



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about College Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability

What are Transition Postsecondary Programs for Student with Intellectual Disability (TPSIDs)?

TPSIDs make college accessible for young adults with intellectual disability. There are three TPSIDs in Utah: Aggies Elevated at Utah State University-Logan, Wolverines Elevated at Utah Valley University in Orem, and Eastern Elevated at Utah State University-Price (starting 2022). These programs provide college students with learning opportunities leading to independence, employment, and career development. NOTE: TPSIDs are programs funded by a federal grant from the Office of Postsecondary Education Programs. Inclusive Postsecondary Programs for students with developmental disabilities (IPSDDs) are self-sustaining programs without grant funding. We will use the term “TPSID” to refer to both types of programs.

What is the goal of the TPSIDs?

These programs provide the opportunity for selected students to learn and live independently while acquiring skills suited to his or her chosen career pathway.

Who are grant-funded TPSIDs intended for?

Each TPSID focuses on students ages 18 to 26 years who have intellectual disability. Documentation of intellectual disability through a psychological evaluation is required. IPSDDs can accept students from a broader range of disabilities.

Does a student need a high school diploma to apply to a TPSID?

No, we accept students with and without diplomas. A Certificate of Completion is acceptable. See below:

- If a student has a diagnosis of intellectual disability and has received special education services, then admission to the TPSID is possible. Admission is competitive and based on how well the student’s performance matches admission requirements (see below).
- If a student has a high school diploma with at least a 2.5 GPA and an ACT score of 17 or higher, then regular admission to the university, not TPSID, is the preferred option.

What are the requirements for admission to a TPSID program?

There are several requirements, and admission depends on decisions made by the admission committee of the specific TPSID. Applications will be competitive; not everyone will be admitted. Generally,

- The number one factor leading to success in a TPSID is the student's desire to experience learning on a college campus. Students must be willing to challenge themselves, work hard, and focus their energy.
- Students must have basic self-management and study skills. Although the social experience is important, we stress active learning in integrated, inclusive college courses. Also, students must be able to get up on their own, go to class on time, follow directions, finish and turn in homework, manage their time, and navigate new places safely with or without support.
- Active support from parent(s) is another highly important factor. Parents must have high expectations and be willing to let the student take calculated risks in effort to succeed or learn from failure. However, it should be primarily the student, not just the parents, who want a college experience.
- Students who have behavioral issues that would impede their learning or the learning of others will not be accepted. In these cases, we will refer the student and family to appropriate educational, behavioral, mental health, or community-based services and encourage them to apply to the TPSID in future years.

What is the timeline for application process?

We follow the same timeline as the university for accepting applications. Generally, all materials required for admission must be submitted by late Fall for the following academic year starting in August. See each TPSID programs' website for specific information on applications.

What kinds of college courses do the students take?

- Students take regular, credit-bearing college courses on a full-time basis with intensive supports (trained peer mentors, academic tutors, and use of assistive technology).
- In the first semester, all TPSID students register with the campus Disability Service Office to receive accommodations.
- Most of the first semester courses are taken with other TPSID students (although they are also available to "typical" college students) in order to provide orientation to college, academic preparedness, and career exploration.
- During or following the first semester, students develop a person-centered program of study based on their interests and career plan.
- TPSID students receive letter grades, pass/fail, or audit.

What is the length of the TPSID program?

- Aggies Elevated is a 2-year program. An option allows the student to select a Career Pathway of targeted coursework in the student's preferred field (such as recreation management, preschool/elementary education, landscape design, or other).
- Both UVU and USU Eastern are 3-year programs. The first 2 years focus on college preparation skills, independent living, and employment internships. Year 3 focuses on an industry-recognized certificate chosen by the student leading to a defined career pathway.

Why consider college for students with intellectual disability?

About two-thirds of "typical" students who graduate from high school go to college. Only about 10-20% of students with intellectual disability go to college. That's a huge difference! Typical students continue their education into adulthood and become life-long learners. Colleges are vastly diverse environments with a focus on robust learning experience and foundations for careers. What happens to students with intellectual disability? Opportunities are severely limited, especially given that sheltered programs are no longer available.¹ Community-based programs are available but only for individuals who meet eligibility requirements. Eligibility is confusing and waiting lists exist. There is a real possibility that one's disability is exaggerated during adulthood if the individual is not involved in a program. Most colleges are accepting environments where individuals representing all types of diversity can find their place if they are willing to work hard. There are currently over 300 college programs for students with intellectual disability in the U.S. (<https://thinkcollege.net/>).

Don't the high expectations in college set up the student with intellectual disability for failure?

We would argue that a worse failure is the reverse situation: that is, to deny college is to stifle a learning opportunity. But we must understand the risks at the outset and make thoughtful and calibrated decisions. We also must understand that, at least initially, supports and reasonable accommodations are necessary.

What accommodations are reasonable and available? What can I expect to be done if I am a parent or a teacher of a child/student entering college?

Most accommodations that are commonly available in secondary education are also available in college. Examples include assistive technology, preferential seating, note takers, alternative media, alternative test taking arrangements, reduced course load, access to peer tutors, and learning skills classes. However, there are fundamental differences in how these accommodations are administered. In contrast to secondary education where school districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities, colleges are under no similar

¹ Sheltered programs for adults with disabilities are being phased out because of a court decision that these programs were segregated settings and not least restrictive environments for individuals with disabilities. See *Olmstead v. LC* https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/olmstead_about.htm

obligation. Rather, students are responsible for self-disclosing their needs and requesting appropriate accommodations. TPSID programs connect students with intellectual disabilities to accommodations. In addition, each Utah TPSID provides intensive mentoring, tutoring in academic courses, and other services.

What evidence exists that these programs actually result in improved outcomes as students with intellectual disability enter adulthood?

The Aggies Elevated program has been evaluated extensively on student outcomes. Table 1 below compares Aggies Elevated students before and after they entered the program. As shown in the table, almost 90% of graduates are employed. Over 36% continue to take college courses with supports. One student has graduated with a bachelor's degree and two have graduated with associate's degrees. The majority are living on their own. USBE refers to the Utah State Board of Education statewide survey of students with intellectual disability and their status one year after leaving special education services. As shown, involvement in Aggies Elevated results in vastly improved employment, continuation in college for some students, and independent living for most students.

Table 1: Aggies Elevated Outcome Data, 2016-2019: Percent of Students Who Achieved			
	Before	After	USBE Survey*
Competitive Employment	21.1%	89.5%	53%
Ongoing College Courses (beyond TPSID)	5.3%	36.8%	32%
Independent Living	15.8%	73.7%	30%
* USBE, 2019 Utah Statewide Report of Post School Outcomes of 2017-2018 Students w/ Disabilities; numbers show percentages of students with ID in Utah (N=312) surveyed.			

How do the grant-funded Utah TPSIDs compare?

See Table 2 below for comparison information.

Aggies = Aggies Elevated, Utah State University (USU) Logan

Wolverines = Wolverines Elevated, Utah Valley University, Orem

Eastern = Eastern Elevated, USU Eastern, Price

Table 2: Frequently Asked Questions	Aggies	Wolverines	Eastern
How many students are accepted each year?	About 10	About 7 (increasing to 10-12 in 2023)	About 5
Are trained mentors assigned? How much support is provided?	Yes: up to 10 hrs/week	Yes: up to 15 hrs/week	Yes: up to 10 hrs/week

Is the application process competitive?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do students live on campus?	Yes	No	Yes
How long is the program?	2 years	3 years	3 years
How many credits are required for certificate?	48	33 plus 18 to 33 (Industry recognized certificate)	53-80
What is the tuition cost per year for Utah residents? (There may be additional fees levied for mentors, books, residential, etc.)	\$8,054	\$5,906	\$4,368
Are scholarships and financial aid available?	Yes	In process	In process
What is the recognized certificate that students achieve at the end?	Integrated College and Community Studies	Integrated College and Community Studies	Integrated College and Community Studies
What public transportation to campus is available?	Free local bus transp.	TRAX, local buses	N/A

Where can I go for more information?

Aggies = <https://www.aggieselevated.usu.edu>

Wolverines = <https://www.uvu.edu/autism/wolverineselevated.html>

Eastern = <https://eastern.usu.edu/eagles-elevated/>