THINK COLLEGE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

University of Nevada Reno - Path to Independence (P2I)

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Introduction

The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) Path to Independence postsecondary education program for students with intellectual disability requested an external program review as part of an overall external evaluation across all programs at the University of Nevada Reno, Center on Developmental Disability.

The purpose of the external review is to provide information to support strategic planning for continuous improvement of Path to Independence (P2I), focusing on the degree to which the *Think College Standards for Inclusive Postsecondary Education* (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012) for students with intellectual and developmental disability (ID/D) are implemented. The evaluation report includes evaluation methods and process, as well as areas of strength and growth aligned with each indicator that was reviewed. Not every indicator was reviewed in depth and some identified areas for growth may need more evidence and in-depth investigation prior to taking considerable action.

The *Think College Standards* were used to organize the evaluation content, process, and data collection methods. The evaluation is organized across the following categories:

- Academic Access
- Career Development
- Campus Membership
- Self-Determination
- Alignment with College Systems and Practices
- Coordination and Collaboration
- Sustainability
- Ongoing Evaluation

Evaluation Methods

Multiple evaluative methods were employed for this evaluation in order to assess numerous facets of P2I across the *Think College Standards, Quality Indicators, and Benchmarks for Inclusive Higher Education* (Grigal, et al., 2012). Methods Included documents review, staff survey, and a site visit with interviews and observations.

Documents Review. Prior to the site visit, the evaluator reviewed the P2I website and requested documents for background information and in order to determine interview questions. P2I documents

that were provided included: agreements with local education agencies and Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division, P2I fee and employment structure, and program overview information from Think College and P2I websites, as well as a Powerpoint presentation.

Abbreviated Survey of Think College Benchmarks. An online survey of 61 items from the *Think College Standards, Quality Indicators, and Benchmarks for Inclusive Higher Education* was developed and reviewed by Think College staff. The purpose of the survey was to provide information unavailable through the documents review, identify topics for further discussion with P2I staff during the site visit, and help identify the level to which benchmarks have been implemented. Participants were asked to rate each benchmark using the following rating scale: 1=not planning to implement; 2=no progress; 3=progress but not fully implemented; 4=fully implemented. Four employees, three current P2I staff members and a Vista Volunteer who had recently completed her volunteer commitment, completed the survey. A summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Site visit. A site visit was conducted on April 29 and 30 on the UNR campus, and the site visit protocol and schedule are included in Appendix B. During this time, the external evaluator spent 14 hours conducting interviews with stakeholders and observations of students in academic and employment environments.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with:

- P2I students
    - Daisy, Ian, and Jesse
- 3 P2I staff
    - Mary Bryant, Director
    - Kellen Abe, Employment Coordinator
    - Jessica Keefhaver, Academic Coordinator
- NCED Director
    - Dr. Steve Rock
- Dean of College of Education
    - Dr. Kenneth Coll
- Faculty who have taught P2I students
    - Dr. Amy Fitch, School of Community Health Sciences
    - Dr. Tom Liesz, College of Business
- Education Coaches and Peer Mentors (peer supports)
    - Shay, Maya, Mackenzie and Lauren

Each interview included pre-determined questions that were developed to provide more in depth information across multiple Think College Indicators. Most interviews were conducted individually, however education coaches were interviewed in a group due to scheduling complications. In addition, while it was planned for all staff to be interviewed individually in addition to having time to meet with all staff to review the results of the survey, time constraints limited staff interviews to an interview with the P2I Director, and with the Career Coordinator and Academic Coordinator simultaneously. Interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

Observations. Observations were conducted of four individual students in the P2I program in three separate environments. Two students were observed at their place of employment, and two students were observed during their class sessions. One of these students was also observed during time spent

with an Education Coach working on homework. P2I informed the students and employers/instructors that an observer would visit. During classroom visits, the observer did not engage with the student, other students or the instructor before, during or after class. At employment observations, the observer watched the student perform his/her job and asked the student a few questions about different aspects of the job that were not immediately observable.

Program Evaluation

Program Overview

Path to Independence (P2I) at the University of Nevada Reno is a collaborative effort of the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities (NCED), the University of Nevada Reno Extended Studies Department, the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), local Regional Centers for people with developmental disability, and local school districts. It is a two-year non-degree certificate program that focuses on inclusive academics and student life, employment, and independent living. During spring 2019 P2I had 9 students and expects to have about 13 students in the program for fall, 2019. There are four part-time positions (total of 2.5 FTE) housed at the NCED that administer the program, a Program Director, Academic Coordinator, Employment Coordinator, and a Vista Volunteer. In addition, P2I utilizes multiple student employees and volunteers each semester as education coaches and social mentors. P2I has not received TPSID grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education.

Students are ages 18-28, and some have graduated from high school while others are enrolled in high school and have individualized education programs (IEPs). All students must be eligible for BVR or Regional Center services and, with the exception of a $3500/semester program fee, students pay the same tuition and fees that other UNR students pay. Students in P2I live at home with their families or in apartments with roommates and can participate in campus activities and clubs with or without peer supports.

Person-centered planning guides the students' experiences at P2I, but there is a basic program of study for students to follow. Students in P2I take courses from the UNR course catalog and are supported academically within and outside of the classroom by education coaches who are UNR students. Competitive integrated employment is a focus of P2I, and there are specific career development activities built into each semester of the program.

Based on the evaluation process and materials identified above, the specific details of the P2I program, its strengths, areas for growth and recommendations for next steps are organized by each Think College Standard below.

<u>Academic Access</u>

Students in P2I have access to the full UNR undergraduate catalog to fulfill the coursework requirements of the P2I program of study. They are full-fledged UNR students who are categorized as non-degree seeking, part-time students. They pay the same tuition and fees as other UNR students in this category, and spend four semesters working toward a certificate through UNR Extended Studies (continuing education). P2I has a general program of study that requires students to take 1 course in each general area each semester: a) math/science/environment; b) literature/art/language; c) social studies/civilizations; and, d) physical fitness. The students' pick courses that are of interest to them personally or that help them work toward their career/employment interests as identified through their person-centered planning process that is reviewed and updated each semester.

Courses can be taken for credit or audit, and staff reported most students take courses for audit rather than credit. Students can work with an ed coach whether or not a course is taken for credit or audit. It was reported that the course content and expectations are not "watered-down" – P2I students are expected to attend class, complete assignments, take tests, complete projects, etc. even if they are auditing (no grade). Coursework can only be modified/adapted if the course is being audited. Students taking courses for credit receive accommodations only.

In addition, students take two courses each semester that are not inclusive: an independent living course, and a technology lab. These courses are not in the UNR course catalog and are specialized for students in P2I. However, some coaches and social mentors participate in the IL course, and it is frequently taught by community members in fields related to the topic (e.g. sexuality/dating taught by Planned Parenthood personnel, chef taught cooking, etc.) instead of P2I staff. Most recently, the Academic Coordinator (a relatively new staff person) identified that students in the program did not have skills/experience using computers for the variety of tasks typically-developing UNR students use them for. Therefore, she created a technology course 1x/week in a UNR computer lab. It is not a credit-bearing course. It was developed to address students' limited technology skills, and very few students have or use their own computer for their college work.

Education coaches are identified to work with each student to support them in class, take notes, proctor exams, coordinate accommodations with the instructors, implement adaptations, and support students to complete homework and course projects. Education coaches also attend the physical education classes with students to support them to engage in the activity, increase their endurance, and model classroom participation. The Academic Coordinator provides initial orientation and training for education coaches and meets with them on a monthly basis as much as schedules allow. In addition, education coaches are expected to complete notes in Cognitopia, however, having them complete their notes consistently has been challenging.

Faculty/instructors do not receive any training or instruction about P2I prior to having a student in their class. They receive an email from P2I staff providing basic information about the program and the education coach that may be supporting the student, as well as a long list of accommodations which one instructor indicated was "intimidating." However, the overall purpose/goals of P2I program were unclear. On the staff survey to identify implementation of some of the Think College benchmarks, the benchmark aligned with faculty training in universal design received the lowest rating of all 62 survey items with a 1.75. When asked about training during the interviews, instructors were supportive of P2I and requested some training with their peers on topics such as: a) an overview of the program, b) how

they can include P2I students and support their learning needs, c) what accommodations/adaptations and UDL strategies they could employ, d) how to engage the student with other students in the class, not just the education coach, and e) how students can best take advantage of review and study sessions offered to all students in the class. One instructor indicated that a 1-page summary about the student in his/her class that included a description of helpful accommodations/adaptations, and a few meetings with the student throughout the semester would be beneficial. Finally, the instructors identified that they think an informational presentation or video to other faculty could help engage P2I with other courses and instructors in their departments to help meet the students' and program's goals. One faculty member also indicated they could advise P2I staff and students about department courses and instructors that would help them meet their academic goals. P2I staff indicated they have not trained any faculty yet, but see the need to start with some disability awareness training.

UNR students participating in the P2I program have access to UNR student services by means of their student status, and the staff survey indicated high implementation rates of access to and instruction in technology (3.5), and access to academic supports available to all students such as tutoring, homework help, writing center or supplemental instruction (4), as well as moderate implementation access to the Disability Services personnel (2.75). However, during interviews of students and staff, it was evident that while students could access these resources as well as other resources available to all UNR students, this was not occurring regularly or systematically. Staff identified that students did not directly work with Disability Services personnel for accommodations. When P2I started, Disability Services office indicated they would support P2I by sharing documents and email templates with P2I, but would not be involved in coordinating, providing or ensuring accommodations were provided. According to staff, the Disability Services office continues to support them in this way. Students in P2I can go to the writing center, but "not on their own", and it seems most students do not participate in tutoring services, supplemental instruction or other student academic services outside of working with their individual education coach.

When asked about their courses, all three students discussed the inclusive courses at length – listing the course subjects, specific content, and some discussed some of their favorite projects in detail. They all displayed enthusiasm for their coursework, yet none of the students mentioned the independent living courses. All of the students had education coaches attend class with them, and, next semester, one of the students plans to attend class independently and work with the education coach on homework and assignments outside of class. Upon being asked what the best part of college has been, one student responded, "It has been amazing."

TC Indicator	Strengths	Growth Areas
Provide access to a wide array of college course types that are attended by students without disabilities including existing courses (not separate designed just for students in the program), list of courses not limited to pre-determined list, courses that relate to person, and academic or career goals, and objective evaluation data on course participation	Students enrolled in majority of inclusive and existing courses from general UNR course catalog (no pre-determined list) P2I has attempted to make the IL class, which is not fully inclusive and is not credit-bearing, more inclusive by including peers without ID/D and having instructors from the community teach different content sessions (e.g., Planned Parenthood and local chef) Course instructors positively evaluate their experience working with P2I students and Ed Coaches. Students interviewed reported they like attending college and like some classes more than others. Students complete a survey each semester.	Address inclusivity of IL learning – teach these skills in more inclusive, natural contexts. Address inclusivity of P2I Lab (computer class) Increase the number of for credit courses students take. Consider ways to provide content that is provided in the IL class in more inclusive and natural contexts.
Addresses issues that may impact college course participation including access to disability services office for accommodations, instruction and use of technology, trained educational coaches, peer supports, academic supports available to all students, faculty trained in UDL	Cadre of trained, engaged and committed peer supports UNR instructors who seem engaged and want to improve the learning experience for P2I students	Improve/increase P2I students' regular use of computers & phones throughout the day to access textbooks, schoolwork, accommodations and adaptations. This should be at similar levels as other UNR students' use of technology. Increase involvement of Disability Services Office in coordinating accommodations for P2I students based on policies of the office related to audit/credit courses. Provide faculty training/information on P2I program, UDL, students with ID/D, accommodations, and adaptations.
Provide students with skills to access ongoing adult learning opportunities including variety of courses/adult education within their community and resources available to assist them to access/fund adult learning opportunities	Students use and have access to a variety of transportation services. Students are engaged with the Regional Center or VR, at a minimum.	Training is provided on use of city bus system, but is limited due to parents' concerns about safety. More focus could be put on facilitating the use of public transportation to access the community.

Career Development

Students in P2I participate in employment activities during all four semesters, and some career-related topics are covered in the independent living (IL) course each semester. The P2I Employment Program Description delineates employment activities by each semester. During the first semester, students are expected to focus on adjusting to college and attending a few sessions at the UNR career center, Nevada Career Studio. During the second semester, students rotate through two to three internships (that are primarily paid UNR student positions) in a variety of work settings (e.g., the student government office, media department, campus police, union events, etc.), based upon interests from person-centered planning. In subsequent semesters, students are in paid jobs or unpaid internships related to their interests and skills. All paid positions pay at least minimum wage ($8.25/hour in Nevada). Most of the jobs and internships are on campus.

When developing the work site, the P2I Employment Coordinator provides training to a worksite staff person/supervisor as a natural support and day-to-day job coach. He also checks in with students and supervisors at least monthly. Furthermore, for students staying in the Reno community after completing P2I, the Employment Coordinator assists students to find permanent positions related to their skills and interests. Students are also expected to apply for VR Services during their final semester at UNR, if they are not already VR clients.

Information from the site visit revealed that, as part of the P2I employment program, students go to the UNR Career Center for workshops, resume development, and mock interviews. Currently program staff do not work with UNR human resources department or the career center to identify student employment opportunities. At the time of the site visit and interview, the Employment Coordinator had only been in the position for about a year. Connecting with other employment/career units on campus can be areas of growth in the position as well as in connecting P2I to other campus units with a similar career development and employment mission.

Anecdotal information from the evaluation sources and information from a P2I presentation indicates that the employment data for P2I students is good; however, data was not requested as part of the program evaluation and was not found on the website. It would be good to share quality employment outcomes and relate those to national Think College statistics.

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Provide students with supports & experiences necessary to seek/sustain competitive employment including career goals from person-centered planning, access to trained job coaches/developers, opportunity to participate in service learning experiences, paid work experiences related to personal choice and career goals, connection with community rehab and other adult services providers to sustain employment, and collection of objective evaluation data on student employment	Intentional, sequential career development experiences by semester. Students have paid employment. Jobs align with student interests and skills Job developer is also job coach, who identifies and trains a natural support for the student at the job site. Strong connection with VR and DD services for employment. Uses the Think College follow up survey annually for all alumni.	Connect with other employment/career focused units on campus to identify additional internship opportunities, jobs, and career resources. Review evaluation data that is collected to ensure it addresses individual student, employer, and program needs as well as needs of adult services.

<u>Campus Membership</u>

The results from the pre-visit survey staff indicate that program staff have implemented some strategies to meaningfully engage P2I students with student clubs and organizations. Interviews with staff and education coaches further informed the evaluator that while attempts have been made by staff, peer mentors, and education coaches, for the most part, they have not been successful in connecting P2I students with student groups on campus. A social mentor reported that students in P2I do not respond when they contact them via phoneto invite them to do something. This was reiterated by a staff member in a separate conversation.

Student interviews revealed that students in P2I have mixed experience connecting with others and with organized groups on campus. One student connected with a cultural student organization and has attended regularly, one student occasionally gets coffee with his education coach before or after class, and the third student indicated he was not very connected with other UNR students or organizations. He said he "associates mostly with adults" and P2I staff. All three of these students live at home with their families, and two of them live outside of Reno, which makes participation in UNR student clubs and activities outside of the regular day challenging to attend.

Overall, it appears the authentic campus membership of P2I students is not as robust as academic and employment despite person-centered plans and attempts to connect all students to student clubs and organizations. Staff recognize this, have identified communication via phone/text as a challenge, and plan to take steps to address it. During the interview with education coaches and social mentors, it was mentioned that in fall 2019, they were starting a chapter of Best Buddies at UNR. The hope is that this organized activity will help students in P2I better secure social engagement with other UNR undergraduates as well as participate in university or student activities and organizations. Furthermore, staff identified social independence as a priority for development, and was hopeful Best Buddies would make a significant improvement. While Best Buddies may be one helpful strategy, if carefully implemented, the overall focus should be on the support and establishment of authentic relationships and meaningful campus membership of P2I students. In addition to the current person-centered identification of clubs/organization, specific individual supports including strategies and practice for better communication and planning skills should be addressed.

TC Indicator	Strengths	Growth Areas
Provide access to and support for participation in existing social organizations, facilities and technology, including campus clubs, organizations (including faith), community service, student government, Greek life, student sports/entertainment, recreation facilities, etc., residence life facilities and activities including off-campus housing, technology for social communication (e.g. email, texting, cell phone, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and social activities facilitated by students without disabilities with natural supports	Acknowledgement that this is an area that needs attention Education coaches and Peer mentors who are interested in connecting with students socially Some students have had success participating in a club. Facilitates opportunities for students to live in off-campus housing with students without disabilities.	Overall, prioritize student campus membership and develop specific strategies to implement for each student. Identify ways to regularly connect each student in P2I with at least one club/organization of their choosing. Identify strategies to create campus membership via the academic and employment environments by encouraging coaches to "get out of the way" of naturally occurring relationships and interactions in college classes and at work. Provide students in P2I training, support and practice in using their phones to communicate (GroupMe, What'sApp, text, etc.) Continue to work with the university on access to campus housing.

<u>Self-Determination</u>

P2I places a strong emphasis on the development and revision of students' person-centered plans and using them to help guide students' coursework, employment experiences, and other student life experiences at UNR. This is evidenced by the P2I documentation that reflects person-centered planning, the high implementation scores on the staff survey, as well as staff and student references to their plans during interviews. During interviews students discussed their excitement or anticipation in realizing some of their goals.

Although survey scores were high regarding implementation of students' opportunities to learn, practice or perform self-determination skills, observational data and content of interviews with staff, students, instructors and education coaches suggest that this is an area of growth for the program. Observations by the evaluator suggest that education coaches are acting on behalf of students more frequently than modeling, training, or supporting students in P2I to request accommodations, discuss class content or homework assignments, etc. with instructors. While the education coaches seem to be taking their jobs very seriously and are being very thoughtful and responsible, in so doing, they may unknowingly be decreasing students' self-efficacy and overall self-determination skills. Developing a few sample protocols and tools for teaching educational coaches as well as employment supervisors to support students to request accommodations and negotiate coursework or employment expectations may offer some first steps in moving toward supporting students in P2I to express their self-determination more fully. Other strategies for having peers facilitate, coach and reinforce self-determination skills are warranted.

In addition, students in P2I can be shown how to use a calendar system with reinforcement and practice in natural situations. Although they are being trained to use Cognitopia to track their goal progress, managing their own schedules and sharing it with others may have a more substantial long-term impact on their life beyond college. Student interviews indicated they identify how they want to fill their time and show preferences for activities but may not be taking the next steps to put it in a schedule or invite others to join them, which, in turn impacts students' campus membership. One student did identify that he uses reminders on is phone, but that a parent manages his calendar. Learning to manage one's schedule is a common learning experience among young adults in college and is an important skill for employment, education and social environments. Providing more scaffolding, opportunities for practice, reinforcement, and accountability for students with intellectual disability will afford them opportunities to really experience the benefits of self-direction and "adulting." Students should have opportunities to determine and use a scheduling system that works best for them. Some systems to consider are paper planners/calendars, Outlook, and Google calendar, as they allow others to view and support a student to use it.

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Ensure student involvement in and control of the establishment of personal goals that, reflect student interests/desires from person-centered planning, are reviewed regularly and modified as needed to reflect changes in interests/preferences, address accommodations and technology needs, lead to outcomes desired by the student, reflect family input as desired by student	Students have a person-centered plan that is updated each semester and is used to guide their coursework, employment experiences and student life experiences.	A stronger focus on technology supports that will allow students to be more independent and self-reliant.
Ensure development and promotion of self-determination skills for students with intellectual disabilities as evidenced by students, monitoring own progress toward goals, directing choice of courses, activities and employment, involvement in course registration, accommodation requests, and tuition payment, involved in all aspects of employment (e.g. resume creating, job interviews, follow up calls, negotiating job change), interacting directly with faculty and employers especially requesting accommodations/supports, managing personal schedules for courses, work and social activities.	Students are involved in advising, choosing courses based on their interests, and course enrollment activities.	Identify multiple mechanisms and opportunities for students to lead conversations and negotiations around accommodations and adaptations or other supports for all aspects of their college experience. Give students training, model, practice, and support to interact with instructors and employers. Provide students with instruction, opportunity and reinforcement for managing their own schedules.

Alignment with College Systems and Practices

For the most part, P2I aligns with UNR's systems and practices: the credential is offered through the unit that offers other UNR certificates; students can access student services and campus resources; and, P2I uses the UNR calendar, policies and procedures. Overall, students have access to campus resources because they pay all tuition and fees that UNR students do. Therefore, they have UNR student IDs, regularly use the student union, recreation center, career center, and library, and many have used health and counseling services as well as financial aid office. While P2I students and families have the option to attend UNR freshman orientation, they are required to attend a separate P2I orientation in order to obtain information specific to the P2I program including an overview of the UNR Student Code of Conduct. Considering how to include P2I students and families in UNR freshman orientation with additional information/sessions to focus on P2I can contribute to overall student membership within the university and can help families realize the UNR expectations of all students.

The certificate that P2I students work toward is offered through UNR Extended Studies that offers other certificate programs. P2I staff work with Extended Studies staff to advise students on courses to fulfill their program of study and address their career and personal interests. All three students interviewed discussed some of their courses at length and with enthusiasm. Because P2I students are

non-degree students, they are unable to participate in UNR graduation ceremonies and activities, so they have a separate small ceremony. Other PSE programs have challenged similar policies with a justification that, for this population of students, the certificate is a terminal degree and that the time involved to complete the certificate is significantly greater than other continuing education certificates and is more in line with a degree program. P2I should consider investigating methods for advocating for students in the program to be included in future UNR graduation ceremonies.

Students in P2I are currently not able to live in campus housing due to a housing policy barring part-time non-degree seeking students from living in on-campus housing. This policy was put in place due to the significant growth in student population of UNR in the past 20 years. At the time of the site visit, working to include students in student housing was a strong consideration for near future growth. However, a few months after the site visit, two of the largest dorms on campus was severely damaged by an explosion and were closed. This has compounded the housing shortage on campus, and extended the timeframe in which it might be possible to work with UNR housing to open on-campus housing to students in P2I.

Based on conversations with all staff, students, and some administrators, and a review of a sample schedule, P2I functions on a college schedule and follows the UNR calendar, and includes activities consistent with typical undergraduate college students with chunks of free time, courses, work time, social activities and health/fitness. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) documentation was not reviewed for this program evaluation. Since P2I is a designated CTP through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Financial Aid, it is assumed that the P2I SAP satisfies those requirements. P2I should consider the degree to which students access the student services available to all UNR students and collaborate with these units to help them support a new population of students on campus.

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Offer a meaningful educational credential that has measurable achievable outcomes, outcomes are publicly available, courses & internships are related to achieving and maintaining gainful employment, outcomes/credential addresses engagement in college community life, service opportunities, etc.	P2I has a certificate that is through the UNR Extended Studies Department that provides other certificate programs.	Track outcomes in employment, independent living and life satisfaction regularly. Make outcomes of students publicly available
Provide access to academic advising that uses person-centered planning to develop student's course of study, reflects the satisfactory academic progress policy of the university, and is aligned with the credential	Students work with Academic Coordinator and staff at Extended Studies to determine academic courses related to career or personal interests from person-centered plan. The program of study is general which provides a lot of flexibility to ensure courses align with the program as well as student interest.	Review student learning outcomes and a grading process for academic classes

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Provide access to college campus resources, including admissions, registration & orientation, college ID cards, health and counseling centers, athletic center, IT, career services, dining services, Greek system, clubs, etc., co-curricular activities including practicum and learning communities, support for participating in existing on/off campus university affiliating housing, orientation, training and resources for parents of incoming students, and campus buses to different campuses/community	Students have student id's and have access to all student services. Students accessed health/counseling centers without issue. Parents have access to all parent resources available to UNR undergraduates.	Evaluate this to determine strategic next steps for connecting with university student resources/services to more fully engage students in social activities/engagement that are consistent to typical UNR undergraduate experience. Evaluate how orientation can include both UNR freshman orientation with additional sessions to focus on P2I specifics. Continue to work with the college to allow for campus housing options for P2I students who desire it.
Collaborate with faculty/staff by accessing existing PD initiatives on campus and offering expertise of program staff and students to others through training, course presentations, etc.	P2I staff is regularly involved in UNR diversity and inclusion initiatives and provides presentations to classes and others on campus.	Regularly meet with college faculty who have had P2I students in their classes to gain insight into how to best develop strong collaborative relationships with faculty. Review and implement the advice given by faculty interviewed for this site visit in terms of information sharing and collaboration.
Adhere to college's schedules, policies and procedures, public relations, and communications: review of university code of conduct with students, student participation in courses and social events, student participation in graduation exercises/activities, observation of college vacations and holidays, and not the LEA schedules, recognition of students with intellectual disabilities as a representative population in the IHE diversity plan, presence of students with ID on campus reflects college commitment to diversity- is included in college communication, strategic plan, mission statement, etc.	Despite having a number of students who are dual-enrolled, P2I strictly uses the UNR calendar and students have student ID because they pay tuition/fees as any other UNR student. P2I reviews Student Code of Conduct with students and families during orientation.	Work with college administration to allow for P2I students to participate in general college commencement activities.

Coordination and Collaboration

   The focus P2I has had in ensuring inclusive courses and employment, it is evident that much of the progress of P2I is made by collaborative team that works to ensure accountability and quality practices. While the P2I staff roles and duties are distinct, overlap of duties and responsibility to ensure activities

are completed as anticipated seems to occur naturally. P2I staff are a resource to UNR units, diversity initiatives, and employers, and their expertise is values and utilized by the campus community for the UNR inclusion and diversity summit, presentations to faculty and classes, and participation on accessibility committee. According to the two faculty members interviewed, they can work closer with them to provide more information about the purpose of the program, as well as universal design for learning and quality instruction.

While students in P2I have access to student services offices and resources on campus, it was reported that they are not frequently doing so. From conversations and discussions with staff and education coaches, it seems many of the services that are available through UNR units are being provided by staff or education coaches (see information related to this topic in the Academic Access section above). The strengths of this team may also contribute to the seemingly limited involvement with UNR student services simply because they can and do handle challenges, nuances, and individual student needs aptly among themselves or support the education coaches to do so. Making strategic connections between P2I, the students in P2I and other student services units on campus addresses inclusiveness at a deeper level, ensures other units on campus assumes their responsibility to support all UNR students, and emphasizes UNR's commitment to "embracing diversity as a proven path to institutional excellence."

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Establish connections and relationships with key college/university departments, as evidenced by students effectively use campus resources (e.g., disability services, financial aid, course registration, academic advising, health services and career services), program staff using college infrastructure (IT, maintenance, etc.), program staff aware of governance and administrative structures that may impact program, and program staff participate in faculty/staff governance or committees to contribute to the college.	Students access some UNR student resources with support from education coach or staff. It was unclear how frequently and comprehensively this occurs.	Evaluate the services available to students at UNR and identify priority services for P2I students to access as well as methods to address how they can access them effectively and independently. Identify UNR technology training resources for providing tech instruction/support.
Have a designated person coordinate program-specific services of the program, including, scheduling and conducting interagency team meetings, conducting person-centered planning and assuring results of those meetings are infused into students' daily activities, assuring data collection and program evaluation activities occur, providing outreach to families, providing training and supervision for education coaches, job coaches and job developers.	P2I staff have distinct and clear responsibilities for different aspects of program and gel nicely as a team. P2I has a newsletter, Facebook page, and effectively use individual emails/phone calls to connect families.	Determine alternative ways to train/provide ongoing support to education coaches since it's difficult to negotiate so many schedules to find a time that works for all to meet regularly.

<u>Sustainability</u>

Sustainability is a clear strength of the P2I program. While they are disappointed not to have received a TPSID grant, they have created diverse methods for funding that provides leadership other programs can emulate. First, since its inception, the program has been housed at the UNR Center for Developmental Disabilities that provides administrative support, office space, and other similar operating costs. Part of the P2I Director's salary is covered on the UNR Center for Developmental Disabilities core funding. P2I has CTP status which makes students who are eligible are able to receive federal financial aid (e.g., Pell Grants and work study). P2I has also instituted a program fee of $3,500/semester. At this time, P2I does not recover any tuition paid by students in the program.

Currently they have contracts with two school districts for students who are dual-enrolled. The districts make UNR the placement, and P2I receives funding for providing special education services to the student on campus, which covers the program fee. The districts also pay the students' UNR tuition and fees. In addition, P2I is a VR service provider and bills for specific VR services for students who are VR clients and who are in permanent, paid positions. Finally, P2I is also an approved Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Jobs and Day Training provider for students who have HCBS waivers.

The Dean of the School of Education was helpful in securing a private donation to P2I, and the Director has been very creative in securing AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer funding to fill a full-time media and outreach staff position. It is a high priority of the Director to continue to identify new sustainability measures in order to create stable funding. She made the distinct point that in order to increase the number of students in P2I, revenue and staffing both need to increase as well. Finally, she indicated that her position is only part-time, and that if she leaves, candidates to fill the position would most likely be interested in a full-time position. Perhaps it is good timing to request financial support from the university in some capacity (e.g., tuition recover, provide costs of some support, etc.).

To what extent P2I has and works with an advisory committee, as well as how frequently they are communicated with was not evaluated but warrants consideration with respect to sustainability and ongoing evaluation. The need for developing outside funding mechanisms to sustain P2I. However, it is equally as critical to program sustainability that the P2I students are purposefully and meaningfully woven into the fabric of the overall university culture. This can be accomplished through a focus on campus collaboration and campus membership strategies.

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Utilize diverse sources of funding for students and program including: Financial aid, National Service grants, Medicaid waivers, vocational rehabilitation, state funds, IDEA funds, DD Services agency funds, Family funds, Private/federal grant funds	P2I has very diverse funding and has identified creative use of VISTA volunteer funding.	Working with UNR endowment or others to secure private funding (private donor or foundation) to assist in launching new or revised elements of P2I.
Having a planning and advisory team which has broad membership within college, community, state, etc.; includes members from different roles – parents, former students, agency, community members, etc.; considers program policies, practices, and student outcomes for sustainability; and communicates regularly	Not evaluated	Review advisory council purpose, membership and involvement in program development.

<u>Ongoing Evaluation</u>

P2I staff conduct fairly extensive evaluation activities. Each semester multiple stakeholders are surveyed regarding their experience with individual aspects of P2I including students, instructors, parents and education coaches. Rating scales and open-ended items are included in the instructor survey. The Employment Coordinator meets with students' work supervisors each month to collect information about the work site. Finally, P2I conducts follow-up calls for every P2I graduate each year using the Think College follow-up instrument with a few more questions/items added. The only evaluation instrument reviewed by the program evaluator was the instructor survey. A content and process review of all P2I data collection methods, instruments, and recent aggregated data should be reviewed prior to determining priority areas for program improvement. This review should address whether the data collection instruments are providing the information needed, and that the data generated aligns with program improvement decisions.

TC Indicator	Strengths	Areas for Growth
Conduct evaluation on services and outcomes on a regular basis, including: Data collection from key stakeholders (e.g. students with/without disabilities, parents, faculty, college staff); Student satisfaction; Student exit data; Student follow-up data; Review of all data compiled by advisory team or other stakeholders; Implement program changes as a result of data review.	P2I collects extensive data each from multiple stakeholders on a semester basis as well as annually. Evaluation data is part of new VISTA Volunteer position duties.	Evaluate surveys to align them, as needed, and to ensure the data collected is meaningful for ongoing program improvement. Evaluate current P2I process for reviewing data and implementing changes. Consider how data are shared for marketing and for potential funding sources.

<u>Summary</u>

The purpose of the UNR Path to Independence (P2I) program evaluation is for P2I to have a purveyor identify strengths and areas for growth to inform strategic planning for program improvement in the coming years. Overall, P2I is a strong postsecondary program for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Staff and administrators are committed to its success and to a true college and young adult experience for students in the program. It is evident that foundational program elements were strategic, thoughtful, and inclusive in their development (e.g., meaningful credential, student status, inclusive coursework, employment, peer supports). In addition, P2I has been extremely resourceful and successful in ensuring long-lasting financial mechanisms are in place (e.g., CTP, dual-enrollment, VR services, Medicaid Waiver provider, Vista Volunteer program). These are all areas in which P2I can be proud and can provide exemplars for other programs. Areas for growth tend to fall around four standards that have some overlap: a) self-determination b) campus membership, c) alignment with UNR systems and practices, and d) coordination and collaboration.

Self-determination undercuts almost every facet of college life for students with and without disability. Traditional undergraduate students may emerge from college with a baccalaureate degree, but also emerge with much stronger "adulting" skills and experiences to rely on as they make their way in the world. Students in P2I should experience and gain from the autonomy, expectations, and tools that most undergraduate students at UNR do. While education coaches carry a lot of responsibility, perhaps they are doing too much, and, in their well-placed efforts to be helpful, may in some cases be a

barrier to self-determination much in the way paraprofessionals are a barrier to academic access and socialization of students in public school. This, in turn, impacts students' ownership and accountability for their academic progress and, to some degree, campus membership. Students may come to college programs with very limited skills and opportunities to practice independence and self-determination skills, and two years is not much time to hone them. However, ensuring that the expectation is for students to be taught, modeled, supported to do for themselves, to make a mistake and recover from it, make informed decision, and their successes acknowledged should be established early in the program and implemented throughout.

Self-determination tends to roll into multiple facets of a program, in particular, *campus membership*. Students need specific and relevant skills, modeling, multiple opportunities to practice, as well as opportunities to fail and recover. Coupled with this are supporting students to use methods of communication that is similar to the way in which most UNR undergraduates communicate, helping to prepare the student for the new group/environment, and preparing the group/environment for the student. Membership is beyond being in a club or activity (although it certainly helps), in some cases it may be in the perception of membership by others. If students are attending class always with the same person, never with paper and pencil to take notes, or not talking with the instructor or others in the class, they may not be considered "members" by other students. Ensuring that the support provided to students happens as much in the background and as discreetly as possible is helpful, and that interactions between peer supports and students is as equal peers and modeled for others supports membership efforts. Peers are often the best teachers for all of us.

There is some overlap with the two standards *Alignment to College Systems and Practices* and *Coordination and Collaboration* as they relate to access to college resources and connections and relationships with campus units as a method of P2I students effectively using those services. Ensuring students have access can be a hurdle in and of itself, and P2I has structured their program so that students clearly have access to most services. Moving beyond access so that students effectively use the service/support/resource may require preparing not only the student with practice, model and support to access a service, but to also conduct some preparation work to inform and support the service/unit to be prepared to help a student, and providing ongoing problem-solving with the unit so their staff learn how best to support P2I students. Having units take ownership of P2I students and thinking of them as UNR students also contributes to overall campus membership. Now that P2I has been established, it might be a good time to revisit the agreement with the Disability Services office regarding provision of accommodations to P2I students. Also, revisit the inclusion of P2I students in UNR graduation ceremonies.

Recommendations to consider which address some of the areas of growth include:

- Evaluate the current expectations of education coaches/social mentors, how those expectations are actually implemented in different settings, and how to make adjustments so that they are supporting students to do for themselves, or facilitating and coaching students instead of acting on their behalf. Determine strategies for training to incorporate strategies for facilitating inclusion and self-determination. Identify the purpose for each education coach to be in each course with each student – what is that person's primary purpose and function? Is it truly needed? Consider strategies such as: education coaches sitting away from the student, or asking another student in class to take notes, teach the education coach to help facilitate a

conversation between the student and faculty or just support a student to communicate in class by preparing a question or comment ahead of time, practice meeting a classmate, etc. Consider starting classes without an education coach in the classroom and add it if needed.

- Identify for-credit courses, workshops and opportunities for instruction in natural contexts or that already exist at UNR for IL instruction in lieu of separate course. Often health centers and food services provide workshops on a variety of health/nutrition/cooking topics and personal or public health classes typically address sexual health.

- Support P2I students to develop tools they can use to discuss their interests, strengths, concerns, and accommodations with their instructors. Provide opportunities for students to work with peers for model and practice with support to use the tools during a meeting with an instructor.

- Advise P2I students and families before they apply that they will be expected to have the technology devices that undergraduates at UNR have in order to fully participate in their courses. Work with UNR IT staff to provide some basic recommendations and review of different devices with costs. P2I or social security benefits counselor might be able to provide some ideas for funding/financial support to help make the purchases.

- Use phone apps as regular part of program communication that others on campus use for communication: GroupMe, TopHat, texting, email, google maps, transportation apps (Uber, Lyft, buses), UNR-specific apps, etc.

- Work with Think College staff to identify peer support programs that have been successful in having peers as academic coaches and social connectors and apply/adapt the strategies to the P2I program. This should include peer support training and ongoing support and assistance to them.

- P2I should carefully evaluate the Best Buddies model and make adjustments to it to ensure it is implemented with a focus on inclusive and equal membership for students on UNR campus with the primary purpose of connecting individual students in P2I with campus clubs and organizations. Furthermore, P2I might consider tying campus membership in a club or organization to required course credit or the credential.

- Provide more structured 1:1 in-person connections between P2I students and the social mentors to build rapport and make plans to communicate via text/GroupMe afterward. Social peers and education coaches are probably the best teachers for students using digital communication.

- Collaborate with student services units (e.g. writing center, tutoring center, counseling services, health center, etc.) to co-sponsor student workshops for any UNR student.

- Develop relationship with office of student life or the office that coordinates student organizations and activities to identify strong leaders in student organizations that might be good fit for individual students in P2I. Have that person make a warm introduction to the group leadership, and then P2I staff follow up with that leader to meet with him/her to discuss program and individual student who is involved in the club.

- Consider an appeals process for including P2I graduates in graduation ceremonies. Identify strategies to be made in the appeal related to equity. Other programs have run across similar policies at their university and have justified students' involvement in graduation ceremonies successfully. It is recommended to identify some of these programs, and ask them for any

written materials they used to justify the request. Think College may have specific examples that could be used.

- Revisit relationship with Disability Services office and collaborate with them to provide accommodations to students in P2I.

In addition, the following topics should be considered for further examination.

- *Family communication, training and information beyond initial new student orientation*. This should include input from families to assess their perspective and recommendations on what and how to provide families with the right amount and type of information as well as expectations of their roles. In addition, it might be prudent to identify how families perceive P2I and if that perception matches the program expectations as well as the messages P2I is sending families.
- *Ongoing Evaluation.* While ongoing evaluation methods were described, the actual instruments were not reviewed. A review of evaluation processes and instruments as well as the data they are eliciting and how it is used should be considered and any revisions addressed.

P2I is a strong postsecondary education program in many ways and other programs can learn quite a bit from them. As with all programs, there are a variety of areas for growth that need to be culled through and prioritized by P2I staff to determine which issues to tackle in the short-term as well as when to address others. The next step would be to digest the information in this report, and work together to determine priority areas for planning, consult others for ideas and resources, and create specific actions to address to address each over the course of the next few years.

APPENDIX A

Summary of abbreviated *Think College Standards, Quality Indicators, and Benchmarks for Inclusive Higher Education* survey results.

APPENDIX B

UNR P2I Site Visit Protocol

Site Visit schedule

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions