Individuals with disabilities often encounter obstacles in postsecondary education and work environments. The Postsecondary Access and Training for Human Services (PATHS) program at Texas A&M University through the Center on Disability and Development provides these students with specialized career training opportunities while at the same time promoting inclusion on the TAMU campus. Anyone and everyone can benefit from diversity and inclusion. The PATHS program not only benefits the students by providing them with the skills necessary to succeed academically and socially in a college environment, but it also benefits the other TAMU students, faculty, and staff. Promoting diversity and inclusion can unite a community and also bring together individuals with different experiences, views, ideas, and dreams for the betterment of the community. The program provides students with mentors who are current TAMU students with varying professional interests to help facilitate the PATHS student success in and out of the classroom. Undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and staff from different departments and organizations across campus participate in the PATHS program as instructors and facilitators. The combination of specialized career training and campus inclusion perpetuates employment success post-graduation.

What is the PATHS Program?

Purpose: To provide individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) access to an inclusive postsecondary education program to prepare them for employment in the health and human service field.

Summer Program:
- 4-week program
- On-campus living
- Classroom instruction on campus
- Instruction includes independent living skills, social skills, professional skills, personal safety skills, self-advocacy skills, goal-setting, and community living skills

PATHS Program:
- 1-year program (Texas A&M Academic year) with 2 tracks: Childcare Professional and Direct Support Professional

Fall semester includes:
- Classes on campus
- Career site observations and volunteer opportunities
- Participating in community and campus activities and organizations

Spring Semester includes:
- Continuation of campus classes and community activities
- Field-Based Experience (Practicum or Internship)

Inclusion involves incorporating individuals into a specific group or environment. The PATHS program focuses on the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in college life and the Texas A&M University campus. PATHS creates a significant impact on the diversity of the TAMU campus.

- PATHS students live independently in campus dormitories with other students who attend Texas A&M University
- PATHS students use TAMU transportation to attend campus classes and TAMU events
- PATHS Courses are taught in collaboration with the TAMU Department of Health and Kinesiology, TAMU Department of Educational Psychology, TAMU AgriLife Extension, TAMU Beutel Student Health Center, TAMU Career Center, TAMU Dance Program, and TAMU Department of Student Life: Health Promotions

In a PATH to Inclusion: Involvement of Adults with Disabilities in a Postsecondary Setting to Encourage Campus-Wide Diversity

Alyce Odasso, Christina Gushanas, Mary Whirley, Jesse Cahill, Meagan Sumbera
Texas A&M University

Abstract

Inclusion involves incorporating individuals into a specific group or environment. The PATHS program focuses on the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in college life and the Texas A&M University campus. PATHS creates a significant impact on the diversity of the TAMU campus.

Promoting Inclusion and Impact on TAMU Campus

Texas A&M Undergraduates

Lathan Moore
Senior, Engineering Technology
Houston, TX

I LOVE being a mentor because at the end of the day I know that I am making a difference in the lives of others each day. I feel that after graduating, my job will assist me in being more open minded to everyone and their circumstances and situations. It will also help me in the case of problem solving when it comes to working with others, as well as working and thinking on my toes. Lastly, being an engineer it will also give me the ability to help create and innovate to help cater to the world of disabilities, something which I feel does not get enough attention.

Texas A&M Faculty & Staff

Kim Williams
Assistant EMS Manager
Student Health Services

Working with the PATHS program as a CPR instructor was a delight. Working with the PATHS program has impacted me professionally by challenging the way I teach classes to all different types of people. It taught me to think on my feet and sometimes improvise if a student needs to learn things differently. The PATHS program is doing wonderful things on the TAMU campus by providing our future community members with exciting and challenging opportunities that will help them grow and learn and will continue to positively impact the TAMU family for years to come.

PATHS Success

PATHS Direct Support Professional Graduate

I just wanted to let you know that I am now officially a Licensed CNA! In my opinion, it has many of the same attributes as a DSP! You deal with the elderly and you are there to suit their needs.

PATHS has helped me be more independent in career searching and also has helped me understand more the importance of helping others! With my certification from A&M and my certification from the CNA, I can lead a successful and fulfilling life and career.

PATHS Success: By the Numbers

A) Working Status

- 63% working part-time, full-time

B) Wage Increase

- Average graduate income increased ~8% when comparing starting to current wage

C) Program Satisfaction

- 100% satisfied or highly satisfied

Figure 1. PATHS program graduates’ achievement and satisfaction.

To investigate the outcomes of the PATHS program we surveyed 27 cohorts who graduated between 2012-14. We found that 63% of graduates were either working part-time, full-time or volunteering (Fig. 1A). Average graduate income increased ~8% when comparing starting to current wage (Fig. 1B), suggesting skills acquired in the PATHS program contributed to PATHS cohorts’ performance in the workplace. To assess satisfaction of PATHS graduates with the PATHS program after work experience we asked whether graduates were satisfied, unsatisfied, or highly satisfied with the PATHS program. Notably, all PATHS graduates were either satisfied or highly satisfied with the PATHS program (Fig. 1C). Taken together, these data suggest that the methodology used to train PATHS graduates is effective for both cohort and employers.