

---

---

## **II. Preparation for Postsecondary Education**

---

---

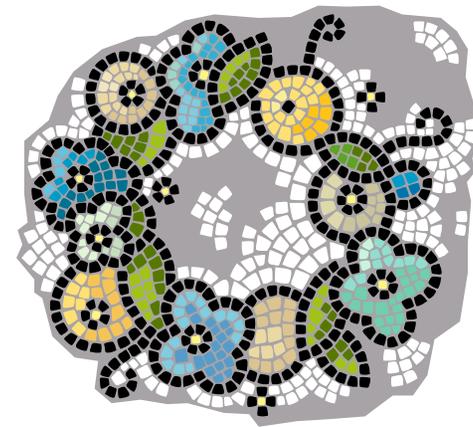
Students with intellectual disabilities in high school, like all high school students, see their brothers, sisters, and classmates planning to go to college. Naturally they want the same opportunity. For some families, enrollment in college, and often a specific college, is a highly valued tradition. What's more, high school is seen as the springboard to higher education, not the end of institutional learning, but rather, just a step along the way. Rather than being the culmination of academic striving, it is preparation for the next phase, and students with intellectual disabilities, as much as any other student, want to see it through.

In this first section, students discuss their reasons for wanting to go to college, their family influences, and their thoughts on the impending termination of special education services. Some of these students are co-enrolled in special education and in college courses and also add their perspectives on the interesting mix of those experiences.

## In Memorial

---

Erin McKenzie was a vibrant young woman, who had just graduated from high school in June, 2004 and was planning to continue her education in theatre Arts at Otterbein College. She died suddenly on August 24, 2004, unfortunately not being able to realize the opportunity of college for her and to model the way for others. Erin had already begun to develop relationships at the college beginning the summer before her senior high school year. The Theatre Arts Department sent two dozen white roses with a message saying, "Break a Leg" to her memorial services and students plan to honor Erin with a seat in her name in their newly renovated theatre.



## Erin

---



I'm a cool senior at Westerville South High School. "Go Wild Cats!" I have my class ring, my letter jacket for Drama Club, and my senior pictures to give to my friends. I go to dances and parties and hang out with my friends at school. Megan drives me to school. She has been my friend since grade school. I take Geology, American Sign Language, Film and Literature, Foods and Nutrition, and Choir. Next semester I will take American Government. Every day during 8<sup>th</sup> period I work in the school offices.

I go to lots of meetings. Sometimes the meetings are about me and what I am doing at school. They are called IEP meetings. Sometimes the meetings are for Drama Club or the Westerville Youth Commission. I help at the Community Center teen dances and other community activities like the Halloween party and planting flowers in Westerville.

I enjoy giving speeches. I show overhead pictures and use a pointer. I have spoken at two conferences in Columbus and at one at Ohio University. I give my "Friends" speech and tell the audience about my school and what I like to do. Last year I got an award for being a good speaker. This year I give speeches in Geology about what happens on the earth each week.

I love the theatre! I have been to New York to see plays and I see many in Columbus too. At Westerville South, I am a member of the Drama Club and I have worked as an usher and on publicity. I also work for the Otterbein College Theatre Department helping to put the programs together and as an usher.

I love musicals and I like plays by Shakespeare. The first one I saw was *Romeo and Juliet*. I have seen *The Tempest* and a funny play about *The Works of Shakespeare*. The musical, *Kiss Me Kate*, has Shakespeare in it. I like to listen to music and sing and dance to movies

and my CD's. I pretend I am different characters. I am Christine in *Phantom of the Opera*. I am Grizabella in *Cats*. Dancing is good exercise and I dance all the time to be healthy. I have been working at the Otterbein College Theatre Department. I like working there. I have made new friends. My friend Lillian and other friends from Westerville South also go to Otterbein College. She was in Drama Club at my high school and was Dolly in *Hello Dolly*. I saw her when I was working as an usher for the Otterbein College Theatre Department. I hope she will be in their spring play, *The Music Man*.

My brother Chris goes to college. He lives in an apartment far away. I miss him. I don't want to go away. I want to live at home. Otterbein College is very close to my house in Westerville.

I think I would like to take a class at Otterbein College some time. Maybe I could take a speech class or a drama class or sign language. I also want to keep working with the Theatre Department. I like working in the school offices too. Maybe I could get a job working for the Theatre Department office or another office at Otterbein College? My senior pictures are beautiful. It might be fun to be a model and pose for pictures or be in movies.

Many people tell me they like my long hair and my smile.

I want to keep learning new things and seeing new places with my friends and family. I want to do things that I like to do. Sometimes I need help to communicate what I like doing or want to do. I needed help writing this paper, but this is what I wanted to say.

Erin McKenzie

## **Beth**

---

My name is Beth and I'm in my last year of high school. My teachers are helping me to get ready for college by helping me enroll in college classes during my last year of school. I audited a class last summer and now I am taking my second class for credit. If you have a certain disability and want to go to college you need to sign up in the disability office if they have one. After you do that, you can get the help you might need. Like, when people have tests and they need extra time, like me, they can take it up there. And my note taker leaves class notes up there for me. Right now I'm at a community college but eventually I would like to go to a college like my sister's. I'd rather go to a college that has dorms in a suite. One day I would like to live on my own and living in a dorm will teach me how to live on my own. I'm hoping that by getting my high school diploma and taking college classes, I will decide on my career choice or major. Right now I'm thinking about three careers: being a vet, teaching young children, or studying culinary arts.



I am willing to go to any college as long as they have the majors that I am interested in. My advice to people who are still in high school or who are getting ready to go out into the world is to try college. I think you should at least try to audit a course that you are interested in. The more experience you have, the more fun you will have at college whether it be a community college or a state college.

Beth Tornatola

## Martha

---



Hello, my name is Martha Linden and I am graduating from high school in three months.

I'm getting ready to graduate through some good internships and jobs. I am taking some college classes and I am taking a class called Jobs for Bay State Graduates in High School.

I've had internships at Wal-Mart, City Hall, The Red Cross, NEADS, at a service dog training center, and at Clark University. Last semester I took my first College class called: Strategies for College and Career. I liked Professor Flo and it was a good first class to take. This semester I am taking a computer class. It's a little tougher because I fell behind when I sprained my ankle, but I am catching up.

Back in high school, in my Jobs for Bay State Graduates class, we write resumes,

practice job interviews and learn how to dress appropriately. After graduation, I want to get a job and continue going to college next year. I would like a job working with animals or kids. I think I'll still need some help with signing up for classes, taking notes, and studying. I am looking forward to graduating, getting a job and staying in college.

Martha Linden

---

---

### **III. In Postsecondary Education**

---

---

This section contains nine stories of students with intellectual disabilities who reflect the diversity that is typical of modern college students. Students tell stories of their course loads and the supports that they receive to be successful. These students use a range of supports, including general academic supports, common disability supports, and highly individualized supports designed for their specific needs.

Perhaps most impressive in these tales are the bonds established between students, both with and without disabilities. There are memberships in academic and extracurricular clubs, friendships and romantic relationships. These are descriptions and first-person accounts of rich and memorable college experiences.



## Jessica

---



I love being in college classes because I am with my peers and accepted as part of society. When I take college classes, the teachers see my potential as an artist and base my work on its own merit. I can be who I am and seek to strengthen my skills through these classes. I have some difficulties with movement but I have some special sensitivity that I can share with others. I feel I grow in so many ways by participating in a college atmosphere. With the proper support I would gladly challenge the academic classes as well. I need to be with people my own age to develop myself fully. We can share something great. I am even getting a little older than them so I should do this soon. The time is right for me now. I

would have more difficulties trying to go later when I am older. There may be the possibility that some of my fellow students could learn facilitated communication and be hired to help me in academic study. I think this happened with other disabled people who went to college like Susan in California. As my degree will be in Art, I think this can be a real possibility and a life chance experience to be accepted on the level of a real college student and a chance to grow and prove myself.

Jessica

## **Stephen**

---

When I was in my senior year of high school, we looked around at college possibilities. We first checked out Miramar College, Mesa College, and Grossmont College, the local Community Colleges, and we did not like what we saw in disability services. Miramar and Mesa required us to go to an Orientation Day just to talk to someone, which was on a day of school that I could not miss. The computer program for people with disabilities at Grossmont, looked too basic for me, as I was more advanced already than what it offered. So, we knew some professors at SDSU, and they told us to check out San Diego State.

We then went to SDSU's Disabled Student Services, and met with Elizabeth Bacon, the DSS director at that time. We liked what they offered, and thought that SDSU could meet my needs, but we were past the deadline! Luckily, God brings us to the right people to make things happen sometimes!

Well, it turns out that one of the TA's that helped me learn social skills during fifth period was the daughter of one of the vice presidents at SDSU. She knew of another pool of applications, and put mine in there. I got

accepted. I then attended orientation day and started school!

To me, going to college is a step in getting a better job, and the opportunity to have a real career. My greatest achievement while in college was when I took Computer Ethics, and writing my first term paper all by myself, which I did about Junk E-mail. However, I struggled reading between the lines. I learned that this is why I had trouble with reading narrative and indirect material. I had grown up reading factual, direct material, often very technical in nature, and had trouble with English classes because of the questions they asked were about "between the lines" stuff. I also had trouble with reading because some of the questions involved close relationship ethics, and I have never been in a close relationship with anyone before (never dated, never in a BF/GF situation, or known what it is like to be married).

Through this process, my professors worked with me during office hours, and provided some curriculum modifications when appropriate. They also helped me choose my classes based on requirements. In addition, some of my teachers were very nice and caring, too.

In college when I studied, I preferred to go to the library and work undisturbed, rather

than at home. Also, I used my technical abilities for my computer classes, as that helped. I think high school helped me prepare for college because people assume that Special Ed kids are going to college by default, and don't know that when they get to college, they are put in a "non-diploma, functional skills track" that leads to "sheltered workshops" and minimum wage jobs. It seems as if a lot of those low-paying jobs are gone.

Next, people need to encourage Special Ed kids to take the courses they need to get into college, which may mean things like Algebra, Trigonometry, Chemistry, Physics, and the like. I took them myself, and actually liked them!

Parents should be educated on what it takes to get into college. Many parents are not sure what it takes. It takes a certain GPA (in many cases over a 3.0), a qualifying SAT/ACT score, an essay, letters of recommendation, community service, specific high school courses, and in many cases a competency exam in English and math.

Parents should also know that colleges allow accommodations, but not always modifications. The amount of financial aid can be adjusted for students with disabilities, as well. Also, accommodations apply to the standardized tests associated with college as

well (such as SAT, ACT, AP, MSAT, GRE, LSAT, and many others). The same is true for the High School Exit Exam.

Last of all, parents should know that Implementing Functional Skills can be done in a transition without jeopardizing one's path to a 4-year college! One way to accomplish this is to take a "home economics", "independent living", or "consumer and family sciences" classes. Another way is to simply teach those skills at home. Still another way is to have the student live in college housing (such as a dorm room, apartment, fraternity/sorority house, or residence hall) and get supported living support if necessary, as this will give them a chance to be "on their own" and a hands-on opportunity to learn these skills!

Last of all, I think that the IEP team should bring up these options and give the student and parents choices about the student's future to the best of their ability, and try to prepare the student for a fun and exciting career, letting the student guide their path, and get to choose their way, their major and minor in college, and be on their way.



Going to college has changed my life because it has been some of the best chapters of my life. I have a job that I love, which actually involves programming the web code for distance learning course grade books and network issues. I am learning to make friends, and I am working towards a degree in computer science. I choose computer science because I am very technical and always into technology, so I thought it would be interesting.

Also, I have considered moving out as well. I probably will sometime in the next year or two. I want to try being independent, and get time to myself.

Stephen Hinkle



## **Kathy**

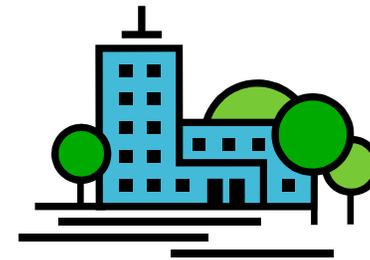
---

*Tips from the Trenches: By Students, for Students*

I believe that college can be a choice for everyone, and I hope that I can give you some useful tips that encourage you to aspire to reach your dream of a higher education.

Let me say a little about myself. Today, I am a college student, but all throughout the early part of my education, I was told that I would never have what it takes to be a success in college. Teachers often asked me why I was setting myself up to fail. My answer to that question was “At least I am trying.” This is a big part of my first tip to you: Have your own goals. The reason that I am making the statement in this way is that there are always going to be people that just see your disability. That is, they almost look right past you as a person. If people around you judge you solely on the basis of what they think they know about your disability, they may think only negative thoughts like: “You cannot do this.” or “You’re too slow.” It was comments like this that made me want to prove them wrong!

Based on my experiences as a college student, there are some things that I suggest you do before actually attending classes. Go explore the college and get to know the campus. I would also recommend a meeting with the Coordinator of Disability Services at



the colleges you are interested in. This will give you the chance to share with

the coordinator what supports you need to be successful. Once you are attending classes, the two keys to success are motivation and organization. I wish someone had told me how important it is to keep up in classes. I had to learn the hard way about this. There were times when I would put off doing assignments until the day before they were due. By doing this, I got behind. This is an example of lack of organization. Motivation and organization are two components that fit together. If you are highly motivated, you will be better organized. If you lack motivation, your organization will suffer also.

When I first started college, I did not know whether I was doing the right thing. Initially, some of my grades were not great, but don't

base your whole college career on those early grades. As time went on, I became more able to talk with my teachers and classmates to get the right information to do the homework to the best of my ability. One final bit of advice that I want to share is this: find a way to “de-stress.” For me, this means having another student to talk to when things get hectic. I hope these words will bring you some inspiration or encouragement in your pursuit of a higher education.

Kathy Ordway



## Micah

---

*I wanted to go to college and my dream came true.*



I wanted to go to college and my dream came true. Here's what happened.

I always wanted to be with my friends. When I was in first grade, I was in a special classroom. It was okay, but I wanted to be with my friends, so I told my Mom and Dad that I wanted to go into the same door at school that all the other kids were going in. They helped me do that.

Then when I got older, I started thinking about what college I wanted to go to. My friends wanted to go to college and I wanted to do the same thing. Since I was little, I've been going to the University of Michigan football games with my Papa. I learned about college

from going to the games and seeing the kids have a good time. They looked happy.

I have always been included in regular classes so I wanted to stay in regular classes after high school. When I was in sixth grade, I had a MAP (Making Action Plans). My friends, teachers, and parents helped me think about my dreams for my future. One of my friends said that I should go to college. I liked hearing it because that was my dream.



I want to work in politics, maybe in government, or at our state capital. I also like current events and I like to do public speaking. I tell people about inclusion, disability rights and self advocacy. I can learn about these things in college and be with my peers. I didn't want to go to a segregated program after high school.

My parents learned about a college program for kids with cognitive impairments at Eastern Michigan University. I visited the program with some of my teachers, my parents and Michele Harmala from Oakland Schools. I liked it a lot and thought it was a cool program for kids with disabilities who wanted to learn on campus and be with their peers. The teacher was John Rose. He was cool and funny.

Then we went back to my school and had lots and lots of meetings. Many people started having the same dream that I had about going to college, so they helped me.

My high school helped me get ready for college. They helped me learn a lot about computers, use a palm pilot, run my meetings, be in clubs, and learn how to be a self advocate. I know how to use the computer to write my papers. I can do look up information on the internet and I can use a program that reads everything to me. I also learned to talk into the computer and then it writes what I say. It is called Dragon Speak. My best teacher in high school was Ms Berke. She helped me learn more about using the computer. She also helped me plan before every one of my meetings, so I knew what I wanted to say. I learned how to tell my teachers what I wanted. Ms. Berke listened to me and helped me reach my dream. She was the best! During high school, I also attended the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum and the National Youth Leadership Forum which helped me learn about my rights. I am a Board Member of national youth advocacy group called Kids as Self Advocates ([www.fvkasa.org](http://www.fvkasa.org)). I learned a lot from these groups.

Two days after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, I started going to Oakland University. A lot of people

didn't think that it could happen but my team believed in my dream. I learned how to take public busses to get to the college campus. I learned how to post flyers at the university, so I got someone to drive me to school on some days. My new teacher, Suzanne James, is helping me find good classes to sit in on at Oakland University. She is working hard. Next semester, I am planning to sit in a Speech class, a Political Science class, and a Social Problems class. I think I will learn a lot. I volunteer at the child care center on the campus. I am also in the social work club and Hillel, which is a Jewish organization. I am learning how to be a leader and how to do community service. I know my way around the campus and I have lunch with friends. I like being a college student. I think I will learn a lot. I am proud to tell people that I am a college student. I am happy. My dream came true.

Micah Fialka-Feldman

## **Adrian**

---

Hi. My name is Adrian Martir. I'm a student at South High Community School in Worcester Massachusetts. For the last two years, I have been trying out college classes and internships to see what I might like to do when I leave high school.

The first step I took was person-centered planning. In this meeting I got some help making plans for my life. At the time, I was thinking about taking a computer class and I wanted a job where I could work with people. I said I liked computers and someone suggested that Quinsigamond Community College might offer computer classes. I visited the college and then signed up for a computer class.

At first I didn't know how to be in a classroom because I had just started. It was my first time going to college. When you start new things you're not sure you can do it. Then you just say in your head, "I think I can, I think I can". And then you just do it. Even though I wasn't sure this was right for me, I got a lot of help. The computer teacher was nice. Whenever I said I wasn't sure I could do this, she told me to just keep coming back. Also, two educational coaches helped me.



One of the best things about going to college is that it gave me more confidence. Back in high

school, I've had three internships and three jobs. Those help me think about the kind of work I would like to do. I think eventually I want to work with kids like I did at my YWCA childcare center internship. I want to read to the kids and help them learn.

This semester I'm taking an English writing class so that will be three classes I've taken while I'm still in high school. Taking college classes and looking for work when you are still in school isn't easy. First of all, you have to work a lot. You might miss your friends from school and the classes you had there. It's hard to manage your new schedule and there are always going to be transportation problems. I worry about working it all out. If you're wondering if it is worth it, I think it is.

Adrian Martir

## **Katie**

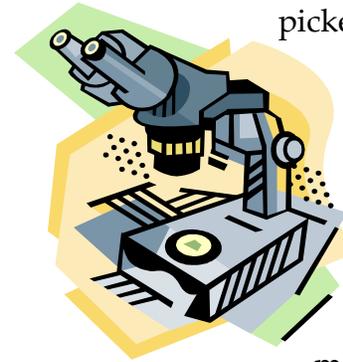
---

Hi. My name is Katie Basford. I'm 25 years old. I live on a farm in Ohio with my parents, although I'm ready to move out into my own place. I currently attend Southern State Community College. I have 96 credits.

In high school I took the same courses my friends were taking, courses like Spanish, French, Social Studies, Current Events, Language Arts, and Chemistry. I started thinking about going to college in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. My friends were talking about going to college. Besides, I needed to complete my education.

At college I hang out with my friends and talk with the teachers. I talk with lots of people and see how they are doing. I know lots of people at college. Right now I'm taking Personal and Human Relations. I like this class. We sit in a circle and have discussions. Last week we talked about the books we're reading. My favorite courses at college are anything about Science. The instructor is clear and I can hear his voice. I think I'd like to be a medical assistant because I like the idea of working in a laboratory and because I love science.

I think college is fun. The funniest thing happened once in English class. The instructor



picked up a chair to make us all laugh. The most difficult subject for me is math, but next quarter I'm taking a math course. I don't like to do homework.

People who are the most helpful have a good attitude. They give me a big smile. Staff members help me with course registration and course history. Teachers help me catch up with assignments. Tests are read to me and the print is enlarged so I can see. My friends and my tutor help me with assignments. They help me get the notes down and go over the more difficult ideas. I've learned that the most important skills for college are to be prepared, to get to class on time, and to find your courage.

The image that I would draw when I think about going to college would be an image of me looking proud. I've noticed that when people find out I'm a college student they treat me with respect and honor. When they don't know I'm a college student they don't listen to what I have to say.

The most surprising and happy thing for me is telling my friends that I'm engaged. I met my fiancé at college a year ago. He was also a student. He was taking a morning class. We met in the student lounge. He sat in the circle of my friends, came up beside me and touched my hand. I told him to not touch my hand... then said, "Okay, you can hold my hand." He proposed 8 months later. We're planning to marry next year.

To the people in the world, I think everyone should have a chance to go to college. College is a way to meet new people, to make new friends and to get an education.

I am an important person at college. I contribute something no one else can. I share my life.

Katie Basford



## Keller

---



My brother is going to college next year. He wants to go to Yale. My father went to William and Mary. My mother went to college in Virginia. My friends went to college. That is why I wanted to go to college. I am in college because I want to study Theatre. I know lots of people in college. I know the people in my classes. I am in a group in Mrs. Sommerstein's class on severe disabilities. I study with people from my classes.

To get ready for college, I bought new clothes and had my hair done. I have meetings with my mother and teachers. I saved my money for lunch and school supplies. I took English and Computers and other classes.

In high school I learned good study habits, like doing my homework. I got detention when I forgot my homework. I always bring my notebook and my planner to school.

My teachers help me do my homework. My teacher's aide, Mrs. Cruz, helped me do my work in high school. Mary Lou Vaughan and my teacher's aide, Letisha Dorsey, help me in college. I have a lot of friends at Buf State who help me, too. I get up for school by myself in the morning. This is the hardest part about college.

I am getting ready to have a job with pay. I worked in the Financial Aid Office. I can take a bus to school. I will take a bus to work, too. Right now, I am just like my family. Maybe I will work at Buf State or work with some of the people I have met at Buffalo State College.

I am in college because I wanted to study business and my goal is to have a business of my own. I wanted to go to college because my mother and my friends were in college, and I wanted to finish my education. I talked to my mother and we had a meeting with my teachers. I met Mary Lou Vaughan at the meeting. I made a goal for myself to study. I'm determined to challenge myself to study more.

High school prepared me for college that teaches me team work and socializing with new friends. Algebra and English taught me

how to count money and how to write better. Computer class taught me how to type on the keyboard and use Microsoft Word and Excel. My English teacher taught me to communicate and express how I really feel. Classes taught me how to dress professionally and prepare for an interview. In college Mary Lou Vaughan taught me how to speak my mind and to accomplish my goals.

My graduation was my struggle because I would miss my friends and teachers so much, even the word college made me stress out. When I got to college I wasn't stressed out because I made new friends and I met Mary Lou. She is my inspiration. My typing and computer skills help me prepare for college. My team work skills taught me to work in groups. College will prepare me to accomplish my goal to work in my own office.

Keller Vogelsangma



## Sue

---



My name is Sue Rubin. I am student with autism at Whittier College, in Whittier California. Going to college and proving to society that I am a capable student has forever been an aspiration of mine, which has finally come to reality. Being a student means to be a thinking individual, something that people thought for many years I would never be able to do. I have certainly developed throughout the years in college into not only that thinking individual but also a social being that is able to better articulate social wants and needs as well as emotions and feelings. One of my greatest achievements in college is being a member of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society.

This is a great accomplishment because my induction was based on my grade point average, nominations by professors and voting of fellow history majors. I finally felt as if I were truly part of the college life. With such great achievements come the struggles of being a student with autism. One of my most difficult tasks as student is of course grappling with horribly awful autism. It is very difficult to fight the echolalia, odd behaviors and uncontrollable sounds and movements. In the first couple of years of college I not only had to fight autism, but I also had to prove I was a capable student. As time went on I have had to fight less and less. Professors that have had me in previous classes began to tell other professors that I did great work. Students that I would have in multiple classes were beginning to include me in their group projects and group discussions. After six years at Whittier College it is quite a relief to not have to fight as hard.

As with any student, course selection is particularly difficult. There are so many classes of interest at Whittier College and I would very much like to be a lifetime student. I am a history major and consult often with my academic advisor to delineate a plan of classes. My particular interest is in women's historical issues in Latin American culture. There are

several professors within the history department that I enjoy very much. They have aided me in establishing my place in Whittier College as well as included me as an equal to all students.

Sadly, I am not sure that anyone can fully prepare for the demands of college life. I moved out of my parent's home right before beginning college and acquired a staff of very competent students to help me in the college process. In high school I was in mainstream classes and also took advanced placement English classes to help prepare me for the challenging workload of college classes. I could have been better prepared for college by perhaps taking a few more advanced placement courses and taken outside preparatory classes. However my intellectual ability was not my biggest struggle even in high school. The number one obstacle was awful autism. Which has taken years to try to subside and will constantly be my struggle.

My quality of life has been drastically changed not only by being a thinking individual and student with autism, but also by the persistence of my family and friends. College has afforded me the opportunity to prove to society that individuals with autism are capable, thinking and feeling human beings that deserve the same opportunities as all

students. I attempt to use my voice as a catalyst for all individuals with autism and the college campus has offered me yet another forum.

Sue Rubin

## Cassilly

---



Cassilly grew up in Hawai'i and was raised with two older brothers. She was always encouraged by her family and her best friend Christy to do anything she wanted. She was very determined to attend college from a young age since her brothers had already gone. Cassilly's friends and family never gave her any slack or treat her differently growing up so she never felt like a victim. Cassilly does things slowly but always gets the task done. While attending high school, she worked at Burger King. Now she works at Kahala Theatre weekends as she attends Kapi'olani Community College during the week. She has a very positive attitude at work and enjoys challenges. "If I don't study hard, I can't get a better job."

Cassilly worked very hard to get to college. She first started at the community college by auditing some classes, but then decided to take them for credit like everyone else. The first class she attended was speech. Her professor said that she always came prepared to class, completed all her assignments and asked questions. Students don't patronize her and expect the same from her as the other students. Then she took a photography class and caught on very quickly. Her professor guided her and helped her learn about photography. Cassilly's friend Christi has been a constant support and has helped her with her classes and assignments.

Cassilly worked hard to acquire the skills and principles for college and has increased her knowledge since then. "Try your best at doing anything. If I can do it, you can too."

Cassilly Woll

---

---

## **IV. After Postsecondary Education**

---

---

Students with intellectual disabilities who finish their postsecondary education typically enter the adult world and obtain a wide range of competitive employment. Some students secure positions as leaders and consultants, some are employed by others, and some start their own businesses. They are a diverse group.

These post-grads often have wider relationships and knowledge bases than their counterparts with disabilities who received disability services. These post-grads typically have met a broader array of disability professionals and have had the opportunities to learn firsthand about the postsecondary educational experience. Postsecondary education has this effect for typical students, and inclusive postsecondary education has this effect for students with intellectual disabilities.



## **Peyton**

---

Peyton Goddard, the Cuyamaca College Valedictorian for 2002, is in the midst of a great journey, plotting a course to live a purposeful life. For the first time, she is “full-top” ready to embrace her future. Peyton has lived her entire life in San Diego. At the age of 3, she was labeled autistic, a misunderstood condition that makes purposeful movement undependable. Consequently, she lacked a dependable way to communicate with the world. Trapped within her body, she spent twenty years within the restrictive environments of the Special Education System. In 1997, Peyton began using an Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC), a method where technology and applied resistance enables purposeful movement and communication through a computer. For the first time, she gained a reliable method for interaction with society. Since then, she has regularly presented at numerous conferences across the United States, including Syracuse University, the Colorado Department of Education, and the PEAK Parent Center in Colorado Springs.

Significantly, Peyton was awarded the 1995 Collaborative Advocacy Award from TASH, the international association promoting inclusion and supported participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life. Locally, she presents many workshops at SDSU, CSUSM, Point Loma Nazarene University, and USD. Audiences include teachers, administrators, policy makers, public agencies, parents, and students. Her topics are diverse, but generally focus on supporting and accommodating students with different learning styles in inclusive settings.



Peyton began at Cuyamaca College four years ago, at the age of 23. She has maintained a 4.0 GPA and is graduating with her Associate Degree in General Studies. She plans to continue her speaking and advocacy, as well as follow a career in leadership. She hopes to enroll in a four-year University within the next year. Post graduation, Peyton is committed to completing her book.

Peyton Goddard

## Shawntell

---

*College should be for everyone: Redefining the college experience*

We grew up with the clear expectation that we would go to college. It was expected! The college experience, at least for us, was both an opportunity to learn but of equal importance to grow up and experience life as a young adult.

Our daughter, Shawntell, is a person who would easily fit into the category of “a person with significant disabilities.” This includes not only intellectual disabilities, but physical and sensory-motor challenges as well. However, Shawntell had been fully included from the time she was 7-1/2 years old and when she was about to turn 18 (her senior year in high school), going on to college seemed like a very viable option to consider. However, in order for this to be a reality this required significant thought, planning, and advocacy.

For years people with disabilities have been attending college and universities throughout the United States. Almost all of these people had disabilities such as physical, sensory, or learning disabilities, etc. While not taking away from the efforts and challenges associated with people with disabilities accessing and participating in college, the general feel was

that these were “otherwise qualified people” who with some minor or even major accommodations could participate in the general curriculum. While this is no small feat, it was at least assumed that these people deserved the opportunity to be in college.

In the late 80’s and early 90’s, there was a move to have people with the most significant disabilities, who were between the ages of 18-21, have their “high-school classes” on the grounds of a community college. This was viewed as more “age appropriate.” These students were involved with more community – based instruction and from time to time took classes such as music, gym, art, and similar related classes at the community college. These students were encouraged to eat in the community college cafeteria in order to share “space” with typical age peers. This was indeed a step forward; it was believed, from remaining on the grounds of the high school.

Just a little earlier, especially in Alberta, young adults with significant disabilities started taking classes at local community colleges and university programs focusing mostly on non-academic areas. However, some academic classes were also supported.

This was what was happening in the late 80’s and very early 90’s for people with more significant disabilities. In 1990, my wife and I

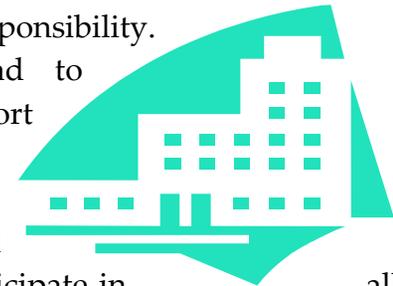
representing our daughter, Shawntell, along with her circle of support from high school, decided Shawntell should attend college.

Knowing that people with significant disabilities and especially people with significant intellectual disabilities were not part of the typical college experience other than what was noted above, required all of us to help think about why we wanted Shawntell to go to college and how to make that a reality. This required breaking many barriers in order to make this a reality for our daughter. After meeting with several different colleges in Colorado, we decided upon Colorado State University in Fort Collins. We decided that CSU was a more open and accepting location and there was support from several key faculty members. These key stakeholders were instrumental in helping to think about this idea and making it a reality for Shawntell. We did approach the Disability Office at CSU for their assistance, but they were neither helpful nor supportive. We are sure that other Disability Offices in other university or colleges are much more supportive and helpful.

In order to make the college experience happen for Shawntell, we needed to develop a joint partnership effort between Shawntell's local school district, CSU, Colorado Department of Education, and the family. Our

first goal was to help determine how this was going to be paid for, a collaborative effort between the above-mentioned entities allowed for share fiscal responsibility.

Secondly, we had to recruit a key support person, whose role was to help facilitate Shawntell



to attend and participate in all facets of life as a student at CSU. This meant not only taking classes and become part of the local student community, but developing relationships and having fun. In addition, it also meant getting to know some of the faculty at CSU and assisting them with including Shawntell in their classes.

In 1990, people with severe and profound mental retardation were not being included in post secondary education and unfortunately; this continues to be a reality for far too many people today. However at that time, we were not able to get Shawntell into the matriculated program at CSU, but used other avenues to access classes such as non-traditional student, auditing, etc. Today, students with more significant disabilities are being part of the matriculated program in growing numbers.

Shawntell attended CSU for three years. In her first semester, Shawntell was a day

student. She lived at home with mom and dad, but went up each day taking classes. At the end of the first semester, Shawntell's support staff came to us and informed us "this isn't working?" We were taken back by this statement, but upon listening further to what Cheryl had to say we understood. What Cheryl said was while Shawntell was taking classes each day she was not a part of the student/university community. When asked what do we do about this, Cheryl indicated that Shawntell had to move up to Fort Collins and "go away" to school. This required pulling together additional support and assistance for Shawntell and to be honest, for her parents to learn to "let go." However, starting with the second semester, Shawntell moved up to Fort Collins and started to share a house with two other girls.

During her time at the university, she attended many different classes. She averaged 12 semester hours. She also secured a job working at the student union. But more than this, she connected with many different people and got engaged with life as a college student away



from home for the first time. There were the concerts, parties, ski trips to Vail or get-a-ways to Mexico during spring or winter breaks.

Growing up is a part of life. Trying new experiences and becoming your own person is a part of life for all young people. No longer being a child or living life as your parents had figured out you would live it, is very exciting, important, and rewarding. That is what going away to college is partially about.

Shawntell and others who followed her have started to break down the belief that only some people can or should attend college. Who college is for has and will continue to change. Moving from taking classes as an auditing student or a non-traditional student to a matriculated student has now been achieved for several people with more significant disabilities. There needs be high expectations for all of our young people and especially people with the label of cognitive impairments. Low expectations “kill” and we have bought into the belief that some people because they don’t have an effective communication system have nothing to say or are not thinking. This is both wrong and very problematic.

Shawntell looks back at her college life and we are sure thinks of it with fond memories. However, Shawntell is now 31 years old and has her own home, good friends, great support

staff, and enjoys life as an adult. College was just another step on her personal journey. If one is going to lead an inclusive life then all parts of an inclusive life must be open and available. College was just one example – an important one not only for Shawntell, but for all those other students, faculty, and others who came across her path during her three years at CSU. As Shawntell would remind everyone especially during the football or basketball season when she is wearing her CSU sweats – GO RAMS!

Shawntell



## Ramona

---



Hi my name is Ramona Sullivan and I'm writing about my experience in college. I went to college for 1 year and I like it very much. I think everyone should go to college. When I first started college, I was scared. The first day I met Marsha Garstka. She helped me pick out some courses and she wanted me to talk to my teachers. I also took a course for non grade. If people think that they cannot go to college, that is not true. Everyone should go to college because it is very good and it can teach you more skills. I learned how to take notes and read a map. I went to college because I wanted to work with special needs kids and now I'm working with DMR people and I bring them to work and home. I love this very much.

I have had a clear and abiding vision of working with children with disabilities—which I have been able to reach. When I graduated from high school I wanted to go on to college, just like my older sister, but my teachers didn't really think I could be successful and didn't know how to be supportive of my vision. My college happened to run a non-credit childcare course that was open to the public. The class had a 5 to 1 student/teacher ratio and had many built-in supports. The course was designed for students that didn't feel ready for traditional college courses and I successfully completed the course.

During my early college career, I was a PCA for a young student with a disability. Now that I have stepped out of college for a while, I am working as a transportation aide on my city's accessible transportation system and am building up my financial supports. Although classes are hard and I have taken several incompletes, my reading and writing have improved substantially and I use the computer with ease. I have also been successful at other courses, such as ASL. The college faculty and Disability Services staff have been faithfully supportive of me and see me as an engaging woman with talent. Some of my biggest challenges have been starting college

without college prep classes, not being familiar with important tools – like use of a computer, and the typical financial ups and downs of part-time students.

Ramona Sullivan



## Matt

---



Going to college means new opportunities for me. It also means I am doing what nearly everyone in my family has already done—getting some postsecondary education. My greatest achievement in college has been getting put on the Dean’s List. I got some really good grades and worked very hard to earn them.

My greatest struggle was getting into the Business Program. However, my professors really helped me stay on track and in classes. I am really persistent, and that helped me a lot. I did not want to give up.

Before, when I wanted to register for classes, I would use a form. But then I had the

chance to choose my classes online and this made the process easier. I prepared for postsecondary education by getting a BOE Diploma and by being very nice to everyone.

I think that High School prepared me better for college and now that I have graduated, my college degree can help me get a good job. My life is different. Now I get a chance to get different job opportunities and be like everyone else.

Matthew Ulanski

## **Christian**

---

I wanted to go to college because I wanted to be like everyone else and I wanted to learn more things so I could have a good job. I wanted to be a chef and St. Paul Technical College had a chef program that I could take part of and learn more about using knives and preparing food. My brother started college the same year that I did. Some of my cousins were in college too. None of my friends were in college but I didn't have too many friends and they were in special education in transition programs with jobs. I had a very good special education teacher who helped me prepare for college. I did not have to take the entrance test because I can't read very well and I would not be able to pass it. The chef that taught the class at TC met with my teacher, mom, dad, and the rehabilitation counselor. Everyone talked about my seizures and how that might cause problems with using sharp knives. My mom told them that I get an aura before a seizure and that I should let someone know if I had to sit down. They talked about my past experience in food prep and how I really wanted to try to take some of the hands-on college courses. I knew that I could not take all the reading and tests but that I could do the

cutting and preparing of the food. So after our meeting the head chef said, "Yes, let's give it a try" and I started the following week. Because I could not take all the course work and pass the tests we decided to call the college work I did "selected objectives" because we picked the courses that I could compete in and not the others. I was able to go through the graduation ceremony with all the other students and that was a very proud day for me and my family. I think I completed about 12 of the 40 some credits that are required for the full program.

I don't know if high school prepared me for college. Most of my high school was spent in the community on jobs. I had some basic math courses and reading but most of the time I was at work learning how to have a job and interact with people. I suppose high school helped me learn more independence for college and how to talk with other people and who to go to for help. My teacher at Transition Plus (high school transition program) helped me a lot. He had an office at the technical college as well and met with me everyday. He helped me with my locker at first and met with my chef teacher every week. He helped me solve problems by talking with me and making lists of ways that I could solve problems, what would happen if I did this or that. He helped my buy my knives and uniforms and practiced at home with me

for cutting and preparing food. Mostly he helped me by encouraging me and telling me what a good job that I was doing. The chef teacher also helped me by teaching me good skills and not thinking that I could not learn knife skills and food preparation. He gave me the same jobs as everyone else and was patient when I did not understand something. The other students were also great and helped me with anything that I was struggling with and included me in the lunch breaks and just hanging out at college.

The most difficulty was sitting in the reading, writing and testing classes that I could understand some of the lecture but could not write out the papers and take the tests. I have always been frustrated that I can't read very good and that I have mental retardation. Sometimes my frustration and my obsessive compulsive disorder has also made me struggle with taking directions from multiple teachers or bosses but my transition teacher has helped me calm down and learn different ways to let people know what I need and what hurts my feelings. My mom always said that I could be angry about that or I could make the most of all the talents that I did have and so I never gave up.

Going to college has changed my life. I have worked as a chef prep for 10 years. First I worked at a fancy Italian restaurant for 5 years as a food prep every day. I helped make the sauces and Italian dishes. The owner was a really neat guy who continued to teach me restaurant skills. That restaurant eventually had to lay off people because they did not have



enough business. So I got a job at a Food Cooperative, Mississippi Market and I have worked as a chef prep there for five years. I start every day at 6:30 and get all the vegetables cut for the salads and the juice bar. I work about 32 hours a week and make \$9.50 an hour. Having these chef skills helped me to get and keep this job. Having a job is how I finally got off SSI and can pay my rent and utilities and have some extra for my bowling and other things that I like to buy. My high school teacher, who is also my job coach now, still has

lunch with me every Friday to talk about any problems that I am having at work and work through them with me and my boss. I like that the other chefs treat me with respect and that I know that I have good skills as a chef prep that I would not have if I didn't go to college. I like that I am independent and have my own apartment and a roommate. I sometimes would like to go back to college and change my job and do something like carpentry but the colleges won't always let a student take classes under a selective objective and I could not do all the math that is required for the carpentry program. So for now I will stay with food prep and maybe someday I will go to another school and learn how to build things.

Christian Schoeller

