Florida IPSE Credential Guidance Brief: # 5 FCIHE Credential Action Planning Tool

The Florida Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Credential Guidance Brief Series is comprised of a set of six stand-alone briefs developed by the *Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education* (FCIHE) and a small workgroup, in consultation with a statewide steering committee. These briefs were written to provide guidance to Florida stakeholders regarding credential development for Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs for students with intellectual disability (ID).

AUDIENCE: This brief is directed to

> 1) college and university faculty and staff planning to build or expand sustainable and rigorous IPSE programs and
> 2) community agency and school district personnel to increase program understanding, recognition, credibility and increased options for individuals with ID.

A meaningful program credential is required to become a federally recognized *Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP)* and a Florida recognized *Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program (FPCTP)*. Credentials also increase students' employment outcomes and career opportunities in multiple ways. For example, credentials enable businesses to identify a student's expected skill sets upon program completion and to recognize credentialed applicants as qualified applicants. Credentials earned through IPSE programs or typical degree-seeking programs, *and* sponsored by the college or university, represent valid and rigorous programs of study. This Credential Guidance Brief has a number of Florida-specific points of information as it was written for Florida, but program staff and faculty outside of Florida, may find the general IPSE information useful.

SERIES: The *Florida IPSE Credential Guidance Brief Series* includes:

> # 1 Background on Inclusive Postsecondary Education
> # 2 Programs of Study
> # 3 Exploring Existing Credentials
> # 4 Partnerships toward Credential Development
> # 5 FCIHE Credential Action Planning Tool (FCAPT) for IPSE Programs
> # 6 Credentialing Resources

ABOUT THIS BRIEF: The **FCIHE Credential Action Planning Tool (FCAPT) for IPSE Programs** was adapted from Shanley, Weir and Grigal's (2014) Credential Action Planning Tool to respond to Florida's specific issues and programmatic processes. This tool is intended to assist institutions of higher education (IHEs) in their exploration and development of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program credentials for students with intellectual disability. The FCAPT is planning-heavy and relates specifically to credential development, implementation, and evaluation, rather than IPSE program planning and development. An overview of the FCAPT and explanation of use is below. Useful resources, including websites, and acronyms are featured the end of this document.

WHAT'S INVOLVED?
Step 1. Planning
1.1. Convene a team
1.2. Explore and understand your IHE's current credentials' policies and procedures
1.3. Explore guidance and technical assistance from neighboring IPSE programs as well as state and federal inclusive postsecondary education organizations
1.4. Identify program of study and earned credential title

Step 2. Implementation
2.1 Develop and sustain communication pathways within the IHE and community.
2.2 Increase support and sustainability of the credential and program of study.

Step 3. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement
3.1 Establish and implement an evaluation plan
3.2 Develop and implement a continuous improvement process

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL
This tool may be personalized to develop a planning process individualized to each IHE's culture, policies and practices. Read through the entire document to identify the steps to follow sequentially, concurrently, or reordered as per your IHE's needs. For example, when planning, it is often crucial to do so with the end in mind, such as with your students' expected outcomes and a well-defined evaluation component. Additionally, this tool may be used to identify the plausibility of developing an IPSE program by exploring what is needed to develop the IPSE program of study and earned credential.

A Credential Defined: "A verification of qualification or competency issued to a student by an accredited institution of higher education—typically a diploma, certificate or degree. Students earn the credential by following and completing a prescribed course of study" (Shanley, Weir, & Grigal, 2014, p. 1).

This tool was adapted from Shanley, Weir, and Grigal's (2014) Credential Action Planning Tool by the Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education (FCIHE) for Florida's Inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs. The original tool may be accessed at https://thinkcollege.net/resource/accreditation-and-credentials/credential-action-planning-tool.

1. PLANNING			
1.1 Convene a team. Involve institutional partners such as college deans, financial aid and student accessibility offices, and other relevant personnel at the institute of higher education (IHE), as well as business leaders, community agencies, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and other community partners during planning process.			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
1.1.1 Establish the Credential Team	**What institutional key players are required?** • Include representatives from academic affairs, career, housing, financial aid, and university advising/support departments. **Define members' roles.** • Identify contribution expectations. **Develop strong community partnerships and invite partners to the table.** • These are crucial toward successful student outcomes. • Focus on employer partners and include multiple businesses, employers, agencies, and other community organizations (e.g., chamber of commerce, Rotary club, public schools, etc.)		
1.1.2 Establish Communication Protocols, Purpose, and Expected Outcomes	**Develop/Implement Communication Protocols.** • (e.g., meeting minutes, rules for participation) **Identify/Define Purpose & Anticipated Outcomes.**		
1.1.3 Identify Employer Priorities and Preferences in employees, regarding training, and hard to fill or retain positions	**Gather information about employer needs and agency requirements.** • Hold focus groups and distribute surveys to collect community, employer, and agency opinions. • Conduct interviews with employers to identify their employee and training needs as well as identify employers' most valued skills or credential components.		

1.2 Explore and understand your IHE's current credentials and credentialing policies and procedures. How will your program's credential align with your existing IHE's credentials? Could existing certificates be adapted to fit the IPSE program's goals and purpose?			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
1.2.1 Identify the IHE's office(s) responsible for student credentials	**Explore the provost's office, academic affairs, or professional or continuing studies, and adult education offices.** • Identify the decision makers and point persons who can guide you in policy and procedure. • Identify the credentialing and monitoring policies and requirements. • In what office/department will the credential be housed/supported?		
1.2.2 Explore existing credentials available at the IHE	**Identify existing credentials and certificates.** • Existing IHE credentials offer credibility and community familiarity and acceptance. • Are there existing certificates to adopt or adapt to fit the purposes and goals of an IPSE program? • Identify potential credentials. **Identify your IHE's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements.**		
1.2.3 Explore your IHE's institutional accreditation requirements	**Find the knowledge brokers.** • Identify and speak with staff knowledgeable about and involved with program and institutional accreditation • Discuss and identify how the IPSE program credential could be integrated into existing college/university accreditation procedures.		
1.2.4 Identify implications to participants regarding financial aid and state scholarships	**Become familiar with federal and state requirements and opportunities.** • Identify Title IV implications for the credential from financial aid officials. • View the Think College Learn online module on "Comprehensive Transition Programs" (CTP). • Align the IPSE credential with Federal CTP requirements. • Align the IPSE credential with Florida Postsecondary CTP requirements (FPCTP).		

1.3 Explore guidance and technical assistance from neighboring IPSE programs and state and federal inclusive postsecondary education organizations/centers regarding federal and state requirements for programs of study, financial aid, and employment outcomes.			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
1.3.1 Gather credentials, Programs of Study, and policies from successful IPSE programs and research centers	**Explore local, and regional IPSE programs and State and Federal resources**: • Explore credential development experiences, policies, and credential documents. • Contact the Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education (FCIHE) to identify state and federal resources. • Contact the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities (FCSUA) to identify state resources and contacts. • Review ThinkCollege for resources **Review credential components** for possible adaptation.		
1.3.2 Review Federal and State guidance for the inclusion of CTP & FPCTP requirements	**How does the Program of Study align** with academically inclusive coursework, gainful employment, independent living skill development and participation in college community activities, by students with ID, along-side nondisabled students? **Identify CTP requirements (HEOA, 2008)** **Identify FPCTP requirements (FS 1004.6495)**		
1.3.3 Flexible Program of Study (PoS)	**Include person-centered planning** as a key factor in the guidance process and development of students' individual courses of study. **Is the PoS flexible** enough to enable person-centered planning and individualized goal setting?		

1.4 Identify program of study and earned credential title.

Action Step	Considerations	Status	Notes/Next Steps
1.4.1 Identify student outcomes OR Identify intended student outcomes	**Define Program of Study (PoS) Purpose/Outcome** to prepare students for specific jobs or occupations, (e.g., office skills training) OR to provide students with a range of knowledge and skills for a range of occupations		
1.4.2 Choose the credential(s) and titles to be developed	**Where will the credential be housed?** • Identify the college or division that will house, support, and be responsible for the credential. **Identify fields and businesses to which the credential(s) align.**		
1.4.3 Develop the PoS	**Identify PoS components** • Utilize your IHE's current credential (s) and PoS to create the new IPSE PoS • Revisit CTP inclusivity requirements • Identify courses, electives, service learning, and activity requirements • Identify credit (or non-credit bearing) or hourly institutional unit requirements as the best-fit for PoS and IHE requirements **Identify the course progression** required for students to attain the credential		
1.4.4 Align Program of Study	**Align PoS with IPSE program goals and mission** • Alignment with your IHE's other credentials to facilitate sustainability.		
1.4.5 Obtain Institutional Program Approval	**Submit and obtain program of study and credential approval from the postsecondary institution**		

2. IMPLEMENTATION			
2.1 Develop and sustain communication pathways within the IHE and the community.			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
2.1.1 Identify Communication Channels across your IHE and community	**What channels will facilitate the growth and success of the IPSE program?** • Faculty Council/Senate meetings, Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Development forums, Comprehensive Transition Program approval, FPCTP approval (FCSUA) **Why are these channels important to your program?** • Identify and connect with communications colleagues from your institution?		
2.1.2 Develop an Internal Communication and Marketing strategy	**Seek guidance from colleagues** regarding communication messages and channels. **Identify your IHE's internal communications** • (e.g., academic meetings) to share information about the credential and program? **What are the mechanisms at your IHE to share programmatic information?** • What departments and colleges should you be communicating with: academic advising, admissions, and student accessibility services, counseling, career services?		
2.1.3 Develop an External Communications and Marketing strategy	**Identify external communication channels.** • Develop multiple messaging formats. • Share IPSE program of study information on the IHE's website.		

2.2 Increase support and sustainability of the credential and program of study.			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
2.2.1 Embed IPSE program within the IHE	**Identify existing IHE services and programs to support students with ID.** • Student Accessibility Services, Career Services, Student Government, TRIO, First Year Experience programs, etc.		
2.2.2 Garner support and expertise across disciplines	**Identify faculty and staff champions.** • Engage undergraduate and graduate students across disciplines (education, counseling, medicine, communications, etc.) to provide mentoring support. • Engage faculty across disciplines to garner support and expertise		
2.2.3 Apply for State and Federal program approvals	**Submit Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program (FPCTP) application for approval.** **Submit Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) application for approval.**		
2.2.4 Partner with community agencies (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	**Develop a working relationship with local VR offices and personnel.** • Explore the feasibility of program participants' applying for VR client status. • Seek collaboration with local employment services agencies (e.g., Best Buddies, Career Source, etc.)		

3. EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT			
3.1 Establish and implement an evaluation plan.			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
3.1.1 Define the purposes of the credential evaluation plan and how this aligns with your overall program evaluation	**Revisit credential purpose's alignment to program.** **How will of the credential's impact be measured?** • Increased academic knowledge? (grades, SAP) • Increased job placement to certain types of jobs? • Increased job retention or wages? • Continued education to additional IHE program. • Increased student independence and self-determination (i.e., in communities, job positions, transportation, housing)?		
3.1.2 Define the credential evaluation plan measures, indicators, and protocols	**Identify how the course of study supports** and aligns with credential outcome? **Develop methodology and timelines** for collection of student outcome data. **Determine exit data to be collected.** • Designate Timeline: 1, 2, or 3 years post program completion? • Integrated Community Employment: definition of employment (e.g., ≥ 20 hrs.) rate of employment, length and wages, number of hours, level of satisfaction, • Community outcomes: residential status • Identify staff to conduct data collection		
3.1.3 Identify the credential's value for students, the college, and the community by reviewing evaluation data	**How did credential attainment result in measurable student outcomes** (e.g., Integrated community employment, continued education, or living independently)? **Credential's institutional value?** • Measurable impact on recruitment and/or revenue? Benefits to the institution (community or national recognition?) **Credential's community value?** Collect data on: • Students' contributions to economic growth through employment; • Employers satisfaction in skilled employees to fill positions; • Satisfaction of graduates, families, college admissions staff and alumni etc.; • Review of community labor participation data		

3.2 Develop and implement continuous improvement processes			
Action Step	**Considerations**	**Status**	**Notes/Next Steps**
3.2.1 Institute continuous quality improvement processes through programmatic data evaluation	**How is evaluation data reviewed and discussed?** **How does the data result in recommended changes** in practices or policies of the program? • Will the credential change over time? • How do other programs at your institution address changes in requirements?		
3.2.2 Incorporate evaluation data in ongoing communications	**Share the program's credential and employment placement data** to show the performance of your program to facilitate ongoing employer recruitment **Share successful job placements** to facilitate developing relationships with additional employers or industries in your community?		
3.2.3 Explore applying for CTP approval	**Explore your IHE administration's interest in applying for CTP approval.** • Meet with office of students' financial assistance. • Align IPSE's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) with IHE's current SAP requirements.		

FCAPT Resources

Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education (FCIHE), FCIHE Brief 1.17 on CTP and FPCTPs; http://fcihe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FCIHE-Brief-I.17docx-1.pdf

Federal Student Aid, An Office of the U.S. Department of Education, Federal CTP requirements; https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities

Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities, FPCTP application and requirements; https://fcsua.org/I_application.php

Person-Centered Planning, Project 10; Transition Education Network; http://project10.info/Star.php

ThinkCollege, the National Coordinating Center for the Federal Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability; https://ThinkCollege.net.

Think College LEARN: Comprehensive Transition Programs online modules; https://thinkcollege.net/think-college-learn/comprehensive-transition-programs-0

Acronyms & Terms

APSE: APSE, the Association of People Supporting Employment First, is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Competitive Integrated Employment: Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE), real work for real pay is the gold standard of transition outcomes for students with disabilities. The work should align with the post-school employment goals of the student and is the desired transition outcome for all students with disabilities who choose to work, regardless of disability or needed accommodations or support. CIE should be a realistic and desirable expectation for all students.

CTP: Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program; a set of federal guidelines, set out in HEOA of 2008, that defines an inclusive postsecondary education program for individuals with intellectual disability. Students attending institutions of higher education, who apply for and receive CTP approval, may access specific Federal Student Aid. See CTP requirements or the FCIHE Brief 1.17 for more information.

Employment First: Employment First, means that employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly funded systems. Simply put, Employment First means real jobs, real wages. See http://www.employmentfirstfl.org/ for more Florida specific information.

FCIHE: Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education, www.FCIHE.com

FCSUA: Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities, www.FCSUA.org

FPCTP: Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program

HEOA: Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008)

ID: Intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. Generally, an IQ test score 70 or below indicates an intellectual disability.

IHE: Institution of higher education, a university, state, or technical college

IPSE: Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program; enrollment in an on-campus college program, in which students with intellectual disability attend academically inclusive college courses, engage in campus clubs and activities with their peers without disability, increase personal development and life skills, earn a career focused credential with the goal of integrated competitive employment upon graduation.

PCP: Person-Centered Planning; for more information go to http://project10.info/Star.php

PoS: Program of Study; the required courses, internships, and activities a student completes to earn the credential.

SAP: Satisfactory Academic Progress; the successful accomplishment of a set of expectations for the IHE and/or Program of Study in which the student is enrolled. Accomplishment of SAP is required to retain state and federal scholarships and/or financial aid eligibility.

ThinkCollege: Think College is the National Coordinating Center for the Federal TPSID projects, www.ThinkCollege.net.

TPSID: A federal discretionary program to increase and enhance inclusive postsecondary education for students with intellectual disability. Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability. See www.FCIHE.com for a list of Florida's TPSID programs and contacts.

TRIO: is a set of federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, McNair Post baccalaureate Achievement Program and others.. Florida TRIO programs http://faeopp.weebly.com/

VR: Vocational Rehabilitation, Florida Department of VR, http://www.rehabworks.org/

WIOA: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Acts (2014) is a comprehensive federal law, intended to streamline, consolidate, and improve workforce development and training services for various groups, including youth and workers with disabilities.

References

Shanley, J., Weir, C., & Grigal, M. (2014). *Credential Action Planning Tool for Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*. Boston, MA, Think College, University of Massachusetts Boston. Retrieved from https://thinkcollege.net/resource/accreditation-and-credentials/credential-action-planning-tool.

Shanley, J., Weir, C., & Grigal, M. (2014*). Credential Development in Inclusive Higher Education Programs. Serving Students with Intellectual Disabilities*. Think College Insight Brief, Issue No. 25. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion. Retrieved from https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/25developing%20student%20credentials_F.pdf

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