

Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center

Annual Report • October 1, 2025

INSTITUTE on COMMUNITY INTEGRATION | UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MINNESOTA
INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM 



Kal-el Spears from Red Lake, Minnesota, is in a transition year at high school. Next year, he plans to study physical education and unified and adaptive sports at Bemidji State University.

The Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center (the Center) is part of the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. The Center provides advisory services and technical assistance to all Minnesota higher education institutions exploring, planning, or offering inclusive higher education initiatives. Additionally, the Center monitors federal and state legislation related to inclusive higher education and communicates legal changes that may impact these initiatives.

Additionally, the Center informs students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), their families, and local education agencies

across Minnesota about inclusive higher education options, training, professional development, and mentoring opportunities.

The primary goal of the Center is to expand access to high-quality, inclusive postsecondary education for individuals with IDD. We want all Minnesotans to have college choice, earn meaningful postsecondary credentials, work in integrated competitive employment, earn higher wages, and lead self-determined lives.

This report is legislatively mandated, as requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197. This report cost approximately \$1,155 to prepare, including staff time.

Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center

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MN Statutory Requirements

[Section 135A.161](#)

[Subd. 5. Reporting.](#)

The director must evaluate the development and implementation of the Minnesota inclusive higher education initiatives receiving a grant under section [135A.162](#). The director must submit an annual report by October 1 on the progress to expand Minnesota inclusive higher education options for students with intellectual disabilities to the commissioner and chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over higher education policy and finance. The report must include statutory and budget recommendations.

Inclusive Higher Education Landscape

Current Enrollment Options

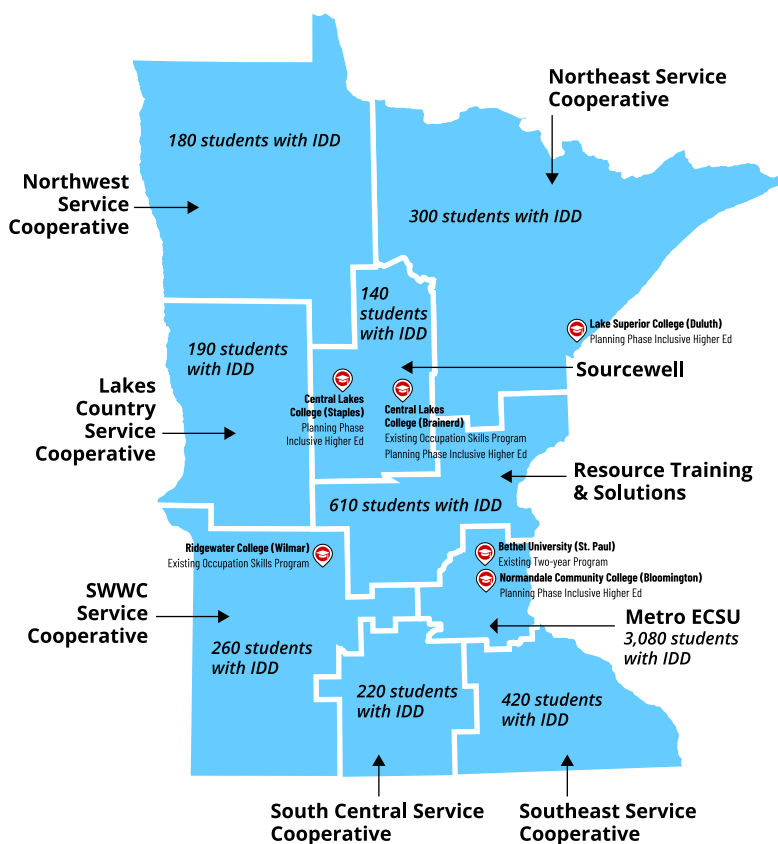
Minnesota currently has three colleges and universities—Bethel University, Central Lakes College, and Ridgewater College—that offer enrollment to students with IDD and hold a Comprehensive and Transition Postsecondary (CTP) designation. This designation allows enrolled students with IDD to apply for, and be considered for, federal and state financial aid. Together, these three institutions have the capacity to enroll 90 students with IDD.

Prospective College Students with IDD

Each year, approximately 1,000 Minnesota students with IDD complete twelfth grade. Presently, an estimated 5,000 college-age (18-22 years old) Minnesotans with IDD could pursue postsecondary education. The number of potential college-age Minnesotans with IDD is based on the Minnesota Department of Education Child Count Totals report as of December 1, 2024. Additionally, many older Minnesotans with IDD are also seeking educational opportunities. Limited postsecondary education options within the state create barriers. Many students with IDD are not continuing in postsecondary education. Other Minnesota students with IDD are pursuing postsecondary education out of state.

Building Capacity: New Initiatives' Competitive Grants

In 2025, the Center offered a webinar series leading up to the second round of competitive grants. The Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in April, and four colleges applied for funding. In June, the



Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Landscape: Prospective College Students with IDD and Inclusive Higher Education Offerings

review committee recommended grants for Lake Superior College (LSC), Normandale Community College, and the Brainerd and Staples campuses of Central Lakes College (CLC). LSC is completing its planning year and expects to enroll students with IDD in spring 2026. Normandale and CLC are beginning their planning year and anticipate enrolling students with IDD in the fall of 2026. The Center has established and facilitates a Community of Practice for the grantees. There is an opportunity for collaboration, leveraging resources and establishing Minnesota State systemwide practices. The Minnesota State systems office staff are supporting these efforts.

The third round of RFPs is anticipated in spring 2026. In addition to the existing grantees, several staff members from Minnesota colleges and universities are expressing interest in applying for the grant funding. These grants provide initial

funding for institutions to establish or expand inclusive higher education initiatives. The Center is collaborating with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to strengthen the application and provide greater clarity to prospective applicants. The Center offers webinars, one-on-one consultations, and open office hours to support faculty and staff.

Outreach and Awareness

A key component of the Center's work is outreach and awareness. The outreach efforts target two key stakeholder groups: (1) students, families, educators, and (2) university faculty and staff. This year, the Center released a Needs Assessment survey for students, families, and educators. The survey results will inform the work of the Center and college and university staff interested in or planning to expand enrollment. The survey results are anticipated before the end of the calendar year.

and will be publicly available. The Center staff work diligently to raise awareness and inform stakeholders that college is indeed an option for students with IDD.

The Center staff offers a variety of resources as part of its outreach and awareness:

- **Communication Tools and Resources:**

Between September 2024 and September 2025, the Center's website received 5,198 visits and 11,206 page views. The *Momentum* newsletter was launched in September 2023, and the mailing list grew from 865 to 1,146 contacts over the past year.

- **Professional Development and Training:**

The Center conducted twelve webinars, with five open to the public and eight specifically for Minnesota faculty and staff. Additionally, the TA Center initiated a Community of Practice for the three colleges that received Inclusive Higher Education grants to launch initiatives on their campuses.

- **Community Presentations:**

The Center presented at nine community events, including engagements with Lake Superior College, the Minnesota Governor's Developmental Disability Council, and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Summit. Staff also presented at the Minnesota Library Association Conference, Educational Opportunity Association Conference, Minnesota Association of Financial Aid Administrators conference, the Minnesota TRIO Annual Conference, and the Northern Lights Interagency Council Mentor Day.

- **Annual Conference:**

In September 2025, the Center hosted its second annual

conference, with over 125 attendees registered. The conference was a virtual event and was planned around the theme of transformation. Despite the challenging times, Minnesota colleges and universities are committed to expanding enrollment to include students with IDD. Prospective students, families, educators, faculty and staff members, state agency staff, and representatives from disability advocacy organizations attended the conference.

Technical Assistance

The Center provides technical assistance to students, families, educators, faculty, and staff seeking information on inclusive higher education, preparing for college, conducting a college search, application processes, and financial aid. The Center collaborates closely with the Office of Higher Education staff, who administer the competitive grant program and grants for students with IDD.

National Recognition—State Level Leadership Award

Minnesota's Center is leading the nation. The Center director, Mary Hauff, was awarded the 2024 State Level Leadership Award. The award is given at the [State of the Art Conference \(SOTA\)](#), organized and led by Syracuse University's Taishoff Center. It is presented to an individual who demonstrates significant leadership through state-level alliance building, leading efforts to enhance available funding for college students with intellectual disabilities or program development, and informing state legislation or policy to further the field of inclusive higher education. SOTA is a national conference that convenes colleges, universities, researchers, program staff, parents, and students to discuss the current state of research and effective practices in inclusive postsecondary and higher education. Hauff (center) is pictured with Julie Lackey (director of OK IPSE Alliance) and Jonathan Lidgus (director of the Office of



MIHEC director Mary Hauff was awarded the 2024 State Level Leadership Award in October 2024. The award is from the State of the Art Conference, organized and led by Syracuse University's Taishoff Center. Hauff (center) is pictured with Julie Lackey (director of OK IPSE Alliance) and Jonathan Lidgus (director of the Office of Inclusive Postsecondary Education at the University of Missouri - St. Louis).

Inclusive Postsecondary Education at the University of Missouri - St. Louis).

Expanding Minnesota's inclusive higher education options aligns with the state's higher education attainment goals, emphasizing the need for all Minnesotans to access postsecondary education and pursue family-sustaining careers. The Center staff is committed to this work.

Minnesota Statutory and Budget Recommendations

The Center has identified the following statutes to consider legislative updates to eliminate barriers and open opportunities for students with IDD:

- [120B.125](#) & [120B.307](#): Amend the statutes to ensure that students with disabilities with an individualized education program (IEP) can access initiatives connecting K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and workforce partnerships, including career and college readiness. Statute 120B.125 excludes students with an IEP. The definition of students who are college and career ready is too narrow in statute 120B.307. The definition should be expanded to include students with IDD eligible for college through inclusive higher education initiatives and not required to take remedial courses.
- [135A.012 Subd. 5](#): Include disability-type disaggregation in reporting on higher education attainment goals.

- [136A.096](#): Report on FAFSA filing rates for students with disabilities by disability type, ensuring disaggregated disability-type data.
- [124D.09](#): Review and amend the Postsecondary Enrollment Options statute to eliminate barriers for students with disabilities.

Federal Legislation, Actions, and Court Rulings

The Center has been monitoring several key federal actions with implications for inclusive postsecondary education:

- Federal Financial Aid—Federal Student Aid Needs Analysis was changed, which will impact Pell Grant eligibility. Students who are pursuing short-term workforce training will be Pell eligible in the future. The [NASFAA](#) summarizes the legislative changes.
- The Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Program (TPSID) Request for Proposal was released in July 2025. These are competitive, five-year grants through the U.S. Department of Education.
- The Inclusive Higher Education Network funding through the Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability – National Technical Assistance & Dissemination (PPSID-NTAD) grant was discontinued by the U.S. Department of Education. The funding ended September 30, 2025, but there is a no-cost extension through the next year.
- The U.S. House and Senate Health and Human Services fiscal year 2026 appropriation bills include level funding for the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs). This is the base funding for the Institute on Community Integration, which is the Center's home.
- Federal law reduces Medicaid funding, adds work requirements, and exempts certain populations, effective January 1, 2027. The funding reductions will disadvantage Minnesotans with IDD who have individual education programs, Medicaid insurance, or waiver services.
- The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the federal administration can downsize the U.S. Department of Education.
- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Reauthorization has not passed in 2025 and has direct implications for inclusive higher education.
- The Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act (TCIEA) legislation was reintroduced (S.2438/H.R.4771) to phase out subminimum wage payments and provide technical assistance for service providers to transition away from subminimum wage payments.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

The University of Minnesota stands on Miní Sóta Makhóche, the rightful homelands of the Dakhóta Oyáte. We recognize the U.S. did not uphold its end of these land treaties. It is the current and continued displacement of the Dakhóta Oyáte that allows the University to remain today.

Ongoing oppression and discrimination in the United States has led to significant trauma for many people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and other oppressed persons. At ICI, we affirm our commitment to address systemic racism, ableism and all other inequalities and forms of oppression to ensure inclusive communities.