Frequently Asked Questions About the Next Steps at Vanderbilt Summer Institute

Q: **What is the purpose of the Institute?**
A: Accepted candidates will achieve different goals, depending on their situation:
   - The Institute serves as orientation for those who have been accepted into our year-round program.
   - For those who are interested in learning more about inclusive higher education opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities, they will emerge from the Institute with a better understanding of what opportunities are available and what college life is like.

Q: **Can I just sign my student up for the Next Steps at Vanderbilt Summer Institute?**
A: There is an online application process for the Institute. Applying for the Institute does not guarantee enrollment.

Q: **How much does the Institute cost?**
A: The tuition is $1,250. That includes room, meals, and all field trips. Students only need additional money if they choose to purchase additional snacks (e.g. vending machine) or souvenirs (e.g. Country Music Hall of Fame Gift Shop).

Q: **What if we cannot afford the tuition?**
A: Need-based scholarships are available to only students who have been accepted into the 4-year Next Steps certificate program. These scholarships are for tuition only. Each family is responsible for arranging for and paying to get their child to Nashville. Scholarships are based on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Family Income</th>
<th>Scholarship Level</th>
<th>Amount you will owe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than or equal to $25,000/year</td>
<td>Full tuition scholarship</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $25,001 and $50,000/year</td>
<td>75% tuition scholarship</td>
<td>$312.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $50,001 and $75,000/year</td>
<td>50% tuition scholarship</td>
<td>$625.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $75,001 and $100,000/year</td>
<td>25% tuition scholarship</td>
<td>$937.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The previous year’s tax return is required as supporting documentation for the scholarship application.

Q: **Do you have a payment plan?**
A: NSSI does not have a payment plan at this time.

Q: **What payment methods do you accept?**
A: We accept credit and debit card online payments, and also checks. If your student is accepted, you will receive an email with further instructions for how to make the payment.

Q: **Does my student meet the criteria for attending the Institute?**
A: *Criteria are:

- Diagnosed intellectual disability (ID)
- Age: Rising high school junior (minimum age = 17) through age 25
- Student must possess the following:
  - Desire to be as independent as possible.
  - Desire for post-high school education and training.
  - Interest in having a college experience.
  - Ability to stay away from home for a week and able to learn and socialize well with other teens and adults with ID.
  - Needs to be relatively independent with no aggressive behaviors or wandering away.
- Required skills of independence needed for acceptance include the ability to INDEPENDENTLY:
  - Take care of all personal hygiene.
  - Get themselves up and dressed at the start of the day.
  - Prepare their own basic breakfast and pack a sack lunch (minimal verbal prompting and modeling are acceptable).
  - Basic use of cell phone (answer and make calls, texting is good if verbal/auditory skills are a challenge).
- *Meeting criteria does not guarantee admission.

Q: My son or daughter has a developmental disability – are they eligible to apply?
A: Due to our program’s grant funding regulations, we must give priority to students with intellectual disabilities. Students with developmental disabilities that are comfortable being placed on a waitlist for consideration to both NSSI and/or the Next Steps year-round program are still welcome to apply.

Q: What are the Institute’s primary activities?
A: Activities vary widely, but are focused on either independence, self-advocacy, social skills, or campus life. Please click here to view the schedule and get an idea of the different activities in which students engage.

Q: What is the student/counselor ratio?
A: The Institute has roughly 1 counselor for every 3 students. Next Steps staff support is also provided during each day.

Q: Is the staff support sufficient for my son/daughter?
A: Counselors are typically Vanderbilt (VU) graduate students, doctoral candidates, full-time teachers (VU alumni), or undergraduates. They typically study or studied Special Education, Clinical Psychology, Neuroscience, or other related fields. That said, NSSI is an exciting experience for counselors and students. Students should be independent and need little help with daily activities, such as dressing and self-care. They should be able to participate in group activities with little redirection.

Q: What will the student’s residential experience be like?
A: The students stay at a dormitory on the Vanderbilt University campus. Only NSSI staff, University staff, and students have access to the dorm. Because the dorms are on an access card system, people have to get special permission in order to get an access card and get into the
Building. Students enjoy a typical dorm experience, which includes having a roommate(s). Counselors are on the same floor as the students.

**Q: Can I visit my student during Institute?**  
**A:** One of the goals of the Institute is to promote independent living skills. In order to work towards that goal, we ask that parents let their son/daughter enjoy the Institute experience on their own. Parents are asked to attend a brief Parent Meeting on Sunday (the first day of the Institute) and the closing ceremony on Friday afternoon. Parents are also invited to participate in a Parent Information Workshop during the final day of the institute. This workshop is led by parents of Next Steps current students and/or alumni.

**Q: Can my son or daughter attend the Next Steps Summer Institute more than once?**  
**A:** Students who have already attended NSSI once will be placed on a waitlist. They will be notified whether or not there are open spots for them to return after the rest of the group has been solidified. The rationale behind this is so that more students with ID have the opportunity to be introduced to college.

**Still Have Questions?**  
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