

## **TigerLIFE Program Design<sup>1</sup>**

### **A Career Development and Transition Model Program**

In 2013, UMID established the TigerLIFE Post-secondary Education Program based on the Think College<sup>2</sup> model fostered by the Higher Education Act of 2008. TigerLIFE, an inclusive college campus experience and vocational training for individuals with IDD, is a 60 hour program culminating in a completion award in Career and Community Studies. This experience encompasses academics, socialization, advocacy, vocational training, career development and job placement.

The mission of the TigerLIFE program is to use a person-centered systems approach<sup>3</sup> to assess each student's academic, career, technical, independent living, and social skills in order to help the client devise the best plan to match their aspired goals for transition into gainful employment and living a more meaningful life.

Based on the research of Dr. Schiro-Geist, there are 8 systems to evaluate and determine how to achieve a balance for each student: 1) self; 2) health; 3) education; 4) family; 5) social; 6) employer; 7) placement; and, 8) funding. Each system has a set of subsystems that directs the goals for each student to achieve balance (see diagram on next page).



As a result of participating in the TigerLIFE program, a student with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have the opportunity to attain his/her maximum level of independence, become more employable, and increase his/her self-efficacy.

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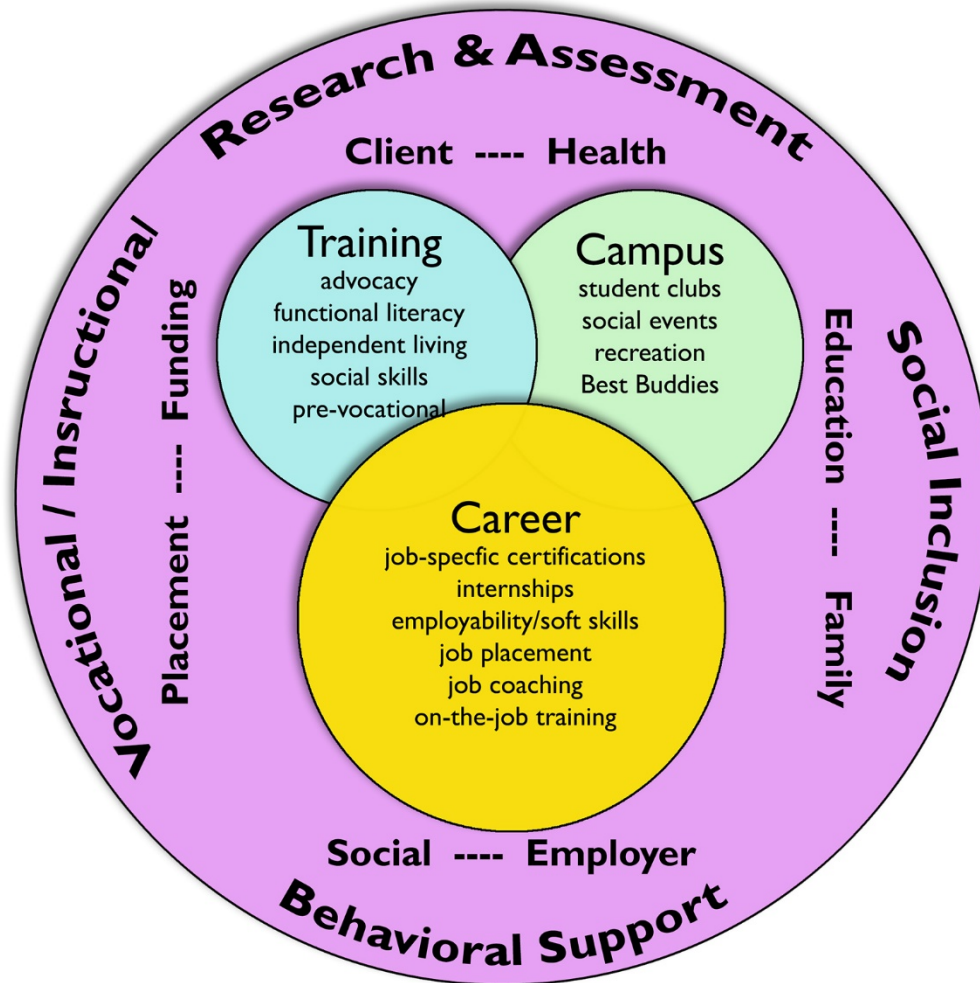
<sup>1</sup> TigerLIFE is an evolving model program resulting in frequent structural and staff changes

<sup>2</sup> Think College! College Options for People with Intellectual Disabilities. <http://www.thinkcollege.net> (accessed 11/30/15)

<sup>3</sup> Schiro-Geist, C. (1990). (Ed) Vocational counseling with special populations

# Career Development and Transition Model Programs

## Providing Inclusive Training Environments & Experiences through a Systems Approach to Placement



Built on guidelines drawn from the Think College national initiative, the goals of TigerLIFE are to support students in their quest for independence through: 1) academic/intellectual development; 2) traditional college experiences; 3) independent living skills; 4) internship opportunities; 5) purposeful job training; and, 6) sustainable employment.

UMID serves as a community rehabilitation provider (CRP) for the mid-south regional area vocational rehabilitation departments in Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee and works closely with the departments to provide services, resources, internships and job placements.

UMID conducts and compiles research on students completing the TigerLIFE program. This research addresses the competitive employment status 3 months after completion of the TigerLIFE classroom-

based vocational training. Results as of July 2016 for those who have passed the three-month post-program milestone are:

Competitively Employed	18	75 %
In Job Placement Services	5	21 %
<u>Moved Out-of-State</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4 %</u>
Total	24	100 %

The newly developed BRIDGE Project goals include: 1) Enhancing UMID's established inclusive post-secondary education program (TigerLIFE); 2) Increasing future sustainability of the BRIDGE Project; and, 3) Building capacity of UMID programs to increase and extend the impact on IDD individuals and their communities.

TigerLIFE offers job-related certifications to boost the employability of the students. These certification programs are fluid in order to respond to employer needs and student interests

TigerLIFE has a 5+-year history that demonstrates the efficacy of the program as well as the need that exists within the Memphis community. As the program evolves, more opportunities for IDD individuals are identified and created within the community. Our goal is to build a BRIDGE that continues and accelerates this process while meeting the employment needs of the businesses. The Crosstown Concourse can take the lead in this endeavor!

The Crosstown Concourse's mission and design philosophy<sup>4</sup> align well with The BRIDGE Project's goals and priorities. Inclusion is a key concept for both...the Crosstown Concourse is creating the environment that will nurture an inclusive community and the BRIDGE Project is working to find inclusive work environments for their clients.



## General Information on Employing Individuals with IDD

Common myths around employing IDD individuals include

- More costs will be incurred
- There are additional liabilities involved
- Productivity may decrease
- Consumer/customer responses may be disadvantageous

There are various responses to these myths but the best responses are based on research that has been conducted to ascertain the veracity of these. A cost benefit analysis of the average employee vs. an employee with a disability was completed on variables associated with productivity, reliability and employee maintenance. Specifically these variables included:

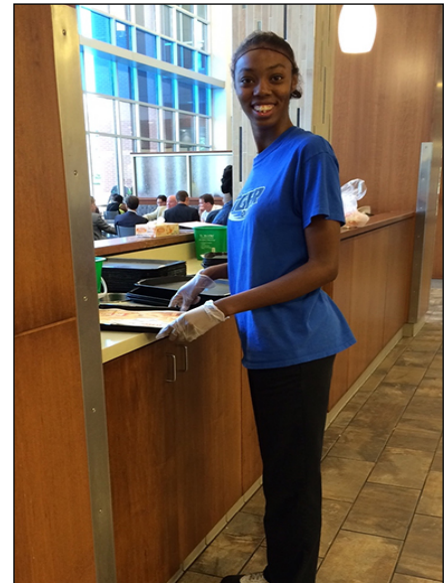
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<sup>4</sup> See section "The Crosstown Concourse Sets the Standard for an Inclusive Community" on page 1 of this document

- Speed/rate of work
- Accuracy/quality of work
- Number of days absent from work and related accrued costs
- Cost of recruitment
- Number of Occupational and Health Safety incidents and related accrued costs
- Number of worker comp incidents and related accrued costs
- Accrued other insurance costs

All reliability factors and maintenance costs were lower for employees with a disability. Most significant were lower costs associated with absence/sick leave as well as lower costs associated with occupational health and safety incidents. Only with respect to speed/rate of work and accuracy/quality of work did results favor average employees. However, the average ratings for employees with a disability with respect to speed/rate of work and accuracy/quality of work were in the medium range.<sup>5</sup>

Results from a national survey of consumer attitudes towards companies that hire people with disabilities reflected that 75% of the survey participants had worked directly with someone with a disability and/or received services as a customer by a person with a disability. Of these survey participants, 91% felt that the job performance of their coworker with a disability was “very good” or “good.” Similarly, 98% of the participants that had been served by an employee with a disability were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the services they received.<sup>6</sup>



A survey targeting high performance businesses, or businesses with impressive market share, revenue growth, profitability and customer satisfaction was conducted by the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp) in 2013. With 230 survey respondents, this survey revealed four key findings<sup>7</sup> from organizations that employ IDD people:

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Graffam, et. al., Employer benefits and costs of employing a person with a disability, (IOS Press - Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 17, 2002) 251-263

<sup>6</sup> Gary N. Siperstein, et. al., *A national survey of consumer attitudes towards companies that hire people with disabilities*, (IOS Press - Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 24, 2006) 3-9

<sup>8</sup> Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp). Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (In partnership with Best Buddies and Project SEARCH 2013-14)



1. ***Companies hire people with IDD for business reasons and are rewarded with business benefits.*** Multiple benefits are cited, including the addition of highly motivated employees, demonstrating an inclusive and diverse culture that's attractive to critical talent pools, and improving customer satisfaction.
2. ***The profile of a worker with IDD reads like that of an ideal employee.*** Descriptors of individuals with IDD include: dependable, engaged, motivated, great attendance, attention to work quality, and high productivity.
3. ***Positive reactions from employers abound.*** Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed say hiring workers with IDD has been a positive experience, and of those, nearly one-third say the experience has exceeded their expectations.
4. ***Challenges are fewer than expected and resources are greater than anticipated.*** Employers report minimal difficulty with preconceived challenges, while support resources for a successful placement – like job profile matching and guided onboarding – are readily available.



Socially speaking, hiring individuals with a disability is the right thing to do but “...it also makes good business sense” according to i4cp research. Organizations who hire people with IDD gain dependable, motivated employees who deliver observable business benefits and help their employers create inclusive cultures attracting desirable talent pools. The benefits go beyond providing employment to people with IDD – they impact business goals and culture.<sup>8</sup>

There are local resources available to make the process of hiring and training an IDD person effective and efficient including the Tennessee Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, UMID and TigerLIFE. All of the resources are working to dispel myths, remove barriers, educate and familiarize employers to the reality and perks of working with IDD individuals.

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<sup>9</sup> Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp). Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (In partnership with Best Buddies and Project SEARCH 2013-14)