

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**STATUS REPORT ON DEVELOPING THE REACH PROGRAM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

Action Requested: Receive the status report.

Executive Summary:

- ◇ During the past 15 months, the University has researched the possibility of developing and implementing a postsecondary program for young adults with multiple learning disabilities, which include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit disorder, dyslexia, and autism, among others.
- ◇ Such a program, called REACH (Realizing Education and Career Hopes) Program, would reflect many of the components of the PACE (Professional Assistant Center for Education) developed by the College of Education at National-Louis University in Evanston, Illinois.
- ◇ It would be a two-year, noncredit postsecondary certificate program which would focus on meeting the transitional needs of students with multiple learning disabilities in an active, participating, and inclusive university setting. Training would center on academic skill building, career preparation, life skills, socialization, and career placement following graduation. The majority of students would live in a residence hall on the University campus.
- ◇ To assess the need for such a program, the University hired Vernon Associates of Cedar Rapids to conduct a study of the feasibility of developing a postsecondary educational services program for young adults with multiple learning disabilities (MLD). The study participants included MLD students, parents of young adults with MLD, and educational and service resource partners.
- ◇ The following were key goals of the study:
 - ☑ Provide an estimated incidence rate of the student population in Iowa who meet the criteria of the proposed program.
 - ☑ Gauge parental interest, establish price sensitivity, and explore marketing strategies for the proposed program.
 - ☑ Delve into MLD educational experiences, concerns regarding potential participation, and attitudes toward similar programs in existence from MLD students, parents, and resource providers.
- ◇ Tuition for a program of this type is likely to be \$25,000 - \$30,000 per year. Only 19% of the survey respondents indicated that the proposed tuition would be no barrier or only somewhat of a barrier to their child's participation; 35% of the respondents indicated that the proposed tuition would prohibit their child's participation.

- ◇ The following learning disability challenges were identified by the survey respondents:
 - ☑ Learning delays result in difficulty focusing on coursework, comprehending the material, keeping pace with the rest of the class, and completing homework and tests.
 - ☑ Parents see an inability to learn in traditional environments.
 - ☑ Underdeveloped life skills include setting goals, money management, social interaction, finding work, and managing a schedule.

- ◇ Using a population estimate method, the study determined that 150 students in Iowa would qualify, meet the financial obligations, and have a strong interest in the program.

- ◇ The following conclusions of the study were identified by the consultants:
 - ☑ Almost two-thirds of the respondents have considered a postsecondary educational program but only 20% enrolled their child in a program.
 - ☑ Respondents indicated a preference for a program that is balanced equally between job training and life skills instruction.
 - ☑ Tuition costs and location are the two most prevalent concerns of parents for participation in a postsecondary MLD program.
 - ☑ Some respondents see the college courses as providing a better foundation for future employment, while others want their MLD children to share in the same “college” experiences as their siblings.

- ◇ The following recommendations were proposed by the consultants:
 - ☑ “It is feasible to create and maintain a program of 25 students per year within the College of Education.
 - ☑ Marketing efforts should focus on mothers of students with MLD who live in Iowa or Western Illinois.
 - ☑ Explore the possibility of grants and loans to those potential students with high school diplomas.
 - ☑ Include a high level of communication between parents and student liaisons to track progress and address problems early.”

- ◇ Some of the challenges identified by the University regarding the development of the program include start-up costs which might be as high as \$2 million and housing for 50 students on the campus.

Details about the market study are available in the Board Office.