

# Presuming Competence for Postsecondary Success

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Inclusive Higher Ed Student & Staff Panel



# Who We Are

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IN! exists to create **inclusive** college opportunities in Colorado for students with intellectual disability (ID) to foster **academic growth, social development, and career advancement.**

## What We Do:

**EDUCATION**

**OUTREACH**

**EXPANSION**

**OUTCOMES**

# Presenters

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## **Shayna Laing**

IN!, Community Engagement  
Manager

## **Kaitlin Brohman**

UCCS Office of Inclusive  
Services, Graduate

## **Maggie Jordan**

UCCS Office of Inclusive  
Services, Student

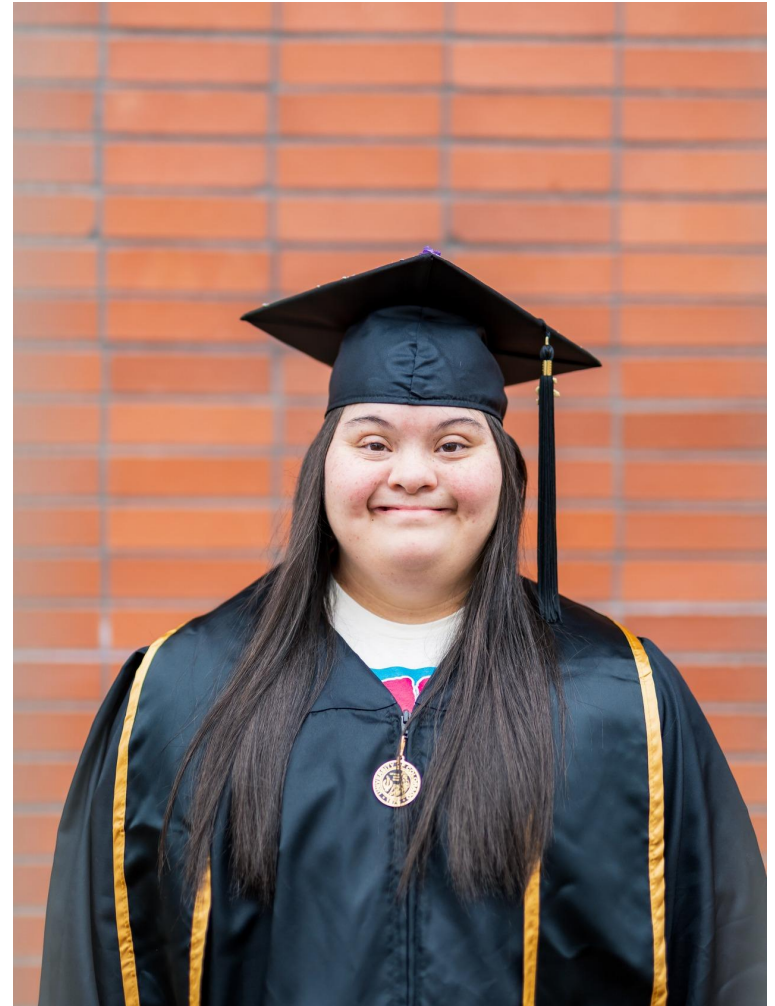
## **Michael Dilworth**

UCCS Office of Inclusive  
Services, Graduate

# Session Schedule

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- **Expectation:** What do you hope to gain?
- **Exploration:** Presuming competence & supporting postsecondary pathways for students with ID
- **Experience:** Student preparation process & recommendations



# OPENING DISCUSSION



What do you already know about inclusive higher education in Colorado?  
What do you hope to gain from this session?

# Presuming Competence

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# Panelists

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- What school/program do/did you attend?
- What do/did you study?  
Why?
- What or who helped you see that college was possible?



**“Research has established that most persistent, self-disciplined, adaptable, and reliable students often outperform those with higher cognitive ability.”**

(Heckman & Krueger, 2005)



# Addressing Assumptions

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- Stark difference between general and special education preparation methods
- Perception of success
- Assumption of desire without voice



# Presuming Competence

- Anyone can learn
- Demonstration of knowledge does not indicate intellect
- Inclusion is a right, not something to be earned
- Assumptions lead to experience



# Benefit of Presumed Competence

- Access to normative pathways
- Ability to make informed choices
- Transferable skill development
- Preparation for lifelong learning

“Teachers’ expectations will have a greater impact on a student becoming employed or going to college than will a student’s skills or disabilities.”

(Grigal, 2015)



**“The notion of presuming competence implies that educators must assume students can and will change and, that through engagement with the world, will demonstrate complexities of thought and action that could not necessarily be anticipated.”**

**(Biklen, 2000)**

# **Inclusive College Pathways for Students with Intellectual Disability (ID) in CO**

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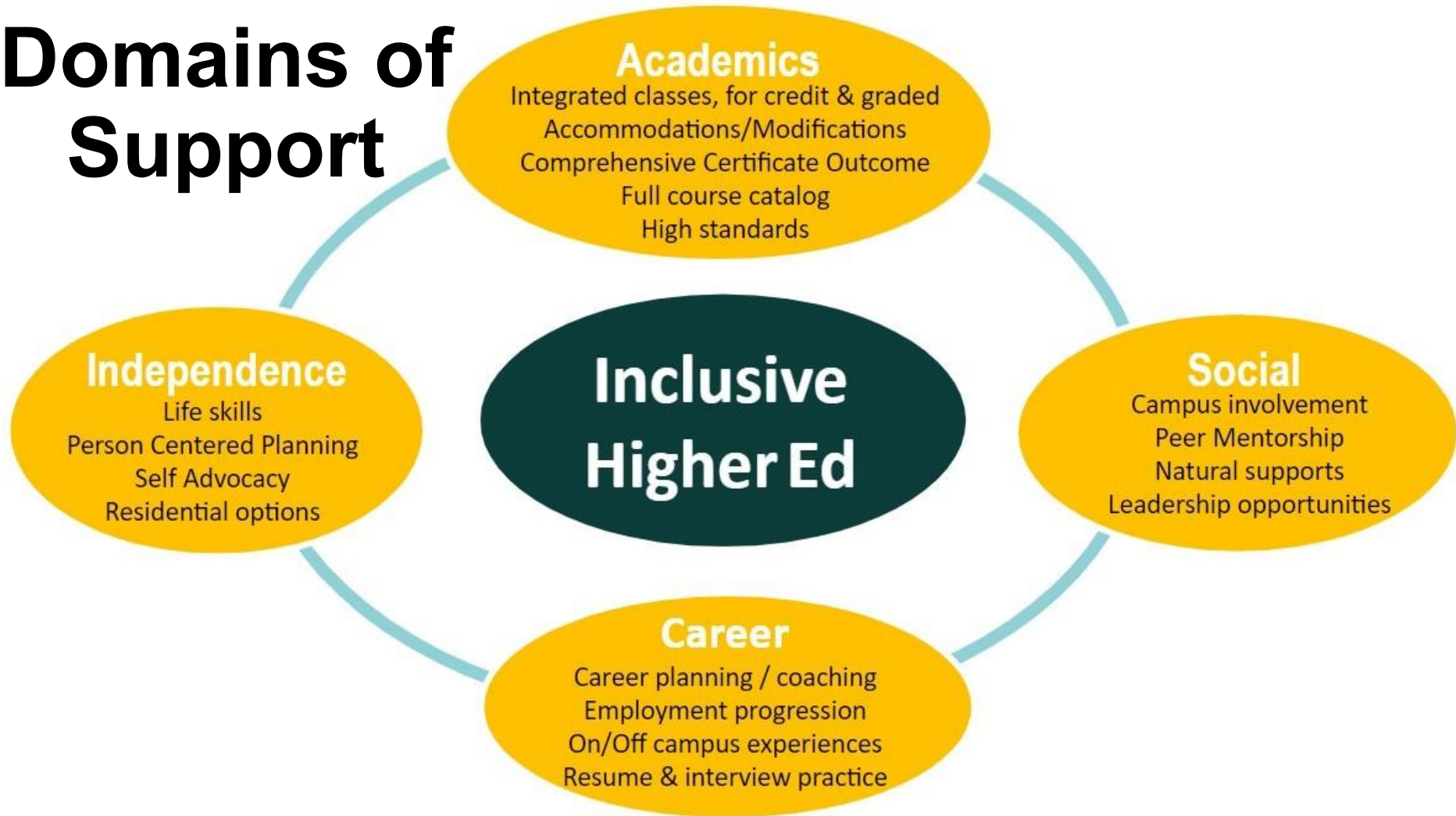
# Inclusive Higher Education

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- Built upon foundation of presumed competence
- Provides alternative admission pathway for students with intellectual disability to be fully included members of the student body
- Inclusive course and campus participation
- Access to accommodations & modifications
- Certificate credential
- Staff and peer mentor support in 4 domains:



# Domains of Support





- Elevate
- Arapahoe Community College
- Littleton, Colorado & Castle Rock, CO
- **Commuter Campus**
- 3 year program
- [arapahoe.edu/elevate-acc](http://arapahoe.edu/elevate-acc)



- Office of Inclusive Services (OIS)
- University of Colorado
- Colorado Springs, Colorado
- **On campus living**
- 4 year program
- [inclusiveservices.uccs.edu](http://inclusiveservices.uccs.edu)



- GOAL – Go On And Learn
- University of Northern Colorado
- Greeley, Colorado
- **On campus living**
- 4 year program
- [unco.edu/unc-goal](http://unco.edu/unc-goal)



- GLOBAL Inclusive Program
- Regis University
- Denver, Colorado
- **On campus living**
- 1-3 year program
- [regis.edu/global](http://regis.edu/global)

- Comprehensive Transition & Postsecondary Program (CTP)
- Statewide Comprehensive Higher Education Certificate







- CSU RAM Scholars
- Colorado State University
- Fort Collins, Colorado
- Experiential learning and agriculture focus
- <https://www.chhs.colostate.edu/ramsolars/>



- Inclusive Higher Education Solutions
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Denver, CO
- [msudenver.edu/IHES](https://msudenver.edu/IHES)



- ASPIRE Scholars
- Pikes Peak State College
- Colorado Springs, CO
- <https://www.pikespeak.edu/>



- Cultivate @ LCC
- Lamar Community College
- Lamar, CO
- <https://lamarcc.edu/academics/cultivate-at-lcc/>

**CTP In Process**

**Coming Fall 2025**

**"The bar has been set high, and  
the students have risen and  
reached it! They have been  
presumed competent and their  
lives changed."**

- UCCS OIS Graduate Parent

# **Student Experiences**

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# How Has College Changed Your Life?

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- What has been the best part of your college experience? Why?
- What was the most challenging part of college? How did you work through it?
- How has college prepared you for the life you want (job, friends, independence)?
- How would your life be different if you didn't go to college?

**PAUSE → PONDER → POST IT**



# How did you prepare for college?



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- What/who helped you prepare for college?
- What piece of advice would you give to other students like you that want to go to college?
- How can teachers/parents support students with ID in preparing for college?



# College Readiness Skills: Academics

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	Attendance and punctuality		Quality of work
	Use of resources		Acceptance of direction and constructive criticism
	Communication		Technological know-how

- Basic writing
  - Sentence/paragraph structure
  - Note taking
  - Email etiquette
- Basic reading comprehension
  - Audio books
  - Annotation
- Knowledge of learning style
  - Preferences
  - Strengths & weaknesses
- Persistence
- Responsibility

# College Readiness Skills: Social

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- Self-awareness & regulation
- Schedule management
- Professional relationship awareness
- Communicates needs
- Conflict management
- Collaboration
- Adaptability
- Responsible risk taking
- Use of social media
- Sex education





# College Readiness Skills: Career

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- Career awareness
- Self awareness
- Time management
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Motivation
- Initiative
- Self-advocacy
- Social/Emotional Understanding
- Coping Techniques

# College Readiness Skills: Interdependence

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- Navigating campus
- Personal & campus safety
- Community access / travel
- Use of down time
- Use of available resources
- Medication Management
- Self-care / cleanliness
- Self-determination
- Growth mindset



# Examples

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- Prepared students vs unprepared students
- Successful transitions
- Learned lessons





**THINK → PAIR → SHARE**



# Resources

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# Learn More & Get Involved

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IN! works to raise awareness of the inclusive college options available throughout Colorado via webinars, informational sessions, mentorship opportunities, college prep resources, and more.

## Helpful Links

- [IN! website](#)
- [IN! College Mentorship Program](#)
- [Free Webinars](#)
- [Monthly newsletter](#)
- [Student Stories](#)

\*Let us know how we can partner with you, your district, & your team!



# Handouts



## PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

for students with intellectual developmental disabilities and their families

### Think Early

At age 14 or earlier, start thinking about your interests, passions, and future goals. Then ask yourself, **can college get me there?**



### Preparing Yourself

Take leadership in IEP meetings. Set IEP goals to prepare for college academics and social life. Know your rights to higher education under ADA. Work on making choices independently and speaking

### Know your Options



Inclusive Services  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
COLORADO SPRINGS



Prevention Research Center  
College of Agricultural Sciences  
Center for Community Partnerships



### Is college worth it?

People with IDD can be up to 4X more likely to be employed after completing a higher education program. (Avellone, Camden, Taylor, Wehman, 2021)



College offers lifelong learning, community engagement, and a fulfilling future!

### Find Out More

Call program staff to ask questions, and visit programs to meet students.

### Preparing Together



National Technical Assistance Center on Transition



Predictors/Outcomes	Education	Employment	Independent Living
• Career Awareness	Promising	Promising	
• Career Technical Education (was Vocational Education)	Research-based	Evidence-based	
• Community Experiences		Promising	
• Exit Exam Requirements/High School Diploma Status		Promising	
• Goal-Setting	Research-based	Research-based	Research-based
• Inclusion in General Education	Research-based	Research-based	Research-based
• Interagency Collaboration	Promising	Promising	
• Occupational Courses	Promising	Promising	
• Paid Employment/Work Experience	Research-based	Research-based	Promising
• Parent Expectations	Promising	Research-based	
• Parental Involvement		Promising	
• Program of Study	Research-based	Research-based	
• Psychological Empowerment (new)	Promising	Promising	Promising
• Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination	Research-based	Research-based	Promising
• Self-Care/Independent Living	Promising	Promising	Research-based
• Self-Realization (new)		Promising	Promising
• Social Skills	Promising	Promising	



# Handouts Continued

## Early Childhood

- Set high expectations
- Share local and national college options with families
- Share success stories of students with similar challenges
- Encourage families to begin saving for college
- Emphasize age-appropriate academic skills
- Empower self-awareness
- Create an environment of choice
- Prompt student decision making
- Acknowledge student failure as opportunity to learn

## Middle School

- Maintain academic rigor for students with disabilities
- Discuss students' interests and goals
- Empower student participation in extracurriculars
- Build comfortability with e-communication, tech use
- Encourage punctuality & time management
- Support student volunteer efforts
- Include students in opportunities for academic advocacy
- Help students become comfortable with down-time
- Strategize systems for management of personal info
- Academic Skills:
  - Use planner to track assignments, important dates
  - Follow a checklist to prepare for classes
  - Use strategies to identify core information in texts
  - Supported note taking
  - Practice sustainable study habits
  - Ensure review time to assess quality of work

## Elementary School

- Include students with disabilities in general education settings
- Foster healthy social-emotional communication
- Talk to all students about college
- Support healthy habits
- Foster academic skills and use of assistive technology
- Explore academic interests and strengths
- Build self-determination, self-advocacy, personal agency skills
- Frequent goal setting
- Provide opportunities for choices
- Help students talk about disability characteristics & needs

## High School

- Students discuss the supports they need to reach their goals
- Families contact colleges to take campus tours and learn more
- Connect with DVR, CCBs, other important agencies/organizations
- Help students budget money
- Encourage students to call and make appointments
- Help students learn to use ADA friendly public transportation
- Include goals related to college preparation in IEP
- Independently maintain a schedule
- Academic Skills:
  - Awareness and appropriate use of resources at school
  - Curiosity, desire to learn more
  - Complete familiar tasks without assistance
  - Self-advocate: Ask questions, attend teacher office hours
  - Participate in class discussions and activities
  - Maintain persistence when frustrated by academic tasks
- Social Emotional Skills:



## Inclusive Services

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
COLORADO SPRINGS

Getting Ready for College: Top 10 Actions to Take While in High School

1. **Work on Independence:** Independence is going to look different for every student, but all students should take steps towards directing their life, making choices, and do things without direct adult support. Some examples include:
  - a. Find classes
  - b. Gather supplies

## College Preparation Checklist for Students with ID Pursuing Inclusive Higher Education

Inclusive higher education programs provide alternate enrollment pathways to college for students with intellectual disability. By providing robust support to students in four domains (academics, social, career, and interdependence), participants are able to pursue their goals and be fully included members of the student body.

Below is a checklist of skills to begin developing in each domain in order to best prepare students for inclusive college participation.



### ACADEMICS:

- Student led IEP
- Participate in inclusive settings

### CAREER:

- Career exploration and curiosity
- Time management

# National Resources

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- [Going to College Preparation Page](#)
- [ThinkCollege Program Search Page](#)
- [ThinkCollege Family Resources](#)
- [ThinkCollege IEP Goal Ideas](#)



**Q&A**

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