

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSITION AND POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs, for students identified with intellectual disability at 4-year post-secondary educational institutions. Theories guiding this study were program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009). Sites included three transition and post-secondary education programs for students with intellectual disability, utilizing similarly designed program models at a four-year post-secondary institution. Multiple forms of data collected from each site included participant surveys, interviews, observations, focus group, program related documents, and public information retrieved from social media and institutional web sites were analyzed through in-case and across-case analyses. The study revealed the need for strategic planning to identify the most appropriate program model to ensure sustainability of the program, including planning for funding, staffing, development of policies and procedures, and student admission, prior to student admission in the program. In addition, this study revealed the need for commitment, flexibility, and collaboration among program directors, faculty, and staff to meet the ever changing and fluid environment in serving students within a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. Further study is needed to identify best practices in student selection processes, programmatic policies, curriculum, and sustainable funding sources.

*Keywords:* intellectual disability, post-secondary education, program development, adults with disabilities, transition services

### **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to the faculty and staff who have committed their lives to serving in transition and post-secondary education programs. Your dedication, commitment and determination are changing the lives of those you touch every day.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my love and appreciation to my family for supporting me in this journey. Carey and Madison, without your love, encouragement, and consistent prayers, I would not have had the courage to even begin. I will forever be grateful that I get to walk through this life with you both.

I must also acknowledge my parents for instilling in me a love of education, determination, and persistence. Today's success is simply a result of your lifetime of love and for that I am truly grateful.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Deanna Keith and all members of my committee. Through this process I have learned so much from each of you. It has been empowering to have crossed paths with three exceptional women in leadership, who are truly making a difference in the lives of so many. Thank you.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHC)

Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA)

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Higher Education Act (HEA)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Intellectual Disability (ID)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

Mental Retardation (MR)

Post-secondary Education (PSE)

Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)

United States (US)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A team of educators, administrators, parent, and student enrolled in a transition and post-secondary education program are sitting at tables arranged in a circle discussing the day, the weather, and how much the student has grown and matured over the last few years, while he was enrolled in the program. The meeting is then called to order and each of the program staff begin to report on the student's progress academically, developmentally, and occupationally. The student's experience interning last summer with NCIS at the Pentagon is discussed and it is difficult not to be engrossed in this opportunity. The student's job coach notes that this summer, he will have the opportunity to intern on Capitol Hill, with the hope of improving his administrative skills. The student expresses excitement about the opportunity. Discussion of transportation to and from the internship site is quickly met with resolution. The student after hearing his mom comment on his ability to navigate transportation states clearly "I Uber". In a large metropolitan city, the student is quick to make clear that navigating public transportation is no longer a struggle and that he has gained the skills needed to get back and forth to an internship in one of the nation's busiest cities. Not something typically taught in the K-12 setting but mastered through participation in a transition and post-secondary education program. The meeting continues with discussion related to academic coursework, where the academic staff commend the student on his positive attitude, and note positive comments shared by faculty teaching his course. The student's mother interjects that he has good study skills, describing his flash cards and his unwavering effort to learn the material. It is recommended, that he continues to improve in self-advocacy, met with agreement throughout the room. Lastly, the student notes that he is taking fencing and he is instructed on how to obtain the equipment he needs for the course. The student explains that he believes that fencing will help with safety. The student is

commended, and his mom appears extremely proud as the meeting is adjourned.

### **Overview**

Throughout the last decade, there has been a significant increase in transition and post-secondary educational programs for students identified with intellectual disability (ID) (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hendrickson, Carson, Woods-Groves, Mendenhall, & Scheidecker, 2013; Judge Gasset, 2015; Kelley & Westling, 2013; McEathron, Beuhring, Maynard, & Mavis, 2013, Papay & Griffin, 2013). ID, as defined by the American Association on Intellectual Disability, “is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills,” originating prior to age 18 (aaid.org, Definition of Intellectual Disability, para. 1). Surprisingly, the use of the term ID remains a relatively new phenomenon. It was not until passage of Rosa’s Law in 2010, that the use of ID formally replaced the term mental retardation (MR) (Degeneffe & Terciano, 2011). Like many terms used throughout history, MR had become recognized as a derogatory label, when identifying individuals with limited intellectual functioning (Siperstein, Pociask, & Collins, 2010).

Through provisions included in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act in 2008 (HEOA), post-secondary institutions began to develop transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at a greater rate than in years past (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; Papay & Griffin, 2013; Thoma et al., 2012). The reauthorization of HEOA, along with advocacy among parents, community partners, and educational agencies, led to the creation of varying models of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Beyond agreement in student populations served, these programs vary greatly in their design, culminating into significant

variations within their development and implementation (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010; Kelley & Westling, 2013; May, 2012; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014). Understanding these program variations by identifying the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, beginning with their initial development and throughout the implementation process, provides significant insight and direction for the future development and implementation of successful transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions.

This chapter begins with providing background information related to specific legislation and advocacy that has increased opportunities for students with ID in post-secondary education. Program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009) are introduced to provide insight into the theoretical framework informing the study. Information regarding my education and professional experience, a clearly defined research problem, an articulated purpose statement, significance of the study, guiding research questions, important definitions, and closing summary are also provided.

### **Background**

Special education began to move to the forefront of American education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This movement was driven by industrial growth, massive immigration, and a progressive political philosophy (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011). However, the education of students with ID, remains a relatively new phenomenon. In fact, “prior to the 1970s, millions of children with disabilities were either refused enrollment or inadequately served through public schools” (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 2005, p. 25). It was not until the authorization of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicap Children Act (EAHC) of 1975, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 that changes in educational

policy extended the right of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students between the ages of three and 21, who were identified with a disability, including those identified with ID (Kauffman & Kauffman, 2011; Kelepouris, 2014; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Spaulding, & Pratt, 2015; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto, Stodden, & Folk, 2014; Yell).

To better understand the educational experience of students with ID in the last 50 years, it is important to examine the legislation leading to today's educational landscape for students with ID. Interestingly, early legislative actions introducing federal participation in public schools had more to do with national security than equity in education. In 1958, congress passed the National Defense Education Act, followed by Public Law 85-926, which provided higher education institutions with financial support in return for preparing individuals to instruct students identified with ID or as referred to at the time MR (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011; Martin et al., 1996). This legislation was in direct response to the Soviet Union's successful launch of Sputnik, purposed with better equipping US students to compete globally (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011; Martin et al., 1996). In 1965, Congress enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which introduced subsidies for specific populations enrolled in public schools; however, this act fell short of allocating direct grants to schools enrolling students with identified disabilities. It was not until the enactment of Public Law 89-313 (1966) that financial assistance was awarded to public schools through Title 1 funds (Martin et al., 1996).

With ongoing efforts to improve access to education for individuals with disabilities and the provision of financial assistance needed to serve them, the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) was passed in 1970 (Martin et al., 1996). This legislation consolidated access to educational programs and funding for students with disabilities. As families and communities became more aware of the right for students with disabilities to have access to FAPE, litigation

began to emerge (Katsiyannis & Hallahan, 2011; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011; Martin et al., 1996; Yell et al., 2001). Public schools found themselves in court, leading to a general resolve, that public schools were indeed responsible for educating all children and that all children had the right to freedom from discrimination in schools, including those identified with disabilities (Martin et al., 1996; Yell et al., 2001).

The enactment of varying legislation between 1960 and 1973 resulted in consensus that all students should have access to an education, free from discrimination; however, it did not result in significant changes in the provision of educational services to students with disabilities. These provisions were firmly established through Public Law 93-112, more generally known as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act mandated that educational entities receiving federal funds, must educate students, free from discrimination, based on the identification of a disability (Katsiyannis, Zhang, Landmark, & Reber, 2009; Martin et al., 1996; Yell et al., 2001). Unfortunately, this mandate, like those before it, failed to include provisions for funding or accountability, resulting in little action among local education agencies (LEA) to comply (Martin et al., 1996; Yell et al., 2001).

In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-142 into law. This law, more commonly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHC), was grounded within a civil rights paradigm and further established access for all students, including those identified with a disability to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and allocated financial assistance to those local education agencies (LEA) who sought to serve them (Katsiyannis et al., 2011; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011; Martin et al., 1996; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Yell et al., 2001). With the enactment of EAHC, it was no longer acceptable for states and LEAs to ignore the mandates outlining equity in education. In the following 15 years, EAHC was reauthorized

twice, once in 1983 and then again in 1990. The 1990 reauthorization brought with it a new name, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Katsiyannis et al., 2011; Yell et al., 2001). In addition to the new name, IDEA brought with it funding, per student, based on “a key variable of which is the average per pupil expenditure (APPE) for nondisabled students” (Martin et al., 1996, p. 30). Today, IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act continue to drive provisions of FAPE for students age three through 21, who have been identified with a disability. In addition, part C of IDEA extends early intervention services for children from birth to age three.

Through the enactment and reauthorization of varying legislation, access to public education appeared to be an agreed upon concept; however, the appropriateness of one’s education was not. Thus, schools throughout the US began to face increasing due process and litigation driven by disagreements in the interpretation of an appropriate education. An example of this was demonstrated in *Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*. In this case, the family of an upcoming kindergartener identified as deaf and hard of hearing sued the school district for not providing the student with a sign language interpreter (Yell et al., 2001). The school proposed several interventions to assist the student, short of providing a live interpreter; however, the family felt that the options presented did not demonstrate an appropriate education for their child. In 1982, this became the first case involving special education services to be heard by the US Supreme Court (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011; Yell et al., 2001). The final ruling in favor of the school district noted “that Congress had intended that to deliver FAPE, school districts had to provide personalized instruction with sufficient support services to permit a child with a disability to benefit educationally, which had been satisfied in the case” (Yell et al., 2001, p. 4). It was through this

case that the US Supreme Court delivered a two-part test for LEAs to use in determining their obligation to serve students identified with disabilities. These included “first, has the [school] complied with the procedures of the Act? And second, is the individualized education program developed through the Act’s procedures reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefits?” (Yell et al., 2001, p. 4-5). To date, the definition of appropriateness continues to be strongly debated.

The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004:

retained and expanded many of the requirements of IDEA '97, such as involvement in general education curriculum, participation in statewide assessments, and the emphasis on developing measurable annual goals for each student in special education, monitoring each student’s progress, and then reporting on this progress to his or her parents. (Yell et al., 2007, p. 8)

In addition to these, IDEA (2004) mandated the use of research-based practices in individualized education programming and the delivery of transition services for students with disabilities (Foley, Dyke, Girdler, Bourke, & Leonard, 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Katsiyannis et al., 2011; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011; Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, & Harrison, 2012; Yell et al., 2001). Transition services were delivered to prepare students with disabilities for life beyond the K-12 educational environment.

Upon reaching the age of 21, many students with disabilities are limited to participation in post-secondary trajectories focused on supported employment, day rehabilitation programs, or family and home-based supports (Walker, 2014). Post-secondary education for individuals identified with ID have been limited to participation through provisions found in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Unfortunately, few students with ID are equipped



to meet standard post-secondary admission requirements or find success in regular college coursework (Kelley & Westling, 2013). Although Section 504 supported the participation of students with ID in post-secondary programs, it did so by providing an avenue of protection from discrimination in the admissions process and throughout the student's college experience (Kelepouris, 2014; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Walker, 2014). In addition, Section 504 provided students with ID access to academic accommodations and supports purposed in providing students with equitable access to post-secondary education.

Access to post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities, specifically ID, became a reality in 2008, with the introduction of Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID). TPSID provides funding and support for transition and post-secondary education programs, facilitated by post-secondary institutions who seek to “create opportunities for students with ID to attend and be successful in higher education” (Think College, n.d., Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) Spotlights, para. 2). In addition to funding transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, TPSID provides funding for Think College, a not for profit organization responsible for ongoing research, coordination and dissemination of information to potential students and their families about the availability of post-secondary transition programs across the nation, technical assistance and training to program staff, and supports to institutions interested in developing new transition and post-secondary programs and sustaining established programs for students with ID (Folk, Yamamoto, & Stodden, 2012; Papay & Griffin, 2013; Think College, n.d.).

Through the implementation of additional transition and post-secondary education programs, students with disabilities were provided opportunities for the addition of post-

secondary educational trajectories including dual enrollment in post-secondary programs, access to appropriate courses, supported employment, and recreation geared to the individual's strengths, needs, and desires (Folk et al., 2012; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Papay & Griffin, 2013). More than a decade later, the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in 2009, introduced formalized post-secondary educational opportunities and supports for individuals identified with MR, or more recently ID (Griffin, Summer, McMillan, Day, & Hodapp, 2012; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; Kleinert et al., 2012; Papay & Griffin, 2013; Thoma et al. 2012; Walker, 2014). Resulting mandates within HEA extended beyond discriminatory protections, to open the door of varying models of transition and post-secondary educational programs for students with ID (Griffin et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Kleinert et al., 2012; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014). In addition to extending access to post-secondary educational programs, HEA addressed the lack of funding opportunities available for institutions of higher education to develop and implement transition and post-secondary programs for students with ID (Griffin et al., 2012; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Walker, 2014).

Given the progressive inclusion of post-secondary educational programs in federal legislation, it seems that the development of these programs would have subsequently increased congruently to the identified need in the US. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Think College, a national "organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability" (Think College, n.d., About Think College, para. 1), maintains a comprehensive database of transition and post-secondary educational programs for students identified with ID, throughout the US. As of June 2016, there were 247 post-secondary education programs included in the database (Think College, n.d.). Of

these, 135 were housed at four-year post-secondary institutions, 95 at two-year post-secondary institutions, and 10 vocational and trade schools (Think College, n.d.). The US Department of Education's *Digest of Education Statistics* (2014), reported a total of 3,026 four-year post-secondary institutions in the US (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). This translates to only 4.5% of four-year post-secondary institutions having implemented a transition and post-secondary education program for students identified with ID, further lending credibility to the need for more programs.

During the 2013-2014 school year, records maintained by Think College indicated a total of 883 students with ID were enrolled in a post-secondary educational program in the US. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that there were 6.5 million students between the ages of 3 and 21 concurrently enrolled in special education services through provisions outlined in IDEA during the 2013 and 2014 academic year. Of the 6.5 million students served within the K-12 environment, 455,000 of those students were identified with ID nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). In contrast, only 883 or .194% of students identified with ID were enrolled in transition and post-secondary education programs. Given this rate of participation, more students need access to transition and post-secondary education programs. In addition, it is important to note that most students identified with ID enrolling in transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID were Caucasian males; whereas typically enrolling college students throughout the country were more likely to be female minorities (Think College, n.d.). Recognizing the number of students enrolled in the K-12 environment who could potentially benefit from transition and post-secondary education programs in comparison to the number of post-secondary opportunities currently available, there is a significant need for additional transition and post-secondary education programs throughout

the US (Grigal, Migliore, & Hart, 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto, et al. 2014).

Historically, post-secondary institutions developed and implemented transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID independently, without following a specific curriculum or program design. Program designs were heavily dependent on the institution's mission and local administrative control. More recently, institutions have begun to develop programs following pre-designed frameworks developed and implemented by other institutions, as they relate to the institutions willingness to include students with ID campus wide (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

To date, there is limited research identifying best practices for the successful development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. This study sought to identify successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, in effort to reveal lessons learned by individuals with firsthand involvement in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs at four-year post-secondary institutions. In doing so, this study provides significant guidance to post-secondary institutions seeking to develop and implement new transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

Program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009) were used to guide this study. Program implementation theory focuses on the process of program implementation, to include the essence of the process. This theory allowed me to examine the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and glean a deeper understanding into the often-discrete perspectives of those involved in the development and implementation of the program (Renger, Bartel, & Foltysova,

2013). Disability theory provided a lens to examine the inclusionary practices of students with ID in transition and post-secondary education programs through a socio-cultural perspective (Creswell, 2013).

### **Situation to Self**

Upon completion of my bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Sociology I began working in Child Protective Services. Quickly, I realized that many of the children and youth I worked with were impacted by an identified disability. In addition, I came to realize that for them to receive the appropriate supports and services, they needed an advocate. Contrary to legislation establishing their right to FAPE, many of these children were not being served appropriately or effectively. While continuing to work in human services, I began pursuing my master's degree in special education with a concentration in applied behavior analysis. Just prior to completion of my program, I accepted a position with a local high school teaching in a self-contained special education environment. Not surprisingly, given my background, I was familiar with many of the students entering my classroom. It was there that I began to work directly with students with ID and their families in transition planning and I found it difficult for several reasons. First, working in a rural county, there were very few post-secondary options for my students after high school. Secondly, my students' families were often overwhelmed at the thought of their child no longer attending or receiving supports through their local public high school that they failed to plan accordingly.

Two years into teaching, I experienced a reduction in force and was one of approximately 100 faculty and staff whose annual contract was not renewed. This was the most difficult experience that I had faced professionally. I have often described it as a loss only comparable to the actual loss of a loved one. At that time, I returned to my first career; however, in a different

capacity. I became a member of the Division of Family and Children Services educational unit, the first of its kind in Georgia. My experience working with families, coupled with my education and classroom exposure, opened many doors for me, providing me with the opportunity to become an advocate for children and youth in foster care. I attended individualized education program (IEP) meetings, supervised certified teachers providing one-on-one supports, and most importantly, I served as their advocate. I was astounded at the number of students who needed someone to advocate for them to ensure that they were given what they were, in fact, entitled to. I continued to learn more about navigating educational systems and was completely discouraged to discover that the lack of effective transition planning was indeed a statewide issue. In 2012, I accepted a position with a local, two-year technical college, as the Director of Student Support Services. Interestingly, I found that many of my previous positions had not only equipped me for this role but led me to it. In this position, I oversee eight post-secondary support programs serving all populations of the college, including students with disabilities. Overseeing the Office of Disability Services became a launching point in my quest to improve transition services for students with disabilities.

This study addressed the following philosophical assumptions including ontological, epistemological, axiological, and rhetorical. My ontological assumptions were drawn from questions related to the “nature of reality” and the fact that reality is derived differently by different people (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). Everyone holds a certain perspective of what they attribute to truth. My ontological assumption related to the differing perspectives of program directors, faculty, and staff who participated in the development and implementation of their institution’s transition and post-secondary education program. By including the perspective of these various positions, my assumption was that while they remain true to the individual, they

will vary given their specific roles and responsibilities in the development and implementation of their program. This allowed a deeper understanding of how these programs were established.

My professional experiences primarily involve the transitional planning process, as opposed to the direct delivery of transitional services. These experiences have provided me with significant insight into the need for appropriate and effective transition planning for students with disabilities. To differentiate these experiences and address potential researcher bias, I immersed myself into the environment with program directors, faculty, and staff of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, consistent with the epistemological assumption that by collaborating closely with participants in the field, I would have the opportunity to experience each of the participants level of knowledge in the development and implementation of their transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID (Creswell, 2013). Subjective evidence gleaned from interviews, focus group, and observations support my understanding of participant shared knowledge.

My axiological assumption is that the identified challenges, faced by post-secondary institutions, result from misconceptions held by institutional leadership. This axiological assumption was addressed through the presentation of the participants and my own biases throughout the study (Creswell, 2013). To ensure recognition and understanding of this bias and how it was reflected in my interpretation of information shared by participants, I included narratives within the study, acknowledging this potential value laden bias and those of the participants, as well.

Creswell (2013) explained that methodological assumptions “are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (p. 22). I recognized that although my research methods addressed specific research

questions, data collection protocols, and plans for analysis, I may find the need to change or alter these predefined components, as the result of additional knowledge gained throughout the study. These assumptions are imbedded into the social constructivist and pragmatic paradigms, ensuring the potential to address social constructs evident in the study, as well as the lessons learned through the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Creswell, 2013).

Lastly, rhetorical assumptions relate to the writing framework employed in research (Creswell, 2013). This case study includes vignettes to assist the reader in developing “a vicarious experience to get a feel for the time and place of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 236). The purpose of the study was clearly defined to assist the reader in understanding why the study was important and how my background influenced my decision to perform the research. My experiences in working with transition planning and in post-secondary education are expressed. These assertions were assessed and discussed, along with discussion of how my “initial naturalistic generalizations” have been impacted (Creswell, 2013, p. 237).

### **Problem Statement**

Students identified with ID are more likely to experience negative post-secondary outcomes related to employability, life skills development, and independence (Morgan, 2014; Rogan, Updike, Chesterfield, & Savage, 2014; Walker, 2014). In addition, students with ID are less likely to acknowledge education as a potential post-secondary trajectory (Wintle, 2014). In contrast, participation in post-secondary educational opportunities have been linked to increases in gainful employment (Grigal, Migliore, & Hart, 2014; Rogan et al., 2014; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014) increased life skill development (Folk et al., 2012; Rogan et al., 2014; Smith, & Benito, 2013; Thoma et al., 2012), and increased student



independence (Folk et al., 2012; Rogan et al., 2014; Thoma et al., 2012; Uditsky & Hughson, 2012) for students identified with ID. The successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs have been recognized as an effective tool in providing students with ID the opportunity to develop employability skills, improved life skills, and increased independence, all of which are linked to positive post-secondary outcomes for students with ID (Folk et al., 2012; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Thoma et al., 2012).

Given the evidentiary knowledge linking positive outcomes for students with ID to their participation in transition and post-secondary education programs, there remains a significant need for the development and implementation of additional programs in the US. Further study is needed to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as expressed by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and successful implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. The problem this study sought to address was the need for additional transition and post-secondary education opportunities for students with ID and limited research available to assist in the development and implementation of these programs at four-year post-secondary institutions.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions. Given the nature of this study, it was grounded in a foundation of social constructivism and pragmatism (Creswell, 2013). For this study, transition and post-secondary education programs

at a four-year post-secondary institution were defined as a program with varying degrees of inclusivity, specifically designed for individuals identified with ID; incorporating skills-based instruction, including academic content skills, employability skills, and independent living skills (Folk et al., 2012; Morgan, 2014; Plotner, & Marshall, 2015). The presenting phenomenon was defined as the identified successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students identified with ID, at a four-year post-secondary institution in the US. Using a multiple case study, description of the phenomenon was developed followed by the lessons learned by program manager's faculty, and staff in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

The theories that guided this study were program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009). Through the lens of program implementation theory, the process of program development and implementation was examined in depth, moving beyond simply stating an inferred step by step process, to gain a thorough description of the development and implementation of the program allowing for a detailed description of the essence of each step. For example, as opposed to simply stating step one, convene a panel of participants, program implementation theory would examine who, what, why, and how the process led to successful program development and implementation. Disability theory provided a lens of examination focused on the inclusionary aspects of each transition and post-secondary education program model and how it related to the successful development and implementation of the program.

### **Significance of the Study**

Using a multiple case study, this research provided practical, empirical, and theoretical significance. The practical significance of the study rested in its provision of specific recommendations to aid in the development and implementation of new transition and post-secondary education programs. These recommendations were drawn through the identification of successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, as cited by program directors, faculty, and staff. By providing a better understanding of the process and offering specific recommendations for future programs, this study has the potential to improve programs currently in development and offers enough guidance to assist post-secondary institutions in the creation of new programs, increasing the number of transition and post-secondary education programs in the US. In doing so, more students identified with ID will have the opportunity to participate, ideally closer to their home and family. This will, in turn, increase the number of individuals identified with ID who are prepared to enter gainful employment, demonstrate effective life skills, and live independently (Folk et al., 2012; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Thoma et al., 2012).

This study provided empirical significance as it examined the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs among three different post-secondary institutions. Empirical significance was demonstrated through the collection and analysis of multiple forms of data, including participant interviews, a focus group, program observations, multi-media products, program documents, including program proposals, and public information retrieved from social

media outlets, news media, and post-secondary institutional websites (Yin, 2009). Using a pragmatic lens, lessons learned were identified, culminating into specific recommendations to assist future program directors, faculty, and staff in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Yin, 2009).

Grigal and Hart (2010) explained that to date, previous research has narrowly focused on the participation of individuals with disabilities in post-secondary education; however, these studies concentrated on individuals identified with learning disorders, not ID. Studies focusing on students with ID have been limited to the identification of available programs, the various characteristics of these programs (Grigal, Neubert, & Moon, 2001; Neubert, Moon, & Grigal, 2004; Redd, 2004) available supports included in the programs, (Page & Chadsey-Rusch, 1995) models of inclusivity (Mosoff, Greenholtz, Hurtado, & Jo, 2007; Redd, 2004) and student outcomes (Grigal et al., 2001; Hughson et al., 2007; Neubert et al., 2004; Redd, 2004). These studies led to a comprehensive listing of available transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and specific information about the programs. These studies identified three primary models of transition and post-secondary education programs, based on their level of inclusivity. These models include substantively separate, mixed or hybrid, and fully inclusive.

Previous research in the actual development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs designed for students with ID rely on quantitative survey data, limiting the information gleaned to a simplistic overview of the presence or absence of specific components present among the programs identified. Mosoff et al. (2007) performed a qualitative, grounded theory study to examine program characteristics associated with program success, however their study failed to address analysis of multiple cases leading to the

identification of shared experiences and recommendations based on those shared experiences. Folk et al. (2012) provided a descriptive report of the implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program, by following the implementation process of a Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with ID (TPSID). Although these studies provide a glance at the challenges faced in implementing the TPSID program during its first year, they fail to move beyond the identification of potential challenges leading to specific recommendations based on lessons learned, that assist in the development and implementation of additional programs. Given the limited nature of research related to transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID more research is needed to ensure the successful development and implementation of additional transition and post-secondary education programs for students identified with ID. To date, there is limited research, specifically addressing the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID using a qualitative, multiple case study design grounded in a social constructivist and pragmatic paradigm, with a shared theoretical lens of program implementation theory and disability theory.

Theoretical significance of the study was demonstrated using program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009). Program implementation theory has not been used to guide previous studies in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) provided an avenue for detailed study and chronological description in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, located at a four-year post-secondary institution. This study moved beyond simply citing individual steps in the process, offering insight into the essence of these steps and

how they relate to the identified successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Weiss, 1997).

Disability theory (Mertens, 2009) was also used as a guiding framework for the study. Disability theory “addresses the meaning of inclusion in schools” (Creswell, 2013, p. 33), based on a social constructivist perspective, noting that disability is “a dimension of human difference and not as a defect” (Creswell, 2013, p. 33). Disability theory provided a lens to examine the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, as it related to their inclusion in post-secondary environments (Creswell, 2013). Unlike their non-disabled peers, many students with ID, face significant barriers associated with inclusionary practices on a post-secondary campus. These inclusionary practices and their resulting challenges significantly impact the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with an ID and this is evidenced by variations in transition and post-secondary education program models, in relation to their levels of inclusion (Kelley & Westling, 2013; Walker, 2014).

### **Research Questions**

Increased employability (Grigal et al., 2014; Rogan et al., 2014; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014), improved social skills (Rogan et al, 2014; Smith, 2013; Thoma et al., 2012), and independence (Rogan et al., 2014; Thoma et al., 2012; Uditsky & Hughson, 2012) are positively linked to participation in transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. This knowledge supports the continued development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID; however, currently there is an insufficient number of post-secondary educational opportunities available to this population

(Gallinger, 2013; Grigal et al., 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014). This study sought to provide guidance in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, to increase the number of post-secondary education opportunities afforded to students with ID. This study was guided by research questions that sought to identify the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. The central research question was:

What lessons have program directors, faculty, and staff learned through the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

To date, little research is available on the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs at four-year post-secondary institutions. Plotner and Marshall (2015) noted that a previous study associated with program development is limited to a single case design examining one program. This method prevents the opportunity for cross-case analysis, where different programs could be compared for similarities and differences, so that shared findings could be reported. In fact, it is noted that more research is needed to specifically address the identification of successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, to develop foundational guidelines in the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Plotner & Marshall, 2015).

The following sub-questions were designed to lead to further understanding of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for

students with ID. The sub-questions included:

1. What successes do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?
2. What challenges do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

Hafner, Moffett, and Kisa (2011) used both quantitative and qualitative measures to identify factors associated with the development of a transition and post-secondary education program on a private four-year university campus. The purpose of this previous study was to examine access to the program, the process the institution followed in the development and implementation of the program, and the benefits and challenges faced by the program in serving students with ID. Plotner and Marshall (2015) focused on the facilitators and barriers to the implementation of a post-secondary education program for students with ID, this study was in response to the recognition of the limited studies cultivating research-based practices in development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs. As such, a more thorough examination was necessary to provide institutions with evidenced based practices derived from the collective challenges and successes experienced by post-secondary institutions (Plotner & Marshall, 2015).

3. What factors are identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges by program directors, faculty, and staff in the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at a four-year post-secondary institution?



Although previous studies have begun to examine the challenges and successes faced in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, there remains a lack of guidance on whether these challenges and successes are consistent among all programs and what mitigating factors have led to more successful implementation (Hafner, Moffett, & Kisa, 2011; Plotner & Marshall, 2015). By examining the mitigating factors, a collection of lessons learned were developed, leading to specific recommendations to address the identified challenges and support identified success, across institutions, assisting in future development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at post-secondary institutions across the US.

### **Definitions**

1. *Functional Limitations* – Observable limitations related to “challenges with everyday social and practical skills including communication, self-direction, social skills, self-care, use of community resources, and maintenance of personal safety” (Folk et al., 2012, p. 262).
2. *Inclusive* – All participants are eligible, regardless of the identification of a disability or standard skill set (Smith & Benito, 2013).
3. *Intellectual Disability* – Disability formally referred to as mental retardation and defined by “significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).
4. *Post-secondary Educational Program* – Educational programs designed to provide educational opportunities upon completion of high school (Plotner & Marshall, 2015).

5. *Post-secondary Transition Plan* – Part of the individual educational program that includes student centered post-secondary trajectory goals and the individual steps that have been identified to prepare students with disabilities to meet their identified goals (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004).

### **Summary**

Individuals who do not have access to post-secondary education have less than desired outcomes in employability, life skills development, and independence (Morgan, 2014; Rogan et al., 2014; Walker, 2014). These negative outcomes may be exacerbated in students with ID. To combat this, current federal legislation supports the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education opportunities for students with ID; however, the need far outweighs access to these programs (Gallinger, 2013; Grigal et al., 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014). This study sought to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges associated with the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and provided recommendations for the further development and implementation of additional programs throughout the US.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

This multiple case study examined the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID through a social constructivist and pragmatic approach (Patton, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). In so doing, the study provided pragmatic lessons learned (Patton, 1990) by program directors, faculty, and staff, initiating recommendations for future program development and implementation throughout the US. Using Weiss's (1997) program implementation theory, descriptions of the existing transition and post-secondary education programs studied included not only specific steps associated with the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, but a keen understanding of the essence of the process (Weiss, 1997). In addition, disability theory (Mertens, 2009) provided further examination of these post-secondary programs, as they related to their inclusionary practices among the various program models. In addition to discussing the theoretical framework of the study, discussion of related literature is provided, followed by a summary of the chapter.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework allows qualitative researchers to conduct research by providing guidance in the development of appropriate research questions, identification of appropriate data collection methods, and data analysis (Yin, 2009). In addition, it is through this theoretical framework that analytic generalization may be observed (Yin, 2009). Unlike statistical generalizations, found in quantitative research, analytic generalizations do not focus on inferences, but are drawn by comparing the findings of a case study with existing theory (Yin,

2009). This study was focused using both program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009). Utilizing both program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009) allowed for deeper understanding of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

### **Program Implementation Theory**

Program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) manifested from program development theory (Bickman, 1987, 1990); however, program implementation theory relates specifically to the activities involved in program development and implementation. Both theories are grounded in evaluation. Yin (2009) discussed the importance of differentiating between two theories by determining which would provide for better understanding based on the purpose of the study. When determining between the two, it is important to understand specifically, what is to be learned (Yin, 2009). When the purpose of a study is to examine the actual components of a program, for example curriculum or effectiveness of curriculum, program theory would be used to focus on its substance. However, this study is not focused on the components of transition and post-secondary education programs, as important as they are; this study focused on the process of development and implementation and is grounded in how to implement an effective program (Renger et al., 2013). Thus, program implementation theory guided this study examining the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution.

To better understand program implementation theory, it is imperative to consider it through the context of evaluation. That is, the evaluation of the specific steps associated with the implementation of a program, or more specifically, the activities program directors, faculty, and staff take in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education

programs for students with ID (Renger et al., 2013). In addition, it is important to understand that this theory moves beyond a cumulative list of steps, to develop a greater understanding of how these steps, either positively or negatively, contribute to change in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Renger et al., 2013).

This study examined the steps taken by program directors, faculty, and staff in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, focusing on the steps that these individuals took to establish and sustain their programs. By doing so, this study provides direction for the future development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs across the US.

### **Disability Theory**

In addition to the use of program implementation theory, disability theory (Mertens, 2009) was incorporated into the framework of this study to address the examination of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, as they related to the inclusive nature of the program. Programs currently existing on post-secondary campuses vary among the participants but given that all participants within these transition and post-secondary education programs have been identified with ID or other disability, the successful development and implementation of these programs must be examined specifically through the lens of disability theory. Failure to do so would result in inadequate conclusions, given the programs purpose and participants.

Grounded within a transformative paradigm, disability theory provided focus on the social aspects among people with and without disabilities who work collaboratively to change the perspectives of people, regarding a marginalized population (Mertens, 2009). Noting that a

marginalized population is defined as one which is more likely to be discriminated against or experience oppression due to characteristics beyond their control (Mertens, 2009). Mertens (2009) explained that with using disability theory, researchers move beyond simply answering questions about a non-disabled population, which most often leads to identifying disability as an anomaly. Disability theory provided an opportunity to examine the lives of individuals with disabilities, to increase socio-cultural understanding among the non-disabled population.

For the purpose of this study, disability theory examined the nature of inclusive practices among transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, identifying the successes, challenges, and the factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff responsible for the development and implementation of these programs, their socio-cultural impact, and how the inclusion of students with ID impacts the socio-cultural landscape of a four-year post-secondary institution (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2009). Failure to understand how each campus's inclusionary practices impacted the development and implementation of their transition and post-secondary education programs, may result in negative consequences in the sustainability of the program. For example, students identified with ID may experience significant challenges in independent living skills (Morgan 2014; Rogan et al., 2014; Walker, 2014), as a result, on-campus housing may need to be addressed in a different way than it is for the participants' non-disabled peers.

This study examined the process of developing and implementing a successful transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. In doing so, it was important to examine the process of developing and implementing a successful program, considering the specific population that these programs serve. Students with disabilities often bring with them

the need for academic and supplemental supports that must be acknowledged in both the development and implementation of a successful transition and post-secondary education program.

### **Related Literature**

Throughout the last decade, transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID have begun to emerge (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; Kelley & Westling, 2013; McEathron et al., 2013). However, these programs vary greatly in the students that they serve, their stated policies and objectives, admissions procedures, curriculum, campus wide inclusivity, nonacademic services, student experiences, and potential student outcomes. Current research is attempting to shed light on transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, through the collection of survey data used in the identification of available programs and their potential requirements, analysis of specific program models detailing specialized policies and procedures, and limited qualitative studies describing student participation and detailing student participants attitudes and beliefs associated with post-secondary programs for students with ID (Plotner & Marshall, 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Rogan et al., 2014). Unfortunately, little research is available focusing on the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

### **Emergence of Postsecondary Programs**

Historically, the presence of post-secondary opportunities for students with ID have been limited, if not non-existent. In most cases, students with ID were often “encouraged to transition directly from school to employment or placements within community rehabilitation programs” (Yamamoto et al., 2014, p. 59). If students were unable to meet regular college admission

requirements, there post-secondary trajectories often included residing with family or participation in community-based day programs. Plotner and Marshall (2015) explained that “programs for individuals with intellectual disability have gradually emerged at colleges and universities” (p. 58). This emergence was initially instigated through growing educational and social legislation (Plotner & Marshall, 2015), including the reauthorization of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicap Children Act (EAHC) of 1975, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hart et al., 2010; Hendrickson, Busard, Rodgers, & Scheidecker, 2013; McEathron & Beuhring, 2011).

Throughout the last four decades, transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID have grown in number (Hartz, 2014; Hendrickson, Hosp, Hensley, Huddle, & Ford, 2014; Morgan, 2014; Ross, Marcell, Williams, & Carlson, 2013; Wintle, 2014). Griffin et al. (2012) explained that these programs began to offer opportunities for students with ID, extending their studies beyond the secondary environment to gain experiences in academics, independent living, and employment; with their same age peers. These first programs, however were not always housed at post-secondary institutions; it was not until more recently, they did so (Rogan, et al., 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014).

In 2008, the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, then renamed the Higher Education Opportunity Act, became a catalyst to increasing the emergence of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, through the addition of grant funding and provisions or waivers for student enrollment, available to post-secondary institutions interested in developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Ryan, 2014; Thoma et al., 2012; Vanbergeijk & Cavanagh, 2015). Currently, there is an estimated 246 transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID across



the US (Think College, n.d.).

### **Postsecondary Program Models**

With the emergence of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, multiple variations among these programs have been identified. Post-secondary institutions have ventured into providing programs for students with ID based on varying sources of information most of which are lacking evidence-based practices (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Grigal and Hart (2010) discussed these variations and identified three primary program models. These include substantively separate models, mixed or hybrid models, and fully inclusive models. These models are delineated by the level of inclusive practices that participants of the program experience (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Kelley & Westling, 2013; May, 2012; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014). More specifically, “the degree to which the program supported student participation in typical inclusive college courses, in addition to all other aspects of college life” (Grigal & Hart, 2010, p. 50).

**Substantively separate program model.** Like the historical K-12 academic setting, many early transition and post-secondary education programs involved educating students with ID, separated from their non-disabled peers. Plotner and Marshall (2015) explained that in substantively “separate models, the students’ courses and social activities are located on campus, but their courses are mainly separate from the rest of the student population and focus on instruction in life skills area” (p. 59). Having been the first model to emerge more than 40 years ago, the fully separate model does not allow for inclusion of student participants within academic course work and minimal inclusion in campus wide student activities (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Yamamoto et al., 2014). The fully separate model is also rarely linked to residential post-secondary experiences. Despite these limitations, students with ID are more

likely to transition into one of the substantively separate models (Walker, 2014).

**Mixed or hybrid program model.** Mixed or hybrid models allow for increased inclusivity for student participants, as compared to the substantively separate program model. Today's most prevalent model, the mixed model provides students with access to post-secondary academic content through participation in college coursework for credit or for auditing purposes (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Morgan, 2014). Smith and Benito (2013) described the mixed model as providing "a combination of standalone courses and integrated courses while integrating students through extracurricular activities and residential life" (p. 396). In many cases, the student's ability to participate in academic coursework results from his or her ability to meet pre-determined institutional requirements, including placement testing or evidence of ability to benefit through standardized assessment. The mixed model often allows students to receive alternate admission to the institution and through this alternate admission, they are limited in their inclusion in college-level academic coursework for credit. Mixed model programs provide students with inclusive opportunities to participate in campus-wide activities and in some cases in on-campus housing.

**Fully inclusive model.** The third post-secondary educational model for students with ID, which has developed more recently, is referred to as the fully inclusive model. In the fully inclusive model, students are granted the highest degree of inclusivity (Kelley & Westling, 2013; Plotner & Marshall, 2015). These models operate with individual supports, often including similar individualized planning strategies, as used in secondary schools (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Students are empowered to make choices related to their career and independent living goals through person centered planning (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Kelley & Westling, 2013). It is important to note, that even in the fully inclusive model, as with models previously discussed,

there are many variations among institutions in how they provide inclusion of student participants with their non-disabled peers (Walker, 2014). The fully inclusive model “attempts to teach a wide range of skills on college campuses, including skills in areas such as independent living, pedestrian navigation, accessing public transportation, social relations, following a daily schedule, and participating in various college activities” (Kelley & Westling, 2013, p. 68).

Grigal and Hart (2010) clearly noted that many existing programs were created using a narrow focus that, if continued, may lead to negative outcomes for students. Although the three basic models of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID provides some basic tenets of these programs, the variations among them result in the need to know and understand more about how to successfully develop and implement transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Further research can ensure that future programs are designed to meet the needs of the students, their future goals, and the communities in which they reside.

### **Think College**

Think College, established in 2010, is a nationally recognized not for profit organization overseen by the Institute for Community Inclusion through the University of Massachusetts in Boston. The organization has brought considerable attention to transition and post-secondary education programs in the United States (Think College, n.d.). Their services include coordination of Transition Postsecondary Education Program projects, training and technical assistance, research, and dissemination of comprehensive information about transition and post-secondary education opportunities for students with ID (Think College, n.d.). Primary contributors to the body of research available through Think College include Meg Grigal and Debra Hart, both leading researchers in the field of postsecondary education for students with ID

(Think College, n.d.). In their book *Think College: Postsecondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*, Grigal and Hart (2010) provided a synopsis of available research on transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Consistent with multiple data base searches, it is important to acknowledge the limited research that is available on the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

### **Quantitative Studies**

There are limited quantitative studies on transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Grigal & Hart, 2010). The few quantitative studies published have largely involved survey data focusing on the identification of available programs, program characteristics (Grigal et al., 2001; Neubert et al., 2004; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Redd, 2004), presence of available supports for students enrolled in the program (Page & Chadsey-Rusch, 1995), program inclusivity (Hughson et al., 2007; Redd, 2004), and the resulting outcomes of students enrolled (Grigal et al., 2001; Hughson et al., 2007; Neubert et al., 2004; Redd, 2004). Resulting analysis has led to conclusions citing the need for additional programs to meet the demand of individuals exiting high school with limited post-secondary trajectories (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

Additional quantitative studies involved K-12 public school teacher's responses regarding their student's participation in dual enrollment post-secondary programs, post participation outcomes, and the identification of barriers impeding student participation in transition and post-secondary education opportunities for students with ID (Grigal et al., 2001; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Zafft, Hart, & Zimbrich, 2004). The only previous study identified that examined the implementation of a post-secondary education programs was conducted by

Plotner and Marshall (2015) who used a survey created specifically for the study that generated information related to the implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. The survey specifically addressed participant demographic information, potential institutional supports, potential barriers, and supports over time (Plotner & Marshall, 2015). Ultimately, while this study identified what was believed to be potential barriers and perceived supports, it fell short of delving deeper into the essence of these barriers and challenges to draw recommendations for future development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

### **Qualitative Studies**

Qualitative inquiry into the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID is also limited. Previous studies involve the examination of participant outcomes, in relation to program effectiveness in employment (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hughson, Moodie, & Uditsky, 2006), student experiences (Page & Chadsey-Rusch, 1995, Redd, 2004), delivery of supports (Page & Chadsey-Rusch, 1995), participant outcomes (Redd, 2004), documentation of participant beliefs and experiences (Hughson et al., 2006), perceptions of faculty and non-disabled peers, factors related to the success of post-secondary educational opportunities (Mosoff et al., 2007), narratives describing the changes in programs evolution, varieties in program purpose and procedures (Hughson et al., 2006), and campus wide stakeholders understanding of the process leading to the implementation of post-secondary educational programs (Hughson et al., 2006; Mosoff et al., 2007; Page & Chadsey-Rusch, 1995; Plotner & Marshall, 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Smith & Benito, 2013).

Little is known about the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Historically, research has sought to fill this

gap, only to fall short in providing lessons learned or recommendations aiding in the development of new programs or improving existing ones. Hafner, Moffatt, and Kisa (2011) contributed empirically to the body of knowledge in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary programs through a mixed methods study of one post-secondary education program, executed through a published doctoral dissertation. This study examined student access to post-secondary programs, the process of developing and implementing a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, and the challenges associated with serving students with ID (Hafner et al., 2011). Although this study was purposed and designed to examine the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, its focus was simply on describing the process itself.

A foundational component of developing and implementing a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID involves the identification of existing best practices to aid in the development of the program. Having recognized that there was “no one right way of doing inclusion in college”, the program development team strategized how they may develop a fully inclusive model, to include the use of “person centered planning and Individualized College Plans” (p. 19). Person centered planning and individualized college plans aid in identifying the student’s strengths and the development of strategic partnerships with the participant’s families and local community agencies, all while remaining fluid with the number of students who would be accepted given the institutions ability to serve them through existing on-campus supports (i.e. peer mentoring, academic supports, and housing). Although these areas were defined, the study fell short of identifying the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges that could lead to recommendation or lessons learned to aid in the future development of transition and post-secondary education programs for

students with ID (Hafner et al., 2011). Although these studies add to the body of knowledge about transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, more is needed to assist post-secondary institutions in the identification of successes, challenges, and the factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of these programs (Plotner & Marshall, 2015). Plotner and Marshall (2015) explained that:

there is little available information that describes the challenges and supports facing those individuals or entities interested in beginning and developing new post-secondary programs and there are few, if any research-based guidelines to help program developers prepare and plan adequately for post-secondary programs (p. 59).

In addition, Plotner and Marshall (2015) noted that “program directors have published narratives of the evolution of their programs or case studies of their current programs and identified both challenges and supports they found during the process”; however, they did not provide a pragmatic approach, resulting in lessons learned and clear recommendations for the development and implementation of new transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (p. 59).

### **Postsecondary Program Components**

A current review of research indicates that there is limited research available on the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs. In addition, there is limited research available addressing specific program components related to transition and post-secondary education programs. Given the lack of research associated with program admission, participant populations, funding, curriculum, available supports, evaluation mechanisms, student outcomes, and research-based best practices, more research is needed to

empower post-secondary institutions to develop, implement, and sustain transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID throughout the US.

### **Barriers to Participation**

While considering the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, it is imperative to consider the documented barriers that have been identified through previous research. The primary barriers to participation in transition and post-secondary education programs for student with ID are awareness of programs (Folk et al., 2012; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013), access to programs due to the limited number of programs, coupled with the limited number of students each program is able to serve at any given time (Folk et al., 2012; Hendrickson, Busard, et al., 2013; McEathron & Beuhring, 2011; Mock & Love, 2012), and a combination of systematically low expectations for students with ID (Folk et al., 2012) in combination with a lack of student outcome data associated with transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013). Awareness of post-secondary opportunities for students with ID is hindered in what Folk et al. (2012) referred to as “insufficient or ineffective transition planning and implementation too often”, resulting in “gaps in student preparedness, inadequate supports, and missed opportunities to participate” (p. 257). In addition, students with ID are missing out on post-secondary opportunities, due to a lack of agency collaboration, specifically with schools, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and other community partners charged with serving students with ID (Mock & Love, 2012).

Access to transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID is limited, due to several factors including availability of programs near residences (Hendrickson, Busard, et al., 2013; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; McEathron & Beuhring, 2011; Mock &



Love, 2012) program admissions policies (Hendrickson, Busard, et al., 2013; Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; McEathron & Beuhring, 2011; Papay & Griffin, 2013), and funding (Hendrickson, Busard, et al., 2013; Mock & Love, 2012). Mock and Love (2012) explained that “a mere 10% of youth with disabilities have access to PSE” (p. 290).

Prior to the reauthorization of the HEOA of 2008, which allocated funding for transition and post-secondary education (PSE) opportunities, students with ID were burdened with paying out of pocket for tuition and program fees associated with attending. It is important to note that tuition and fees to attend a transition and post-secondary program for students with ID are approximately \$20,000 per semester. This total varies based on the program and its available supports, such as on-campus housing. Ross et al. (2013) discussed the financial provisions available to students with ID, through the reauthorization of HEOA to include “Pell Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunities Grants, and the Federal Work Study Program” (p. 337). Although the addition of this funding has improved students access to transition and post-secondary education programs, funding remains a barrier. For example, a student with ID attending a transition and post-secondary education program could expect to pay approximately \$20,000 per semester, with access to the Federal Pell Grant a student may receive tuition assistance of up to \$5775 per year or roughly 14% of the student’s tuition and fees. Thus, the student and their family may be responsible for the remaining funds. If one coupled the lack of available programs with limited funding, access to transition and post-secondary education programs remain a significant barrier for students.

### **Dual Enrollment versus Open Enrollment**

One of the first steps in the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program is for the institution to determine the appropriate population of

students to serve. Transition and post-secondary education programs have followed along two trajectory paths. The first is through dual enrollment. A dual enrollment program is designed to serve students with ID through a partnership with the local school district, offering students the opportunity to enroll in a post-secondary education program, while still completing high school (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Grigal et al., 2001). Hendrickson, Carson, et al. (2013) explained that “students in these transition programs tend to live at home and commute to work sites or the local college” (p. 171). Understanding this, it is important for institutions to consider the purpose of their program to determine if this type of participation would be appropriate. If institutions wish to offer a more holistic program, where students have access to post-secondary education, in the same ways as their peers, then a dually enrolled program may not be the best design (Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013). With limited research on the effectiveness of dually enrolled programs, it is important that future studies examine if dually enrolled programs are indeed leading to positive outcomes for students with ID. Folk et al. (2012) discussed the dually enrolled component, in the development of a TPSID program in Hawaii, by noting that:

dual enrollment did not appear to offer a significant benefit to any of the students in the projects first cohort and all elected to separate from the USDOE with certificates of completion or diplomas and entered the community college through the standard application process as matriculating degree-seeking students. (p. 259).

Transition and post-secondary education programs developed to provide students with ID access to a typical college experience are most commonly designed as regular enrollment programs. Regular enrollment programs do not operate in partnership with the local school districts, but instead hinge on the collaborative work of the institution in partnership with faculty and staff, community partners, local businesses, and potential students and their families (Grigal

& Hart, 2010; Mock & Love, 2012; Papay & Griffin, 2013). Students seeking enrollment in a regularly enrolled program would be those students who have completed their K-12 education experience.

### **Admission**

Admissions policies are developed throughout the program's development and implementation. It is also not uncommon for these policies to change as the program evolves. Throughout history, admission to post-secondary institutions have been limited to those students capable of meeting the institutions rigorous admission policies. Typically, the average applicant will need to meet a minimum high school GPA, acceptable performance on nationally recognized standardized exams, adequate community involvement and in some cases, references who can speak to the applicant's intelligence and likelihood of their success in the post-secondary environment. Unfortunately, students with disabilities, more specifically, ID are unlikely to meet these rigorous requirements. Thus, students with ID have in most cases been denied admission.

Transition and post-secondary education programs for student with ID are specifically designed to open the doors of the institution to students with ID. Understanding that traditional admission requirements would not be appropriate in most cases, individuals tasked with developing specialized admission procedures will need to understand not only the population being served, but how the institution is equipped to meet the needs of students enrolled under these specialized procedures. Grigal, Hart, and Weir (2012) reported the results from the 2009 survey of postsecondary education programs for students with ID. In this report, the authors noted that program admission requirements considered were:

ability to follow code of conduct (66%), specialized entrance criteria (56%), level of

safety skills (50%), independent navigation of campus (40%), certificate of attendance from high school (35%), and record of immunizations (28%)” additional areas noted were in “specific disability label/type (24%), IQ (23%), and high school diploma (22%). (p. 226).

Folk et al. (2012) discussed the challenges of customary admissions requirements considering transition and post-secondary education programs and how they are purposed at the institution. In most cases, institutional admission policies will not be appropriate, resulting in the need for institutions to develop specialized admission policies to ensure that students with ID, transitioning into post-secondary education, are assessed based on the programs goals and the institutions overall mission. Hendrickson, Carson, et al. (2013) discussed the development of admissions policies for the UI REACH program, a transition and post-secondary education program at the University of Iowa. This discussion, noted how the institution designed admissions standards based the programs model, the institutions overall mission, and the students they were seeking to serve.

The UI REACH program was designed to serve students with ID, who met the programs admission requirements. Potential students were required to complete a downloadable application found through the program’s website. Once received, the application was reviewed by a panel of institutional staff and, if deemed appropriate, the applicant was invited for an interview. Interviews involved both the potential student and their family to determine appropriateness for the program. It was at that point that the panel would review all available information and make the final decision regarding admission to the program. The UI REACH program noted that “the major factors in admission include the potential of the student to adjust to life in the residence halls and living with a roommate” and “the motivation of the student to

attend the university and to further his or her education” (Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013, p. 173).

### **Financial Aid and Assistance**

Previously recognized as a barrier to participation in a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, it is imperative that financial assistance and funding be addressed (Hendrickson, Busard, et al., 2013; Mock & Love, 2012). Regular admission to post-secondary education requires that applicants have received a high school diploma, general equivalency diploma, or successfully passed a federally recognized ability to benefit exam (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Historically, possession of one of these credentials has also determined a student’s ability to receive federal financial aid (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Understanding that many students seeking admission to a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID will not hold one of these credentials, funding for enrollment must be addressed.

The reauthorization of the HEOA of 2008, opened the door for students seeking to enroll in transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, by extending federal financial-aid to students enrolling in these programs (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Ross et al., 2013; Ryan, 2014; Thoma et al., 2012; Vanbergeijk & Cavanagh, 2015). Students with ID were then able to receive federal Pell grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants, and participate in federal work study programs (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Ross et al., 2013; Ryan, 2014; Thoma et al., 2012; Vanbergeijk & Cavanagh, 2015). In addition, this reauthorization provided exceptions that would allow students with ID to take reduced course loads, as appropriate; and participate in higher education programs that do not necessarily lead to a college degree (Mock & Love, 2012; Vanbergeijk & Cavanagh, 2015).

For families that do not meet federal financial-aid eligibility and for those enrolling in

programs exceeding federal reimbursements, students must seek additional funding to cover their educational expenses. Grigal and Hart (2010) explained that:

aside from parents' own funds, funding for students with ID in postsecondary settings has traditionally come through grant programs, vocational rehabilitation agencies, partnerships with school districts, education awards from AmeriCorps for community service, and scholarships that target students with ID". (p. 170).

Understanding that each of these funding sources hold specific eligibility requirements for both the student and the program with which they are enrolling, it is imperative that students and their families, begin investigating available funding opportunities early and accepting that they may indeed bear the greatest burden financially (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

### **Program Curriculum**

A search for literature on curriculum for transition and post-secondary education programs revealed little. In fact, a description of program curriculum was limited to two identified studies. Ross et al. (2013) and Folk et al. (2012) provide insight into specific curriculum associated with a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. Ross et al. (2013) analyzed a transition and post-secondary education program located in California and explained that "curriculum consisted of basic academics, life skills, and paid work experience in jobs" (p. 339). The researchers went on to describe "36 individual classes which are all approved by the California Community College Chancellor's Office" and with successful completion, the student is awarded a certificate of completion (Ross et al., 2013, p. 340). This description was rich in comparisons to other examinations in literature. In analyzing a transition and post-secondary education program in Hawaii, Folk et al. (2012) discussed the alignment with regularly enrolled students at the institution. Students enrolled in the transition and post-

secondary education program participated in the institutions placement exam and were subsequently enrolled in “the most basic developmental English and math courses offered” (p. 259). The institution used the “Essentials” English curriculum to assist students in remediation. In this program, the institution chose to “work within the Community College’s developmental education system instead of trying to negotiate a different route or defaulting to course auditing as a way for students who were technically ‘academically ineligible’ to access the majority of courses” (p. 259). In addition, students enrolled in the program also participated in courses related to their career choices.

Transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID are tasked in designing curriculum that will meet the needs of students upon completion of the program, whether it is using existing academic offerings or specialized curriculum, aimed at building skills in employability and independent living. Grigal et al. (2012) conducted a comprehensive survey of transition and post-secondary education programs in the US. This survey addressed student’s access to academic courses and curriculum. Survey responses showed that “62% indicated that they offered social skills training” and 61% indicated “independent living and life skills instruction,” 57% of the distribution offered access to credit bearing courses whereas, 51% offered access to non-credit bearing courses (p. 226). The survey identified that 75% of programs indicated that students received group instruction and activities in a self-contained environment with peers identified with ID (Grigal et al., 2012). Although this survey provided significant information related to the academic design of the program, research is needed to assess and evaluate best practices in program curriculum.

### **Student Outcomes: Benefits vs. Outcomes**

**Benefits of post-secondary participation.** As with their non-disabled peers, students

with ID benefit from access to post-secondary educational trajectories. Researchers have concluded that students who participate in post-secondary education are more likely to have improved employment outcomes leading to higher wages (Folk et al., 2012; Hart et al., 2010; Hosp et al., 2014; Papay & Griffin, 2013; Ross et al., 2013), improved academic skills (Folk et al., 2012), improved health (Hosp et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2013), increased independence (Folk et al., 2012; Hosp et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2013), improved self-confidence, self-advocacy, and self-esteem (Hart et al., 2010; Hosp et al., 2014).

**Outcomes of participation in post-secondary education.** Although research findings indicate that enrollment in post-secondary education trajectories lead to improved outcomes for students, including students with ID, little research is available linking transition and post-secondary education programs to improved outcomes for enrolled students (Grigal et al., 2001; Hughson et al., 2007; Neubert et al., 2004; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Redd, 2004; Zafft et al., 2004). Ross et al. (2013) sought to examine the outcomes of students enrolled in a transition and post-secondary education program and found that students with ID enrolled in the program were experiencing improved employment outcomes, living independently, and were more likely to participate in their local communities. More research is needed to substantially link students with ID enrolled in transition and post-secondary education programs with positive long-term outcomes.

### **Participant Perspectives**

Little research has been done to address the individual perspectives of the varying populations impacted by transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Participant's perspectives include those of students, parents, peers, faculty, and community members impacted by the presence of a transition and post-secondary education program for



student with ID.

**Student perspectives.** Given the limited nature of research associated with transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, it is not surprising that examinations of student perspectives are limited, as well. What is known is that students enrolled in a transition and post-secondary education programs have noted that they feel that they are exposed to a new social environment, offering them opportunities to interact with their same aged, non-disabled peers (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Mock & Love, 2012). This finding is important because these interactions provide opportunities for students with ID to build relationships with their non-disabled peers and opportunities to make social choices that they may not otherwise have (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Mock & Love, 2012). In addition, a transition and post-secondary education program provides students with a unique opportunity to learn, not only through changes in curriculum from that of the K-12 environment, but with targeted focus on employability skills, social relationships, and independent living skills (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Mock & Love, 2012). Students enrolled in transition and post-secondary education programs also noted that their perceptions of self and daily behavior were positively changed through their participation in the program (Folk et al., 2012). Lastly, students concluded that their ability to participate in transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID represented respect for all students (Mock & Love, 2012). Each of these perspectives positively support student's participation in transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and the need for the development and implementation of additional transition and post-secondary education programs.

**Parent perspectives.** There are limited studies addressing parental perspectives related to transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Of these studies, the

focus has been related to parental perspectives on transition planning and post-school readiness for employment (Cooney, 2002; Davies & Beamish, 2009; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001). Davies and Beamish (2009) executed a quantitative study to assess parental perspectives ( $N = 218$ ) related to the post-school readiness and outcomes of their children. Post-school readiness specifically addressed readiness for “employment, community activities, and daily living, and the extent to which schools involved families in the transition planning process” (Davies & Beamish, 2009, p. 251). Survey responses indicated that although they had significant involvement in transition planning for their student, their student did not. Parents indicated positive views of post-school preparation related to community involvement and daily living skills; however, their views of preparedness for post-school employment were not positive. This is significant in relation to student’s overall outcomes and their continued reliance on subsidized governmental wages through disability services, noting the importance of improved post-school preparation for employment (Davies & Beamish, 2009). Foley et al. (2012) reiterated the challenges associated with post-school employment outcomes noting that “parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities have reported a lack of adequate full day adult services” (p. 1757). Given the lack of available day programs for students with ID, it is imperative that additional programs be developed and implemented to assist students with ID in gaining adequate employability skills to improve their post-school outcomes through gainful employment, reducing their reliance on governmental programs and parents.

Few studies have sought to determine the parental perspectives of post-secondary education as a viable post-secondary trajectory for students with ID (Griffin, McMillan, & Hodapp, 2010). Griffin et al. (2010) “investigated the issues that families consider when making decisions regarding post-secondary education (PSE) for young adults with intellectual

disabilities” (p. 339). Through the delivery of a quantitative survey, Griffen et al. (2010) sought to examine the perspectives of parents in relation to transition planning and whether specific demographic data correlated to parental perspectives of post-school expectations. In addition, the study addressed parental concerns associated with enrolling in post-secondary education programs and which program characteristics were deemed most important to them.

When addressing transition planning, it is important to note significant inconsistencies associated with transition planning. Parents indicated that they believed that access to transition and post-secondary education programs would be beneficial for their student, but teachers were said to be “less encouraging” in the potential benefits of post-secondary education programs (Griffen et al., 2010, p. 341). This appears consistent with the finding that “only 26% of parents affirmed that their child’s IEP included a plan for the time immediately following high school” (p. 342). In addition, most parents indicated that they did not know how to access post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Lastly, parents expressed that their greatest concerns associated with their student attending a post-secondary education program was their student’s safety (Griffen et al., 2010).

The role of parents in the post-secondary environment is drastically different than in the K-12 setting. Parents begin to play a supported role with limited access to students’ academic records. Folk et al. (2012) briefly discussed parental perspectives of transition and post-secondary education programs and noted that in some cases, institutions purposely shift focus to the student, with primary contact with parents revolving around obtaining parental consent. However, it was noted that the encouragement parents provide significantly impacts student participation in transition and post-secondary education programs and undoubtedly improves student self-efficacy (Folk et al., 2012). Mock and Love’s (2012) qualitative, grounded theory

study sought to identify recurring themes among students, parents, higher education professionals, and community-based agencies. Parental themes centered on two main topics, “concepts relevant to inclusive higher education” and “essential elements they needed to support their son or daughter in inclusive education” (p. 293). Based on this research, parents expressed that the relevance of transition and post-secondary education programs involve their relationship with student participant’s future goals, social skills development through interactions with non-disabled peers, inclusive opportunities for students identified with a disability to learn alongside their non-disabled peers, and the potential of offering an alternative to more frequently identified post-secondary trajectories (Mock & Love, 2012).

**Peer perspectives.** Historically, research has focused on addressing the perspective of non-disabled peers within the K-12 educational environment. Limited research has examined the perspectives of peers within a post-secondary environment, especially surrounding transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Casale-Giannola and Kamens (2006) utilized a mixed methods approach, pairing qualitative case study and quantitative surveys ( $N=28$ ) to examine whether there was any change in the perceptions of peers enrolled in classes with a student identified with Down syndrome. The author’s concluded that there was a positive change in the perspectives of classmates, regarding time taken away from class, because of the cognitive limitations of a peer. Hafner et al. (2011) sought to examine the perspectives of peers ( $N = 712$ ) enrolled at a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. Using a pre- and post-survey, Hafner et al. (2011) “found that 96% were ‘comfortable’ or ‘very comfortable’ around classmates with ID” (p. 235). In addition, 40% of peers living in a dorm with students with ID noted that they developed friendships with them. Like Casale-Giannola and Kamens (2006), May (2012) examined attitude change among the non-disabled peers, using

a pre- and post-survey. The pre- survey was administered at the beginning of the semester, with the post-survey administered at the end of the semester. Peers enrolled in inclusive courses expressed more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with ID (May, 2012).

It is important to assess the perspectives of peers, given the role that peers play in the post-secondary environment. Griffin et al. (2012) examined the “attitudes of college students toward the inclusion of students with ID at their college” (p. 235). The researchers concluded that the perceptions of peers were positive overall. In addition, data analysis provided the identification of specific peer characteristics tied to more positive responses. Female students, those who volunteered to interact with students with ID, and those with more interactions with students with ID, reported more positive attitudes (Griffin et al., 2012). More research is needed to examine the perspectives of non-disabled peers enrolled in post-secondary institutions that have a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.

**Faculty perspectives.** Faculty of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID have expressed changes in their perceptions after having participated in the program (Folk et al., 2012). Feelings of skepticism were replaced with feelings of acceptance and emboldened advocacy (Folk et al., 2012). Faculty concluded that when proper academic supports were provided, students with disabilities could be successful in the post-secondary environment (Folk et al., 2012). Mock and Love (2012) explained that transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID create opportunities for students with ID to meet their post-secondary goals (Mock & Love, 2012). In addition, the presence of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID creates opportunities for student’s non-disabled peers to interact socially and through mentoring relationships, positively impacting the growth of non-disabled students (Mock & Love, 2012). Lastly, faculty have begun to fully

align their transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID with the institution's overall missions of diversity and social justice (Folk et al., 2012, Mock & Love, 2012).

**Community partner perspective.** Even less is known about the perspectives of community partners present in communities surrounding transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Mock and Love (2012) identified specific ways that transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID positively impact their communities. Positive impacts include a unique option for transition, positive key to addressing civil rights concerns, opportunity to positively impact barriers associated with the abilities of students with disabilities, and a more skilled workforce (Mock & Love, 2012). More research is needed to demonstrate the benefits of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID within the communities where these programs exist.

### **Best Practices among Transition and Post-Secondary Education Programs**

Given the increased emergence of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, it is somewhat surprising the little research that has been done examining best practices among programs. In fact, what little research that is available has occurred within the last six years. This is significant because transition and post-secondary education programs have been in existence in various forms for over four decades. Throughout this time, institutions and other agencies implementing these programs appeared to use approaches developed independently. Folk et al. (2012) described the progression of a specific transition and post-secondary education program and how it evolved, based on trial and error. For example, they discussed the use of developmental courses for students with ID, as appropriate in increasing the basic academic skills of students in the program. However, the authors noted that “although the

developmental education path was appropriate for the first cohort of participants, we acknowledge that this may not be the case for all future students” (Folk et al., 2012, p. 259).

Upon review of available research, although limited, there has been consistent recognition of three specific practices that offer transition and post-secondary education programs added benefits. These are collaborative teaming (Hendrickson, Carson, et al., 2013; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2014), education coaching or mentoring (Folk et al., 2012; Yamamoto et al., 2014), and person-centered planning (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hart et al., 2010). With this, there remains a critical need for future research in identifying best practices among transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, to assist in the future development and implementation of new programs, as well as the improvement of existing programs.

**Collaborative teaming.** Collaborative teaming has been identified as a best practice in the successful development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. By incorporating a team approach, programs invite individuals throughout the campus community to come together to serve students appropriately and effectively. Hendrickson, Carson, et al. (2012) described the use of collaborative teaming to aid in communication. Collaborative teaming involved two primary components, including team structure and the use of staffing’s and meetings (Folk, Carson, et al., 2012). Team structure was related to the programs staff and their shared responsibilities. Collaborative teaming replaces an organizational chart, by identifying staff and distributing intentional shared responsibilities. Folk, Carson, et al. (2012) described this by noting, “most staff members work as part of a specialized division, supervised by the Coordinators of Career Development and Transition (CDT) and Student Life and the Associate Director who oversees Academic Enrichment” they

went on to explain that staff “participate in a wide range of shared instructional, advising, and outreach responsibilities” (p. 175). Collaborative teaming provides a team approach that prevents silos and ensures that students with ID are engaged with all program staff.

Collaboration among institutional staff and other available supports is a key component in a successful transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.

Yamamoto et al. (2014) discussed the use of collaborative teaming in the context of building supports for students with ID through collaborative partnerships with institutional staff and other agencies to ensure open communication and student access to all available supports. The authors noted that “interagency collaboration is an evidenced based predictor of positive postsecondary success for students with disabilities and is also considered a critical practice in supporting students with ID in PSE and adult services” (p. 66). Institutions seeking to develop and implement a new transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID will need to fully examine their access to needed supports for students with ID on and off campus.

**Education coaching and mentoring.** Educational coaching and mentoring provide students with ID with individualized support, assisting them in meeting their academic, employment, and independent living goals. To do this, educational coaches and mentors theoretically walk students through the process from engaging in a transition and post-secondary education program, completing the program, and successfully acquiring the necessary employability and independent living skills that they need to be successful throughout their adult life. Folk et al. (2012) explained that “students were supported to pursue inclusive social and academic opportunities on campus by project-funded (50% full-time equivalent) educational coaches (p. 259). Yamamoto et al. (2014) discussed the use of educational coaching within a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, and like Folk et al.



(2012), the need for educational coaches to provide varied services was highlighted. The role of educational coaches was varied, but most commonly involved, “academic and social skills coaching, organization, and time management assistance and supported the development of the students’ executive and self-management skills (Folk et al., 2012, p. 259). Folk et al. (2012) went on to explain that “perhaps the most important support that educational coaches provided was building student capacity to undertake a steady march away” (p. 259).

In addition to Education Coaches, transition and post-secondary education programs have involved peer mentoring (Hafner et al., 2016; Kelly & Westling, 2013; Kleinert et al., 2012; McEathron et al., 2013). Kleinert et al. (2012) noted that “peer mentors can play a vital role in supporting students with ID on campus” (p. 30). Peer mentors support students with ID with navigating college life and building upon the students’ academic skills. Hafner et al. (2016) examined a transition and post-secondary education program implemented at a 4-year liberal arts college. Through this examination, the use of peer mentors was highlighted, given the positive impact it played in the success of the program.

These peer mentors met regularly with Cutting-Edge students to assist with both academic and social situations, including help with coursework; problem solving daily schedules and needs; and gaining access to, and acceptance in, student life, clubs, athletics, and general college activities. (Hafner et al., 2016, p. 21)

**Person centered planning.** The most frequently identified best practice among research is the use of person-centered planning (PCP). “PCP is an evidence-based practice that can be conceptualized as a set of approaches designed to assist people to plan their lives and needed supports” (Yamamoto et al., 2014). Hart et al. (2010) explained that “there are numerous types of PCP, but all have some common elements including the following: The focus

is on the student's strengths and abilities, the focal person directs the process, and the preferences and desires of the individual are of utmost importance" (p. 141). Grigal and Hart (2010) outlined four basic principles of PCP. These included a team approach involving "the individual, family members, friends and peers, school personnel, community members, neighbors, or other service providers", regularly scheduled meetings, focus on the student, allowing them to be in control, and an individualized plan that is supported among all members of the team (Hart & Grigal, 2010, p. 212). The practice of PCP highlights the need for students to gain self-determination and self-advocacy skills, to map out a plan that will allow them to meet their educational, employment, and independent living goals (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Yamamoto et al., 2014). Transition and post-secondary education programs across the country have acknowledged the need for PCP and its use has been shown to improve program success (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal & Hart, 2010; Morgan, 2014; Ryan, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014).

### **Summary**

Throughout the last decade, research has begun to focus on transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. The bulk of this research involves quantitative survey data purposed with identifying the presence of post-secondary educational programs for students with ID (Grigal et al., 2001; Neubert et al., 2004; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Redd, 2004), the varying models of post-secondary programs (Hughson et al., 2007; Redd, 2004), and the varying experiences and beliefs of participants, faculty, and their non-disabled peers. Qualitative study has examined the types of programs available, participant perspectives (Hughson et al., 2006), and the identification of challenges and successes derived from program development (Grigal et al., 2001; Hafner et al., 2011; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Zafft et al., 2004). Unfortunately, these

qualitative studies most often involved the study of one case, whether it be one participant, one program or one model. More research is needed to address the successes, challenges, and the factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges associated with the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Specifically, there is a gap in current literature examining the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, as it relates to the identified successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, culminating in the identification of pragmatic lessons learned among more than one case or program. In addition, by incorporating the use of a multiple case design recommendations can be ascertained for the development and implementation of future transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at four-year post-secondary institutions. This study provided recommendations identified through multiple case analyses and the resulting lessons learned, to assist in the development and implementation of future transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID across the US. In this chapter, I discuss the research design, research questions, data collection methods, and data analysis executed in the study. Explanation is provided to establish understanding and possible replication of the study.

### **Design**

This qualitative study was conducted using a multiple case study design. Unlike quantitative study, qualitative inquiry extends knowledge beyond that of frequency data to report on the essence of the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2013). Acting as a human instrument, I studied the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID in their natural setting, with sensitivity to participants involved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, qualitative inquiry allowed for multiple data collection methods which led to both inductive and deductive data analysis resulting in the identification of themes (Creswell, 2013). The emergent nature of qualitative inquiry allowed me to alter my data collection and/or data analysis as needed throughout the study (Creswell, 2013), ensuring a comprehensive examination of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at four-year post-secondary institutions.

For this study, the use of multiple case study was the most appropriate research design given that the focus of the study was to understand a complex phenomenon as it currently existed and provide a thick description of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). The phenomenon of the study involved the process encompassing the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Each case was bound by the existence of a successful transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution. Given the nature of the study, the use of case study design provided an avenue to identify the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges leading to thorough analysis using coding to impart knowledge about each case.

The three cases examined allowed for analytic replication in the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges related to the development and implementation process. Each case was examined individually and across cases. Cross-case analysis was framed using Stake's (2006) data analysis worksheets including worksheet 2 through worksheet 6 (see Appendix A-E for Worksheets 2-6). Stake (2006) explained that "the analysis is not simply a matter of listing the case findings pertinent to each research question, because, to some extent, the findings need to keep their contextual meaning during the authoring of the multi-case report" (p. 71). By collecting and analyzing data from among three transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, I was able to identify common themes within and among all three cases and identify pragmatic lessons learned, resulting in relevant recommendations for the development and implementation of future transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

Consistent with Stake (1995) each case was bound through the exploration of the successes, challenges, and the factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Although differing titles, I included the highest-ranking staff member and a minimum of two additional staff members as participants to obtain an in-depth understanding of the success and challenges faced by participants. All three cases were located in the southeast United States and have developed, implemented, and sustained a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID for a minimum of five years. The use of a pragmatic paradigm allowed me to identify lessons learned by all participants in effort to glean recommendations for the successful development of additional transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Yin, 2009).

Data drawn from questionnaires, focused interviews, observations, a focus group, review of various program documents, and review of publicly available information on the internet and at the sites were collected and analyzed allowing for triangulation of the data, the cases, and validity of the study (Creswell, 2013). The questionnaires involved ten questions and were completed at an average of 3.48 minutes. Focused interviews ranged between 19 and 59 minutes ( $M=38.46$  minutes). A paid transcriptionist transcribed all interviews and I transcribed the observations and focus groups. Focus groups were used for member checking to ensure information gleaned from interviews, observations, and document review were accurate and consistent with the impressions of all participants.

I obtained permission from Guilford Press for the republication of Stake's (2006) worksheets 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for use in data analysis (see Appendix F for Publisher permission for

use). Worksheet 2 (see Appendix A for Worksheet 2) documented my central research question and sub-questions. Worksheet 3 (see Appendix B for Worksheet 3) documented each single case analysis, allowing for a clear and concise summary of the case, identified themes from among all participants in the case and commentary related to the single case analysis. Worksheet 4 provided a template to examine consistent themes across cases and indicate cross case themes that were brought to light within the cross-case analysis (see Appendix C for Worksheet 4). Worksheet 5 guided analysis to the degree of relevance the theme represented within each case, outlining and differentiating those themes pertinent to creating assertions and writing chapters 4 and 5 of my study (see Appendix D for Worksheet 5). Worksheet 6 listed the multiple case assertions developed through data analysis.

### **Research Questions**

The development of research questions in a multiple case study involves the development of a central question or a broad question that seeks to answer or address the overall problem detailed in the study (Creswell, 2013). In addition, sub-questions are open ended questions developed to glean more specific information to guide the collection of data (Creswell, 2013). This study examined the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, in so doing, it is important to “illuminate some of these many contexts, especially the problematic ones”, to fully develop the lessons learned by program directors, faculty, and staff working with the identified programs (Stake, 2006, p. 40). Consistent with Yin (2009) the research questions for this study were developed through a thorough review of literature, narrowing my “interest to a key topic” and then examining how these studies either answered their previously defined research questions or if additional or different questions could have led to more specific information about the development and

implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (p. 27).

The central question guiding this qualitative, multiple case study was:

What lessons have program directors, faculty, and staff learned through the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

The following sub-questions led to further understanding of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. The sub-questions included:

1. What successes do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?
2. What challenges do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing a transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?
3. What factors are identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges by program directors, faculty, and staff in the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at a four-year post-secondary institution?

### **Sites**

For this study, non-probability, criterion sampling was used to identify three sites. To execute this sampling methodology, a review of the Think College database of transition and post-secondary educational programs for students with ID was reviewed to identify three



transition and post-secondary education programs utilizing similar program models. Three sites were selected based on their location and varying demographic data of the institution and surrounding community. I invited each of the three identified sites to participate in the study via email invitation addressed to the program directors, identified through the online faculty and staff directory of the institution. The invitation included information about me, the purpose of the study, summary of research design, and outline of participant expectations, as they related to data collection strategies.

The use of three sites allowed for literal replication, noting the likelihood that the three cases would yield comparable results (Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). Maximum variation was assumed, given the differentiation among each site's surrounding communities (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) recommends the use of 4 to 10 cases in multiple case study research, whereas Stake (2009) explained that "a few cases (2 or 3) would be literal replications, whereas a few other cases (4-6) might be designed to pursue two different patterns of theoretical replications" (p. 54). For this study, three transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, located on four-year post-secondary campuses were examined. The examination of these three sites allowed for literal replication of the study. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the privacy of the identified institutions, program directors, faculty, and staff, and their corresponding populations.

### **Site One**

The setting of site one is in the southeast US. The institution operates its transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, through their College of Education and Human Development. The program follows a *Learning into Future Environments* (LIFE) framework, offering a two-year basic program incorporating functional academics, independent

living, employability, and recreation and wellbeing components. In addition, they provide a two-year advanced program emphasizing employment, community integration, and independent living requiring reduced supports. The program is led by a Director, reporting to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Development. The institution's overall enrollment for the 2015-2016 academic year is 33,925. The LIFE program has 54 students currently enrolled. A residential program is available, but not required. Financial aid is currently available for participating students through Federal Pell Grant and institutional grants. Federal Pell grants, institutional grants and funding through Vocational Rehabilitation may be used for tuition. Current tuition and fees for the residential program is approximately \$20,575 per semester. If eligible, students may receive funding through the federal Pell grant equaling up to \$5,775 annually, which equates to approximately 14% of tuition and fees. Other funding varies and is subject to eligibility.

The setting of site one is positioned in an urban environment with a reported population in 2014 of 24,483. The reported median age of residents was 40.0 in comparison to the statewide median age of 38.2. The estimated median household income in 2016 was reported at \$107,156 in comparison to the statewide median household income of \$68,114. The median residential value in 2016 was \$518,329 (City Data, n.d.).

### **Site Two**

The setting of site two is in the southeast US. The institution operates its transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID through their School of Education. The program follows a *Learning is for Everyone* (LIFE) framework, offering a two-year basic program incorporating functional academics, independent living, employability, recreation, and wellbeing components. In addition, they provide a two-year advanced program emphasizing

employment, community integration, and independent living requiring reduced supports. A residential program is offered, but not required. The program is led by the Program Coordinator, whom reports to the Program Director under the leadership of the College of Education. The institution's overall enrollment in 2015 was 21,857 students. The LIFE program has 37 students currently enrolled. Federal Pell grants, institutional grants and funding through Vocational Rehabilitation may be used for tuition. Current tuition and fees for years one and two of the programs is approximately \$18,376 per semester. If eligible, students may receive funding through the federal Pell grant equaling up to \$5,550 annually, which equates to approximately 15% of tuition and fees. Other funding varies and is subject to eligibility.

The setting of site two is positioned in a variation of rural and suburban environments with a reported population in 2014 of 15,072. The reported median age of residents was 23.4 in comparison to the statewide median age of 39.1. The estimated median household income in 2016 was reported at \$39,401 in comparison to the statewide median household income of \$49,501. The median residential value in 2016 was \$226,279 (City Data, n.d.).

### **Site Three**

The setting of case three is in the southeast US. The institution operates its transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID through their School of Education. The program follows an *Individualized Developmental Educational Approach to Learning (IDEAL)* framework, offering a two-year basic program incorporating educational opportunities, work place training, and independence. In addition, they are in the process of implementing an additional junior year program emphasizing employment, community integration, and independent living, requiring fewer daily supports. A residential program is offered, but not required. The program is led by the Program Director, whom reports to the Faculty Advisor,

under the leadership of the College of Education. The institution's overall enrollment in 2017 was 4,642 students. The institution's IDEAL program enrolls approximately 16 students each year. State scholarships may be used for tuition. The program also offers students and their families a payment plan to assist with tuition. Current tuition and fees for years one and two of the program is approximately \$7,500 per semester.

The setting of site three is positioned in a variation of rural and suburban environments with a reported population in 2016 of 660,393. The reported median age of residents was 34.0 in comparison to the statewide median age of 38.6. The estimated median household income in 2016 was reported at \$54,310 in comparison to the statewide median household income of \$44,163. The median residential value in 2013 was \$210,600 (City Data, n.d.).

### **Participants**

With the assistance of program leadership, participants were selected from among each site and included program directors, faculty, and staff who have firsthand knowledge of the development and implantation of the transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID (see Table 1). There were variations in position titles among the identified sites and to ensure the selection of appropriate faculty and staff participants, individual job descriptions were utilized in the selection. A minimum of three participants were identified at each site to allow for triangulation and literal replication of findings. Additional participants involved in the program's development and implementation were selected from among program faculty and staff, as needed, until themes were saturated within and across each case (Yin, 2009). A total of 12 participants were selected and participated in the study. Site one included four participants, site two included three participants, and site three included five participants. Prior to their participation, each participant was given information about the purpose of the study and

agreed to participate.

Table 1

*Description of Participant Sample*

<b>Site</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Graduate Credentials</b>
<b>Site One</b>	Debi	Program Director	Female	White	PhD in Special Education
	Matt	Residential Coordinator	Male	African American	Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling
	Alan	Employment Coordinator	Male	White	Master's Degree in Special Education
	Pam	Academic Research Coordinator	Female	White	Master's Degree in Special Education
<b>Site Two</b>	Donna	Program Coordinator	Female	White	Master's Degree in Special Education
	Sharon	Administrative Assistant	Female	White	Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy
	Mary	Instructor	Female	White	Bachelor's Degree in Special Education
<b>Site Three</b>	Nancy	Faculty Advisor	Female	White	Doctorate Degree in Special Education
	Amelia	Program Manager On-Campus Job Development	Female	White	Master's Degree in Special Education
	Heather	Assistant Program Director	Female	White	Master's Degree in Educational Leadership
	Chris	Job Coach	Male	White	Bachelor's Degree in Psychology
	Tina	Job Developer	Female	White	Bachelor's Degree in Entrepreneurship and Management

### **Procedures**

Prior to the start of the study, submission of all necessary information was provided to gain conditional Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Liberty University, pending

site approvals. I contacted leadership from among each of the three identified sites and requested their participation in the study. These three sites were identified from among the ThinkCollege.org database of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and selected, because of their programs location and varying demographic data of the institution and their surrounding communities. Site three required that the study be approved through their institution's Institutional Review Board, prior to their commitment to participate in the study. Upon review, site three's Institutional Review Board granted approval (see Appendix G for Site three IRB approval).

Site one, site two, and site three formally agreed to participate in the study and full IRB approval from Liberty University was obtained (see Appendix H for Liberty IRB approval). I scheduled site visits at each of the three sites. Prior to the visit, I forwarded a short questionnaire to be completed by all program faculty and staff employed with each program. On-site visits involved interviews with the identified participants, observations of administrative and program components, and collection of relevant documents for review. Focused interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and later transcribed by a professional transcription service. I reviewed transcriptions for accuracy by comparing to recordings. I wrote detailed notes from each interview, as well as observations throughout the visits. In addition, observations were documented on a prescribed observation sheet, focused on identifying any successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges. After each visit, I obtained program related documents and publicly available information found online for review. These included admission procedures, program policies, procedures, and current practices. Data collected from interviews, observations, and program documents were then used to develop clarifying questions for site specific focus groups, allowing for member checking and

triangulation of the data.

### **The Researcher's Role**

As the human instrument (Creswell, 2013) in this study, I acknowledged my previous experiences with transition planning for students with ID and the available post-secondary trajectories often experienced by them. As a high school, special education teacher, I was responsible for transition planning; however, I received little training on the topic. I found myself completing transition plans using our districtwide software and simply choosing trajectories, goals, and steps from a drop-down box, instead of assessing student's strengths, needs, and post-secondary goals. As an educational consultant, I sought after whatever resources I could find to ensure that my students had what I thought they needed to be successful in the present. The problem was that these resources primarily led to immediate success, as opposed to a lifetime of success. In my current position, I oversee the delivery of disability services for a post-secondary institution. In this role, I have had the opportunity to look back on my previous experiences in transition planning and see the mistakes I made. My goal was student success, which often included over accommodating students. Every day, I see students who are struggling in their courses, simply because they were over accommodated in the K-12 environment and ill-equipped for life after high school. To differentiate these experiences and address potential researcher bias, I immersed myself with the data acquired, consistent with my epistemological assumption that by working closely with the participants in the field, I would experience participant's knowledge of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs at their institutions. In addition, my axiological assumption that the challenges faced by post-secondary institutions heavily result from misconceptions held by higher education leadership is addressed through the presentation of the participants and my

own bias throughout the study (Creswell, 2013). These assumptions are imbedded into the social constructivist and pragmatic paradigms, ensuring the potential to address social constructs evident in the study, as well as the lessons learned through the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Creswell, 2013).

### **Data Collection**

For this qualitative multiple case study, data collection included multiple techniques to allow for triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2013). These techniques included interviews, observations, document reviews, surveys, archival records, and a site-specific focus group. Each method of data collection was used to compliment the others, using multiple sources (Yin, 2009). Data collection continued until thematic saturation was obtained (Gall et al., 2007). Naturalistic generalizations were drawn detailing the lessons learned and recommendations for the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs, firmly rooted in the data.

### **Surveys/Questionnaires**

Demographic surveys were collected using Survey Monkey online from program faculty and staff, including those who participated in face-to-face interviews. This was done prior to interviews to allow for follow up as needed, during scheduled interviews. Information obtained in the survey included personal demographics, education, years of service or employment within a post-secondary education program, and participation in the developmental and implementation processes.

Table 2

*Standardized Demographic Survey Questions Related to Participant Background and Experience*

<b>Questions</b>
------------------



1. How long have you been working, or did you work with your institution's transition and post-secondary education program?
2. What is/was your institutional title?
3. What are/were your current duties associated with your title?
4. What are/were the specific qualifications associated with your position?
5. Do/did you feel adequately prepared for this position?
6. What is your highest level of education?
7. Do/did you have any previous experience working with a transition and post-secondary education program for students with intellectual disabilities? If so, in what capacity?
8. What do/did you believe to be the greatest challenges associated with effectively performing your job duties?
9. What do/did you see as the greatest challenges impacting your transition and post-secondary education program?
10. What do/did you see as the greatest successes experienced by your transition and post-secondary education program?

## Interviews

During site visits, focused interviews (Yin, 2009) were conducted face to face with program directors, faculty, and staff with firsthand knowledge of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. All participants were interviewed using the same semi-structured, open-ended questions to allow for unencumbered and fluid responses from the participants (Yin, 2009) (see Table 3). Questions were grounded in literature on the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, provided an avenue to identify commonalities within and across sites, and led to recommendations in the development and implementation of new programs across the US.

Table 3

*Semi-structured Open-ended Interview Questions for Program Directors, Faculty and Staff*

<b>Questions</b>
<b>Questions built rapport with the participant and detailed the individual's background</b>

**and exposure to the development of their institutions transition and post-secondary education program.**

1. What interested you in pursuing a career in transition and post-secondary education programs?
2. Please describe your background and how your education and previous positions have prepared you for your current role in a transition and post-secondary education program.
3. Please describe the process through which you were selected for your current position, to include the actual stage of development that the program was in at that time.

**Questions focused on the initial steps of program development, to include initial steps in developing a program, institutional faculty and staff involved, how these individuals were selected, and the culmination of the program proposal design (Hafner et al., 2011).**

4. Please describe in detail your knowledge of the initial steps in developing your institution's transition and post-secondary education program.
5. Please describe the institutional faculty and staff who were involved in the development of the program.
6. Please describe how these faculty and staff were selected to be part of the development team.
7. Please describe the proposal process and how the various team members contributed to the program proposal.

**Questions sought to draw out information on the development of program policies and program participants.**

8. Please describe how you developed operating policies and procedures for the program and how these policies and procedures evolved.

9. Please describe the methodology used in determining program participants.

**Questions 10 through 12 sought to bring out detailed explanations of the identified challenges and successes during the development stage and how their program proposal evolved over time (Plotner & Marshall, 2015).**

10. Please describe the initial barriers or challenges in creating the program development team and how these were systematically addressed during the development stage.

11. Please describe the successes you experienced during the development phase of the program and what you feel contributed to these successes.

12. Please describe in detail how your institution's original proposal evolved from the proposal through the development phase and what you feel led to the need for change.

**Questions 13 through 16 addressed the transition from program development and program implementation, outlining the participants involved, challenges faced, successes experienced, and the identified mitigating factors recognized to address challenged in the implementation phase (Plotner & Marshall, 2015).**

13. Please describe the transition from program development to implementation.

14. Please describe specific challenges you faced in the implementation phase and how these challenges presented themselves. What mitigating responses did you take in addressing these challenges?

15. Please describe the components of the implementation phase that you felt were

executed successfully and detail the specific factors that you feel led to this success.

16. Please describe the institutional faculty and staff who were involved in the implementation of the program and how these participants varied from those involved in the development phase.

**Questions 17 sought to understand the responses of the overall campus community at the development of the program on campus (Mosoff et al., 2007).**

17. Please describe the overall, campus-wide response to your institution's implementation of the program. Did you receive any negative feedback, and if so, how did you respond?

**Questions 18 through 20 were delivered in a reflective tone to revisit what the interview participant felt were the most challenging aspects of program implementation and lessons learned (Stake, 2006).**

18. Please describe what you feel to be the most challenging part in the development and implementation of your institution's program.
19. Please describe what recommendations you would provide to an institution that may be considering a transition and post-secondary education program on their campus.
20. Looking back, what do you feel would be the three most important things that an institution could do to ensure they develop and implement their program successfully?

Questions one through three provided background information that when compared to

other programs, provided institutions with foundational guidelines when seeking out individuals to serve on the development and implementation teams. Theoretically, questions four through 16 provided information and explanation of the specific processes involved in the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, as well as the essence of the process, consistent with program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997). Question 17 addressed the perspectives of the campus community regarding the development and implementation of the program (Griffin et al., 2012; Mock & Love, 2012). Questions 8 through 20 provided information related to the inclusive practices associated with the program, consistent with disability theory (Mertens, 2009) and provided pragmatic details, leading to recommendations in the future development of transition and post-secondary education programs.

Active listening and unbiased guiding questions were utilized to remain engaged with the interview and to ensure clarity and understanding with difficult concepts. Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by professional transcriptionist.

### **Observations**

A minimum of three unscheduled observations of student courses, activities, person-centered planning meetings, and staff meetings were conducted at each site. I was a non-participant observer, utilizing a formal observation protocol, developed and employed for comparison of observations among and between participant sites (see Appendix I for Site observation form). In addition, I maintained a research journal for future reference, as needed, detailing significant findings and reactions to observations. These recordings were reflective in nature, to include nuances identified, relating to the environment, participants, the purpose of the event, and whether the purpose was fulfilled. This information was used to compliment the more

descriptive observations recorded in the observation protocol.

### **Document Review**

Site specific documents were collected from each site or downloaded from publicly available web sites, as available, to include program proposals, program policies, application procedures, funding sources, student agreements, program marketing materials, memorandums of understanding between site on-campus divisions and off-campus partnering entities that are currently providing services to students enrolled in the post-secondary educational programs, and available news media advertisements and articles (see Appendix J for List of reviewed documents and media). These documents were analyzed individually to determine how the specific artifacts supported the identified successes, challenges, and mitigating factors to ensure program success and to contribute to a thick description of each case (Creswell, 2013). Site two provided limited information, citing the information as proprietary.

### **Focus Group**

To confirm and draw additional information about shared experiences among programs, I conducted a focus group with interview participants using conference call technology. The focus groups were held after the completion of all surveys, interviews, observations, and document review and provided an avenue for discussion related to the identified successes, challenges, and mitigating factors experienced by all programs. The focus group allowed the Program Directors, faculty, and staff among each site to discuss and relate shared experiences. Focus group questions addressed the successes, challenges, and the steps taken to mitigate the identified challenges, allowing programs to move forward to develop a successful program.

Table 4

*Open-ended Questions for Program Directors, Faculty and Staff*

## Questions

**Questions to clarify the identified success, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges. Questions were adapted to include the specific successes, challenges, mitigating factors, and recommendations cited in the individual case analysis.**

1. Based on information gleaned from the interviews, observations, and document review, the following themes were identified as successes experienced by your program.
2. Based on information gleaned from the interviews, observations, and document review, the following themes were identified as challenges experienced by your program.
3. Based on information gleaned from the interviews, observations, and document review, the following themes were identified as factors to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges experienced by your program.
4. Based on information gleaned from the interviews, observations, and document review, the following lessons were identified to establish recommendations for the future development of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

## Data Analysis

For this study, data analysis involved both within-case and cross-case analysis to aid in documenting the successes, challenges, factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, and lessons learned through the development and implementation of transition and

post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institutions. Analysis included the generation of a description of each case, to include a summary of the development and implementation of the transition and post-secondary education programs, identified challenges, recognized successes, mitigating factors to overcome challenges, and the lessons learned (Creswell, 2013). Direct interpretation aided in examining each program thoroughly in chronology (Creswell, 2013). Categorical aggregation allowed for the identification of specific constructs, which were grouped into overall themes, resulting in greater understanding of each programs development and implementation (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). Within-case analysis was executed using ATLAS.ti software. Transcribed interviews, observations, journaling, and documents collected for the study were coded and then grouped together among identified themes. Focus groups were conducted using questions drawn from the identified themes among each site and aided in member checking to ensure researcher perceptions of data collected and conclusions drawn were consistent with participant responses (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). The use of multiple forms of data, collected from among varying participants at each site allowed for the creation of a description of each case, while cross-case thematic analysis assessed consistencies in the identification of similarities and differences among all three sites (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009).

Within case analysis was executed using the theoretical lens of program implementation theory and disability theory. This enabled me to remain focused on identifying pertinent information and glean needed information regarding the essence of the development and implementation phases of creating a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID, as well as identify mitigating factors to address the inclusionary practices of the programs. I identified relevant codes, consistent with theoretical significance and previous



review of literature. These codes were then group into themes grounded in program successes, challenges, mitigating factors, lessons learned, and recommendations. For example, once applied, codes predefined by program implementation theory and disability theory narrowed participant responses into relevant themes based on campus perceptions and peer acceptance of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and represented a program success. Likewise, the participation of students enrolled in transition and post-secondary education programs attending mainstream college courses were coded and grouped into themes associated with campus perceptions and program acceptance among institutional faculty. Each site expressed faculty perceptions as a challenge, although mitigated through awareness, training, and consistent programmatic support. By identifying relevant codes related to program successes, challenges, mitigating factors, lessons learned, and recommendations, codes were then grouped into themes that culminated into practical recommendations for the future development of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID.

Cross-case analysis was performed utilizing Stake's (2006) data analysis worksheets including worksheet 2 through worksheet 6. These worksheets allowed me to identify shared experiences among the programs identified successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, within the context of each case. Worksheet 2 provided a framework for the identified themes, garnered from the research questions and the theoretical framework that guided the study (see Appendix A for Worksheet2). Worksheet 3 was used to review each case to develop a summary of the cases, relevant themes cited in the case, uniqueness of the case, and specific case finding related to the program successes, challenges, mitigating factors, and lessons learned among program directors, faculty, and staff in the development and implementation of their transition and post-secondary education program (see

Appendix B for Worksheet 3). Once each case was assessed on Worksheet 3, Worksheet 4 provided an avenue to report the prominence of identified themes across cases, including campus perceptions, funding, on-campus supports, program planning, program components, and program staffing (see Appendix C for Worksheet 4). Upon completion of worksheet 2 through 4, case findings were documented on worksheet 5 and assessed in importance and relevance to each identified theme for the development of assertions. Lastly, worksheet 6 outlined the identified assertions recorded in chapter 4 and 5 of the study.

Naturalistic generalizations were developed and provided an avenue for articulating the recommendations and lessons learned through analysis of the study (Yin, 2009). Creswell (2013) explained that naturalistic generalizations are “generalizations that people can learn from the case, either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases” (p. 200). Stake (2006) described naturalistic generalizations as the expectation “that the multi-case report will be a guide to setting policy for a population of cases such as those studied” and that the assertions may be transferred from the cases within the study to others, as well.

### **Trustworthiness**

To address trustworthiness of the study, considerations addressed credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Credibility**

In quantitative study, credibility is used to denote the extent the researcher has gone to establish a causal relationship (Gall et al., 2007). Qualitative inquiry, on the other hand, does not seek to establish a causal relationship between variables. As such, internal validity addresses the believability of the study, as seen through the eyes of the participants and was addressed to ensure trustworthiness through several ways (Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006). To

begin, multiple forms of data were represented in the study including participant interviews, observations, survey questionnaires, focus groups, and document review, allowing for triangulation of data collected, as well as triangulation of cases, increasing the credibility of study findings. Interview questions were linked to the overall research questions identified for the study (Yin, 2009). Pattern matching identified similarities and differences among and across sites (Yin, 2009). Member checking confirmed accurate perceptions among all data collected. Triangulation of cases and of data collected was utilized to demonstrate credibility of the study (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009).

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

To address dependability of the study, akin to reliability in quantitative research, a detailed description of specific steps taken in data collection were documented in my research journal and maintained allowing for replication of the study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). By doing so, errors and any bias I may hold within the study was minimized (Yin, 2009).

Confirmability, addressed the concept of neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was extended using an audit trail specifically noting the research plan, including a statement of the study's problem, purpose, significance, research questions, design, role of researcher, sampling measures, participants, data collection and analysis, researcher documented research journal, and methods establishing trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009).

### **Transferability**

Lastly, transferability, the counterpart to generalizability in quantitative studies, was addressed using a "thick, rich description of the cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Analytical generalizations were established through the application of the program implementation theory and disability theory (Creswell, 2013; Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2009). Using three cases identified

within this multiple study, replication logic was established (Yin, 2009). Cases were selected from varying states with differing institutional and community demographical features, which increased transferability of findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To address any potential ethical issues that may have arose during the study, I obtained IRB approval through Liberty University and institutional IRB approval from site three, as required by the institution. Honest disclosure of the study's purposes and potential expectations was provided to potential sites and approval was obtained. Informed consents were obtained, as necessary, for participant interviews and observations of identified program courses, activities, and staff meetings. Informed consent from student participants under the age of 18, were not necessary, during the observations, as all participants were over the age of 18. Care was given to ensure that interviews and observations were not intrusive or disruptive to the site or their schedules. While analyzing data, it was imperative to ensure that results were accurate and that the privacy of the individuals and programs was protected. Settings and participants are identified throughout the study using pseudonyms for the names of the institutions, program directors, faculty, and any other participants involved. Integrity was maintained in the collection of data and throughout the process of reporting study findings, including clearly stated facts that are free from bias, plagiarism, and false conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Electronic artifacts and information collected and analyzed throughout the study were secured electronically, using password protection. Any physical artifacts or information was stored in a locked cabinet at my residence. Information gleaned from the study was shared with study participants and published to ensure easy accessibility to post-secondary institutions interested in developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Creswell,

2013).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and the factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. This study adds to the current body of research available on transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID and addresses a gap in literature by identifying the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the successful development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID through a multiple case study using a theoretical framework of program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009). Using multiple data collection measures and both within-case and cross-case data analysis, this study examined the pragmatic lessons learned by program directors, faculty, and staff in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution and allowed for the discovery of significant recommendations to aid in the future development of these programs.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

Negative post-secondary outcomes related to employability, life skills development, and independence among students identified with ID have been documented in literature (Morgan, 2014; Rogan, Updike, Chesterfield, & Savage, 2014; Walker, 2014). Participation in transition and post-secondary education programs have been linked to increases in gainful employment (Grigal, Migliore, & Hart, 2014; Rogan et al., 2014; Smith & Benito, 2013; Walker, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2014) increased life skills development (Folk et al., 2012; Rogan et al., 2014; Smith, & Benito, 2013; Thoma et al., 2012), and increased student independence (Folk et al., 2012; Rogan et al., 2014; Thoma et al., 2012; Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). The purpose of this multiple case study was to thoroughly examine the challenges and successes experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs. To do this, I posed the following central question.

What lessons have program directors, faculty, and staff learned through the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

To glean a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, the following sub-questions, derived from the central question, were posed.

1. What successes do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

2. What challenges do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?
3. What factors are identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges by program directors, faculty, and staff in the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities at a four-year post-secondary institution?

In this chapter, I discuss the cases and participants involved in the study, the identified themes, responses to the research questions, and a summary of the chapter.

### **Participants**

By utilizing the Think College website, I identified six potential transition and post-secondary education programs in the southeast United States. I selected three sites from the six and sought their participation. Of these, two sites responded positively and committed to participating in the study. The third potential site responded positively to participation initially; however, they later declined participation, due to changes being made within their program. I then began the search for and obtained a commitment of participation from a third site. Data collection among my three sites included a survey, interviews of program directors, faculty and staff, observations, document analysis, and a focus group with participants involved in the interviews, allowing for triangulation of the data. In this chapter, I provide a description of each site, allowing for a deep understanding of the site (Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2009). Lastly, I will synthesize my findings within and across cases.

#### **Site One**

Site one is a R1 public research university, located in Virginia. The university houses a

four-year transition and post-secondary education program, serving students between the ages of 18 and 23, who have been identified with an intellectual or developmental disability. Housed within the university's College of Education and Human Development, the program enrolls 54 students, with approximately 100 support staff, including 14 full time staff, 1 part-time counselor, and volunteers from the university's student population. The program's director (Debi) remains its longest serving staff member, having worked for the program since its inception. Over time, as the number of students enrolled has increased, the program has had to hire additional employees to staff the various components of the program. Program components include academics, exploration, residential housing, employment, behavioral and mental health, and community integration. The program represents a hybrid or mixed program model, as students drive their participation in the program through person-centered-planning and students enrolled in the program are integrated into credit courses through auditing and campus life.

During an early morning site visit in January 2018, the Assistant Director introduced staff and began to describe the program, its components, the students enrolled, and the program's relationship with other key areas of the institution, all while greeting students as they arrived for the start of their day. The Assistant Director, Debi, and other administrative staff greeted students and began to engage in dialog with each student as they entered the suite of offices. Staff could immediately recall each student's schedule, their previous weekend's activities, and address any special needs that arose. The dialog was professional, and each staff member acknowledged each student, individually, and gave the impression that the program was not only an educational program, but a family. For freshman and sophomore, Monday mornings were filled with academic courses, such as geometry, banking, personal finance, and radio workshop. Juniors and seniors spent their day in employment internships on Capitol Hill and other locations



on and off campus. It was then a smiling student entered the suite and was introduced as one of the university's cheerleaders. The pride felt by the staff was evident. The assistant director noted that the student officially made the team.

Soon after entering the office, the assistant director and Debi addressed a situation that occurred over the weekend with an alumnus of the program. The assistant director noted that many of the students who complete the program remained in the local area, because they have become so integrated within it through their participation in internships, employment, and community integration. It was clear that all of the staff were concerned for the wellbeing of the alumnus but sought balance between institutional policy and ethical obligation to inform the alumnus's parent. The institution's transition and post-secondary education program began under the research arm of the university, more recently, the program was moved under the university's College of Education and Human Development, and with that move came differences in how program staff were to respond to circumstances like this, as well as other challenges. Later in an interview with Debi, she described the success of being recognized as an educational program on campus, but that it come with challenges, including a major reduction in the programs funding and a lack of understanding of the program, among the new administration. The students enrolled in the transition and post-secondary education program have specialized needs that most of their non-disabled peers do not, as well as increased parental involvement. In addition, program staff are not only the student's teachers, but they are their surrogate parent while living away from home. Their work infiltrates all aspects of the program staff's lives. This was reiterated by the residential coordinator, who had been called over the weekend over what he referred to as "roommate drama".

Debi then prepared for an applicant interview with a young lady seeking acceptance to

the program. Sitting around a small table, Debi presented the applicant with various objects and questioned her about what the things that she could see, do, and think. The applicant remained engaged. Debi then asked the applicant questions to ascertain the applicant's present levels in basic academic skills, employability skills, and independent living skills. Debi then led the applicant in writing a paragraph about why she wished to be accepted in the program. The applicant worked diligently. Lastly, the applicant was given a sheet of math problems and asked to solve them at her own pace. She asked if she could use a calculator and once she received the approval, she began to work. Typing numbers into the calculator with both hands, it was clear that she was somewhat nervous, but she continued to work. Throughout the interview, Debi provided encouragement and utilized predefined prompts.

At the conclusion of the interview the applicant was introduced to a currently enrolled student and provided a schedule for the day, and off she went. For the remainder of the day, the applicant shadowed a currently enrolled student so that the program administration could see how the student would respond to the programs components and the student would have a better understanding of what being in the program would look like on a typical day. Debi explained that they had not always partnered applicants with an enrolled student, but they found that by adding this task to the admission process that they have improved their ability to determine if the student is a good fit for the program and that the program is a good fit for the student.

By this time, students transitioned to lunch, followed by lunch club. The assistant director explained that students typically like to eat in the student center and led the way. The student center was large and packed with students, who were getting lunch at one of the many vendors. Quickly one of the students noticed the assistant director and Debi walking by and said hello. There were two tables positioned close together and students enrolled in the program were

sitting together eating and talking. In many ways, blending into a completely inclusive environment.

Student's schedules were created for each semester by grade. For example, after lunch club, seniors attend senior seminar, juniors attend employment, sophomores attend academic classes, and freshman attend a course in Human Sexuality and relationship fundamentals. Although somewhat controversial, program staff observed the need to educate students about sexuality, personal hygiene, and navigating relationships. The assistant director explained that in most cases, students enrolled in the program were not familiar with these topics and when questioned, parents had admitted that they really didn't know how to address these topics with their children considering their disabilities. The assistant director further explained that the class curriculum was written and is being researched to determine the impact of the course on the students understanding and ability to successfully navigate these topics.

At 3:00 p.m., all freshman and sophomore students met for Student Mentor Academic Resource Time (S.M.A.R.T.), facilitated by the Community Integration Coordinator, S.M.A.R.T. offers students the opportunity to hear and make announcements about what is going on around campus. Students were very engaged and participated in announcements. At the completion of announcements, students chose to get assistance in the academic room or chose to spend this time in the social room. The program provided students with the opportunity to audit college level credit courses and self-contained program courses. The academic room provided students with a space to work on any homework or assignments for their classes, with the assistance of program staff and volunteers. The room was full, with students working on laptops and staff walking from student to student. The social room was intended for students who had completed their academic work and would like to socialize with other students in the program. While

observing these classes, a student approached and once introduced, she began talking about her day. She was warm, inviting, and quite funny. She talked about her day and much like her non-disabled peers, she was not the least bit excited about homework. Students continued moving from one room to the other, based on their need for academic assistance and at 4:00 pm, they were dismissed. At 5:00 pm students had completed their academic day and were able to return to their dorm or home for the evening.

### **Site Two**

Site two is a R1 public research university, located in South Carolina. The university houses a four-year transition and post-secondary education program, serving students between the ages of 18 and 23, who have been identified with an intellectual or developmental disability. Housed within the university's College of Education, the program seeks to enroll 40 students by 2020, with approximately 100 support staff, including 8 full time staff, 1 part-time counselor, and volunteers from the university's student population. Site two represented a hybrid or mixed model whereas students enrolled in the program drove their educational experience through person-centered-planning, participation in recreational credit courses, and were fully integrated into the community and campus life.

On a Wednesday morning in February 2018 the campus was swarming with students walking to and from class. A student enrolled in the university's transition and post-secondary education program stepped into the elevator, headed to the second floor. Her first words were "you look tired", followed by "I'm sorry". Her sweet voice and expression of concern framed the remainder of the day. The halls of the building were busy with students walking up and down the hallways to and from their classes. From the waiting area, you could see students enrolled in the program wonder to and from their classes, while stopping to say hi to a passing

student. The main hall housed staff offices and classrooms where students enrolled in the program walked the hall with students regularly enrolled at the university. Program staff greeted students as they passed by, asking about their day and their next class or activity. At the end of the hall, several of the program staff were meeting with community members who were interested in employing students enrolled in or completing the program. Later during an interview with the program's coordinator, she spoke about the importance of community partners in meeting the programs employment goals for students. She went on to speak of the strong partnerships that have been built on and off campus that have instigated opportunities for students to meet the primary goals of the program, employability and independent living. This was reiterated in an interview with a program teacher, who stressed the importance of "building relationships with people who can make things happen".

Later in the day, I heard program teachers talking about a flu epidemic hitting residential housing and as a result, several students were sick and in need of medical care. Program staff worked to notify parents, provided care for the students who were ill, and ensured that the students received any needed medical attention. At the same time, program teachers and staff worked with students who had not been affected, to clean and sanitize their apartment in effort to prevent more illness. This provided program teachers and staff the opportunity to discuss germs, cleaning, and personal hygiene to prevent illness. Recognizing that every moment, was a teaching moment for students.

One student whose family resided out of state had tested positive for the flu and once notified of his illness, his parents responded by purchasing a plane ticket for the student to return home. Although technically, the student could remain on campus, he was headed to the airport, with the assistance of program staff to catch his plane. It was clear that the program staff did not

only view themselves as teachers or support staff, but as family. They accepted responsibility for the care of their students beyond skill building and provided personal care to students. Later, during an observation in the classroom setting, I observed as program teachers and employment staff worked assisted students with creating and editing a resume.

During this time, a program teacher received a call that her own child was sick. Instead of immediately leaving work, she paused to ensure that the students she worked with were cared for and prepared for the remainder of their day. One of the students, aware of the call, quickly replied “we got this, take care of your child”. There was no doubt that her child was and is of the utmost importance, but she accepted that her students were very much her responsibility, as well, and lovingly provided guidance to her students before leaving. I was taken aback at her dedication and commitment to fulfilling her role in the program and her students, it is apparent that their jobs infiltrated their lives and they were very much accepting of it. This was just one example of the care shown to students enrolled in the program, these types of observations appeared throughout my visit. Program staff admitted to accepting phone calls at all hours of the day and night, as well as their willingness to return to campus after hours, in the event of an emergency or recognized need. Whether it was in an academic or social skill setting, during internships, or campus wide activities, program teachers and staff worked alongside each student daily; and their commitment to their students and the program were evident and commendable.

The next morning, program staff gathered in Donna’s office in preparation of their weekly family call. During her interview, I listened as the program’s coordinator discussed the importance of the student’s families, she explained her connection to a student, identified with a disability, whom she was very familiar with, who she would pick up from school and provide care for in the afternoons. She explained this experience provided her with some insight on what

families of her student's face. She noted that "I am not in your shoes and I can try to empathize with you, but I will never truly understand what you're going through, but I have an idea". This desire to connect and involve parents in the program was evident and was expressed during interviews and observations throughout the visit.

A few minutes before the call, staff chatted and talked about the week's activities and what was planned for the remainder of the week. They discussed the students who had fallen ill and which of the students remained on campus, and which students needed to be followed closely due to being sick. Then it was time for families to call in. During the call, staff took turns providing updates on the previous week of class and the coming days. These updates included specific activities, related to budgeting, academic skills, and social skills development. The sophomore teacher provided information about students learning to set goals during their disability awareness course. The remaining teachers also explained what had taken place both in and out of the classroom, which specific skills were addressed, and some of the student's responses to the activities. As staff talked about cooking lessons, they beamed with pride, when detailing the students' performance.

Teachers and program staff informed the parents on the call that many students in the program were sick and that some had been diagnosed with the flu. They indicated that they had been working with the students who remained on campus to clean and sanitize their apartments, hopefully to prevent the spread of germs and to use the experience as a teaching moment. Parents were given the opportunity to ask questions about their student and the activities that were discussed. Although there were not many questions, some parents did ask about upcoming events on campus. It was clear that this call had become part of their normal routine and provided parents with the opportunity to be part of their child's educational experience, while not

impeding the programs primary goals of employment and independence.

Later in the day, senior students congregated in the classroom for advising. Advising provided an avenue for senior students to meet with their teacher to review their calendar, weekly budget, answer emails, discuss mentor meetings, and assess performance in their leisure class. Students participated in Blackboard modules that included budget sheets. They reviewed their bank accounts, paid required bills, and discussed any overages. For example, one student exceeded his budgeted weekly amount. He was overdrawn. The teacher talked with the student about exceeding his account and which choices he had made that led to the overage. Several times, the teacher would said “let’s try this again”, when adding expenditures. Again, the student was overdrawn. Students worked diligently answering emails, adding receipts, and updating their calendars, each at their own pace. The teacher provided prompting and assistance when needed and it varied from student to student. Some students were able to perform calculations on their own using the calculator or their cellphones, while others needed added guidance from the teacher.

After multiple attempts to correct the overage, the student explained to the teacher that he had overspent. The student stated that it was from “too much using debit card” and when asked by the teacher what he could do to solve the problem, he stated “maybe get one sweet a week”. He and the teacher talked about his expenditures and identified that he was spending too much money at work. The student works at Publix supermarkets and had developed a habit of purchasing a snack every day that he went to work. The teacher explained that the “little things add up” and that “every time you work, you don’t have to buy something”.

As class ended and the students began to leave the room, the teacher explained that each student enrolled in the program had access to a Bank of America account through the university



and that it provided them the opportunity to learn how to budget their money and pay bills independently. In addition, she explained that senior advising provided students with the opportunity to fill in upcoming activities on their calendar and talk about what had had done the week prior and what activities were coming up. She noted that they assist the students with scheduled activities and they encouraged students to participate in campus wide activities, noting that navigating scheduling and filling time was often a struggle for students. It was important to note that throughout the discussion about the course, the teacher was visibly excited about serving the students and took much pride in her instruction and the success of each student.

### **Site Three**

Case three is a private university, located in Tennessee. The university houses a two-year transition and post-secondary education program, serving students between the “ages of 18 and 26 who have a documented intellectual or developmental disability (ID/DD) (██████████). The program was working to pilot their program to include a third-year for students interested in remaining enrolled as juniors. Housed within the university’s College of Education, the program currently enrolls 16 students, with approximately 100 support staff, including 14 full time staff, 1 part-time counselor, and volunteers from across the university’s student population. Case three represented a hybrid or mixed program model, providing students with person-centered-planning, participation in credit courses through auditing, and were integrated into campus life.

On a cold and rainy Monday morning I arrived on campus and students were walking to and from classes. I met with the faculty advisor of the program to introduce myself and to talk about the days ahead. The faculty advisor was open and her passion for students and the program was immediately evident. As she talked about the program, its mission, and the students they served,

she beamed with pride. She noted that the program currently enrolled 16 students and of those, 90% were identified with an intellectual disability, consistent with the TPSID grant. Noting that eight of the students resided on campus and the remaining were commuters. In addition, she explained that the programs number one goal was competitive employment, not just any job, but a job in the field that they have interest and skills in. She recalled individual stories about each student, each staff member, and the connections they had made across campus. She detailed the various aspects of the program, beginning from when the program was initially started and describing the specific roles of each staff. We then toured the campus, where she pointed out student housing on campus, the student center, classrooms, and finally the library.

While in the library, we observed two rows of computer stations, one on the left and one on the right. Students worked diligently, and it was not immediately apparent if the students were enrolled in the IDEAL program or not. I was then introduced to most of the students working, most, because students that were enrolled in the program were immersed among student mentors, regularly enrolled at the institution. The students enrolled in the program were working in pairs, talking, typing, and then talking some more. The pairs consisted of an IDEAL student and a student mentor. The student mentors were there to assist the students by facilitating discussion about the student's individual program goals, their grades, upcoming assignments, and role plays to assist the student with engaging in socially appropriate interactions.

One student was excited to update the faculty advisor on how he was doing. He explained that he wanted to be a broadcaster and that he was taking communication classes, which the faculty advisor noted were credit classes, and that he was working with a professional broadcaster to learn more about it. The faculty advisor explained that the student had made such a good impression that the professors in the communication department requested and

encouraged him to take their classes. The student was excited to say that he planned to intern at the state's capital building in the fall. As we passed each student, the faculty advisor was aware of each student, their goals, their strengths, and the areas they were continuing to grow in. The personal connections among the students and the program's leader were evident.

In addition, it is important to note the role of the student or peer mentor working with students enrolled in the program. The faculty advisors proudly noted that the program has recruited approximately 100 peer mentors from across campus. The importance of these mentors could not have been clear. The peer mentors began each conversation with the students, enrolled in the program, by asking them to state their program goals. While working with the student, or even when socializing the student, the peer mentors made it a point to verbalize the student's goals to prompt them and remind them of their goals. For example, if the student's goal was to remain on task, if the student began to get off task, the peer mentor would ask the student to repeat their goals and connect the appropriate goal to the student's behavior. It was apparent that the peer mentors had been well trained and were committed to their involvement with the program.

After advising, the students headed for the student center for lunch and so did I. I sat a table close to the students, who congregated around a few tables, their peer mentors were there too, talking and eating lunch with them. This environment was a fully inclusive environment and if one was not aware of the students enrolled in the program, it would have been difficult for them to identify the program's students from the institution's regularly enrolled students. In the student center, the students enrolled in the program, appeared confident and comfortable in the loud and busy environment. After finishing lunch, I had the opportunity to talk with the program's director before the students arrived for class. She explained that students were very

familiar with the campus and that typically during the first two weeks of classes, program staff walked with the students to assist them in finding their way around campus. She indicated that this prompting was then faded to empower independence among the students.

I then had the opportunity to meet the residential coordinator for the program. He explained that students have been living in residential housing for about 18 months and that next year, they anticipated more students living in residential housing, which meant they were going to have two residential assistants to support the male residents and two to support the female residents. He noted that the most significant need among the students residing on campus, was assistance in determining how to fill their extra time, making positive social decisions, and ensuring the student's safety. He noted that some of the challenges in housing students on campus were addressing people's perceptions of the student's needs, establishing preventative measures for the student's safety and wellbeing, and addressing what he referred to as small fires, that come up from time to time. To address these challenges, he recommended that programs start with a small population of students residing on campus and ensure that needed supports were identified and provided, prior to increasing the number of on campus program residents.

Year one students filled a small program classroom that was also used for regular credit courses and had begun to engage in discussion with the teacher on budgeting. Students were intermingled with several peer mentors who assisted the students during assignments or activities. They also made attempts to reengage students if they began to appear to get off track. Students were given copies of various receipts and instructed to identify if the items on the receipts were items that were needed or if they were simply wanted. For the most part, students worked independently, but asked questions and were quizzed on the answers by either the

teacher or the peer mentors.

Most students were engaged; however, the class was right after lunch and some of the students had a hard time just keeping their eyes open, like most college students. One student became frustrated with identifying the objects. As he voiced his frustrations, another student verbally encouraged him. It was not long before the encourager, was the one needing encouragement. Each time, a student began to struggle another would verbally encourage them. The students and the way that they connected to one another provided a picture of collaborative learning and community that would be of benefit to all college students with or without an identified disability.

While the year one students discussed budgeting, next door, the year two students discussed and worked on their employability skills. As this class ended, the students remained in the classroom, but the teachers swapped classes and those students who had just completed their budgeting class began instruction in employability skills, while the others engaged in discussion about budgeting. The transition was relatively easy, since students needed only to remain seated. As discussion began, one student informed the teacher that he had “used his self-talk today” in response to reviewing his goals. The teacher responded enthusiastically with a high-five and stated, “Way to use your own skills”. Students engaged in discussion about the meaning of work ethic and were asked to come to the front of the class and to write one word that they felt represented good work ethic. As with any class, some of the students demonstrated significant effort in thinking of, and writing a response on the board, while others simply repeated what another students had already written. Responses ranged from “keep working with a good attitude”, “do your own work”, “doing your best”, to the other end of the spectrum, “I don’t know what this is”. As the teacher read the last response, many of the students giggled.

The teacher rounded out the discussion by reminding students about how to use self-talk to stay on task. She labeled them self-management “punches”, instead of using self-management strategies, and the students responded positively to it. Student’s then stated the strategies, one at a time and mimicked a boxing punch with their hands. They stated “monitor, reminder, talk, and reward”. The students were completely engaged, as the discussion turned from the strategies to discussion of receiving “Do Jo” points during their employment internship. Later the teacher explained the use of “Do Jo” points were a part of the program’s positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) program.

At the end of the day, parents and some of second year students congregated in one of the classrooms on campus. The program director presented a power point to inform parents and students about the opportunity of piloting a third year of the program. She indicated that they had attempted last year, but their participation in years one and two of the program, provided eligible students with the opportunity for employment, meeting the programs primary goal and they decided not to attend. Information was provided about off campus living options, provided by a community member who supported the program and what the program components would be. Parents asked questions related to housing and the level of program oversight, while living off campus. By the end of the meeting, there were parents and students who were excited and noted their desire to participate in the third-year pilot of the program.

## **Results**

The purpose of this study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. To begin, each case was analyzed individually to identify patterns presented from among the survey, interviews,

observations, and document analysis occurring at that site. Once each case was analyzed, across case analysis was completed to identify patterns across all cases, resulting in the development of themes (Stake, 2006). Visual representation of single case analysis and across case analysis is noted in appendices (see Appendix K for Visual representation of single case analysis). Using Stake's (2006) multiple case worksheets two through six, assertions were developed in response to each of the stated research questions and discussed below.

### **Research Question One**

Research question one examined the successes that program directors, faculty, and staff experienced when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution. Observed themes included partnerships and perceptions, on-campus supports, program components, and student outcomes.

**Partnerships and perceptions.** Participants from all three cases noted the importance of program planning prior to greeting students on campus and noted several specific components in program planning that they felt were executed successfully by their programs. These included building effective partnerships within the community and on-campus, program exposure, positive peer perceptions and support, and acquisition of on-campus housing. Building strong relationships and partnerships on-campus and within the community aided in meeting the needs of students and the program. These partnerships led to additional financial support through donations and recognition for the program, opportunities for students to audit institutional credit courses, as well as garnered internship and employment opportunities for students enrolled in the program. Mary from site two noted that "one of the big successes would be all of the community

partnerships that we've built" and went on to discuss how these partnerships have allowed their program to grow.

Positive peer perceptions were heavily praised among all three sites and it was noted that by understanding an institutions inclusionary practices, prior to the development of the program, provides additional opportunities for students enrolled in the program to build relationships with their non-disabled peers in the classroom and across campus, increasing program awareness. These relationships provide opportunities for social interaction and skill building for students enrolled in the program. Debi with site one explained that "I must say we're probably recognized more now because we also employ a lot of people, we are the largest student wage employer, beyond residential housing, and a lot of our students are recipients of financial aid and so we are a big player in helping support work study". In addition to paid employment opportunities, all three programs have established successful peer mentoring programs that involve hundreds of students across campus.

**On campus supports.** All three cases identified the development and availability of on- and off- campus supports as a success, noting that students enrolled in the program had access to the same types of supports as their peers who were regularly enrolled at the institution. These supports included those delivered through the institution's student affairs, student supports, and housing divisions, as well as access to emotional and medical services. Although the delivery of the supports varied among the three cases, access to needed supports were available to students enrolled in the program. When discussing academic supports on campus, Debi of site one explained that with some supports, "we can offer a better job of helping our students learn writing than our Writing Center. They can still access the writing center, but ultimately, they're



going learn more through us”. It is important to note that many of these supports have developed and evolved overtime and may not have be as readily available during its inception.

Although students initially accepted in the program did not live on campus, Heather of site three explained that it “was proposed in our grant” and went on to say that “we’ve seen that evolve from 2 students on campus to now we have, this upcoming school year, I think we’ll have 8”. Matt of site one described being hired by his institution as Housing Coordinator for the program. He explained that “when I came on board, I remember we still had a total number of about 50 students in the program”, he said that at that time, “we had maybe between 6 to 12 students who are actually on campus and the remaining students were off campus”. He went on to explain that between that time and now, the residential program has grown to an availability of 40 spaces. It is evident that overtime, residential housing has been successful among all three cases.

**Program components.** Program components were consistent among all three cases with minimal variations. All three programs included a self-contained academic component, employment component, and an independent living component. In addition, all three programs included intentional opportunities to engage across campus and in the community. Site one referred to this as community integration and it involved engaging students in activities and experiences to help them learn to navigate the campus and local community. The academic content was delivered using institutionally designed curriculum focused on improving the student’s academic skills, especially in reading and writing. It is important to note that all three institutions were committed to research-based teaching and utilized available research in curriculum design to develop their academic content. Debi of site one stated that “looking at what the research says and what we want to take it to the next step has been really important”.

Each of the three programs designed and delivered instruction related to gaining employability skills, placed students in internships, and assisted them in career exploration and job attainment. While observing a freshman program class at site two, involving the development of a resume, the teacher discussed how to create a good resume and then worked on one or in small group to assist the students in writing a good resume for themselves. The staff would review their resumes and give feedback, encouraging the students to use the example given to correct formatting, font, and mechanics. The students were very engaged and worked diligently to meet the teacher's expectations. Out of the classroom, students participate in various internships to prepare them for employment. Heather of site three explained how the program used internships to increase student's employment skills. She stated, "I think major successes are internships, especially off campus, how those have grown and I really think we're placing students in internships that fit well with their interests and some of those have turned into actual employment".

**Student outcomes.** Program evaluation and positive student outcomes were a theme across all three cases. Participants from each case cited the importance of evaluating the program to ensure that students were getting what they needed in all components of the program to empower them to succeed then and when they graduate. All three cases noted the importance of being flexible and willing to adapt, keeping the programs intended outcomes at the fore front always. Donna of site two explained that "we work together on seeing the problem, addressing it and its trial and error. It doesn't always work but I thought we had some good success with that so far".

Donna of site two explained that "we've had great success and I feel like part of that is what we see in our graduates. So, we keep up with our students upon graduation to know who's

living independently, whose employed, were they here two years or were they here four years, we're looking at the outcomes". She later explained that 86% of students completing two years were employed and 100% of those completing four years were employed.

Debi from site one discussed student outcomes stating that "we have a lot of different stakeholders including our students, including our staff, including our families and I would say it's knowing that there's a cyclical process and a continuous evaluation process has been really important in our implementation".

### **Research Question Two**

Research question two asked, about the challenges program directors, faculty, and staff experienced when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Challenges were consistent among all cases and included program planning, funding, staffing, student admission criteria, tuition, and parental expectations.

**Program planning.** Program planning was recognized as a challenge among all three cases. Planning specifically related to developing a sustainable program model to include funding, staffing, development of policies and procedures, program curriculum, student admission criteria, employment opportunities and internships for students. Beginning in the development process through current day, there were multiple references to the presence of constant change and the need for programs to adapt to meet the needs of the students and the program.

In discussing program planning, Sharon of site two noted the importance of working to ensure that the appropriate student supports were available, prior to having the students on campus. She explained that programs need to be prepared to meet the needs of student enrolled

from the beginning. Nancy from site three went a little further in describing the planning process and explained that every semester has resulted in last minute changes or additional needs that have to be met and that without the willingness to be flexible and adaptive, programs would struggle. She noted “that the first two weeks, on a college campus, change constantly, classes get cancelled, classes get moved, and peers change their schedule. And so there’s just a fluidity that occurs at the beginning of the semester that affected everything we do”. She went on to say that “no two semesters were the same”.

**Funding-sustainability.** All three cases cited funding as a significant challenge in both developing and sustaining their program. Given the variations in the length of time that the programs had been operating, current funding sources varied. Two programs were currently operating with funds driven by student tuition and/or donations, while the third was receiving grant funding to supplement student tuition.

Donna of site two explained that “when you are tuition-based, it’s hard. You’ve got to get funding and you’ve got to get donors”. Debi of site one went on to say that when funding for a program is tuition based, programs must think “how much is this really going to cost” and programs must be matter of fact about how many students they need to admit versus how many they can support, given the specific needs of the student population.

In addition, programs must consider that there is more to think about when considering funding. Nancy of site three explained that you do not only have to fund the supports needed for the students, but must also consider the space, staff, and operating costs. Having received a 1.6-million-dollar grant, the largest ever received by the institution at that time, she noted that she had some concern about funding for the program when the grant ended and transitioned to solely

a tuition-based program and that they were already working to identify alternative funding sources to sustain the program.

**Staffing.** Program staffing was said to be a challenge among all three programs to varying degrees. These challenges centered on the need for more staff, clearly defined staff roles, professional experience, communication, and staff turnover. Participants from each case noted that they either needed or desired additional staff but hiring of additional staff was limited due to funding. Donna of site two explained that they had been able to hire additional positions as the need has arose over time; however, other programs noted that the hiring of additional staff was not always possible, especially after the expiration of grant funding. In addition, one program noted that they were looking at a reduction in full time staff, due to budget constraints. As a result, the programs have become reliant on part-time, student, or volunteer personnel. Debi of site one explained that their program is “the largest student wage employer beyond residential housing” on campus.

Staff turnover was identified as a challenge with two of the programs. Nancy of site three explained that staff turnover was challenging, in that she was “constantly training staff” and that the program had “amazing staff”, but limitations in funding made it difficult to pay enough “for them to stay”. She went on to say that many program staff are “young professionals” that “are early in their careers, so they’re still learning”. This was evidenced by Amelia’s response when asked about her previous work experience, to which, she smiled and stated “so, this is actually my first full time job”.

Given the presence of significant turnover among staff, the identification of clearly defined roles presented additional challenges. Tina of site three explained that “high turnover and keeping the consistent responsibilities and clear tasks for each role” “kind of slipped through

the cracks, when new people are hired”. Pam of site one reiterated the need for “clearly defined roles” explaining that “my position was kind of all over the place, people just kept trying to jump in” making it difficult for staff to know, understand, and perform their specific responsibilities.

**Student admission criteria.** Each of the three cases identified student selection as a challenge for their program. They all had established admission procedures, but noted that these procedures had evolved over time, as they had become more experienced in identifying students who would most benefit from the program’s objectives. Each of the programs required the completion of an application packet, an interview, and some form of observation that would allow program personnel to observe the student in a similar setting. In addition, each program had an admission component centered on the student’s family and their long-term goals for the student. Donna of site two explained “we want students and families, we don’t have one without the other”.

All three programs required student participants to have been identified with ID or a developmental disability to be accepted into their program. In addition, all three programs noted that they were looking for a student who wanted to be there, who could benefit from the program objectives, and who had the potential to live independently. Debi of site one explained that “we need people who want to be a patriot for 4 years. We need people who want to still do academic learning”. Similarly, Donna of site two explained that “we want those who want to come in and have the goal in mind of when you graduate that you are going to live independently and have employment”. Nancy of site three added that after previous experiences, they don’t just look at the individual students they are admitting, but that they “look at the group as a whole”, how they interact and blend into a cohesive group. As such, as the programs have become more

experienced and aware of student outcomes, they have revised their admission procedures and continue to do so.

**Development of policies and procedures.** All three cases varied in the presences and content of program policies and procedures during the development and implementation of their program. Donna of site two explained that when she was hired, a handbook had already been developed, but that it had been “tweaked as I have found certain needs or made things a little more explicit”. The other sites noted that their programs began with few policies or established procedures. Nancy of site three explained that “honestly, our policies have developed as we’ve seen the need for them”. For example, she explained during their first semester they had a couple behavior issues and “that made us realize we needed to develop a behavior policy”. Debi of site one explained that “operation on policies and procedures have evolved, they normally come about when there is a situation that actually has occurred, and we have to actually writing or implement a policy”.

**Program curriculum.** To date, there are minimal curriculum resources available for transition and postsecondary education programs for students with ID. Heather with site three explained “it is hard to find a curriculum for what we say we are preparing the students with that is truly a good fit, since we have such a wide variety of students in our program at any one time”. All three cases utilized curriculum that they had created themselves or received in collaboration from other transition and postsecondary education programs. Two sites submitted curriculum for review as for this study.

**Internships and employment opportunities.** Employment was cited by all three programs as a primary objective and component of their program. They each provided classroom instruction, internships, and support to students who were already employed. Tina of site three

explained “I think with the end goal in mind of employment and I think what we strive for is greater independence and meaningful employment”. This was evident while observing a student talking with Nancy in the site three library. The student talked about wanting to be a teacher’s aide in the local school system after interning there as part of her program. The internship played a pivotal role in exposing the student to the job, training her to perform the specific job, and growing the student’s employability skills. These types of partnerships with potential employers are essential in programs meeting their employment goals for students, yet they are challenging to identify and maintain as programs grow and placements are needed for more and more students. All three sites utilized both on and off campus internships, based on the needs of their students.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three inquired about the factors that were identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges by program directors, faculty, and staff in the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at a four-year post-secondary institution. Primary mitigating responses targeted strategic program planning addressing program funding, staffing, development of policies and procedures, and student admission. In addition, commitment, flexibility, and collaboration were also cited by three sites as imperative mitigating factors.

**Strategic planning.** All three institutions cited the importance of strategic program planning and the need to be prepared to receive students on their first day. Specifically, participants noted the importance of planning during the developmental stage, beginning with the identification of the most appropriate program model to ensure sustainability of the program. Key factors associated with planning included funding, staffing, development of policies and



procedures, and student admission.

Each program acknowledged the challenges associated with funding of the program from its initial startup through present day. To mitigate the challenges associated with funding, programs relied heavily on grants, donations, and student tuition to function and sustain their programs. The key as Debi of site one explained, is that programs must choose a model, first understanding “how much is this really going to cost”, from the beginning. Then researching and identifying other possible funding sources, to supplement student tuition. All three sites utilized student tuition as a primary or secondary funding source. Donna of site two noted “when you are tuition based, it’s hard, you’ve got to get funding and you’ve got to get donors”. Donations through the institution’s School of Education’s development office had become a primary source of funding for their program. Like site one, grant funding was cited as the primary instigating driver in the development and implementation of site three program, but as the program begins to near the end of the grant they are continuously investigating alternative funding to supplement student tuition. Ultimately, when planning to develop and implement a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID at a four-year university, it is imperative to begin by investigating and identifying long term solutions to funding to ensure sustainability of the program. Tina of site three made a valid point when discussing program sustainability noting that programs should be “run like a business, not an educational institution, if you put any generic corporation next to ours and how its run and how it’s fine-tuned and how when challenges arise and how they’re addressed, there is a process for everything and you know where to go, and what action steps” to take.

Staffing was consistently noted to be a challenge among all three programs, but to differing degrees. All three programs utilized full-time paid staff, part-time paid staff, student

workers, and volunteers to meet the needs of the program and its students. Given the noted challenges in funding, programs must assess the staffing needs of the program, based on the chosen program model, program components, and the needs of the student population being served. Institutions having access to grant funding, experienced staffing challenges to a lesser degree, as they had funding to hire and maintain paid staff; however, even with grant funding, institutions could not possibly fully fund ample paid staff to meet all the needs of the program. To mitigate staffing challenges, Debi of site one advised to develop the program through the institution's college of education so that there is access to skilled student workers through an apprenticeship model. This was reiterated by the remaining two sites, as well.

In developing the program within the College of Education, programs were able to work with students generally enrolled at the institutions to meet the needs of students, beyond those that paid staff could. All three sites utilized student workers within and without the institution's College of Education by employing traditionally enrolled students part-time and in some cases provided the benefit of tuition assistance as reimbursement for their time and work with the program. Part-time student workers performed duties from among various roles including housing, classroom aides, social skills training, and mentoring. Debi of site one explained that their program was the second largest student worker employer on campus.

In addition to the presence of a well-developed student worker program, all three cases developed and incorporated a strong volunteer network across campus to assist in meeting the needs of the program participants. Donna of site two was excited in the fact that they currently had over four hundred volunteers from across campus, noting that "having hundreds of traditional students embrace our students as one of their peers, is the best campus response I could have". Heather of site three reiterated that "we were able to develop our volunteer

component a lot more with our peer mentors, so we offer a lot more support to our students through our peer mentors”. The use of peer mentors or volunteers provided programs with the ability to deliver supports that could not be afforded otherwise.

Development, implementation, and evolution of program policies was noted to some degree among all three cases as a challenge. Each case noting varying levels of policy development prior to the admission of their first students. Initial policies appeared as handbooks and for all three sites had grown due to the need to address specific issues or operationalize existing policies for consistency among a growing staff. For example, Matt of site one noted that the “operation on policies and procedures have evolved, they normally come about when there is a situation that actually has occurred, and we have to actually write or implement a policy” and Debi explained that even now, “they were actively developing policies”. The challenge exists; however, because transition and post-secondary education programs are still relatively new to higher education and knowing and understanding which policies are needed and once written, which are effective can be somewhat illusive. To mitigate these challenges, programs must rely on strategically aligning the program model, staffing, and policies and procedures so that they align with their program mission.

Consistent with the need to strategically plan for program funding, staffing, and the development of program policies and procedures, it becomes clear that each of these areas are directly impacted by the student population accepted into the program. Although all three programs sought to serve similar populations, the makeup of their current enrollment varied. Having set predetermined qualifiers for admission to their program including the identification of ID or developmental disability, each case discussed the importance of accepting the right student for their program. Donna of site two explained when developing and implementing a transition

and post-secondary education program for students with ID, it is important to “find your niche”, “if I know who I want to serve, I know the type of supports they need which is going to impact your housing”, “the type of curriculum you need, which impacts your staffing”. Debi of site one explained that it wasn’t just about identifying a student with ID who could attend, but did they “want to be here, did they want to still do academic learning”. Nancy of site three went a bit further by noting that it wasn’t just about admitting the right student to the program but admitting the right student for the cohort. She went on to say that during their interview period, they “look at the group as a whole”, “how they interact together”, “and then we make our decision, kind of as a whole of the group of students that we’re going to accept”. All three programs noted challenges to some degree associated with the student admission process and acknowledged mitigating these challenges by identifying or further defining key characteristics of the students that they choose to admit.

**Commitment.** A key mitigating characteristic identified among all three programs was commitment among program faculty and staff. This commitment was evidenced by their willingness to dedicate not only their work hours, but their lives to serving and meeting the needs of their students. This was evidenced, as well, while on campus at site one and site two. During both visits, a significant number of students became ill with the flu. For those students residing on campus, program faculty and staff were tasked with ensuring the students received appropriate medical treatment, if needed, and care, typically provided by family members. Faculty and staff worked diligently to ensure that all students were safe and cared for and acknowledging the opportunity for a teaching moment, they worked alongside healthy students, teaching them how to disinfect their apartments and modeling proper hand washing and other preventive measures.

While observing a program class at site two, the commitment of program faculty was evident. One of the program faculty received a call that their child was not feeling well. After hanging up the phone, the faculty member proceeded to take steps to ensure that the needs of students were met. In that moment, she took the responsibility of her students seriously and she was committed to ensuring that their needs were met, even before her own. Situations like this were present among all three cases. At site one, staff were contacted the night previously over concerns for a former student. Staff acknowledge and accept that they may be called on at all hours of the day or night for help and given the limitations in funding, they do so, without additional compensation. The level of commitment demonstrated among all cases from the beginning, was a mitigating factor in the sustainability of the program thus far.

**Flexibility.** Faculty and staff from among all three programs stressed and demonstrated the need of flexibility in the development and implementation of their transition and post-secondary education program and in the day to day operations of the program. Nancy of site three explained “you just have to be flexible”, “there’s just too many factors that change”. Flexibility is what will allow programs to adapt, evolve, and sustain. She went on to explain “that we have yet to have a semester that’s been exactly like the semester before” and that “I think that’s the nature of these programs, so you have different students, you have different staff, every year we’ve lost a staff member or two or we’ve replaced or we’ve added”.

During observations at site one, site two, and site three, faculty and staff demonstrated flexibility in the day to day operations of the program. They would acknowledge if something was not working, assess why it was not working, and adapt, often at a minute’s notice. This could be in the instruction, as seen at site two, when many students were out sick and program faculty tailored their classroom instruction and activities

to meet the needs of those students who were healthy and use the student's illness as a teaching moment delivering skill-based instruction in cleaning and disinfecting, as well as teaching preventative measures to stay well. While at site one, a similar situation led to similar adaptations to ensure the care of those who were sick and instruction for those who were healthy. All three cases demonstrated flexibility and had mastered the ability to use this flexibility as a teaching tool when situations or circumstance would arise throughout the day. The knowledge of program faculty and staff coupled with their willingness to be flexible consistently led to teaching moments and learning opportunities for students enrolled in the program. Change appears to be a constant, and without the ability and willingness to be flexible, these programs will have a difficult time sustaining overtime.

**Collaboration.** Each of the three cases consistently demonstrated the need and importance of collaboration at many levels. To sustain, programs need to master the art of collaboration, beginning with their institutional administration and stretching across campus and into the local community. Debi of site one explained that to succeed, programs must “get buy in from all the stakeholders” and Donna of site two added that “building partnerships with the community and opening employment opportunities, building partnerships with other colleges and opening research opportunities and then having those partnerships truly with the administration or with athletics just help this program grow”. Transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID require the availability of resources and supports that cannot be met among the program itself. These programs rely on the partnerships that they develop to operate. Mastering the ability to collaborate with other entities and building relationships with key players on and off campus is a necessity to develop and implement a successful and sustainable program. All three programs were able to mitigate numerous challenges by building and sustaining

partnerships throughout all aspects of their programs. Site two partnered with their College of Education's development office to address funding, site three partnered with local community member to address housing needs of their students, and site one partnered with government entities to address internship needs for their students. These are examples of partnerships that were developed through collaboration on and off campus to ensure that the needs of students were met, and their program sustained.

### **Summary**

This study examined the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID in effort to identify lessons learned by program directors, faculty, and staff that would assist in the development of new programs and aid in the sustainability of existing ones. Information was gleaned from surveys, interviews, observations, document review, and focus groups. Each case was analyzed individually using Stake's (2006) Worksheet 3 to identify case specific themes (see Appendix B for Worksheet 3). Upon completion of single-case analysis, cross case analyses were executed using worksheets 4 through 6 identifying expected utility for each case, theme-based assertions, and multiple case assertions (see Appendix C-E for Worksheets 4-6). Assertions associated with high utility across all cases were identified.

Research question one examined the successes experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff in the development of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. Cross case analysis identified successes experienced across cases and included building effective partnerships within the community and on-campus to meet the needs of students enrolled in the program, program exposure resulting in positive perceptions across campus and

within the local community leading to both social and financial support, positive peer perceptions and support instigating inclusivity on campus, and the acquisition of on-campus housing opportunities for students enrolled in the program. These successes were noted as instrumental in the sustainability of each case studied.

Research question two examined the challenges experienced by program directors, faculty and staff in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Cross case analysis identified consistent challenges among all three case to include program planning, funding, staffing, student admission criteria, tuition, and parental expectations. Program planning as it specifically related to the development and implementation of a sustainable program model was said to be a challenge and noted to be of the utmost importance among all three programs.

Research question three examined the mitigating factors present among the three cases that allowed them to overcome the identified challenges. It was through these mitigating factors that each program experienced success for the program itself and the students enrolled. Mitigating factors identified among all three sites included ongoing strategic planning, commitment, flexibility, and collaboration. Strategic planning involved addressing ongoing program funding, staffing, development of policies and procedures, and student admission. Through strategic planning, continuous commitment and flexibility of program directors, faculty, and staff, and collaboration across campus and throughout the local community, programs were able to address their identified challenges effectively and efficiently.

The central question of this study is “what lessons have program directors, faculty, and staff learned through the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs at a four-year post-secondary institution?” Cross-case assertions highlight the need for



strategic planning, commitment, flexibility, and collaboration to develop a successful and sustainable transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions. In this chapter I provide a description of study findings, discussion of findings, implications and limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a closing summary.

### **Summary of Findings**

This multiple case study sought to identify the successes, challenges, and mitigating factors in the successful development of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. Three cases were selected using non-probability, criterion sampling. The Think College database was used to identify three cases with similar transition and post-secondary education program models. Data collection included a survey, semi-structured interviews, observations, document review, and focus groups to allow for triangulation. Surveys were completed by program directors, faculty, and staff. Interviews were conducted with program directors, faculty, and staff from among all cases.

### **Research Question One**

Research question one addressed the successes experienced in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs. Successes experienced across cases included program partnerships and perceptions, access to on-campus supports, well developed program components, and most notably positive student outcomes. All three cases noted positive student outcomes that were driven by their program's primary mission of

employment and independent living.

### **Research Question Two**

Research question two identified the challenges associated with the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID. Challenges experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff were consistent among all three sites and involved program planning including sustainable funding, staffing, student admission criteria, development of policies and procedures, program curriculum, and availability of internships and employment opportunities for students enrolled in the program. Of these, the challenge most notably experienced by all three cases were the challenges associated with ongoing and sustainable funding. The degree to which each program experienced each of these challenges varied, based on mitigating factors that each program experienced individually.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three addressed mitigating factors that programs had identified that have effectively addressed the challenges they faced in developing and implementing their transition and post-secondary education programs. Among the three cases, strategic planning, commitment, flexibility, and collaboration were identified as the most predominant mitigating factors. Given the short span of time that transition and post-secondary education programs have been in existence, there is little research available to assist potential programs in identifying and addressing adequate and effective planning, prior to the arrival of students on campus and as a result, programs continue to face these challenges when developing and implementing programs. As a result, the presence of commitment, flexibility, and collaboration among faculty and staff is imperative.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome these challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution. To fully examine this phenomena, three sites were identified from among the Think College online directory for participation in the study. Using a survey, interviews, observations, document review, and a focus group, each sites successes, challenges, and mitigating factors were identified which led to pragmatic lessons learned by program directors, faculty and staff during the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program. These lessons serve as a guide to institutions seeking to develop and implement a transition and post-secondary education program on their campus.

### **Empirical Significance**

To date, there has been little research associated with transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. What has been done, has focused primarily on the presence of these programs, their potential requirements, analysis of specific program models, participants, and their attitudes or beliefs associated with participating in the programs. There is a clear gap in research regarding the development and implementation of a successful program. This study sought to address that gap and examine the pragmatic lessons learned among three transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID leading to implications for further study.

The development of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID is still a relatively new phenomenon. It has been within the last decade that there has been a

significant increase in the number of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hendrickson, Carson, Woods-Groves, Mendenhall, & Scheidecker, 2013; Judge Gasset, 2015; Kelley & Westling, 2013; McEathron, Beuhring, Maynard, & Mavis, 2013, Papay & Griffin, 2013). As a result, little research has been done associated with these programs. Current research has focused on quantitative inquiry into the presence of programs, their potential requirements, analysis of specific program models, participants, and their attitudes or beliefs associated with participating in the programs (Plotner & Marshall, 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Rogan et al., 2014). There was an apparent gap in the literature addressing the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. To begin to address this gap, this study focused on qualitative inquiry into the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs using a multiple case design to impart a thick rich description of each case, the identified successes, challenges, and mitigating factors identified in the successful development and implementation of a program. As a result, this study answers the central question related to the lessons learned by program directors, faculty, and staff of the identified transition and post-secondary education programs.

This study expounded upon previous research to delve deeper into the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. Unlike previous literature, this study examined multiple cases in effort to glean recommendations for institutions interested in developing a new transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID or assist in strengthening existing programs. Like previous studies, this study examined each case's admission requirements, specific program model utilized among each program, and the perceptions of various program participants

including students enrolled in the program, parents of students enrolled, peers, and the faculty and staff employed at the institution (Plotner & Marshall, 2014; Plotner & Marshall, 2015; Rogan et al., 2014).

### **Theoretical Significance**

The theoretical significance of this study rested in utilizing program implementation theory (Weiss, 1997) and disability theory (Mertens, 2009) to examine the process of program development and implementation, as well as allowing for understanding the special factors associated with the level of inclusivity of these programs at a four-year post-secondary institution. Resulting implications include the importance of extensive strategic planning prior to receiving students on campus and the recognition of the specialized socio-cultural needs of students identified with disabilities within the culture of post-secondary education.

Weiss's (1997) program implementation theory, designed within the context of evaluation, seeks to move beyond the identification of specific steps to implement a program to examine the essence of the process in effort to identify those idiosyncrasies that allow for a robust understanding of the process. This study examined the process of program development and implementation and program implementation theory provided an avenue for that. Program implementation theory operates through the context of evaluation, as such it allows for the examination of the specific steps associated with the development and implementation of a program to include the activities that are involved and how they contribute to the success of the program. This was important as this study identified those lessons learned by program directors, faculty, and staff involved in the development and implementation of a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.

In addition to program implementation theory, disability theory (Mertens, 2009) was also

used to guide this study. Disability theory (Mertens, 2009) provided a lens to examine the inclusionary practices of students with ID in transition and post-secondary education programs through a socio-cultural perspective. Given the inclusionary aspects of transition and post-secondary education programs it was important to understand how institutional culture can play into the success of a program. This was evidenced by all three programs strong dependence on collaboration, partnerships on and off campus, and ongoing relationship building to ensure access to needed services and supports for program and student success.

This study provides a model for the use of both program implementation theory and disability theory independently and joined. This study examined the essence of the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. In so doing, program implementation provided a framework that allowed for the identification of successes, challenges, and mitigating factors that resulted in lessons learned and recommendations for the future development of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. As such, institutions who are interested in developing and implementing a new program could utilize the practical recommendations identified in the study and increase their propensity for success programmatically, reinforcing this theoretical model. In addition, this study reinforced the theoretical model of disability theory by examining programs in relation to their inclusivity and the resulting successes of programs who fully integrate students enrolled in the program within the campus community.

Institutions who wish to develop and implement a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary campus must strategically plan to assess their campus culture and communitywide acceptance related to the inclusivity of students with identified disabilities, first. This will provide them with the opportunity to gauge

campus wide perceptions of serving students with ID on campus and in the community, identify the presence of individuals who may be advocates and/or stakeholders, and begin building relationships that will be necessary in the development and implementation of a successful and sustainable program.

In addition, institutions must identify a team, with representatives from across campus to serve in developing program components, the population identified to serve, admission procedures, programmatic policies and procedures, program curriculum, and internship and employment opportunities. Lastly, institutions need to be creative and intentional in seeking out funding for the development, implementation, and sustainability of the program. The three cases examined in this study were funded through variations of student tuition, fundraising, and educational grants, with the most notably consistent funding source being student tuition. For programs to sustain over time, it is imperative that during program development stage, that institutions must consider alternative funding sources, such as grant funding for workforce and/or community development.

### **Implications**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions. As a result, this study has implications for all stakeholders with a vested interest in post-secondary education options for students with ID.

#### **Implications for Students**

This study provides implications for students with ID. Students with ID have historically



been limited in post-secondary trajectories. These limitations have negatively impacted students with ID, given previous research on the benefits of post-secondary education. In effort to increase the availability of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, this study provides recommendations to assist institutions in the development of new programs, increasing opportunities and access for participation for students with ID.

### **Implications for Parents**

Through the creation of new transition and post-secondary education programs students with ID, as outlined in this study, parents of children with disabilities are provided with the opportunity of a new post-secondary trajectory that increases their child's access to further academic, social, independent living, and employability skill development, leading to more positive outcomes for children with disabilities. In addition, this study examined the admission requirements of the three cases presented and as such, provide parents with insight into transition planning for their child, prior to existing the K-12 environment.

### **Implications Program Directors, Faculty, and Staff**

This study provides program directors, faculty, and staff of transition and post-secondary education programs with guidance on the development and implementation of new transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, as well as guidance in the improvement of existing programs. Program directors, faculty and staff can read through the lessons learned by pioneers in the field and utilize the identified strategies to mitigate those challenges and improve the overall outcomes of the programs and the students they serve. In addition, program directors, faculty, and staff could see the identified success across all three programs, providing them with a foundation for creation of new programs.

By examining three successful transition and post-secondary programs for students with

ID and identifying the successes, challenges, and mitigating factors to overcome the identified challenges, it is possible to theoretically envision the ideal transition and post-secondary education program. The ideal program would utilize a hybrid or mixed program framework allowing for a significant degree of inclusivity on campus. The institution's administration would be on board and involved in the development and implementation of the program from the beginning and ongoing. The program would be housed within the institutions school of education. The institution's school of education would provide oversight for the program and the needed staff, in the form of undergraduate and graduate students to assist with all components of the program. In return, students within the school of education would be provided with the opportunity to gain experience in working with students with disabilities and providing direct supports to the students enrolled in the program. The program would include an academic component, an employment component, an independent living skills component, and a community integration component. These four components would work in tandem to provide the students opportunities to gain the necessary skills for gainful employment and independent living. Students enrolled in the program would have access to credit level courses through course auditing and full access to all on-campus activities and events. Program curriculum would provide students with information and skill building consistent with the mission of the program.

Sustainable funding for the program would begin to be addressed during the development phase of the program, in effort to minimize the ongoing reliance on student tuition as the primary funding source. In addition to investigating educational grant opportunities and donations, the development team would think outside of the box and look for ongoing funding opportunities using workforce investment grants. Although the program is identified as a

transition and post-secondary education program, it is imperative to understand that funding may come in unfamiliar forms. Transition and post-secondary education programs, although housed and operated through a post-secondary institution, do not solely address their student's academic education. These programs are designed to grow their student's employability and independent living skills, consistent with workforce development. These programs can serve students with ID, while narrowing the skills gap experienced nationwide and meet the growing demand of global business and industry.

In addition, the ideal program would know whom they want to serve. They would find their niche and develop admission procedures congruent with it. The student admissions process would consist of objective assessment delivered through student and family interviews, on-campus observation of participation through shadowing or an event, and review of psycho-educational information. This information would allow programs to identify and accept students who are right for the program and vice versa.

The ideal program would also work with their legal affairs department and develop policies and procedures to address key factors of the program including student admission criteria and processes, on-campus housing, behavior and discipline, course participation and attendance, internships, employment, and after-hours activities. These policies would be utilized consistently and delivered via student and parent orientations to students enrolled in the program and their families. Program policies would be added or revised, as needed to meet the needs of the program and its participants. Lastly, by strategically planning and partnering with key contributors on and off campus, the ideal program would offer students with the opportunity to participate in live work experiences through internships and paid employment to prepare them for life after completion of the program.

### **Implications for Post-secondary Administrators**

This study examined the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions. During this examination, it was clear that a major challenge confronted by two of the programs, at least to some degree, was a lack of administrative support from the top down. This study provides evidence of the benefit of developing a transition and post-secondary education program on a four-year post-secondary campus. These benefits extend beyond the benefits to the population that the program is designed to serve and transcends across the entire campus, through the availability of internships, job opportunities, and professional work experience for students regularly enrolled at the institution, opportunities for across campus collaboration and community connections that provide visibility for the program and the institution as a whole, and a visible demonstration of the institutions commitment to diversity and social justice paradigms. A transition and post-secondary education program for individuals with ID acts as a catalyst to drive the very best that institutions and their students have to offer, leading to positive outcomes for all populations of the institution.

### **Implications for Schools of Education**

This study revealed opportunities that are associated with schools of education that house transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. In many cases, these programs provide theoretical and hands on experience in working with students with disabilities within all areas of their lives. This experience is invaluable and is not generally replicated within any other program on campus or in the community. These programs exist to aid students with ID

in developing their skills and in turn provide a rich training ground for students who are pursuing their degree and future career in education. In addition, these programs provide opportunities for schools of education to study various aspects of education from skill building, curriculum design, differentiation, behavior management, classroom management, and more. In most cases, institutions have to seek out these opportunities, but with the presence of a transition and post-secondary institution on campus and housed within the school of education, live work within the program leads to gained knowledge for the participants, the regularly enrolled student, and faculty researchers.

### **Implications for Community Partners**

This study examined the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions and as a result provided implications for the programs community partners and the surrounding communities at large. All three sites expressed the importance of community partners and what they bring to the table, whether it was through donations, public support, internships or job opportunities, these programs could not function without the support of these partners. In turn, it is important to note that as the United States continues to demonstrate a significant skills gap and need for trained workers, this study opens the door for the development of programs that can train students with ID to grow and begin to fill some of these needed positions, securing a qualified and able workforce. These programs stress their focus on their student's employability skills, which falls closely in line with today workforce development needs. Continued partnership between institutions housing transition and post-secondary education programs and the communities in which they housed has

the potential to equip students to join today's workforce and grow the local economy.

### **Implications for Transition Planning in Secondary Education**

As this study examined the development and implementation of post-secondary education programs for students with ID, the challenges associated with the admissions process were expressed across all sites. Understanding how to select the students that are right for the program continues to be a challenge, but much has been done to streamline the process allowing programs to admit students who would most benefit from the services they provide. As a result, it is imperative that transition planning at the secondary level recognize the opportunities that students with ID may have by applying to and attending a transition and post-secondary education program and adapt their transition planning process to identify and grow those skills that will equip students for participation in a transition and post-secondary education programs. In addition, it is imperative that transition planning at the secondary level engage parents in transition planning and assist families with understanding and planning for the most appropriate post-secondary trajectory for their child.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

To limit the scope of the study, certain delimitations were necessary. These delimitations include the selection of the sites for study. Sites were identified for inclusion in the study if the institution successfully developed and implemented a transition and post-secondary education program, through provisions cited in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 2009. Successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID was defined as a program, continuously enrolling students with ID for a minimum of four continuous years, with established policies and procedures addressing participant admissions, academic planning, inclusivity, and confounding exit credential.

Program admission requirements were limited to individuals identified with mild to moderate ID or developmental disability. Sites included those that awarded a minimum of a four-year bachelor's degree to regularly admitted students and provided optional on-campus residential housing for all students enrolled. These delimitations focused data collection on institutions with significant environmental similarities that will allow for transferability to like institutions in the future.

Limitations of the study derived from geographic locations, as all sites were limited to the southeastern US, differences among student populations as they relate to the campus community and the communities surrounding them, state level policies outline procedural guidelines for post-secondary institutions, and student access to on-campus and off-campus resources that are serving populations identifying with a disability. In addition, the use of qualitative study limited the ability for findings to be generalized across the nation; however, this was somewhat mitigated using multiple cases and replication logic.

In addition, limitations existed with the studies participants. The study outlined the inclusion of participants with firsthand knowledge of the program's development and implementation. Unfortunately, due to staff turnover, the availability of multiple participants with firsthand knowledge of the development and implementation of the program was challenging, especially among program faculty and staff. In fact, none of the three sites still employed the minimum of three participants with firsthand knowledge of the program's development and implementation that the study called for.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Although this study sought to address a gap in research, more study is needed to address transition and post-secondary education program in various areas.

1. Research is needed to address the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs at two-year post-secondary institutions and vocational schools. Given the focus of employment and independent living skills, two-year institutions and vocational schools may have variations that could potentially influence and improve programs located on four-year campuses.
2. Research is needed to thoroughly examine student admission requirements and processes. Each of the three cases studied had developed similar admission procedures; but noted the importance of other factors that may lead to greater student success, including the students desire to continue academic learning, behavioral concerns, and cohesiveness of the accepted cohort.
3. Research is needed to examine sustainable funding options for transition and post-secondary education programs in the development and implementation phase, so that program planning, and design can address any factors that may inhibit access to sustainable funding. All three cases had at some point received educational grant funding, but this funding has or is pending conclusion, student tuition remains the primary funding source, supplemented by fundraising and donations.
4. Research is needed to examine programmatic policies and procedures. Each of the three cases included in the study had established policies, although not all three had established them prior to receiving students into their program. As a result, policies have been developed or tweaked overtime due to incidents occurring or circumstances creating a need for them.
5. Research is needed to develop research-based curriculum for use by transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID. This study revealed that although all



three cases utilized specific curriculum, this curriculum had been developed in house, due to little research and development of standardized curriculum.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the successes, challenges, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at four-year post-secondary institutions. Through the execution of a qualitative multiple case design, three sites were selected for study and data was collected through surveys, interviews, observations, document review, and focus groups to identify the successes, challenges, and mitigating factors in the development and implementation of their program. Pragmatic lessons learned were gleaned across cases to provide insight to assist in the future development of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with disabilities. Two specific lessons learned through this study were first, the need for strategic planning to identify the most appropriate program model to ensure sustainability of the program and planning for funding, staffing, development of policies and procedures, and student admission criteria. Secondly, this study revealed the need for commitment, flexibility, and collaboration among program directors, faculty, and staff to meet the ever changing and fluid environment in serving students within a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.

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**APPENDICES****Appendix A****Worksheet 2. The Themes of the Multiple Case Study (Research Questions)**

Theme 1: What lessons have program directors, faculty, and staff learned through the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

Theme 2: What successes do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

Theme 3: What challenges do program directors, faculty, and staff experience when developing and implementing transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID at a four-year post-secondary institution?

Theme 4: What factors are identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges by program directors, faculty, and staff in the successful development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs for students with ID, at a four-year post-secondary institution?

**Appendix B**  
**Worksheet 3. Analyst's notes while reading a case report.**

Case ID   1  

<p><b>Synopsis of case:</b></p> <p>Transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.</p> <p>2 year basic program, 2 year advanced program with reduced supports</p> <p>Housed in school of education and human development</p> <p>Functional academics, independent living, employability, recreation and wellbeing components</p> <p>Housing available but not required</p> <p>54 students enrolled</p> <p>Surrounding community: Urban</p>	<p><b>Case Findings:</b></p> <p><b>I. Successes:</b> Successes: Stakeholder involvement, continuous evaluation, staffing, program growth, academic component, PBIS, person centered practices, participant outcomes, positive peer acceptance, residential component, on-campus supports, inclusionary practices, community supports, 2nd largest student wage employer, and flexibility.</p> <p><b>II. Challenges:</b> Learn by trial and error, unrealistic student expectations among institutional administration, access to on-campus supports, participation in catalog classes, employment opportunities, registration, program funding and resources, underdeveloped policies and procedures, parental expectations, residential housing, mental/behavioral health, cyclical in nature, qualified staff, cost of tuition, and misperceptions of other institutional faculty/staff.</p> <p><b>III. Mitigating Factors:</b> Utilize grant and development opportunities for funding, choose a sustainable model (business oriented), work through the institutions education department, continuous evaluation, building relationships throughout campus and in the community, providing faculty, staff, and student employees training and support, develop program structure and supports, narrow student scope, increase staff, focus on skill building, inform parents of program goals/scope, and flexibility.</p> <p><b>IV. Lessons Learned:</b> Research the institution and assess inclusionary perceptions, build infrastructure at the beginning, start small, get buy-in from all stakeholders, choose a Sustainable Model (business model) based on your University, create through the School of education for skilled workers (apprenticeship model), figure</p>
<p><b>Uniqueness of case situation for program/phenomenon:</b></p> <p>Site 1 is a R1 post-secondary institution in the southeast. It operates a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID through their school of Education and Human Development. The program was one of the first Transition and post-secondary programs in the US. The institution's funding derives primarily from student tuition. The institution is located within an urban environment.</p>	

	<p>out what it will cost, ratio of students to staff, figure out who will lead (long-term, tenure track SPED faculty), work with the registrar to determine scope, create campus wide awareness, develop measurable student outcomes, build partnerships in the community, incorporate community integration for students.</p>
<p><b>Relevance of case for cross-case Themes:</b>  Theme 1 <u>X</u> Theme 2 <u>X</u> Theme 3 <u>X</u>  Theme 4 <u>X</u> Theme 5 <u>X</u> Theme 6 <u>X</u>  Theme 7 <u>X</u> Theme 8 <u>X</u> Theme 9 <u>X</u>  Theme 10 <u>X</u> Theme 11 <u>X</u></p>	<p><b>Possible excerpts for cross-case report:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Person centered planning meeting</li> <li>2. SMART Class</li> <li>3. Alumni concern</li> </ol>
<p>General influences (optional):</p>	<p>Situational Factors (optional)</p>
<p>Commentary:</p>	

Case ID 2

<p><b>Synopsis of case:</b></p> <p>Transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.</p> <p>2 year basic program, 2 year advanced program with reduced supports</p> <p>Housed in school of education</p> <p>Functional academics, independent living, employability, recreation and wellbeing components</p> <p>Housing available but not required</p> <p>37 students enrolled</p>	<p><b>Case Findings:</b></p> <p>I. <b>Successes:</b> Student outcomes, building partnerships in the community and on-campus, individualized instruction and supports, campus wide support and involvement, large volunteer base, program exposure, financial support, intentional growth, and ability to adapt.</p> <p>II. <b>Challenges:</b> Campus wide support, finding your niche, knowing the needs of students during admission, meeting individualized needs, trial and error, selecting the right students with the information you have, meeting employment needs and opportunities, transportation, funding and facilities, and have supports in place prior to</p>
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<p><b>Uniqueness of case situation for program/phenomenon:</b></p> <p>Site 2 is a R1 post-secondary institution in the southeast. It operates a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID through their School of Education. The institution's funding derives primarily from student tuition and donations. The institution is located within rural and suburban environments.</p>	<p>students arriving on campus, staff work-life balance.</p> <p><b>III. Mitigating Factors:</b> Building strong relationships with administration, continual assessment and evaluation to improve, adding relevant staff (i.e. job coaches and additional teachers), managing growth, building partnerships on and off campus, and utilizing technology, working with the development office to elicit donations.</p> <p><b>IV. Lessons Learned:</b> Have the legal and housing offices on board, seek administrative support, find your niche (know wo you want to serve so you know the supports needed, appropriate academic content, staffing, and identify the direction of the program), selecting the right students, hire the right staff (education/experience), have common ground (everyone must believe in the same philosophy, including parents), develop campus wide awareness and building relationships, and maintain family support, consider piloting short term events for potential students, work with development to collaborate with donors.</p>
<p><b>Relevance of case for cross-case Themes:</b>  Theme 1 <u>X</u> Theme 2 <u>X</u> Theme 3 <u>   </u>  Theme 4 <u>X</u> Theme 5 <u>X</u> Theme 6 <u>   </u>  Theme 7 <u>X</u> Theme 8 <u>X</u> Theme 9 <u>X</u>  Theme 10 <u>X</u> Theme 11 <u>X</u></p>	<p><b>Possible excerpts for cross-case report:</b>  Student issue – after hours  Find your niche  Collaboration on and off campus</p>
<p>General influences (optional):</p>	<p>Situational Factors (optional)</p>
<p>Commentary:</p>	

Case ID 3

<p><b>Synopsis of case:</b></p> <p>Transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID.</p> <p>2 year program, piloting a 3<sup>rd</sup> year</p> <p>Housed in School of Education</p> <p>Educational opportunities, work place training, and independence</p> <p>Housing is available but not required</p> <p>16 students enrolled</p>	<p><b>Case Findings:</b></p> <p>I. <b>Successes:</b> receiving grant, campus wide buy-in, peer mentor program, started small, auditing classes, internships, quality of student experiences, clear goals of employment, adequate staffing, student employment outcomes</p> <p>II. <b>Challenges:</b> admin perceptions, uncertainty, staffing (turnover, defined roles), constant change, funding and sustainability, communication, ability for growth, student selection, appropriate curriculum, teaching unlearned skills, student behavior, and parent expectations for alumni support</p>
<p><b>Uniqueness of case situation for program/phenomenon:</b></p> <p>Site 3 is a private post-secondary institution in the southeast. It operates a transition and post-secondary education program for students with ID through their School of Education. The institution's funding derives primarily from student tuition and donations. The institution is located within rural and suburban environments.</p>	<p>III. <b>Mitigating Factors:</b> obtaining grant, providing admin opportunity to see success, providing support to faculty, increase staffing, be advocates for student internships/employment, be intentional about skill building, hire behavior interventionist, create awareness and exposure on and off campus, trail days for student selection, soft skills training, and educate parents</p> <p>IV. <b>Lessons Learned:</b> get admin support, think/plan staff structure intentionally, be flexible, be comfortable with admitting that something didn't work and try again, clearly define staff roles, develop concrete procedures, set firm guidelines for alumni support, set clear criteria for admission, train faculty, build connections and resources on and off campus, set measureable student/program goals before students arrive</p>
<p>Relevance of case for cross-case Themes:  Theme 1 <u>X</u> Theme 2 <u>X</u> Theme 3 <u>X</u>  Theme 4 <u>X</u> Theme 5 <u>X</u> Theme 6 <u>X</u>  Theme 7 <u>X</u> Theme 8 <u>X</u> Theme 9 <u>X</u>  Theme 10 <u>X</u> Theme 11 <u>X</u></p>	<p><b>Possible excerpts for cross-case report:</b></p> <p>Funding concerns  Volunteers – over 100 peers  Planning</p>
<p>General influences (optional):</p>	<p>Situational Factors (optional)</p>

Commentary:



### Appendix C

#### Worksheet 4. Estimates of Ordinariness of the situation of each case and estimates of manifestation of multi-case themes in each case

Table A 3

W = highly unusual situation, u = somewhat unusual situation, blank = ordinary situation  
 M = high manifestation, m = some manifestation, blank = almost no manifestation

	Case A	Case B	Case C
Ordinariness of this Case's situation:			
Original multi-case themes			
Theme 1 Partnerships & Perceptions	M	M	M
Theme 2 On-Campus Supports	M	M	M
Theme 3 Program Components	M	m	M
Theme 4 Student Outcomes	M	M	M
Theme 5 Program Planning: funding, staffing, student admission, development of policies and procedures	M	M	M
Theme 6 Program curriculum	M	m	M
Theme 7 Internships and employment	M	M	M
Theme 8 Strategic Planning	M	M	M
Theme 9 Commitment	M	M	M
Theme 10 Flexibility	M	M	M
Theme 11 Collaboration	M	M	M

High manifestation means that the Theme is prominent in this particular case study. A highly unusual situation (far from ordinary) is one that is expected to challenge the generality of themes. As indicated, the original themes can be augmented by additional themes even as late as the beginning of the cross-case analysis. The paragraphs on each Theme should be attached to the matrix so that the basis for estimates can be readily examined.

**Appendix D**  
**Worksheet 5. A Map on which to make assertions for the final report**

Table A 4

	Themes										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Case A											
Finding I Success	H	H	H	H							
Finding II Challenges	H	H			H	H	H	H			
Finding III Mitigating Factor	H	H			H		H	H	H	H	H
Finding IV Lessons Learned	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Case B											
Finding I Success	H	H	H	H							
Finding II Challenges	H	H			H		H				
Finding III Mitigating Factor	H	H			H		H				
Finding IV Lessons Learned	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Case C											
Finding I Success	H	H	H	H							
Finding II Challenges	H	H	H		H	H	H				
Finding III Mitigating Factor	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Finding IV Lessons Learned	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H

A high mark means that the theme is an important part of this particular case study and relevant to the theme.

**Appendix E**  
**Worksheet 6. Multi-case Assertions for the Final Report**

Table A 5

#	Assertion	Evidence in which cases
1	The need for strategic planning to include sustainable funding, staffing, student admission, and the development of policies and procedures.	1, 2, 3
2	The need for commitment among program staff and the institution.	1, 2, 3
3	The need for flexibility among program staff and the program itself.	1, 2, 3
4	The need for collaboration among faculty, staff, and surrounding community.	1, 2, 3

**Appendix F**  
**Publisher Permission for Use**

## Re: Republication Permissions Request

AW

Angela Whalen <Angela.Whalen@guilford.com> on behalf of GP Permissions  
<Permissions@guilford.com>

### Reply all

Mon 3/19, 4:25 PM

Fewox, Keli

Inbox

You replied on 3/21/2018 2:43 PM.

Dear Keli,

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From: "Fewox, Keli" <kfewox@liberty.edu>  
To: GP Permissions <permissions@guilford.com>  
Date: 03/18/2018 05:08 PM  
Subject: Re: Republication Permissions Request

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Hello,

I will be using the worksheets to guide data analysis for my dissertation only. I will not need to provide copies for participants. The purpose of this multiple-case study is to examine the challenges, successes, and factors identified to mitigate or overcome the identified challenges, as experienced by program directors, faculty, and staff, in the development and implementation of transition and post-secondary education programs, for students identified with intellectual disability at 4-year post-secondary institutions.

I would like to modify the worksheets to reflect my data. For example, I have attached the modifications in Worksheet 2.

Thank you,  
Keli Fewox

**Appendix G**  
**IRB Approval from [REDACTED] University**

You forwarded this message on 11/21/2017 4:33 PM

Hi Keli,

Thank you for your prompt response! I have now also received the NIH training certificate from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as well, so you may consider your project approved by the Institutional Review Board. Good luck with your research!

Best Regards,

*Richard*



**Appendix H**  
**IRB Approval from Liberty University**

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 17, 2017

Keli Fewox

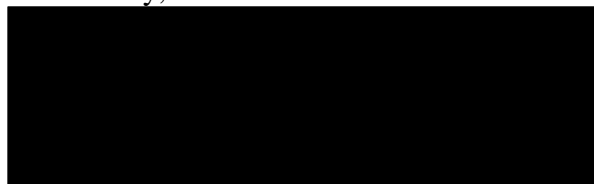
IRB Approval 2809.111717: A Multiple Case Study Examining the Challenges and Successes in the Development and Implementation of Transition and Post-Secondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Dear Keli Fewox,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



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**Appendix I**  
**Observation for Data Collection**

1/30/18	
Describe the observation location.	
Describe the participants involved.	
Describe the dynamics among participants. (Who is facilitating, who is involved in discussions, etc.).	
Describe the level of participation exhibited by participants.	
Describe the physical environment of what is observed. (Be sure to address questions of inclusivity).	
Describe the dynamics among participants.	
Describe the context of what is observed.	
Describe any discussions or interactions related to program challenges and mitigating factors.	
Describe any discussions or interactions related to program successes and mitigating factors.	
Other.	



**Appendix J**  
**List of reviewed Documents and Media**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Information Obtained</b>	<b>Origin</b>
#1	Organization chart	Graphic of staff organization	Provided by program
	Employment responsibilities	Job duties, expectations and responsibilities	Provided by program
	Employment pay rates	Outline of starting salaries for program staff	Provided by program
	Exploration support staff handbook and job description	Handbook for students participating in exploration	Provided by program
	Residential support job responsibilities	Outline of job responsibilities for housing	Provided by program
	Employ self-evaluation form	Form for staff to evaluate themselves on performance annually	Provided by program
	Admission Information	Application, program interview procedure and questions, intent to enroll information, acceptance and non-acceptance letters	Provided by program
	Student scholarship application and criteria	Student scholarship application and criteria	Provided by program
	Program curriculum	Information related to curriculum, syllabi, course objectives, course directions, lesson plans, key skills list, program of study, and assessments	Provided by program
	Class schedule	Sample student class schedules by year (i.e. freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior)	Provided by program
	Person Centered Planning	Meeting template	Provided by program
<b>Case</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Information Obtained</b>	<b>Origin</b>
#2	Alternate ILA application	Application to apply for independent living supervisor program	Provided by program
	Student Application Packet	Program application and details of program participation	Provided by program
	Program Academic calendar	Calendar of important dates for the academic year	Provided by program
	Program costs	Outline of expenses for enrollment in the program	Program website
	Course Descriptions	Outline of program courses with descriptions	Program website

	Daily Schedule	Outline of student schedule	Program website
	Financial information	Handout outlining fees and financial aid	Provided by program
	Master calendar	Calendar outlining important dates during the semester	Provided by program
	Organizational Chart	Program organization	Provided by program
	Staff listing	Contact information for faculty and staff	Program website
	Faculty/Staff employment information	Outlines benefits of employment at the institution	Provided by the program
	ILA Job announcement	Outlines information to apply to be an ILA	Provided by program
	Staff contact protocol	Outlines who parents should call in the event of an emergency with a student	Provided by program
<b>Case</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Information Obtained</b>	<b>Origin</b>
#3	Program Proposal	Initial program proposal to start IDEAL program: justification and benefits, program description, curriculum, career component, program admission, exit criteria, and staffing	Provided by program
	Program Proposal	Initial program proposal to start IDEAL program: justification and benefits, program description, curriculum, career component, program admission, exit criteria, and staffing	Provided by program
	Accreditation proposal	Information submitted to regional accreditor	Provided by program
	Program Timeline	Timeline for the development of the program	Provided by program
	Organization Chart	Staffing Organization	Provided by program
	Summary of Job Duties and Job	Staffing roles	Provided by program
	Program curriculum	Information related to curriculum, syllabi, course objectives, course directions, lesson plans, key skills list, program of study, and assessments	Provided by program
	Admission Packet	Information to apply, information about process, and interview questions,	Provided by program
	Person Centered	Flow and content of PCP	Provided by program

	Planning Meeting Outline	meetings	
	Sample Schedule	Sample of a student's program schedule	Provided by program
	2016-2017 Student Handbook	Institutional policies	Provided by program
	2016-2017 Student and Family Handbook	Program mission, purpose, and policies	Provided by program
	2017-2018 Employee Handbook	Institutional policies related to employment with the program	Provided by program
	Peer mentor roles	Description of peer mentoring responsibilities	IDEAL website
	Staff listing	Staff contact listing	IDEAL website
	2015 IDEAL Annual Report	Detailed report of program and outcomes	IDEAL website
	Program description	Description of IDEAL program	IDEAL website
	IDEAL Brochure	Brochure outlining and summarizing the program	IDEAL website
	Report regarding program accreditation	Article outlining accreditation standards for TPSID programs	Provided by program

**Appendix K**  
**Visual Representation of Single and Across Case Analysis**

**Single Case Analysis: Case One**

RQ#1 Successes: Stakeholder involvement, continuous evaluation, staffing, program growth, academic component, PBIS, person centered practices, participant outcomes, positive peer acceptance, residential component, on-campus supports, inclusionary practices, community supports, 2nd largest student wage employer, and flexibility.

RQ#2 Challenges; Learn by trial and error, unrealistic student expectations among institutional administration, access to on-campus supports, participation in catalog classes, employment opportunities, registration, program funding and resources, underdeveloped policies and procedures, parental expectations, residential housing, mental/behavioral health, cyclical in nature, qualified staff, cost of tuition, and misperceptions of other institutional faculty/staff.

RQ#3 Mitigating Factors: Utilize grant and development opportunities for funding, choose a sustainable model (business oriented), work through the institutions education department, continuous evaluation, building relationships throughout campus and in the community, providing faculty, staff, and student employees training and support, develop program structure and supports, narrow student scope, increase staff, focus on skill building, inform parents of program goals/scope, and flexibility.

**Central Question**

**Lessons Learned:** Research the institution and assess inclusionary perceptions, build infrastructure at the beginning, start small, get buy-in from all stakeholders, choose a Sustainable Model (business model) based on your University, create through the School of education for skilled workers (apprenticeship model), figure out what it will cost, ratio of students to staff, figure out who will lead (long-term, tenure track SPED faculty), work with the registrar to determine scope, create campus wide awareness, develop measurable student outcomes, build partnerships in the community, incorporate community integration for students.

## Across Case Analysis

RQ#1 Successes: Stakeholder involvement, program growth, programmatic components, person centered practices, participant outcomes, positive peer acceptance, residential component, on-campus supports, inclusionary practices, community supports, collaboration, and flexibility

RQ#2 Challenges: program planning (i.e. Funding, staffing, student admission criteria and process, development of policies and procedures program wide, program curriculum, internship and employment opportunities.

RQ#3 Mitigating Factors: Comprehensive strategic planning during program development and implementation, staff and institutional commitment, staff and programmatic flexibility, and collaboration with key state holders on and off campus.

### Central Question

Lessons Learned: Research the institution and assess inclusionary perceptions, build infrastructure at the beginning, start small, get buy-in from all stakeholders, choose a Sustainable Model (business model) based on your University, create through the School of education for skilled workers (apprenticeship model), figure out what it will cost, ratio of students to staff, work with the key partners to determine scope, create campus wide awareness, develop measurable student outcomes.