



The Initiative for Empowerment and Economic Independence at Eskenazi Health

Greg Fehribach, Program Founder

IEEI's mission

To empower Indiana college students with physical disabilities to find gainful, sustainable, and equitable employment by engaging qualified students into comprehensive and diverse internship opportunities that build skills, confidence, and work history to maximize competitiveness in the workforce.

College students with physical disabilities

IEEI's niche is college students with physical disabilities.

- Mobility, orthopedic, visual, hearing
- These students face unique barriers to employment that other SWDs may not encounter
- Supportive of efforts of Easter Seals, ARC, etc., but IEEI works solely with college students with physical disabilities

About Eskenazi Health

- Essential care hospital system for residents of Marion County (formerly Wishard)
- 315 bed hospital; over 1 million outpatient visits a year
- 10 primary care centers across Indianapolis; 21 Midtown Mental Health clinics; EMS
- Education is essential to Eskenazi Health's mission

Origins of IEEI

- Partnership between Ball State & Eskenazi Health in 2013
- Ball State's history of access & inclusion
- Only BSU students through 2016
- Summer of 2018 – 22 interns from 12 colleges
- Total of 73 internships so far through IEEI

Why IEEI is Needed

- 18.7% of PWDs in the workforce compared to 65.7% without disabilities
- Unemployment rates
 - PWDs – 9.2%; PWODs – 4.2%
- 32% of PWDs employed part-time; 17% for PWODs
- As high as 50% of college grads with physical disabilities are not working
- After earning degree, PWDs earn 38% less than those without disabilities

More Stats

- 63% of SWDs graduate high school; 82% of SWODs graduate high school
- 55% of SWDs enroll in postsecondary education; 62% for SWODs
- 56% of jobs require some level of postsecondary education
- Good news – SWDs graduate postsecondary at rates similar to SWODs (38% vs 41%)
 - BSU research shows higher rates at 6 years

Barriers students encounter

- Attitudes/stereotypes
- Education
- Disability specific issues
- Disincentives to work

Attitudes/stereotypes

- Parental/family expectations
- Paternalistic or demeaning
 - “I was in 3rd grade with someone like you.”
- All people with disabilities are the same
 - “Have you been in the Special Olympics?”
- Objects of pity or inspirational

Educational barriers

- Segregation in K-12
 - Alternative diplomas that aren't accepted by most colleges
- Staff not trained to teach independence skills or assistive tech
- Lowered standards & expectations
- Inadequate transition planning
- Lack of access/accommodations in higher ed

“Setting PWDs on the path to achieving economic self-sufficiency in adulthood requires a strong foundation and knowledge and skills that must be laid in school.”

(National Disability Policy: A Status Report, page 45)

Disability-specific issues

- Accessible housing
- Transportation
 - Inter-county, weekends, cabs, Uber
- Reliable personal assistants
 - Morning & mid-day care
- Accessible workplaces & technology
- Essential vs peripheral tasks
- It costs a lot of money to be disabled!

Disincentives to work

- Make too much money & lose benefits
 - Negotiate for a lower salary!?!
 - Working less hours
 - Made too much money, so had to pay back Social Security
- Disability determination process is lengthy with multiple steps
- Is it worth it? Many give up.

“Preparing SWDs for skills development and economic independence often includes early opportunities such as job shadowing, internships, part-time jobs, and volunteer work. SWDs are less likely to have these opportunities.”

(National Disability Policy: A Status Report, page 47)

IEEI internships

- Paid internships in a field related to the student's major
- 8 week internships
- For current college students in Indiana, Indiana residents at out-of-state colleges, or graduates within the last year
- Majority of internships are in the summer, but fall and spring sessions are also offered

I'm not a health care major...

- Like any university, there are numerous departments within Eskenazi Health
- Examples of intern placements:
 - IT, Grants, Public Affairs & Communication, Rehabilitation, Wellness, Mental Health, Foundation, Professional Development
- Corporate partners such as Eli Lilly, Hiron, & Old National Bank have hosted interns

Benefits of IEEI internships

- Physical access at Eskenazi
- Accommodations provided
- Housing offered when needed
- Assistance with transportation for commuters
- Wraparound professional development
 - Weekly Lunch and Learn programs
 - Networking opportunities
 - Mentoring with peers and senior leaders

Application process

- IEEI staff will give campus presentations to interested students
- Students should meet with Career Services to develop a resume and cover letter and do mock interviews
- Resume, cover letter, and three letters of reference submitted to IEEI
- IEEI staff will interview students & facilitate internship placements

Outcomes for interns

- Interns developed skills and competencies that will significantly help their job searches
- Interns gained experience in identifying and addressing barriers which stand between them and a successful transition to post-graduation employment
- Interns learned how to be self-advocates and to ask for what they needed in order to be successful
- Interns developed a more positive outlook on their career prospects post-graduation
- Importance of professionals understanding the barriers to employment and supporting students
- Interns' hands-on experiences helped them recognize how their disabilities would play into their work, also showed potential employers that they were just as capable of doing the work as those who were able-bodied

Future plans

- More interns & additional employers!
- Opening of the Gregory S. Fehribach Center in 2019
 - Enhanced outreach to K-12 & higher ed on the transitions to college & employment
 - Research & public policy initiatives
 - Interactive job site created for IEEI alums & corporate partners
 - Replicating the model nationally

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