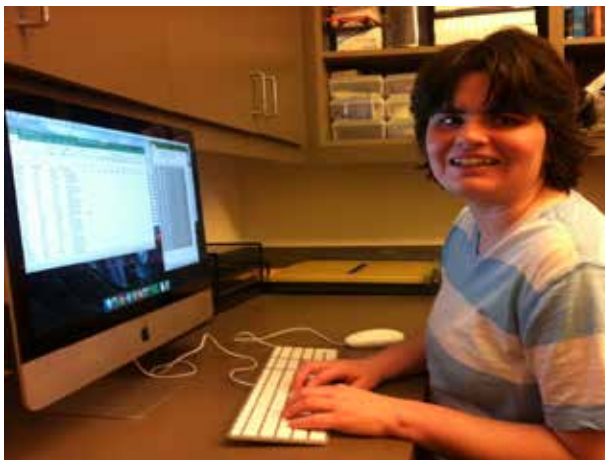


Next Steps at Vanderbilt: Faculty Information



NEXT STEPS AT VANDERBILT IS A 4-YEAR, RESIDENTIAL, CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES, PROVIDING INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMS OF STUDY AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL SKILLS, AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Brief Overview of Next Steps at Vanderbilt

Mission

Next Steps at Vanderbilt is committed to providing students with intellectual disabilities inclusive, transformational postsecondary education in academics, social and career development, and independent living, while honoring equality, compassion, and excellence in all endeavors.

Goal

The goal of the program is to broaden the career options and opportunities for individuals, accepted between the ages of 18 – 26, with intellectual disabilities in inclusive, age-appropriate settings. In order for these students to best meet the expectations of adults in our society, they need to have integrated educational experiences. The goals are for the students to have the “outcomes we all value -- a career, close relationships, and enjoyment....” (Hughes & Carter, Transition Handbook, Brookes Pub., 2012).

Individual Programs of Study

Next Steps at Vanderbilt is committed to the integration of students with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of the university and the surrounding community. Students will self-direct the development of their Program of Study



through initial and on-going Person-Centered Planning activities. The Program of Study is a unique and customized plan for achievement in academic areas, independent living skills, career development, and university life. While Next Steps students work towards completing an individual Program of Study, they must also complete the programs requirements to earn a Next Steps certificate upon completion. - See more at:

<http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/vkc/nextsteps/overview/>

Next Steps students are considered full-time university students averaging over 30 hours on campus each week during their four-year program. Currently, students take one university class, three core Career and Community Studies courses (formally known as Next Steps classes) that are designed to facilitate mastery in career and technology skills, self-awareness, and other skills of independence. Beginning Spring 2017, students will have the opportunity to take up to two university classes (i.e., one VU elective, one Commons Seminar) based on students’ unique academic needs. In addition, the students have internships on and off campus each semester that prepare them for competitive, meaningful employment upon graduation. Beginning Fall 2017, the residential program will be piloted with two to four Next Steps students. Details will be forthcoming on this initiative at a later date.

Learning Goals and Objectives for Next Steps Students in their Vanderbilt University Class

Starting Fall 2016, Independent Learning Agreements (ILAs) will be initially crafted by an experienced Ambassadors Tutor who will work closely to assist each student with identifying individualized course goals and assignments that best meet the student's needs. This meeting will also help the student identify academic support needs. Learning goals will be based on key concepts that are critical to each respective class as noted in the course syllabus and on goals identified for each student in the Next Steps program. Once established between the Ambassadors Tutor and student, the Academic Development Director will review the content with the student and collaborate with the faculty member to share and revise any specific learning goals for that respective course.

Next Steps students will satisfactorily complete a **one hour, independent learning agreement** as demonstrated by the following broad objectives:

1. satisfactory attendance at class meetings
2. satisfactory completion of individualized learning objectives, goals, and/or assignments
3. appropriate interaction with peers and instructor

Next Steps Alum, Bud Sugg, Class of 2014 My Experience in Vanderbilt Classes

"Having the opportunity to participate in Vanderbilt classes was a wonderful experience for me. All of the professors were so kind and nice to me. I would say that despite knowing a lot about music, American Popular Music was the class that I gained the most knowledge. Of course I did gain some knowledge in my other classes as well. In American Popular Music, I knew about the impact that Rhythm and Blues had on Rock n' Roll, but little did I know that it's actually one of the oldest forms of music ever.

Now I will admit, at first when you get into these classes, you will feel a little nervous with all the curriculum that's thrown at you. However, you're not expected to do the same amount of work that those other 20+ students are expected to do. That's why you have a learning agreement. Having said all that though, being a part of the Vanderbilt classes will be a memory that will last a lifetime. You will definitely gain some knowledge that you previously did not know before"

Independent Learning Agreement: Philosophy

The participation of Next Steps at Vanderbilt students into Vanderbilt University courses is an inclusive practice as students with intellectual disabilities are joining their same-aged peers in university level academic coursework. When determining the amount and type of coursework each student will be expected to complete, the Next Steps students' expectations follow best practices in inclusive education. As the staff reviews the requirements for the regularly admitted university students through each course syllabus, the development of the Next Steps students' independent learning agreements will begin with the concept of "as is." The assignments will be changed as little as possible. The amount of reading and writing required will be considered against the academic levels of each student. The goal will be to have high expectations for the students while providing them with assignments that will challenge, but not overwhelm them. It is important to note the students receive multiple tutoring sessions each week to provide supports as needed. As one can imagine, there is a wide-range of

variability in the independent learning agreements based upon the students' academic abilities. Furthermore, Next Steps students, as applicable, will also seek writing support, with the help of their Ambassadors Tutor, through the Vanderbilt Writing Studio to help successfully achieve any writing requirements illustrated within the syllabus requirements.

Supports for Next Steps Students- Ambassadors Program

Next Steps Ambassadors play a vital role in supporting our students in all aspects of the program. These peer mentors are undergraduate and graduate students who establish one-on-one relationships with the Next Steps students. Since the inception of Next Steps, well over 300 students have participated in the program. Students from all backgrounds, with different majors and interests, have played an integral role in the development and success of Next Steps and the growth of the Ambassadors program.

Commitment: Volunteers make a semester-long commitment of 2-4 hours per week with a Next Steps student.

Training: A three hour Ambassador training serves as orientation for new Ambassadors and provides the mentors with information about the students, the program, and strategies to support the students most effectively. Ongoing support from NS staff is available to problem solve any issues or difficulties that may arise.

“The appreciation that students in Next Steps have for being a part of a university community is something that many college students take for granted. I see my enrollment differently now; I see it as an amazing blessing, and an opportunity to make sure more people feel this way, too. All students should have access to a community that supports their dreams and works with them to achieve their goals.” – Rebecca Moody, Ambassador 2010-2014

Roles: There are four Ambassador roles that define their interactions with our students:

- Lunch partners – focus on social skills and healthy eating goals
- Workout partners – help to increase stamina and establish exercise habits
- Academic tutors – assist students with academic work and encourage good study habits
- Daily planners – focus on organizational skills and completion of NS program requirements (e.g., journal, food log)



Program Structure:

Circles of Support: Each student has 5-7 Ambassadors who make up their Circle of Support. These students communicate through written notes and group meetings (two per semester) to work together to best promote student growth. Each Circle has a **Lead Ambassador** who facilitates communication, collaborates with Next Steps staff, and organizes at least one circle social event during the semester.

Next Steps Ambassadors Student Organization: The Next Steps Ambassadors became an official student organization in 2013. There are four officers on the Executive Board who head up several committees: recruitment, fundraising, and social event planning. The Ambassador Social Committee plans program-wide social events for all students, Ambassadors, and graduates. These activities foster deeper friendships and further increase our students' involvement in campus life.

Next Steps Students' Outcomes Upon Graduation

As of April 2016, Next Steps has graduated 28 students. The following information provides insight into some aspects of our outcomes.

Close Relationships and the Community

Most of our alumni continue close relationships with each other and have supports from their family and community members. A Next Steps

Alumni Association has been formed under the guidance of the greater Vanderbilt Alumni Association. With the majority of our families from Middle Tennessee, the Next Steps Alumni Association will allow for alums to frequently participate in alumni activities that are arranged each semester. Ninety-two percent of our alumni participated in activities on campus through Vanderbilt sporting events, Best Buddies, Academy of Country Music Lifting Lives Career Exploration Series, and Next Steps social activities. The majority of our alumni also report frequent contact with fellow classmates and Ambassadors.

"88% of our alums have paid employment. Nationally, adults with intellectual and developmental have employment rates of less than 30%"

Outcomes Research

In July 2014, Dr. J. Lounds-Taylor, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics; Assistant Professor of Special Education, will begin a four-year longitudinal research study, with Hobbs grant funding provided by Mike Walther. The two questions being asked of all Next Steps alumni, current students, and students admitted in the next four years will be, 1) do young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who participate in the Next Steps at Vanderbilt Postsecondary Education Program have higher subsequent rates of employment and social participation, relative to a nationally-representative sample? and 2) do young adults with IDD who participate in the Next Steps program experience improvements in self-determination, adaptive functioning, social skills, and executive functioning. This academic year (2016-2017), several other research initiatives will be launched as an effort to capture the perspectives of faculty and peer supports who work closely with Next Steps students.

FYI...Academic Tutoring Lab: Pilot Year

Beginning Fall 2016, the Next Steps Academic Tutoring Lab will be piloted. The Academic Tutoring Lab will provide Next Steps students with remediation and enrichment, as individually necessary, through data-driven planning and instruction in accordance with their

Career and Community Studies courses (*formally known as Next Steps classes*). Career and Community Studies (CCS) consist of core classes that focus on content and skill acquisition in the areas of self-awareness, independent living, and career technology.

Within the Academic Tutoring Lab, a data-driven approach will be utilized based on the seven dimensions of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Partnering with the Vanderbilt's Special Education Severe Disabilities program with emphasis in ABA, graduate students will assume the role of ABA Tutors and provide systematic instruction and academic supports (e.g., visuals, task analyses, guided notes) tailored to each student's unique academic needs. Once mastery and generalization of skills has been met, individualized supports and prompting strategies will be faded. Systematic instruction and ongoing data collection will assist the Next Steps team with curriculum analysis, evaluation, and enhanced development of this organization.

Accountability and Standards

Next Steps students are afforded the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as other Vanderbilt students with some conduct regulations that are noted in the Next Steps at Vanderbilt Student Program Guidelines.

These regulations are in place to provide the supports and supervision needed for the program students. In all other instances, Next Steps students must follow the Vanderbilt Student Handbook for information, regulations and policies.

Resources

The Next Steps staff is always ready to support Vanderbilt faculty in regards to all aspects of the Next Steps students, Ambassadors, and the specifics of the program.

Coming Soon!

Next Steps is currently in the process of developing a Blackboard site for faculty to access pertinent information on the program, resources, and strategies. Stayed tuned for additional information.

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The Iris Center

Funded by OSEP and the U.S. Department of Education, the IRIS Center <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/> creates free online resources for use by college faculty and professional development providers. These resources—which are designed to improve education outcomes for children and young people (from

birth through age 21)—touch on a wide variety of disability related topics, including vision impairments, evidence-based practices, secondary transition, assistive technology and classroom accommodations, and many more.

The Tennessee Inclusive Higher Education Alliance

The Tennessee Inclusive Higher Education Alliance was formed to increase awareness about the need for and existence of postsecondary opportunities in Tennessee. Quarterly up-dates inform interested students, families, and educators.

www.tnpsealliance.org

Think College

Think College is a vast website with resources and a searchable database for existing postsecondary education programs across the United States.

www.thinkcollege.net

Watch and Learn from Next Steps at Vanderbilt Students About the Importance of a College Experience:

College and Beyond: Empowering Young Women with Disabilities
Postsecondary education is possible for all, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Next Steps at Vanderbilt is giving students opportunities to pursue their goals of postsecondary education.



I'm Thinking College (Even with my Disability)
Students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in Next Steps at Vanderbilt talk about their experiences at college and highlight the need for more such programs in Tennessee.

