 2012).

### ***Residential, Campus, and Independent Living***

The research team reviewed 75 articles focused on residential, campus, and community living, as well as work explicitly labeled as addressing "life skills" or daily living. The earliest publication in this category examined success after graduation for students with intellectual disability was in 1994 (Levine & Edgar, 1994). Most studies were conducted within the United States ( $n = 69$ ), with other notable settings including Ireland ( $n = 1$ ), Australia ( $n = 1$ ), Mexico ( $n = 1$ ), and the United Kingdom ( $n = 1$ ). Two articles did not list a location. Sixty-eight articles focused on students with intellectual disability; however, fewer studies ( $n = 29$ ) sought feedback and collaboration from individuals with intellectual disability. Interestingly, studies that centered on the effectiveness of a particular method on students with intellectual disability ( $n = 27$ ) were nearly as common as those that centered on the lived experiences of IPSE students (e.g., Baker et al., 2019). Faculty ( $n = 11$ ), peers ( $n = 9$ ), and family, guardians, and caregivers ( $n = 4$ ) were also primary areas of focus. The most common methods were quantitative ( $n = 38$ ), qualitative ( $n = 22$ ), and mixed methods ( $n = 9$ ). Six additional articles were not academic in nature. Thirty-three of 75 articles focused on living specifically mentioned race.

The majority of studies ( $n = 47$ ) focused on stu-

dents with intellectual disability acquiring skills to help them become more self-reliant, including executive function, emotional regulation, and task completion. Studies emphasizing choice and self-determination were also common ( $n = 25$ ). Community integration ( $n = 21$ ), exercise, health and recreation ( $n = 15$ ), and building confidence ( $n = 11$ ) were also popular themes. Lesser named trends revolved around engaging in adult behavior (e.g., alcohol and sexual activity) ( $n = 8$ ) and emergency preparedness ( $n = 4$ ). Less frequently discussed was the location of residence for IPSE students: campus living ( $n = 15$ ) was the most named, followed by community living ( $n = 6$ ), and living with family ( $n = 5$ ).

Across this theme, constructs such as executive functioning, emotional regulation, and community integration were operationalized through both quantitative measures (e.g., standardized assessments, surveys, or task-based performance indicators) and qualitative reports describing students' lived experiences and skill development.

### ***Employment***

Seventy-three articles focused on employment. Most of this research (90%,  $n = 65$ ) took place in the United States. Forty of the articles used quantitative research methods, seventeen used qualitative approaches, eight were mixed methods studies, while the remaining eight were conceptual works. Other types of articles included program review papers (e.g., Wilson et al., 2017) and conceptual articles (e.g., Harmon et al., 2021). Within this employment dataset, articles discussed topics such as program design ( $n = 12$ ), support ( $n = 8$ ), social engagement ( $n = 7$ ), and academics ( $n = 5$ ) (e.g., Devine et al., 2022; Fisher et al., 2020). Forty-nine of the articles focused primarily on students with intellectual disability (e.g., Roberts-Dahm & Dukes, 2024), two focused on faculty and staff (e.g., Chezan et al., 2018), and one centered on the perspectives of parents (Yuan et al., 2018). The remaining studies examined programming (Harmon et al., 2021); students and faculty (e.g., Scheef et al., 2018); students, faculty, and families (e.g., Kelley & Prohn, 2019), students without intellectual disability (e.g., Carter et al., 2019); and other combinations of students and stakeholders. Thirty-three of 73 articles focused on employment specifically mentioned race.

Common trends among the articles in this thematic dataset include identification and development of employment skills, employment outcomes, and predictors of employment. Employment skills addressed in the literature include interviewing skills, decision-making skills, self-advocacy skills, and workplace communication skills. Studies on employment

outcomes found participation in an IPSE program was correlated with higher rates of paid employment (e.g., Grigal et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2021).

### ***Transition Into IPSE***

The research team identified 72 studies focused on transitioning into IPSE, with the first article published in 1988 (Westwood & Mitchell, 1988). Of these articles, the majority took place in the United States ( $n = 60$ ). Other countries included Canada ( $n = 4$ ), United Kingdom ( $n = 3$ ), Spain ( $n = 1$ ), Saudi Arabia ( $n = 1$ ), Ireland ( $n = 1$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 1$ ), and Taiwan ( $n = 1$ ). Two of the included studies did not specify a location. Many of the studies in this theme ( $n = 59$ ) had the students with intellectual disability as the population focus, although far fewer included these individuals as participants or co-researchers (note exceptions such as Scanlon & Doyle, 2021). Other common subjects included families and caregivers ( $n = 23$ ) and faculty or teachers ( $n = 20$ ). The most common method used was quantitative ( $n = 25$ ), closely followed by qualitative ( $n = 20$ ), mixed methods ( $n = 13$ ), while the remaining articles constituted conceptual papers ( $n = 14$ ). Only eight of the identified articles (11%) made use of a theoretical framework in analysis, with the rest ( $n = 64$ ) not engaging with theory in their research. This limited engagement with theory constitutes a striking gap and a notable limitation within the field, underscoring the need for more conceptually grounded research in IPSE. Thirty of the 72 articles focused on the transition into IPSE specifically mentioned race.

Among the identified studies, transition planning and postsecondary goal setting was the most common focus (e.g., Baer et al., 2011), with studies reporting on predictive factors of postsecondary education access (e.g., Andresen, 2024), followed by best practices and examinations of collaboration between families, students, and professionals (e.g., Pearman et al., 2004). Studies examining family perspectives, preparation, and experiences (e.g., Graff et al., 2019) were also common in this category.

### ***Transition out of IPSE and Post-IPSE***

A total of 54 articles were coded with a focus on transitioning out of IPSE or post-IPSE. Among these articles ( $n = 41$ ) (76%) were conducted in the United States. Other countries include the United Kingdom ( $n = 3$ ), Australia ( $n = 2$ ), Iceland ( $n = 1$ ), Ireland ( $n = 1$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 1$ ), Saudi Arabia ( $n = 1$ ), Spain ( $n = 1$ ), Taiwan ( $n = 1$ ). The remaining two articles did not report a study location. The year of publication began in 1988. Twenty-five of these studies employed quantitative methods, seventeen utilized qualitative

methods, and seven used mixed methods. Additional types of articles within this theme included conceptual papers (e.g., Cook, 2017) and policy overviews (Talapatra & Snider, 2022). Of the 54 articles on transition out of IPSE, 27 mentioned race (50%).

The variety of topics discussed in the articles about transition post-IPSE included employment (e.g., Rillotta et al., 2024), independent living skills (Ross et al., 2013), transitioning into IPSE programs (e.g., Kelley & Prohn, 2019), IPSE program development (e.g., Caniglia & Michall, 2018), post-IPSE outcomes (Grigal et al., 2019), and social engagement (Spencer et al., 2021). Thirty-one of these studies concentrated on students with intellectual disability (e.g., Lansey et al., 2024), four focused on parents and caregivers of students with intellectual disability (e.g., Yuan et al., 2018), and 19 investigated students with intellectual disability alongside other populations of faculty or peers (e.g., Butler et al., 2016). Employment outcomes were best documented in this area, while quality of life, community participation, and community living remained under-researched.

### ***Literature Reviews***

A total of 24 literature reviews were identified by the research team, ranging in publication dates from 2001 (Neubert et al., 2001) to 2024 (Taconet et al., 2024). While not every literature review was restricted to a specific country, the United States was the most specified country ( $n = 17$ ), with the remaining articles ( $n = 7$ ) being unspecified. These articles were overwhelmingly qualitative ( $n = 23$ ), encompassing both scoping and systematic reviews, with one quantitative exception (Woods-Groves et al., 2023). The majority of the studies ( $n = 17$ ) identified students with intellectual disability as the population focus, with other foci including family and caregivers ( $n = 3$ ), faculty ( $n = 4$ ), and students without intellectual disability ( $n = 3$ ). Only seven of the identified studies engaged with race.

The two most common topics among the literature reviews included reviews of interventions ( $n = 6$ ) and IPSE overviews and state of the field ( $n = 6$ ). Most of the reviews of interventions were related to academics, such as literacy, assistive technology, augmented reality, communication, and independent living (e.g., Jdaitawi & Kan'an, 2022; Shelton et al., 2019; Taconet et al., 2024). The literature reviews focused on IPSE broadly discussed access to IPSE, academic progress, or funding (e.g., Becht et al., 2020). Other literature reviews centered on stakeholder attitudes toward IPSE, but overwhelmingly did not include student perspectives (e.g., Carter & McCabe, 2021).

## Policy

A total of 14 articles were classified by the research team as policy-related, with publication dates beginning in 2012 (e.g., Mock & Love, 2012). The majority of these articles originated from the United States ( $n = 11$ ), with the remaining articles coming from Australia ( $n = 1$ ), Brazil ( $n = 1$ ), and New Zealand ( $n = 1$ ). Of these 14 articles, nine were empirical studies, with five employing qualitative methodologies, three using quantitative methodologies, and one adopting mixed methods. The remaining five articles consisted of policy briefs and conceptual discussions grounded in policy frameworks. The predominant topic among these articles focused on policy implementation ( $n = 10$ ), while a smaller subset explored interactions of policy across systems and agencies ( $n = 3$ ), and one article presented a literature review. Notably, none of the identified articles explicitly addressed race, a critical gap in informing equity-based policy in the field. Additionally, there was an evident absence of student voices and perspectives in these articles, highlighting a disconnect between policy-making processes and the experiences of the student community being served.

## Discussion and Recommendations

This scoping review reflects a near 50-year history of university supports for students with intellectual disability, with a total of 498 research articles found in the field of inclusive postsecondary education dating back to 1976. Eleven early articles were published prior to 2000, with the majority of research published after 2010. Both the total number of publications and the year span of research is notable for a field that is generally considered “first generation.” It is not surprising, however, that the surge in publications corresponds with the growing recognition and support for IPSE programs, particularly following the passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 and the first Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) awardees in 2010.

The research also follows a predictable trajectory of the field: While early research focused primarily on program design and development, research topics became more refined over time. This research is aligned with previous literature reviews, reflecting similar findings such as Papay and Grigal (2019), Whirley et al., (2020), Lee and Taylor (2022), and Thoma et al., (2011). Some of the reviews focused on a particular set of dates, such as 2010-2016 (Papay & Grigal, 2019), or 2001-2010 (Thoma et al., 2011). Key themes, such as academics and employment, have

been explored with more specialized research in recent years, and an understanding of student supports and services is reflected in the recent literature, mirroring the broader research of higher education (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020; Braxton, 2009). Some of the literature reviews found also examined a particular specialization within the IPSE field, such as assistive technology (Woods-Groves et al., 2023), faculty attitudes (Alanazi & Gadelmawla, 2021; Li, 2020), academic access (Becht et al., 2020), self-determination (Burke et al., 2024), literacy interventions (Hua et al., 2019), or health disparities (Oakes et al., 2020).

The acceleration of IPSE scholarship after 2010 reflects not only increased program activity, but also a shift in the structural conditions that made such research possible. The passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) and the establishment of TPSID model funding did more than expand program numbers, they reshaped the research agenda by defining the outcomes that counted, incentivizing demonstration of effectiveness, and channeling institutional attention toward particular models of inclusion. The funding from the TPSID program not only impacted program development, but also much of the research that was developed after 2010 in the field (Papay & Grigal, 2019; Grigal et al., 2021). As a result, the post-2010 literature is not simply more refined, it is shaped by policy priorities that privileged program evaluation, measurable outcomes, and proof-of-concept narratives (Papay & Grigal, 2019). Recognizing this influence clarifies why certain topics, such as program development, employment outcomes, and academic access, became dominant (Papay & Grigal, 2019; Whirley et al., 2020), while others, including equity, remained underexamined. Situating the growth of the field in this policy context moves the discussion beyond description and toward a critical account of how IPSE research has been produced, constrained, and directed over time.

## Theoretical Foundations

The limited use of explicit theoretical frameworks was also noted. In the coded dataset, only 20.5% of studies ( $n = 102$ ) employed a guiding theory, while approximately 80% were coded as having “no theory found,” indicating the authors did not identify a theoretical foundation for their research. This absence suggests much of the IPSE literature remains exploratory or descriptive in nature, lacking a cohesive conceptual lens. While such a finding is expected early in a field’s development, the continued dearth of theoretical framing may raise concerns about the cumulative ability to build a generalizable and connected knowledge base. Although only 20.5% of



studies employed an explicit theoretical framework, the significance of this gap extends far beyond the number itself. The limited use of theory reflects a broader pattern in which IPSE research often prioritizes documenting practices over building coherent conceptual foundations. Without shared or clearly articulated frameworks, findings accumulate in isolation, making it difficult to compare studies, interrogate assumptions, or develop cumulative knowledge about what drives meaningful inclusion. This absence of theory also constrains the field's ability to engage critically with power, identity, and structures that shape postsecondary experiences.

In short, the scarcity of theoretical grounding does not simply describe the literature, it limits its coherence, its interpretive depth, and its potential to guide transformative practice. While 20% of studies provided a theoretical framework, few studies offer some explicit guidance for theoretical framing for the field. One example, Rooney-Kron et al., (2022), is specific to considerations of student risk in IPSE. Other common frameworks include grounded theory (Prohn, et al., 2019), Disability Studies in Education (Myers & Smith, 2025; Soldovieri & Myers, 2025), self-determination theory (Torres, et al., 2023), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Scott, et al., 2017).

### Intersectionality and Access

The consideration of diversity and access within the IPSE research remains limited. Notable recent publications on this topic include Andresen's (2024) study of minoritized representation in IPSE (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomics, ethnicity, foster care status, and housing status), and Harmon et al., (2021) in their paper examining social justice and systems approaches to inclusive higher education. Although recent years have shown some improvement—with approximately half of studies published between 2021 and 2024 referencing race in some capacity—this area continues to require attention. Importantly, only 7 of the 24 literature reviews we identified (29%) included any engagement with race, even at the level of basic demographic reporting. This limited attention to racial equity represents a significant gap in the existing synthesis work and warrants explicit acknowledgment as a limitation of the field. Additionally, because “literature review” encompasses a wide spectrum of rigor, we specified in the Results section which reviews were systematic, scoping, or narrative to provide greater clarity for readers.

The omission of race extends to other intersectional student identities as well. While we specifically coded for mentions of race, such mentions were typically an entry to other demographics, such as ethnicity or socio-

economic background. Studies rarely addressed students who are English language learners, for example, or students who do not use spoken language as their primary mode of communication. Those with additional intersecting disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability and autistic or Deaf), or other intersectional identities (e.g., gender and disability) were rarely specified in the literature. These topics are seldom addressed in depth in the IPSE research currently, underscoring the need for more substantive engagement with issues of equity and intersectionality in future studies. Despite this recognized need, current federal funding models may further restrict research in this area.

While our dataset shows that race and other equity-related identities are rarely addressed in depth, the issue extends beyond the absence of demographic reporting. The uneven engagement with equity reflects deeper structural patterns in the field—whose experiences are centered, whose perspectives are systematically overlooked, and which questions researchers position as worthy of study. Rather than listing underrepresented groups, it is more accurate, and more productive, to acknowledge that IPSE research has seldom interrogated how race, gender, language, socioeconomic status, disability intersections, or other dimensions of identity shape access to, participation in, or outcomes of inclusive postsecondary education. These omissions are not merely descriptive gaps; they reflect broader systemic inequities within higher education, and then also in IPSE, that are reproduced in the research itself. Recognizing these patterns is essential if the field is to move toward a more equity-oriented research agenda.

### Geographic and Cultural Contexts

The overwhelming majority of IPSE research included in this study were conducted in the United States. According to this study, about 80% of the publications are U.S.-based. Only a portion of studies came from other countries (e.g., Canada, Ireland, Australia, Spain) each representing a small number of publications. While some of this gap is likely due to the English-availability constraint, this large percentage also indicates a gap in knowledge about how inclusive postsecondary education operates in different cultural or national contexts. With Ireland as a notable exception, few countries outside of the United States have had policy support for IPSE like HEOA 2008, or national funding models like the TPSID initiative. This is, perhaps, why the United States can cite over 300 PSE programs and most countries in Europe have zero or one (JoinIn, 2020). Even less is known in the U.S. research context about IPSE in Asia, Africa, or South America.



Although approximately 80% of the identified studies were conducted in the United States, the implications of this imbalance extend far beyond uneven representation. A U.S.-centric evidence base means that the field may be disproportionately shaped by American policy structures, funding mechanisms, disability classifications, and higher education norms. As a result, the research risks reinforcing assumptions that are context-specific, such as reliance on TPSID funding models, IDEA-aligned transition practices, or U.S. definitions of intellectual disability, while obscuring alternative models emerging in other countries. This concentration of scholarship narrows the conceptual horizons of the field by limiting opportunities to compare policy environments, understand cultural variation in inclusion, or examine how IPSE may function within different social welfare systems. The geographic skew, therefore, introduces a structural bias into the literature, constraining the field's ability to build a genuinely international, context-responsive understanding of inclusive postsecondary education.

There may be unique challenges, policy frameworks, or program models internationally that are under-documented in the literature, or that we have not yet found due to language constraints. Countries with alternative policy frameworks may offer valuable perspectives that may be models for future development. For example, most countries outside of the United States have signed the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and approach disability from a human rights perspective. While this perspective may look different in practice than in policy or theory, it provides a baseline for inclusion in educational systems and community spaces. Similarly, many countries outside of the United States provide university access at low or no cost to all. Costs can have both positive and negative implications for potential IPSE programming. On the one hand, low-cost access is ideal, especially for a population that has been historically impoverished like the disabled. On the other hand, initial access to off-limit spaces is often easiest when it can be granted to those who are willing to pay and is either cost-neutral or income-generating for the institution. This relationship between cost and access is perhaps one of the reasons why the few programs that do exist in Europe are small in student numbers.

### Centering Student Voice

Although 78% of the articles were about students with intellectual disability, only 15% of the articles gathered the experiences of students with intellectual disability or students' own voices. Instead, most of these student-focused articles looked at data about stu-

dents with intellectual disability or intervention outcomes, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Kubiak, 2015a, 2015b). This absence is not merely numerical; it reflects a structural pattern in which research about students is routinely privileged over research *with* students. The result, as Smith-Hill et al., (2025) point to in their research, is an evidence base shaped largely by proxy perspectives, limiting the field's ability to understand self-advocacy, agency, and lived experience from the vantage point of those most directly impacted. This gap was apparent in the literature.

This finding suggests that much of what we know about the college experiences of students with intellectual disability is from the perspectives of others, and not the students themselves. Notable examples of this come from the research on peer partnership and peer mentoring; the vast majority of studies are on the experiences of the peer partners (e.g. Travers & Carter, 2022), as though a driving factor of program research was to prove to university communities that matriculated peers were not harmed, and could actually potentially benefit, from IPSE programs. This tendency to omit the perspectives of students with intellectual disability from research is, perhaps, exacerbated by research requirements such as IRB participation, guardianship limitations in research, and other systemic issues, despite recent projects to support change (see RE4All). Recognition and funding for this type of research may also be limited.

### Implications for Disability Support Professionals

Traditional university disability services are primarily based on an accommodations model to help students access the regular academic curriculum. While students with intellectual disability should have access to these accommodation supports, they often need direct and sustained support that may exceed what universities are accustomed to offering (Harrison & Holmes, 2014). This scoping review identified program design in 161 studies, the most common topic throughout IPSE literature, reflecting the field's recognition that students with intellectual disability need intentional consideration in the disability support space. These factors include alternative pathways to admissions and course access, curriculum modifications in addition to accommodations, and support in social, residential, and career preparation spheres of college life (Plotner & Marshall, 2014; Papay et al., 2017). Data from TPSID programs affirm the importance of connecting students with existing campus resources, including disability supports (Papay et al., 2017), and more recent data from Grigal et al., (2025) continue to track how programs provide support beyond traditional accommodations. This review identified 102 studies

on support, including 42 studies on peer mentorship. Disability support professionals should consider not only the development of peer mentorship opportunities on college campuses but also opening these opportunities to students with intellectual disability in an empowering approach, considering the wealth of experiences that students with intellectual disability bring to the university community.

### Recommendations for the Field

Although research on employment and post-IPSE trajectories has expanded, the evidence base remains largely short-term, limiting what can be inferred about the durability or broader impact of IPSE participation. The near absence of longitudinal studies means that the field lacks the ability to trace whether early employment gains translate into sustained labor-market participation, career advancement, wage growth, or stable independent living. Without multi-year follow-up, current findings may overestimate program effectiveness or overlook later challenges that only emerge once students leave structured campus environments. This gap also restricts the field's capacity to evaluate how broader systems, such as public benefits, workplace discrimination, or regional labor markets, shape the long-term lives of IPSE graduates. In this sense, the limitation is not simply an evidentiary gap but a constraint on the field's theoretical and practical understanding of what inclusion means beyond the college years.

As reflected in this review, research on post-program outcomes such as employment, independent living, and long-term quality of life for IPSE graduates has increased but remains relatively limited in scope. Sheppard-Jones et al. (2018) argue for more longitudinal data to follow students across multiple years and multiple measures, considering a broad range of factors. The research demonstrates a need for more longitudinal studies that track students beyond their time in college. While employment is a frequently studied outcome, much of the current research is cross-sectional or short-term, focusing on employment status at the time of graduation or shortly thereafter. Longitudinal studies could offer critical insights such as stability of employment outcomes five or ten years post-graduation, IPSE alumni experiences with career advancement, or increased earnings over time. Similarly, long-term data on independent living such as housing stability, community participation, quality of life, and self-determination are lacking. Importantly, future research should also account for the broader systems and structures that influence these outcomes, an area largely underexplored in the existing literature. For example, limitations associated with Social

Security Income (SSI) and other public benefits and their effects on graduates' ability to obtain, sustain, and advance in employment will be critical issues to address for the field. Current funding for national data collection, such as that through the TPSID program, is the only long-term IPSE data collection mechanism in the United States, and cohorts change every five years. There is no current federal funding for long-term longitudinal data collection in IPSE, nor the existence of IPSE programs beyond TPSIDs. National database funding, similar to that of the Education Longitudinal Study (ELS) or others housed through the National Center for Education Statistics, is important for researchers in the field.

Despite notable advancements, research on social inclusion and student support services within IPSE programs remains inconsistent, especially within specific campus sub-environments (e.g., participation in student organizations, Greek life, or study abroad programs). While the existence of support practices is documented, more research is needed to determine best practices in providing support, as well as the balance between support and autonomy. Sexuality and relationship education represent another critical yet underexplored dimension of adult life within the IPSE research literature. Future research should expand to include additional topics related to sexuality, relationships, and personal agency.

Research on social inclusion and sexuality highlights important domains of student life, but the existing evidence base remains uneven (Hill et al., 2023). Studies consistently document that opportunities for social connection, campus engagement, and relationship education are central to students' experiences in IPSE programs. However, empirical work in these areas is still limited in scope and depth, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about how specific supports shape these outcomes. Where gaps appear, such as the lack of research on counseling services, campus-based supports, or sexuality and relationship education, our analysis reflects the absence of data rather than an endorsement of particular program models. Distinguishing between what is empirically established and what remains underexamined clarifies the contours of the literature and avoids conflating evidence with aspirational practice. This more precise delineation underscores the need for continued inquiry into how social belonging and relationship autonomy are cultivated within inclusive postsecondary settings. For sustainable growth, establishing a research agenda to guide policy and practice is essential (Brady, 2021).

Additionally, despite recognition that early planning is crucial, there is little research following stu-

dents longitudinally from elementary, middle, or high school into college to identify predictors of success in IPSE. The absence of research that traces students from K-12 through their postsecondary transitions reflects a deeper structural omission within the field. Without longitudinal designs that connect early educational experiences, transition practices, and college participation, the field lacks the analytic foundation needed to understand how opportunity is shaped or constrained long before students arrive on campus. This gap also obscures the systemic barriers that determine who is positioned to access IPSE programs in the first place. Evidence from related areas of disability and education research suggests that inequities in school resources, referral processes, family advocacy burdens, and local policy landscapes shape postsecondary pathways in patterned ways. Yet, these dynamics remain largely unexamined in IPSE scholarship. Addressing this omission is not simply a matter of adding another research topic; it is essential for developing a field-wide account of how inclusion is produced or foreclosed across students' educational trajectories.

### Limitations

This scoping review has several limitations. The review did not seek to evaluate the quality of every research study included, nor was this review a full meta-analysis of data in the field. The validity of the evidence included cannot be guaranteed, even though the search was limited to peer-reviewed studies. Another notable limitation is that the search was narrowed to studies available in English, which likely excluded valuable work that was not available in English, and is particularly important to consider given the U.S.-centric skew of the results. Additionally, the requirement that included studies be published in peer-reviewed journals means that we did not consider other potentially valuable works or published in community practice spaces or other sources. These studies might have been particularly useful, especially in the early years of the field. Some relevant literature may have been missed because of limited search terms or selected databases, despite efforts of the research team to find all relevant articles. Additionally, no information about research funding was sought or reported. Given the aim of this study was to find and synthesize the entire scope of the field, any missed research would affect, and potentially limit, the presented results.

### Conclusion

Research in the field of inclusive postsecondary education has grown significantly since it first appeared in the literature in 1976. This study definitively shows that what was considered a fledgling field is now well established, with a near 50-year research trajectory comprised of over 498 peer-reviewed research articles published in English. We recognize the significance of documenting not only the exponential increase in the amount of research in the field, but the breadth and depth of topics addressed in the studies.

While the research on IPSE has become more refined over time, this study also points to the need for more attention to issues of identity, access, and outcomes. Issues of access, including who accesses IPSE programs and how, are rare. Closer examination is needed, considering student identity markers as well as university and program metrics, such as geographic availability, as well as long-term success, on both the student level (examining, for instance, not only employment but also community inclusion and quality of life) and program level (such as sustainability). By targeting these gaps, future research can promote a more inclusive postsecondary landscape.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Education Source Database Terms**

#### Concept 1: Search Terms for intellectual disability

“intellectual disability” OR  
“neurodevelopmental disorders” OR  
“learning disabilities” OR  
“developmental disabilities”

#### Keywords:

“intellectual disabilit\*” OR  
“learning disabilit\*” OR  
“learning disorder\*” OR  
“down syndrome” OR  
“developmental disabilit\*” OR  
“people with intellectual disabilit\*” OR  
“people with developmental disabilit\*” OR

#### Concept 2: Search terms for College

Subject heading (only 1 maps to a descriptor)  
College OR  
University OR  
“Higher education” OR  
“postsecondary education” OR  
“Dual enrollment” OR  
IPSE

#### Keywords:

“College” OR  
“Universit\*” OR  
“Higher educat\*” OR  
“postsecondary educat\*” OR  
“Dual enrollment” OR  
“IPSE”

#### English only

#### Search 1

- concept 1 subject headings AND concept 2 subject headings

#### Search 2

- concept 1 key words (Title) AND concept 2 keywords (title)

#### Search 3

- concept 1 key words (ab) AND concept 2 keywords (title)

#### Search 4

- concept 1 key words (Title) AND concept 2 keywords (ab)

#### Search 5

- concept 1 key words (ab) AND concept 2 keywords (ab)



## **Appendix B**

### **Data Extraction Framework**

#### **Study Identification**

- Title of Study:
- Research Question(s): (If not available, write "not found")
- Location of Study (Country):
- Year Published:

#### **Research Information**

- Is this research?
  - Yes
  - No (specify type, e.g., speech, introduction, letter)
  - Other (please specify)
- Methodology:
  - Qualitative (specify type e.g., interviews, focus groups, ethnography)
  - Quantitative (specify type e.g., statistical analysis)
  - Mixed Method (specify components)
  - Other (please specify)
- Theory Used: (If not available, write "not found")

#### **Study Focus (Select all that apply)**

- Academics
- Program design/development/IPSE overview
- Policy
- Transition into IPSE/Preparing for IPSE
- Transition out of IPSE/Post IPSE
- Employment
- Support (including peer support)
- Social/Student engagement/Campus involvement
- Residential/Campus living/Independent living/Life Skills
- Literature Reviews
- Other (please specify)

#### **Population Focus (Select all that apply)**

- Students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID)
- Students without ID (peers)

#### **Faculty/Instructors/Staff**

- Family/Parents/Caregivers
- Other (please specify)

#### **Additional Information**

- Any mention of race?
  - Yes
  - No