



Occupational and Life Skills Program: Introducing a Potential New Program at NWACC

Steven M. Gates
Senior Vice President for Learning & Provost



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What is the Occupational and Life Skills Program (OLS)?

- **Modeled after Bellevue College in Seattle, WA**
 - Program entering 14th Year
 - Current program serving 78 students
 - Seeking partners to expand service across the nation

- **Primary Audience**
 - Area students/citizens with cognitive disabilities who meet particular admissions standards
 - Number of area citizens, Benton and Washington County with cognitive disabilities is 9,823



What is the Occupational and Life Skills Program (OLS)? *Continued*

- **Primary Goals**
 - To serve a segment of this population currently underserved: the “tweens”
 - To empower students to achieve a greater financial and social independence
 - To provide an important link of support for the cognitive disabilities community

- **Program Focus**
 - Through an accredited curriculum, participating students are taught hard and soft skills essential for life and work in preparation for employment and greater independence.
 - A full Associates Degree, approximately 60 credit hours delivered over 8 terms
 - Students progress in co-horts of 12-14
 - Students are not eligible for additional entitlements, i.e. special accommodations. All supports comes from within the program
 - Rigorous preparation for capstone internship leading to employment



What is the Occupational and Life Skills Program (OLS)? *Continued*

Program Curriculum and Learning Outcomes

- Developing hard and soft skills to be an exceptional employee
- Building on one's "dependable strengths"
- Learning workplace etiquette and intrapersonal communications
- Learning personal financial management skills
- Learning self-supporting skills for greater social and financial independence
- Building a personal career pathway
- Preparing for a 200 hour internship with area employer
- Job development and matchmaking with the right employer



What is the Occupational and Life Skills Program (OLS)? *Continued*

Course and Content Examples:

- Personal Finance
- Office Procedures Customer Service
- Human Sexuality
- Cultural Awareness
- Critical Thinking & Science / Nutrition *(separate)*
- Healthy Relationships
- Controversial Issues



What is the Occupational and Life Skills Program (OLS)? *Continued*

Program Delivery and Teaching Focus

- Focus on learning style, not disability
- “Scaffolded Learning” approach to teaching and learning
- Small classes, co-horts of 14 students per year moving in sequence
- Traditional classrooms and labs
- Easy access to classrooms, labs and program staff
- Slower pace to maximize learning and achieve retention
 - 7.5 credit hours per term; eight, 16-week semesters (no summers)
- Managed participation with other college activities
- All support comes from within the program. No special support services.



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Student Audience

General Admissions Score

- A minimum of 72 on the standard IQ test ^{70 IQ}
- Has completed High School (Diploma, GED, or Certificate of Completion)

Common Disabilities

Non-verbal learning disabilities (NVLD), generalized learning disabilities, ADHD, anxiety disorders, traumatic brain injury, sight impairment, Asperger's and autism.



Student Audience

Continued

Other Characteristics

- May have attempted, but was unsuccessful in the traditional college setting
- Has experience working or volunteering
- Has challenges with “soft” or “people” skills
- Is motivated to obtain a college education
- Can critically think and problem solve
- Participates in activities and conversations
- Makes personal decisions
- Technology savvy: word processing, internet and e-mail
- Communicates personal knowledge and opinion



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Challenges and Next Steps

Key Program Delivery Challenges

- Program cost will require a higher tuition rate
 - Licensing fee for program content, Bellevue College
 - Higher student to faculty/staff ratios and intensive job development services
 - Recruiting and admissions processes more time intensive
 - Records and data collection
 - Program assessment and continuous quality improvement

Next Steps

- Finalize program budget
- Complete Community Needs Data Collection
- Gain local approval: College Curriculum Committee and NWACC Board of Trustees
- ADHE Coordinating Board Approval
- August 2015, tentative Program Launch



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Thank you!

QUESTIONS?

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