Educational Policies Committee Program Proposal, Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, July 19, 2013 – Institute for Interdisciplinary Transition Services

Utah State University

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Institution Submitting Request: Utah State University
Proposed Title: Institute for Interdisciplinary Transition Services
Currently Approved Title:
School or Division or Location: Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services
Department(s) or Area(s) Location: Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation
Recommended Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code (for new programs): 13.1019
Current Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code (for existing programs): 00.0000
Proposed Beginning Date (for new programs): Spring 2013
Institutional Board of Trustees’ Approval Date: March 8, 2013

Proposal Type (check all that apply):

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*Requires “Section VI: Program Curriculum” of Abbreviated Template

Chief Academic Officer (or Designee) Signature:
I certify that all required institutional approvals have been obtained prior to submitting this request to the Office of the Commissioner.

____________________________________
Signature
Date:

Printed Name: Laurens H. Smith
Executive Senior Vice Provost

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Section I: Request

Utah State University requests approval to create the Institute for Interdisciplinary Transition Services (IITS), effective Fall, 2013. Transition Services refer to the process of facilitating the progression of students with disabilities from special education programs into employment and/or higher education following high school. The transition process is complex, and is more effective when professionals from many different areas (e.g. special education, rehabilitation counseling, school counseling, family services, etc.) work collaboratively to accomplish the goals and objectives of the student. The IITS will function as the organizational structure to coalesce the educational, research, and community service transition initiatives and activities that are occurring at Utah State University. By bringing these initiatives and activities together in a single organizational structure, Utah State University will be in a stronger position to build collaborative relationships with other universities, recruit exceptional faculty and students, compete for external funding, and build a national reputation and identity as a leader in transition research and services for individuals with disabilities.

The mission of the IITS is to promote the use of empirically validated, quality transition services for students with disabilities and their families. This may be accomplished through the following activities:

1. Establish Evidence-Based Practice in Transition Through Research - The IITS will work to design and empirically validate curriculum and intervention processes that result in improved transition outcomes. Faculty will utilize multiple research methodologies to accomplish this, and utilize the four level model of evidence-based practice outlined by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Team (NSTTAC).

2. Policy and Legislation Analysis - The establishment of relevant laws and policies has a significant impact on the way in which services are provided, and the priority given to transition activities. As is evident in state and national data, the current policies and legislation do not translate into positive outcomes for students with disabilities. The IITS will conduct research on the impact of state and federal legislation and policies on the transition process, with particular attention to how policies influence practice with individuals with disabilities.

3. Disseminate Knowledge Through Systems Change - All services are provided through state and federal systems of service delivery. This may include such entities as schools and state vocational rehabilitation agencies. The IITS will disseminate the findings of its research activities to the community systems involved in transition services, and assist in the process of translating that knowledge into practice.

4. Foster Pre-Service and In-Service Education - The dynamic nature of transition requires that those involved in providing transition services engage in a continuous process of professional development. The IITS will actively engage in both pre-service and in-service educational activities. Pre-service educational activities focus on preparing those individuals who are new to the service arena, usually those who are enrolled in degree programs at universities (undergraduate and graduate). In-service training occurs with those who are currently working in the service arena. In both cases, the training will be grounded in evidence-based transition practice.
The thematic organization of the IITS, and the current efforts in each area of activity, are provided in the graphic located in the Appendix.

Section II: Need

The transition of youth with disabilities from high school special education programs to employment and post-secondary education is a significant issue in Utah, and nationally. Transition outcome data indicates that the percentage of students with disabilities who go on to higher education and/or employment is significantly lower than the general population in Utah, and across the nation. Instead, young adults with disabilities are often served in publicly funded programs. When students with disabilities fail to achieve an employment and/or higher education objective, there is a negative impact on the economy, the expenditure of personal and family resources, level of public support for those individuals, and individual health and quality of life. Due to the negative personal and societal impact associated with poor transition outcomes, attention to the issue of transition services for youth with disabilities has increased at the state and federal level. Examples of this increase in attention to transition services include the recommendations of the National Council on Disability (2008), as well as in the TEAM-Education Act and TEAM-Employment Act, which have both been referred to the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education. In a recent study conducted by the Government Accounting Organization (2012), it was found that there was “a lack of sufficient information or awareness of the full range of service options available after high school on the part of students with disabilities, parents, and service providers”, and that “students with disabilities may not be adequately prepared to successfully transition to life after high school”. Additionally, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2010) conducted an extensive review of the quality of transition services for youth with disabilities, and found that an evidence-base is lacking in the provision of transition services. These are a few examples from a large body of literature, which documents the shortfalls of the current systems of service provision, and calls for increases in funding, research, training, and program evaluation in transition services. Clearly, this is an area that will be receiving increased attention for the foreseeable future.

The Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation is in a unique position to address this issue. The two primary professional groups engaged in transition services are special education teachers and rehabilitation counselors working in the State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation program. The Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation is one of a very small number of academic departments across the nation that houses both special education and rehabilitation counseling programs. The Disability Disciplines Doctoral program provides the foundation for interdisciplinary work for both faculty and graduate students. One common concern across specializations in the doctoral program is the transition of individuals with disabilities from school-based services to productive community and vocational integration. Thus, because of its interdisciplinary focus, the Disability Disciplines Doctoral Program will support the mission and goals of the IITS. Similarly, the IITS will support the educational focus of the Disability Disciplines Doctoral Program.

In recent years, the faculty in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation has increased the number of collaborative projects focused on transition services for students with disabilities. Over the last three years, faculty and graduate students have generated 9 peer reviewed journal articles, and 9 externally funded projects totaling $1,492,638 (A list of publications and funding is provided in the Appendix). With the establishment of the IITS, the visibility of these initiatives will increase and facilitate the marketing of USU’s leadership in interdisciplinary transition-related research, and the development of transition related education programs in the state and region.
The Institute for Interdisciplinary Transition Services will build on current assets and strengths, and increase the potential for expanding research and external funding. This will enable faculty from many different departments in the College of Education and Human Services who are involved in transition research and activities to easily establish collaborative relationships with other universities for the purposes of recruiting students and faculty interested in the topic of transition services, increasing the visibility of Utah State University at the national level, and obtaining external funding.

Finally, this will be the only such organization nationally that addresses transition services from an interdisciplinary perspective. USU is one of the few universities in the country with the critical research, educational, and service components needed to grow this essential aspect of professional practice.

**Section III: Institutional Impact**

The establishment of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Transition Services will have a minimal impact on existing institutional structures and programs. All affiliated educational programming will be run through academic units. The IITS will be housed within the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, and will be Co-Directed by Dr. Robert Morgan and Dr. Jared Schultz. As this represents an organization of existing research activities in the department, it is anticipated that the impact on faculty time will be minimal. However, as growth occurs, the research and teaching loads of participating faculty will need to be evaluated to maximize new opportunities while meeting the needs of academic programs within the department. At present, the faculty and students engaged in the research and training activities related to transition services are located in multiple buildings on campus. It is anticipated that the IITS will be housed in the proposed Clinical Services Building when it is completed. Additionally, should the establishment of the IITS have the anticipated effect; it is likely that there will be an increase in externally funded projects which will require space and facilities to accomplish the goals of the funded project.

**Section IV: Finances**

There are not any new funds being requested for the startup of the IITS. It is anticipated that the funding of additional faculty and staff will be dependent upon grants and the potential for development funding.

**Section V: Program Curriculum**

All courses provided in connection with the IITS will be arranged and coordinated through the academic department and programs currently established at USU.

**References**


National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2010). *Evidence-Based Practices and Predictors in Secondary Transition: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know*, Charlotte, NC, NSTTAC.
Appendix

REFEREED ARTICLES 2009-2012 (Listed chronologically. Bold print denotes graduate students.)


FUNDED GRANTS 2010-2012


Riesen, T. (2012). Training employment specialists to support people with ASD during the job search process. Sub-contract with the University of Utah, Department of Psychiatry and R. Harold Burton Foundation. ($9,000).
OTHER FUNDING 2010-2012

EmployAbility Clinic: Community-based employment services are provided to individuals with disabilities. Funding is provided through a fee-for-service contract with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation. Total funding as of 8/1/12 is $30,100.
Institute for Interdisciplinary Transition
Dr. Bob Morgan, Co-Director
Dr. Jared C. Schultz, Co-Director

Establishing Evidence-Based Practice in Transition Through Research

- Current Activities:
  1. Employability Clinic (Currently serve six clients at a time. Waiting list of more than 70 individuals.)
  2. School District Partnerships (6 Partner Organizations)

Participants:
- Bob Morgan
- Jared Schultz
- Scott Kupferman
- Jared Woolstenhulme
- Tracy Woolstenhulme

Policy and Legislation Analysis

- Current Activities:
  1. Utah Transition Action Team (41 Professionals from Across Utah)

Participants:
- Bob Morgan
- Jared Schultz
- Tim Reisen
- Scott Kupferman
- Jared Woolstenhulme

Knowledge Dissemination Through Systems Change

- Current Activities:
  1. Utah Transition Action Team (41 Professionals from Across Utah)
  2. School District Partnerships (6 Partner Organizations)

Participants:
- Bob Morgan
- Jared Schultz
- Tim Reisen
- Scott Kupferman
- Jared Woolstenhulme

Knowledge Dissemination Through Pre-Service and In-Service Education

- Current Activities:
  1. Masters Interdisciplinary Transition Specialist Training Program (9 Students)
  2. Employability Clinic (11 Grad Students)
  3. School District Partnerships (6 Partner Organizations)
  4. University / College Partnerships (4)
  5. Employment Specialist Training (Over 280 Professionals Trained Annually)

Participants:
- Bob Morgan
- Jared Schultz
- Tim Reisen
- Scott Kupferman
- Tracy Woolstenhulme