University of CINCINNATI | INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY EDUCATION CENTER

YEAR IN REVIEW 2024-2025

CEES • TAP • IMPACT • RAAC

Leading Research, Education and Services

IDD Education Center

The IDD Education Center at the University of Cincinnati empowers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to learn, work, and thrive. Through our four programs, CEES, TAP, IMPACT Innovation, and RAAC, we provide education, employment pathways, community connections, and lifelong learning opportunities. By partnering with families, schools, employers, and the community, we're creating a more inclusive future where every individual can reach their full potential.

Collaboration for Employment and Education Synergy (CEES)

CEES is a year-round high school transition program at the University of Cincinnati, following the university's semester calendar and a summer camp program. Designed for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities ages 14–21, CEES helps young people discover their strengths and prepare for the future. Through an individualized curriculum aligned with UC's semesters, students build workplace skills, gain independence, and explore how their interests can be applied in real-world careers.

Transition and Access Pathways (TAP)

The Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program at the University of Cincinnati is a four-year inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who want a full college experience. TAP helps students prepare for competitive employment, independent living, and active community participation. Students earn a university-recognized certificate and can pursue industry-recognized credentials. They follow a personalized pathway that blends specialized classes—focused on life, career, and self-advocacy skills—with inclusive courses taken alongside peers without disabilities. With individualized support, peer coaching, and strong partnerships with families, faculty, and employers, TAP builds on each student's strengths to help them thrive in college and beyond.

IMPACT Innovation (IMPACT)

IMPACT Innovation is an adult day program serving individuals 22 years of age and older. As an agency provider for the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, IMPACT offers lifelong services for individuals with autism and/or complex sensory, communication, and behavioral support needs. The program equips participants—referred to as associates—with the skills needed to build meaningful relationships, pursue vocational opportunities, contribute to their communities, and maintain overall health and wellness.

Regional Autism Advisory Council (RAAC)

The Regional Autism Advisory Council (RAAC) is a dynamic network of self-advocates, families, educators, and professionals working together to create positive change for people with autism and those with related support needs. As a membership-based organization, RAAC offers valuable opportunities for collaboration, training, and resource sharing—all grounded in community connection. We don't just support—we advocate, serving as a trusted voice shaping policies and practices that uplift individuals and families across the lifespan.

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Our Year of Progress

2024 - 2025

This past year, the IDD Education Center has seen incredible stories of growth, resilience, and community. From the 193 UC student workers who gained valuable experience and contributed more than 57,000 hours of support, to the 40 volunteers who dedicated their time and talents, each person has played a part in creating opportunities for independence and success for individuals that are served in the center.

The four life-changing programs have touched the lives of 262 individuals, which provided not just education and training, but also belonging, confidence, and growth. Through 30+ community partnerships and CEES's four pre-apprenticeship programs, we are building bridges to employment and brighter futures.

The impact extends even further: 200 RAAC members uniting around advocacy, five TAP scholarships opening doors for higher education, and a growing online social community of 2,600+ followers helping us share stories of possibility. And with 48 IMPACT transportation routes, we are ensuring that every associate has access to the experiences that help them thrive.

Every number represents a life touched, a barrier broken, and a step forward.

Together, we are making lasting changes.

193
Student Workers

57,652
Student Worker Hours

48 IMPACT
Transportation Routes

4
Life-Changing Programs

262
People Served

30+
Community Partners

40
Volunteers

210
Volunteer Hours

4 CEES
Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

200
RAAC Memberships

2.6K
Social Media Followers

5
TAP Scholarships

Director's Message

Dr. Christi Carnahan

As we reflect on the past year, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the IDD Education Center. This year has been defined by purposeful growth, bold innovation, and an unwavering commitment to expanding opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. At the core of our work is a simple but powerful belief: every individual deserves the chance to lead a self-determined life, to find and use their voice, and to pursue meaningful education and employment opportunities.

Strengthening Employment Pathways and Employer Partnerships
We have continued to expand inclusive employment pathways that reflect both industry needs and individual aspirations. By cultivating strong partnerships with employers across Ohio's advanced manufacturing and technology sectors, we're creating opportunities for people with IDD to enter skilled, high-demand fields. These partnerships are rooted in mutual respect and shared goals, and they give individuals with IDD the tools to shape their own career journeys and futures.

Expanding STEM Access and Credentials
Our work to restructure the pre-apprenticeship program into targeted credentialing pathways in Electrical Design and Advanced Manufacturing is opening new possibilities. Through hands-on training and industry-recognized certifications, participants are developing valuable technical skills and the confidence to explore STEM fields. Our programs are not just preparing people for jobs – they are equipping individuals to define their own paths and make informed, empowered choices about their futures.

Innovating for Individuals with Complex Support Needs
We are proud to be recognized as a national leader in designing innovative programs and supports for individuals with complex support needs. Whether through assistive technology, personalized learning plans, or inclusive communication strategies, our goal is always to support each person's autonomy, dignity, and self-expression.We remain committed to creating environments where every individual can thrive, make decisions about their lives, and be fully included in their communities.

Building Partnerships Across the University
Our reach and impact have been strengthened by collaboration across the university. By engaging faculty, staff, and students from diverse disciplines, we are co-creating opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, research, and inclusive teaching practices. These partnerships amplify the voices of individuals with IDD on campus and reflect our shared responsibility to advance inclusion at every level of the institution.

Strategic Vision and Planning
As we look to the future, our strategic priorities are centered on sustainable growth, research excellence, and the continued development of inclusive, person-driven programming. Our planning efforts reflect a clear commitment to supporting people with IDD in defining success on their own terms. We are investing in long-term strategies that honor individual agency, foster community inclusion, and expand opportunities for meaningful engagement in education and employment.

None of this work would be possible without the generosity of our donors, partners, and supporters. Your belief in our mission—and in the potential of every individual – fuels everything we do. Whether you give time, expertise, or resources, your support makes a lasting difference, and we are deeply grateful. Thank you for walking alongside us in this journey. Together, we are creating a future where all people can lead self-determined lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Wishing you a safe and inspiring fall.

Christina Carnahan

Research and Collaboration

The IDD Education Center is committed to developing exceptional programs that are not only driven by but generate and disseminate innovative evidence-based practices. The mission of the IDD Education Center is to provide meaningful quality life experiences for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Students and associates in the Center connect with their communities, engage in employment aligned to their career interests, build relationships and develop skills to become more independent. The IDD Education Center Research Network was established in 2019 and comprises UC faculty and students from across the University and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. This network focuses on conducting and disseminating innovative research to improve outcomes for people with IDD. The research network has several on-going research projects across the programs.

Outcomes and Social Validity of the Transition & Access Pathways (TAP) Program

Dr. Lori Vincent, Assistant Professor in the School Psychology Program, and Dr. Valerie Miller, Assistant Professor in the Occupational Therapy Program, are leading a longitudinal study with the Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program staff to evaluate the student outcomes and social validity of the program. The purpose of the current program evaluation is to (1) evaluate outcomes (e.g., adaptive behavior, mental health, cognitive abilities, self-determination) for students who participate in TAP; (2) to evaluate the social validity of the TAP Course Content; and (3) to understand what population of students with disabilities are most likely to be successful with this specific program which includes a hybrid of TAP specific and inclusive university activities.

Evaluation of the Sexual Health Curriculum of the Transition & Access Pathways (TAP)

Learn More About the Research Study Here

or scan below

School Psychology Assistant Professor, Dr. Lori Vincent, and Criminal Justice Associate Professor, Dr. Brittany Hayes, completed a pilot study to evaluate the sexual health course of the Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program. The purpose of this research study was to (1) determine if students' knowledge changes about sexuality and sexual health following completion of the sexual health course; (2) determine if students' perceptions change about learning about sexual health after taking the course as compared to students who have not yet taken the course but are also in TAP; and (3) determine how students' sexual health knowledge impacts their sexual relationships following the course. As this pilot study is completed this year, a neurodiverse research team in UK/Ireland are reviewing the curriculum to provide feedback for use in cross-national communities for people with intellectual disabilities.

Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM) Careers for People with IDD

Developing employment skills and creating career pathways of interest are critical components in all the IDD Education Center programs. Center staff work closely with UC faculty from the School of Engineering and the School of Education to create and evaluate postsecondary programs to increase employment opportunities in the STEM field for people with IDD by systematically addressing participation barriers and implementing, refining, and disseminating evidence-based practices across the United States. One specific project, Project Enable, focuses on creating work-based learning opportunities with Enable UC. The goal is to develop a STEM pre-apprenticeship model that will advance the graduation and post-secondary success of at-risk students (low-income youth and English learners) and students with disabilities in our high school transition program. CEES, a program at the University of Cincinnati, is designed to provide employment/social communication opportunities to adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Communication Research Team

Special Education faculty members, Dr. Christina Carnahan and Dr. Kate Doyle, have been working collaboratively with Literacy and Language Studies faculty member Dr. Allison Breit since 2019 on the Communication Research Team. Their focus is on developing and evaluating evidence-based practices that target communication for individuals with complex needs across the IDD Education Center. Current interventions focus on supporting individuals in developing the skills to independently post their thoughts and feelings on social media, send text messages, and share experiences with friends and family.

Disabilities Without Borders Research Team

Several faculty and staff (Dr. Brittany Hayes, Dr. Steve Kroeger, Dr. Valerie Miller, Dr. Lori Vincent, Kerri Wolfer) in the IDD Education Center have partnered with people with IDD in the US and Ireland, as well as researchers in the UK, to develop an international, inclusive research team. This team was originally formed around shared work in sexuality research for adults with IDD and has since expanded its focus to improving power sharing among team members and developing collaborative research projects that reflect the goals and needs of adults with IDD worldwide.

Dedicated Partnerships

The IDD Education Center staff, students and associates would not find success without the support from the University, the College of Education, Criminal Justice, Human Services and IT, the School of Education and the many dedicated employment and community partners providing inclusive internship and employment opportunities. A special thanks goes out to these amazing community partners.

Discover More About Our Partners Here

cech.uc.edu/idd-ed-center

Collaboration for Employment and Education Synergy (CEES)

High School Students, Ages 14-22

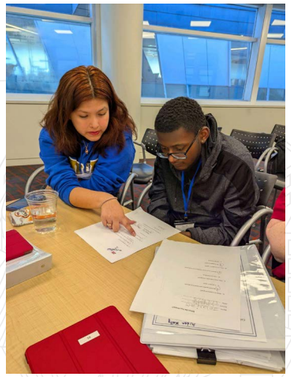
The Collaboration for Employment and Education Synergy (CEES) partners with local school districts to provide transition services to over 200 high school students with IDD. This year, CEES Students engaged in various programming options such as pre-apprenticeships in Information Technology, Engineering and Hospitality.

Through participation in a pre-apprenticeship pathways, students receive technical training and develop on-the-job and industry specific skills. Students participated in many on-the-job training experiences on or near UC's main campus. Some of these opportunities included the United States Geological Survey (USGS), STEMternship (Introduction to STEM Pathways and Concepts), Hampton Inn, CVS, Sodexo/UC Dining Services, UC Greenhouse, UC Biology Lab and many other community integrated work opportunities. CEES is also in the second year of Individual Programming (IP). CEES Individual Programming offers individualized comprehensive transition services for high school students with disabilities, providing a tailored approach to enhance academic, social, and vocational skills.

Through a combination of classroom instruction, campus engagement, and community partnerships, students receive support in navigating postsecondary education and career pathways. These services are designed to foster independence, self-advocacy, and readiness for future employment or continued education, ensuring each student's unique needs and goals are met.

All CEES programming is rooted in the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction. Students engage in meaningful goal setting activities to support their transition from high school to the adult world. The curriculum is tailored to support students in achieving their self-directed goals. Students choose to focus on various domains:

- Development of pre-employment skills
- Budgeting to live independently
- Postsecondary exploration and research
- Development of social communication skills to increase social networking and building peer relationships
- Self-regulation and social emotional learning



Field Service Opportunities for UC Students

CEES partners with the School of Education and provided eight student teaching opportunities. CEES student teachers work with students from multiple school districts and support these students in internships in an inclusive setting and engage students in curriculum to set personal goals and increase their social communication and vocational skills. In addition, CEES student teachers gain experience with lesson planning, job coaching, and creating goals for their students' individual education programs (IEPs).

CEES also partners with the College of Allied Health Sciences and provides field service experience for Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) students. This is a great opportunity for these pre-service professionals because they get hands-on experiences to implement communication interventions with CEES students and a unique opportunity to collaborate with special education pre-service teachers to develop a comprehensive curriculum to support the students.

CEES Summer Programming

CEES STEM Access for All

The IDD Education Center was awarded an Ohio Department of Education Summer Expansion grant in 2022 that allowed for the creation of CEES STEM Access for All. In addition, CEES received an award from the Jack J. Smith Foundation to provide transportation and meals for 2024 summer students and scholarships for 12 students in 2025. CEES STEM Access for All was designed to offer inclusive programming for high school students with diverse needs, with and without disabilities, to develop foundational skills necessary for STEM career pathways.

CEES STEM Access for All is a six-week summer program on UC's campus where students participate in Developing Spatial Thinking coursework, NX Software training modules, and competitive team design challenges. Industry coaches, College of Engineering instructors, and peer mentors guide students in accessing the curriculum and learning. In addition to the rigorous content, students enjoy fun social activities at the UC Rec Center and lunch on campus.

The 2024 CEES STEM Access for All was a huge success. The class enrolled four additional students from 2023 for a total of 22 students and 90% of participants earned a UC badge which is a building block to an Industry Recognized Credential (IRC).

Traditional CEES Summer Program

CEES Summer is a six-week community-integrated summer program for high school students with IEPs, ages 14-22. 23 students engaged in internships, social curriculum, STEM curriculum, and were supported with "near peer" staffing on campus at the University of Cincinnati. Learning activities are built into programming to develop social communication and self-determination skills. In addition, students can participate in career and STEM exploration activities and curriculum to develop these skills.

Local School Districts

Special thanks to all our partnering school districts during the 2024-2025 school year: Deer Park, Fairfield, Indian Hill, Loveland, Maderia, Mariemont, Mason, Milford, Monroe, Mount Healthy, Northwest/Colerain, Princeton, Reading, Sycamore, Warren County ESC, Winton Woods, and Wyoming.

Transition and Access Pathways (TAP)

College Age Students

The Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program is a four-year inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who want a full college experience. TAP students live, work, and learn on campus, fully participating in college life. The program helps students gain independence, build community, and prepare for competitive employment and active community involvement. Students become independent and active members of their inclusive Bearcat community and develop a strong sense of belonging in their college community. Students earn a university-recognized certificate and have access to industry-recognized credentials and vocational training through a personalized pathway that includes a mix of specialized classes focused on life, career, and self-advocacy skills and inclusive courses alongside peers without disabilities. With individualized support, peer coaching, and strong partnerships with families, faculty, and employers, TAP focuses on each student's strengths to help them succeed in college and beyond.

This year, TAP welcomed a full incoming class of 12 new freshmen. The program served 32 full-time students, with 56% from Ohio and 44% from out of state. Five students graduated during the 2024–2025 academic year.

Student Leadership & Involvement

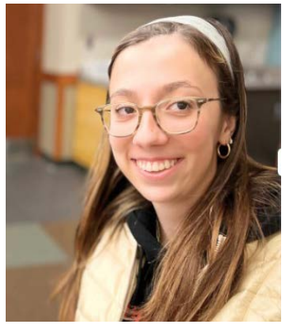
TAP students continued to grow as leaders through active involvement in 27 different campus clubs this year, pursuing activities that reflect their unique interests and passions. This year, they demonstrated leadership in meaningful ways, including:

- **Peer Mentoring:** Serving as mentors to incoming students, helping them navigate college life and providing support and guidance
- **Club Leadership:** Fostering connections by welcoming peers into their campus groups and organizations and helping them get involved
- **Campus Ambassador:** Acting as ambassadors for the program, assisting with campus tours, speaking at events, and promoting the program to prospective students and families
- **Internships:** Taking on leadership roles in internships or work-based learning positions that allow them to demonstrate and develop their leadership skills

Academic Achievements

Matthew Grafe (senior), **Ally Smith** (sophomore) and **Carmen Whitfield** (sophomore) were recipients of the TAP into the Future Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to TAP students who exemplify academic achievement, demonstrate leadership, and strive to engage in the community.

Students selected electives that both challenged them and aligned with their individualized academic and career pathways, reflecting a commitment to personal growth and future goals.



32 electives
were taken across 13 UC academic programs

57 electives
were taken for full academic credit

4 students
pursuing fully inclusive UC certificates in addition to the TAP certificate

2 graduates
earned additional UC certificates in Horticulture and Directing for Film and Television

Employment and Community Partners

This year, the IDD Education Center formed several new partnerships to support TAP students in their personalized career journeys. In line with its commitment to increasing opportunities for individuals with IDD in STEM fields, the Center launched a collaboration with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and Procter & Gamble to create a pathway for structured lab tech internships, providing a clear route to employment upon completion.

TAP staff continue to develop person-centered career pathways in areas of interest including Sports Management, Childcare, Creative Arts, Horticulture, Hospitality and Customer Service, Office/Clerical, and STEM. For a third year, TAP joined forces with a local non-profit, Magnified Giving, to teach freshmen students the importance of philanthropy and service learning. TAP students completed research projects on local non-profit organizations of their choice and presented them to their peers, members of the UC IDD Education Center, and community partners. Based on votes, three of the non-profits – Gorman Heritage Farm, Chemo Unity, and Pink Ribbon Good– received grant awards from Magnified Giving.

Students in TAP put learning to practice in internships starting sophomore year. Highlights from the 2024-2025 academic year:

- Students participated in 27 on-campus internships at 13 different locations
- Students participated in 15 off-campus internships at 8 different locations
- TAP students worked an estimated 3,695 internship hours this past year

TAP's Strategic Partnerships

Scholarship

- The first two scholarships were awarded in the 2024–2025 school year through a new partnership with The Cincy Hat Foundation. Founded by Cincinnati Bengal Ted Karras, the foundation supports programs that help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) live full and meaningful lives. After learning about TAP, Ted chose to support students through the foundation's Scholarship Series hats.
- In addition, thanks to longtime supporters, Brian and Elizabeth Burress, TAP students have the opportunity to apply for the TAP into the Future Scholarship every year.

Community Outreach

- TAP expanded its reach into the community and partnered with the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati to provide targeted information sessions for families on IPSE programs and how to prepare students for postsecondary education.
- TAP hosted its 2nd Annual Special Educators Day, an event designed to share information about IPSE programs and best practices for preparing students with IDD for college admission. The event provided special education staff from local schools and other disability professionals with updates on policies and strategies to support students in pursuing continued education after high school.
- TAP staff, along with UC's Campus Rec Center, Special Olympics Ohio and the Cleveland Cavaliers, partnered together to host the first ever Cavs Academy Unified Skills Day at UC. The event brought together over 400 athletes from Greater Cincinnati area schools to develop skills and inspire unified play.

University Impact

- For the fifth year, TAP took part in UC's Resident Assistant (RA) training, providing instruction on the Zones of Regulation curriculum. This training equips RA staff with tools to support all students in the residence halls, including those in the TAP program.
- TAP responded to a growing need on campus by providing training to help university staff and faculty better support students experiencing emotional dysregulation, an approach that has been especially effective for TAP students. The training focused on executive functioning, emotional regulation, and the Zones of Regulation framework. Katie Norland and Kerri Wolfer delivered this training at the Student Affairs Annual Meeting and at an all-staff meeting for UC's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).
- Over the past three years, TAP staff have worked diligently to formalize and streamline the program's admissions process. Efforts included strengthening marketing strategies to encourage more student applications and collaborating with UC Admissions to create an inclusive admissions process that aligns with those used by other UC programs.
- TAP Campus Life Coordinator, Kerri Wolfer, received UC's CECH Staff Award, recognizing her outstanding performance and contributions exemplifying the College's core values of innovation, partnership, leadership, and support in advancing the mission of the unit, college, and university.
- TAP continued to prioritize the growth and development of its student coaching program, recognizing the valuable opportunity to train future professionals and natural supports for individuals with IDD. During the 2024–2025 academic year, TAP employed 29 paid coaches who contributed approximately 4,895 hours and engaged 25 volunteer coaches who contributed an estimated 537 hours. These coaches represented 13 different academic programs across the University of Cincinnati.

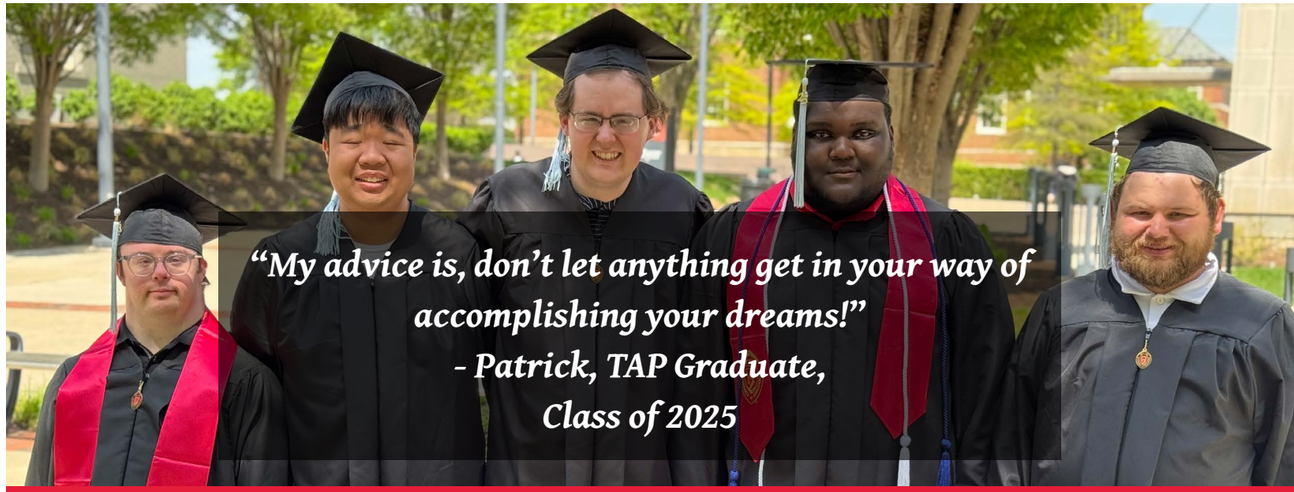
To learn more about TAP's impact

read this article on Unified Skills Day or scan:

TAP's Impact in the Field

TAP staff continue to serve as leaders in the field of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE), sharing their expertise with professionals throughout the 2024–2025 academic year. They presented at the 17th Annual International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD) Congress and co-presented at the State of the Art Conference alongside UC's Title IX office, highlighting strategies for inclusive student support in higher education.

TAP Director, Katie Norland, has played a key role in statewide advocacy efforts, particularly around Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) support for individuals with IDD participating in IPSE programs. Her active involvement in the planning team for the IPSE Association, a membership organization of professionals and advocates committed to the inclusion of people with intellectual disability, and the Great Lakes Inclusive Postsecondary Education Alliance (GLIPSEA) has positioned her as a leader in shaping policy and practice at the local, regional, and national levels.



Alumni Accolades

Our most recent graduates are making a difference in their communities, turning their passions into meaningful careers. This talented cohort is continuing along pathways that align with their goals. Matthew Armstrong Loscalzo has joined Sodexo in Connecticut, continuing to grow his professional pathway. Patrick Carroll applies his customer service skills daily at Meijer while embracing new opportunities through the IDD Ed Center. Alpha Ma is thriving in Louisville, KY, as a valued Publix employee. Matthew Grafe earned his horticulture certificate through TAP and now puts his skills to work every day at Arlington Memorial Gardens. Deshaunte Battle completed TAP with a film studies certificate and will continue his education at Columbus State in Fall 2025, majoring in Theater. Our Spring '25 graduates are proof that with dedication, skills, and support, great things happen for both our students and their communities.

Here are some stats on our alumni:

54 *graduates as of spring 2025*

87% *are employed or continuing their education*

57% *are living independently*

38 *current students for Fall 2025*

IMPACT Innovation

IMPACT Innovation is a year-round program at UC for adults with autism and/or communication, behavior, or sensory support needs. IMPACT associates participate in meaningful, inclusive experiences throughout the day on the University of Cincinnati's campus.

The 10-year anniversary also offers an opportunity to celebrate our valued partner, Impact Autism. Through their financial support, vision, and collaboration, IMPACT Innovation has emerged as a regional leader in providing high-quality adult-day services for individuals with complex support needs.

As we approach the 10-year anniversary of IMPACT Innovation, we celebrate the incredible expansion of our program and reflect on how far we've come. The IMPACT team continues to advance innovative programming so that associates cultivate skills, establish meaningful connections, and participate actively in the community. IMPACT also increased its reach by employing 82 UC students and graduate assistants from various majors including Education, IT, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Pathology, Human Development, Occupational Therapy, Public Health/Administration, Aerospace Science, Computer Science, Engineering, Business, and Psychology.

Program Highlights

This year, IMPACT benefited from a grant awarded by The Good Shepherd Foundation to support meaningful, high-quality programming in the areas of social communication, community access, health and wellness, employment, and cultural enrichment. Associates enjoyed classes with a New Leaf Kitchen, Ensemble Theatre, music therapy with Keys for Success, and art classes with Visionaries and Voices. In addition, the UC Campus Recreation Center offered modified yoga and strength classes.

Increasing meaningful communication continues to be an important focus in the program. The IMPACT team created individualized communication interventions for all associates and set goals that included learning appropriate skills to interact on social media and learning how to convey emotions and choices. These target skills include writing fluency, verbal and written communication, storytelling, texting, and the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.

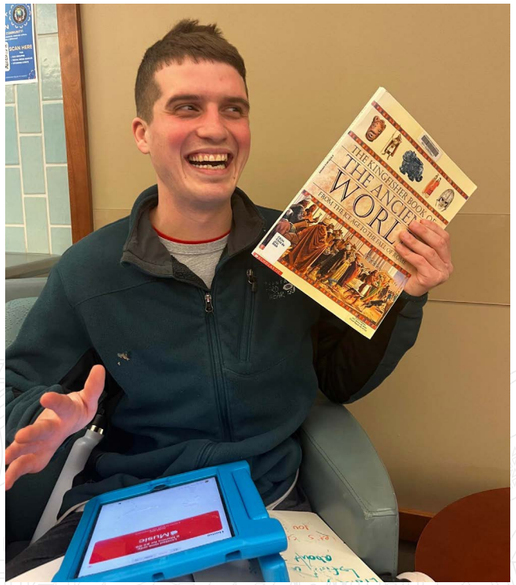
Spring 2025 also brought with it a new group intervention designed to cultivate digital literacy skills and create a space where IMPACT families and staff can meaningfully connect with our associates as they reflect on and share their daily lives on Facebook. Posting and commenting on peers' pictures and posts is becoming a favorite pastime! This group intervention is part of a broader research study assessing the feasibility of delivering group communication interventions to individuals with complex communication support needs. This group intervention will also be presented on at the Division for Career Development and Transition International Conference by members of the research team.

Traveling and interacting with the community continued to be a highlight of the summer programming during our weekly "IMPACTful Fridays". Associates and staff safely engaged in off-campus adventures exploring local favorites like Summit Park, the National Air Force Museum, Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky International Airport, Gorman Heritage Farms, the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens, and the Cincinnati Museum Center. We have also increased our community engagement and associate choice-making with weekly optional community outings related to individual interests. These outings include movies, restaurants, art centers, sporting events, and local attractions like the Newport Aquarium and the Kenwood Mall.

Employment

Employment experience and the development of essential job skills are key aspects of IMPACT. While many associates participate in paid employment, others focus on vocational skills development and career exploration at various community sites.

- Employment experiences and internship sites this year included: Ace Hardware, Adrian Durbin Florist, Sodexo/UC Dining Services, Teachers Café, United States Geological Survey, University Christian Church, UC Bearcat Pantry, UC Biology Lab, UC Greenhouse, UC's College of Conservatory and Music Marketing, and UC Human Resources.
- Travel training continues to be an important component to the vocational development program. Associates are using the UC Shuttle and the Cincinnati Metro system to access internship placements on and off campus. This year associates also practiced navigating the Cincinnati Connector and the TANK (the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky).
- IMPACT provides Individual Employment Supports to eight IMPACT Associates working with Sodexo/UC Dining Services, UC Police Department, UC Campus Events and E-Curriculum, and Adrian Durbin Florist
- IMPACT associates continue to participate in Vocational Skills class to experience various work skills in a fun and meaningful way. This year, IMPACT instructional leads worked with one of our partners to build out vocational programming that allowed associates to explore career pathways and hobbies, build global awareness, and make independent choices about how they wish to participate in and contribute to their communities.
- This new vocational programming has been recognized as an innovative practice, and IMPACT Director, Genna Kieper, and Program Manager, Erica Thompson, will be presenting on it at the Division for Career Development and Transition International Conference in Denver, Colorado in October 2025.



Enrollment

29 adults are supported by IMPACT through daily programming and/or with employment support. This year, we added four associates, one of whom is attending our full daily programming (30 hours per week), one of whom is attending three full days weekly (18 hours), and two of whom are attending on a modified schedule to individualize their programming (15 hours cumulatively). We have enrolled the latter individuals to pilot individualized programming related to vocational and soft skills while serving as a bridge between school-based and community-based services. Capacity is limited due to space and funding and currently there is a waitlist.

Transportation

IMPACT continues to operate three routes providing transportation to 16 associates to and from campus each day and providing access to the community throughout the summer for all enrolled associates. The IMPACT Transportation Program Coordinator, Meredith Finn, has recently begun piloting a new software named Routific to provide live updates to associates and their families as they await transportation in the mornings to better support them in preparing for their days.

IMPACT staff are now actively involved in the Tri-state Transportation Equitable Opportunity Team coordinated by OKI. IMPACT was selected as a grant recipient of an ODOT grant for 2024 to purchase a fourth vehicle, a 12-passenger van, to increase our physical capacity to transport individuals to and from IMPACT and out into the community. IMPACT is currently awaiting a final decision on the 2025 OKI grant application for a fifth van, at which point we hope to add a fourth driving route to serve individuals on Cincinnati's west side.

Interdisciplinary Partnerships

- Three Special Education students are student workers in the program and actively participate in curriculum modifications and interventions.
- Five Communication and Sciences Disorder students supported the communication interventions and research initiatives.
- Two School Psychology students are also IMPACT student workers and supporting research efforts in this focus area.

Learn how IMPACT partners with UC students in research

read this article on IDD Research or scan:

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD)

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) has been an active partner in providing grant funding to improve outcomes for adults with complex support needs. Explore the projects below that highlight DODD's collaborative efforts.

IMPACT was awarded a grant to support the Pathways to Careers Project which addressed the employment needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and the Ohio workforce gap by creating pathways to employment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields by increasing access to high quality inclusive postsecondary education opportunities that involve engagement in apprenticeships and earning industry recognized credentials.

IMPACT was also given the opportunity to participate in the Quality Pilot Project to improve the program with innovative technology and increased staff funding. Monetary awards were dispersed based on a set of program outcomes and IMPACT received the maximum amount awarded for improved staff training and associate goal attainment.

Most recently, IMPACT was awarded grant funding for the Inclusive Supports Project which developed a network of people committed to transformational change to co-create a community that is focused on widespread implementation of evidence-based practices that position individuals with the most significant support needs as the leaders of their own lives. The Inclusive Supports team has developed a set of open access materials highlighting each of the practices, provided in-person training opportunities to the region, created a community of practice for providers and families, and implemented a plan to promote wide-spread dissemination and sustainability.

"Participating in the IMPACT Program has been a significant experience for me. It has allowed me to develop a deeper understanding and empathy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Even though this work isn't directly related to my major, it has taught me valuable interpersonal and communication skills that will be beneficial in any professional setting. Personally, it has given me a sense of fulfillment and purpose, knowing that I am contributing to the well-being and growth of others."

- Sam Adhikari, Student Worker

Regional Autism Advisory Council (RAAC)

The Regional Autism Advisory Council (RAAC) was founded in 1999 in response to the critical need for supports and services for people with autism and their families. Over the years, RAAC has evolved into a premier model of regional collaboration, bringing together experts from various disciplines to work collectively rather than in silos. RAAC has historically coordinated training, education, and professional development opportunities to better serve people with autism and those with related support needs. In addition, RAAC has provided community connections and resource sharing. This approach has significantly enhanced our region's capacity to serve the autism community effectively.

In January 2024, the UC IDD Education Center welcomed the opportunity to acquire RAAC, aiming to uphold RAAC's mission to provide community-driven connection, impactful education and training, and resource sharing to support the autism community and those with related support needs.

Over the past year, the RAAC leadership team identified the following strategic priorities which will shape the focus and work of RAAC over the next few years.

1. Ensure long term sustainability

- Develop and implement a new membership structure
- Revise branding and messaging
- Create and implement a fundraising plan

2. Become a leader in training and research partnerships

- Identify best practices and gaps in training offerings
- Create a structure to provide regular training opportunities
- Plan and implement the RAAC Training Institute
- Become a research partner

3. Provide intentional community connection

- Engage underrepresented members of the community
- Provide a platform for networking and resource sharing
- Foster community connections

RAAC 24-25 STATS

Community Connection

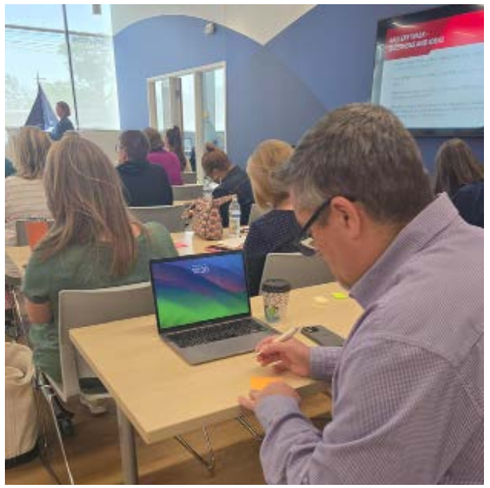
12 Community Update Meetings
12 Newsletters to 600 subscribers
4 OH IDD Collaborative Forums

Trainings & Events

12 Virtual Trainings
NEW Advocacy in Action Events
Reinstated the RAAC Training Institute
September 19, 2025

Resources

Access to a library of resources
Networking to foster collaborations
Recorded trainings and events



Become a RAAC Member TODAY!!

Access to Cutting Edge Training and Resources
- Access to a Membership Portal which will house trainings and resources
- Opportunities to acquire continuing education units for educators and other professionals

Advocacy and Collaboration
- Stay informed on important local, state, and federal policies
- RAAC provides a space to discuss important issues and how to advocate for people with autism and those with related support needs across the lifespan
- Support from University of Cincinnati government relations

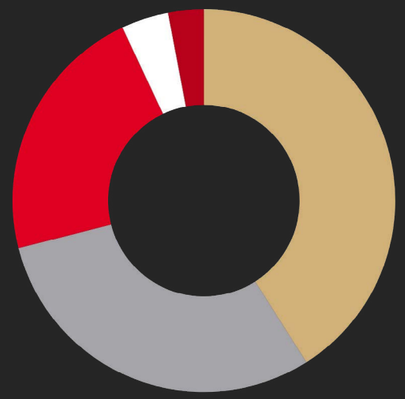
Marketing Benefits
- Logo and links on RAAC website, social media spotlights, and share events and job postings

To learn more about becoming a RAAC member

please contact RAAC_cincy@uc.edu or visit cech.uc.edu/RAAC or scan:

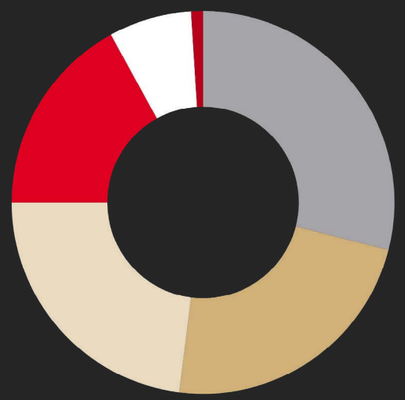
IDD Education Center Expenses

Staff	$ 1,100,209.17	41%
Student Workers	$ 793,797.28	30%
Operations	$ 591,537.80	22%
Scholarships	$ 98,955.17	4%
Part-Time Faculty	$ 93,643.26	3%
Total	**$ 2,678,142.68**	



IDD Education Center Revenue

Ohio DODD Medicaid Waiver	$ 674,862.17	29%
Tuition	$ 534,660.00	23%
Donations	$ 531,927.45	23%
District Transition Dollars	$ 384,000.00	17%
Special Programs	$ 154,451.89	7%
RAAC Memberships	$ 11,500.00	1%
Total	**$ 2,291,401.51**	



Grants

Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Development

$ 120,000

Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments

$ 14,711

The Good Shepherd Foundation

$ 60,000

Jack J. Smith Foundation

$ 15,000

$ 209,711

dollars awarded during FY 2024-2025

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Thank you to our 2024-2025 Supporters

Leadership Circle

Impact Autism Foundation

Cornerstone Partners

The Good Shepherd Foundation of Ohio
The Cincy Hat Foundation

Community Builders

The Matta Foundation
University of Cincinnati College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services
University of Cincinnati School of Education
Valerie Laser and Robert Herman

Ambassadors

Jack J. Smith, Jr. Charitable Trust
RESLV

Advocates

The Boat Family
Elizabeth and Brian Burress
Jeremy Conley
Bonnie Forbes
Susan and Jeffery Harris
Homi Kapadia
Jennifer and Bill McCloy
Kristen and Scott Oyler
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Supporters

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Mary Ann McPherson
Cindy and Mark Molloy
The Neal Family
Diana and David O'Brien
Matthew Rickets
Janet S. Schelb
John R. Schwartz
Susan J. and David Stein
Laura and Jason Stitt
Cindy M. and James Tinkham
Karen Troup
University of Cincinnati Public Safety
University of Cincinnati College of Allied Health and Science
US Bank

We are deeply grateful for the generous contributions received from 7/1/24 - 6/30/25. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in recognizing our donors. We appreciate every dollar donated in support of the IDD Education Center, to help the four life-changing programs be able to serve the participants and community. The Donor List highlights those who have contributed $1,000 and above.

If your name has been listed incorrectly or omitted, please contact us at IDDedcenter@uc.edu so we can make the correction.

RED & BLACK BLAST

The 8th Annual Red & Black Blast was a huge success – with a sold-out crowd of 450+ guests and more than $125,000 raised!

Guests enjoyed bidding on 70+ silent auction items, celebrating the life-changing IDD Education Center programs – CEES, TAP, IMPACT, and RAAC – and honoring some truly remarkable individuals and teams.

A special thanks to our Platinum Sponsor, RESLV, and our Gold Sponsors: the Berninger Family, Elizabeth & Brian Burress, CECH, Deloitte, Susan & Jeffery Harris, Homi & Shireen Kapadia, the Matta Foundation, the Oyler Family, P&G, and Alexander & Anna Polenok. **Visit this site** for a full list of our generous sponsors!

Save the Date

The 9th annual Red & Black Blast will be on Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at Tangeman University Center, Great Hall on the University of Cincinnati campus!

For sponsorship information, please email: nikki.murray@uc.edu.

Register here!

We were honored to present Ted Karras, NFL Center for the Cincinnati Bengals and founder of The Cincy Hat Foundation, with the Champion for Inclusion Award for his dedication to creating meaningful change in our community. Through his efforts, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have gained greater access to education, employment, and housing opportunities. A heartfelt thank you to The Cincy Hat Foundation for supporting the cause and bringing the iconic Cincy hats to the event – over 350 hats were sold, with each purchase directly supporting scholarships for students in the TAP program.

We also extend our gratitude to Label•less from Lachey Arts for their outstanding performance. Their energy, talent, and passion lit up the stage and made the evening truly unforgettable.

If you couldn't join us, we missed you – but you can still relive the magic!
Visit this site or scan the QR code to view videos and photos from the celebration.

"We look forward to attending the Red and Black Blast every year!! Red and Black Blast is so special because it shows how the programs truly changes lives for the better. We always leave feeling encouraged and empowered. Go UC IDD and Go Bearcats!!"

- Kristen Oyler

Vision, Mission, Core Values

Our Vision

To promote inclusive communities where people with diverse abilities can thrive in all aspects of their lives supported by innovative programming driven by research and collaboration.

Our Mission

To create meaningful, life-changing experiences for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) through innovative research, education and services.

1 **We inspire positive change.**

We create a safe place to nurture personal growth by making intentional decisions to break down barriers, model accountability and promote inclusion throughout the communities we touch.

2 **We promote self-determination and self-advocacy.**

We provide experiences that cultivate freedom and authority for individuals to make choices and decisions to create happy, productive and well-rounded lives.

3 **We build relationships of trust.**

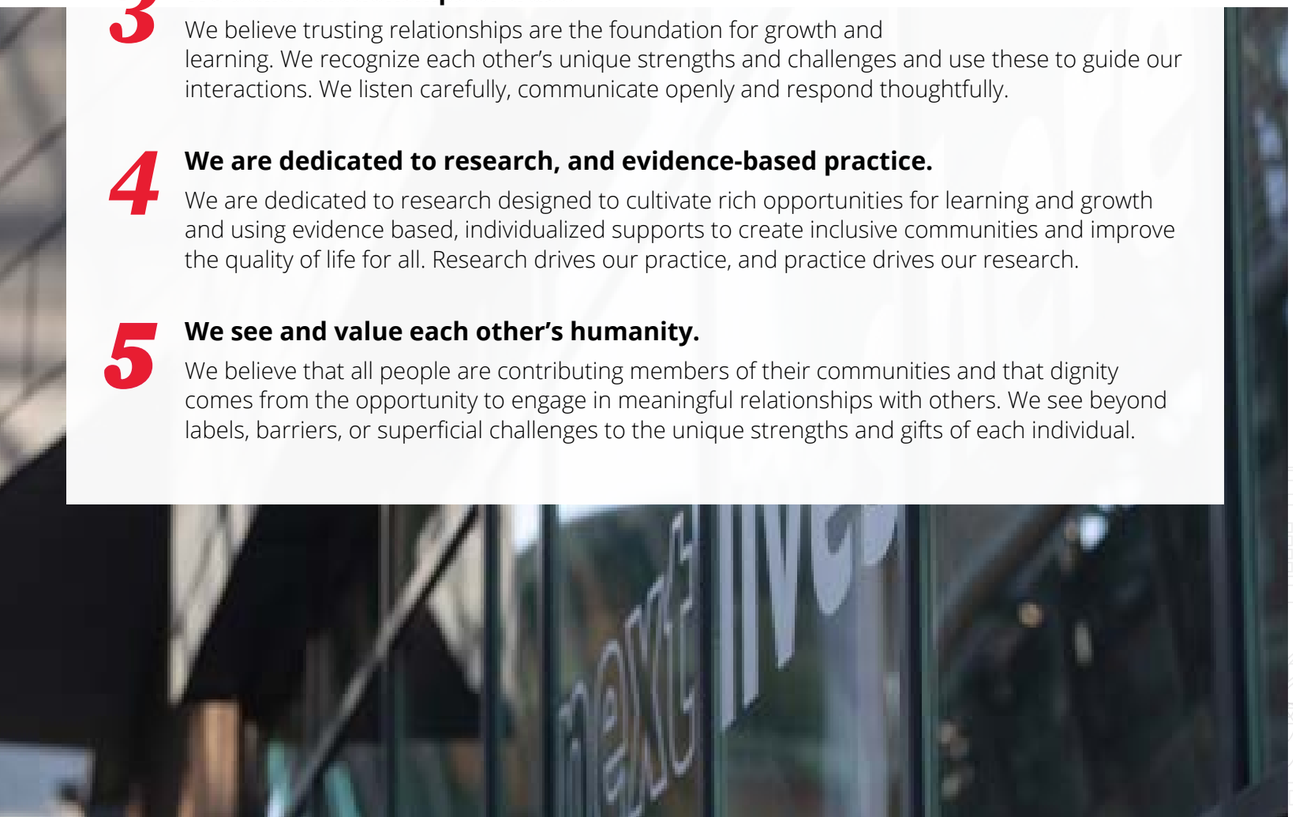
We believe trusting relationships are the foundation for growth and learning. We recognize each other's unique strengths and challenges and use these to guide our interactions. We listen carefully, communicate openly and respond thoughtfully.

4 **We are dedicated to research, and evidence-based practice.**

We are dedicated to research designed to cultivate rich opportunities for learning and growth and using evidence based, individualized supports to create inclusive communities and improve the quality of life for all. Research drives our practice, and practice drives our research.

5 **We see and value each other's humanity.**

We believe that all people are contributing members of their communities and that dignity comes from the opportunity to engage in meaningful relationships with others. We see beyond labels, barriers, or superficial challenges to the unique strengths and gifts of each individual.



Strategic Priorities and Goals

Become a Leader in Research

Our global aim is to be a research center that generates and implements practice-based research to enhance the lives of transition age adolescents and adults with IDD.

- Systematize processes across the IDD Education Center research studies
- Align budgets to prioritize practice-based research
- Create a system for disseminating data/outcomes to a variety of stakeholders

Establish Sustainable Employment Pathways

Employment is a continuum that includes work-based learning experiences, community integrated internships and paid employment. Establishing sustainable employment pathways promotes independence and builds inclusive communities.

- Develop programming that leads to sustainable employment post-program completion
- Recruit and maintain employment partners

Ensure Long-Term Sustainability

Sustainability is having the breadth to innovate, operate efficiently and fulfill the need for our services in our community. Sustainability is financial success and having sufficient resources to achieve our mission and make strategic decisions for the future.

- **Financial Sustainability:** Ensure the financial success of the IDD Education Center by securing diverse funding sources/mechanisms to fund ongoing and future initiatives
- **People and Knowledge:** Ensure the sustainability of our programs and initiatives by employing a team dedicated to the IDD Education Center vision, mission and core values
- **Community Sustainability:** Engage with stakeholders (students, families, alumni, participants, employers, community partners and donors) to ensure awareness

Develop Innovative Programming

The IDD Education Center is committed to developing inclusive, engaging, meaningful and evidence-based social, vocational and educational programming to improve outcomes for people with IDD.

- Develop a sustainable, fluid staffing model that allows for the implementation of evidence-based practices and innovative research across programs

Giving Opportunity: Next is Now

What's next starts with our our generous donors, supporters and community partners. This is your chance to change lives, turning aspirations of college, employment and independent living into a reality. Embrace the opportunity to support a community of inclusion, diversity and belonging where everyone is valued for their contributions.

Next is Now.

Support the IDD Education Center today—because every contribution changes a life.

foundation.uc.edu/iddedcenter_fund

The IDD Education Center Team

Christi Carnahan

Director of IDD Education Center

Dr. Christina R Carnahan is Professor of Special Education in the School of Education, College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services at the University of Cincinnati. Christi has served as the director of the IDD Education Center for nearly ten years. She has extensive expertise in supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in inclusive settings, including developing programs focused on employment supports for adolescents and young adults with IDD. Christi's research interests include literacy and communication interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other complex communication and behavioral support needs and creating efficient and effective instructional practices across the lifespan. She has a strong history of mentoring students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Christi has published in journals such as Exceptional Children, Journal of Special Education, and Focus on Autism and Developmental Disabilities. She is the co-author of two books including Quality Literacy Instruction for Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Facilitating Evidence Based Practice for Students with ASD: A Classroom Observation Tool for Building Quality Education. Christi and her husband have three children and enjoy traveling as a family.

Shelbie Collopy

Business Manager

Shelbie Collopy has her Master's in Business Administration from the University of Cincinnati's Carl H. Lindner College of Business. Before joining the IDD Education Center in 2019, Shelbie was a member of the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning's Business Office. She also has experience in early intervention therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder and an undergraduate degree in Psychology from UC. As the IDD Education Center Business Manager, Shelbie merges her business skills with her passion for helping people. When not working, Shelbie loves to cheer on the Bearcats and hopes to visit all 50 states by the time she turns 50.

Andrea Dubell

HR Coordinator

Andrea Dubell joins the IDD Education Center with 10 years of experience in Human Resources through multiple Retail Management positions. She has her Bachelor's in French from Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College, along with minors in Business and Linguistics, and a Teaching English as a Foreign Language certification. She has had a passion for accessible, community-building services since she first volunteered with Cincinnati Therapeutic Riding and Horsemanship in high school. When she is not working, Andrea can usually be found reading - preferably outdoors with an iced tea or coffee - or spending quality time with friends and family.

Nikki Murray

Marketing Coordinator

Nikki Murray serves as the Marketing Coordinator for the IDD Education Center, where she leads efforts to promote and support all four of its transformative programs. With a strong foundation in sales, training, and marketing from the private sector, Nikki brings a strategic mindset and a deep passion for mission-driven work. She holds an MBA from Thomas More College and brings valuable experience in marketing, nonprofit organizations, event planning, and supporting individuals with disabilities. Outside of work, Nikki volunteers as an active member of the Cincinnati Alumni Chapter of Delta Gamma. A firm believer in lifelong learning, she is known for her creativity, collaborative spirit, and drive to make meaningful connections. Originally from Philadelphia, PA, Nikki lives in Northern Kentucky with her husband Jamie, their identical twin daughters, Makayla and Aubrey, and their two dogs, Spike and Snoop. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, kayaking, attending networking events, and dancing it out in Zumba class.

Cadi Dart

Assistant Director of Employment Services

Cadi Dart brings expertise in transition services to the IDD Education Center team. A decade ago, she collaborated with colleagues, community partners, and local school districts to pilot the CEES program, establishing a high-quality transition program for high school students with disabilities at the University of Cincinnati. After serving as the Director of CEES for 10 years, Cadi now holds the position of Associate Director of Employment Services. In this role, she focuses exclusively on expanding and enhancing employment services within the IDD Education Center. Throughout her tenure, Cadi has led numerous initiatives aimed at increasing access to technical training for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her strong emphasis on the development of STEM-based training platforms has significantly transformed the center's employment services. Cadi remains committed to advancing workforce development initiatives that create meaningful employment opportunities for the individuals served by the center. Outside of work, Cadi enjoys spending time with her husband, Garrick, and their two sons, Noah and Julian, in Clarksville, Ohio. An avid traveler and adventurer, she seizes every opportunity to explore the world and share its wonders with her children.

Collaboration for Employemnt and Education Synergy (CEES)

Maddie Baumer

Director of CEES

Maddie Baumer has a Bachelors in Special Education from the University of Cincinnati and worked previously as an Intervention Specialist working with students with intense behavioral and communication needs. One of her student teaching placements was with CEES back in 2017. Since then, she has become very passionate about transition services for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). When Maddie is not at work she enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband, two dogs, and their newborn baby, Juniper.

Stacey Lipps

CEES Program Coordinator

Stacey Lipps recently joined UC's IDD Education Center as the CEES Program Coordinator for Independent Programming. She is excited to embark on this new journey and contribute to the continued success of the program. Stacey brings over 17 years of experience in the developmental disabilities field. She began her career with the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities as a Direct Support Provider. In 2011, after attending a RAAC Seminar, she was inspired to shift her focus to Special Education. She joined the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC) as a Paraprofessional, where she has worked for the past 12 years. During that time, she completed the Registered Behavior Technician program through Florida Tech University and transitioned into the role of Program Behavior Interventionist and Registered Behavior Technician. Stacey is enthusiastic about applying her skills and experience to support students at the IDD Education Center and enhance their experiences on campus. Outside of work, Stacey is a proud mother of three sons and two daughters. Her family spends much of their time at gymnastics and softball events, and they love traveling and exploring new places together—with plans to attend the 2028 Olympic Games.

Transition and Access Pathways (TAP)

Katie Norland

Director of TAP

Katie Norland is the Director of the Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program at the University of Cincinnati. She previously served as Director of Student Success Services at The College of the Florida Keys, where she led Project ACCESS and supported accessibility, career development, and student success. Katie serves as Secretary on the Board of the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Association and as Vice Chair of Communication for the Great Lakes Inclusive Postsecondary Education Alliance (GLIPSEA). She is also a Technical Assistance Consultant with the Think College National Coordinating Center and a Strategic Planning Facilitator for the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities. Katie is passionate about advocating for students with disabilities and expanding access to inclusive postsecondary education.

Lisa Claypool

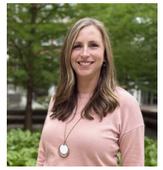
TAP Academic Coordinator

Lisa Claypool is the Academic Coordinator for the Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program. Her responsibilities include advising students, student academic course participation, supporting faculty, facilitating academic support and the development of executive functioning skills, and recruitment and admissions. She joined TAP in 2021. Lisa earned her B.S. in Mild to Moderate Educational Needs from Ohio University and her M.Ed. in Literacy Education from The Citadel. Lisa is a licensed intervention specialist and previously taught in middle and high schools in Charleston South Carolina and Cincinnati, Ohio.

Emily Johnson

TAP Vocational Coordinator

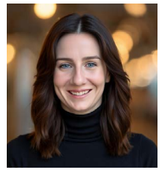
Emily Johnson is a licensed intervention specialist and has 10+ years of experience with students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Emily holds a Bachelor's degree in Special Education from The Ohio State University. She spent 8 years at a local Cincinnati high school focusing on students' career opportunities and success outside of the classroom. This is Emily's third year as the Vocational Coordinator for TAP, where she can continue to provide access and support to students with IDD that align with their career pathways. She lives in Finneytown with her husband.



Kerri Wolfer

TAP Campus Life Coordinator

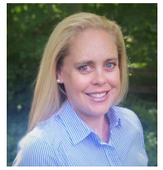
Kerri Wolfer, MSW, LISW, is the Campus Life Coordinator for the Transition and Access Pathways (TAP) program at the University of Cincinnati. A Licensed Independent Social Worker with 30 years of professional experience, Kerri holds a Master of Social Work from Michigan State University and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Miami University. She leads the development, management, and research of TAP's social and independent living instruction and initiatives. She also contributes to the program's strategic planning and works across the university to promote accessible, inclusive college experiences for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Kerri recruits, trains, and supervises more than 30 student coaches annually, supporting their growth as future professionals. Driven by a strong commitment to inclusion, she works to create a sense of belonging for all students within the university community.



Jill Benzinger, MOT, OTR/L

TAP Faculty

Jill Benzinger is a licensed occupational therapist with over eight years of experience working in a variety of settings. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Xavier University where she completed research on how the environment impacts participation of young children with cerebral palsy. She currently works as a school-based occupational therapist working with students of diverse needs building sensory processing, executive function, and motor skills. Jill also works at a local inpatient rehab hospital serving patients in both individual treatments and group settings. She also has experience in acute care, hand therapy, and mental health settings. Jill is passionate about working with students in TAP because of her Uncle David. David was born with Down Syndrome and spent his adult life working at New Perceptions, Inc. in Northern Kentucky. Upon his passing, they established the David G. Benzinger Employee of the Month to recognize New Perceptions's employees who have adopted David's positive work attitude and his spirit of self-motivation, persistence, and joy of living. In her free time, Jill enjoys reading, watching FCC soccer games, and playing volleyball with her friends.



Alison Rubel

TAP Faculty

Alison has over 15+ years of experience teaching students with developmental disabilities in both K12 and post-secondary settings. She earned a Master of Science in Education from Purdue University. Alison began her career as a special educator with the Carmel Clay Schools in Carmel, Indiana. During this time, she served on an interdisciplinary committee to develop a curriculum for district K-5 special education classrooms. She was responsible for the development and implementation of academic and behavioral interventions for students with multiple disabilities as well as the management of instructional assistants in the special education setting. Alison joined the TAP team in 2017 and is currently an adjunct assistant professor teaching courses including College Success, Writing Basics, College Writing, First Aid Basics, and Financial Literacy. Alison lives near Kings Island with her husband, two daughters, and two Schnauzers. She loves developing new recipes, gardening, and spending time with family at her favorite Cincinnati spots, Pyramid Hill and Washington Park.

Terri Schermerhorn

TAP Faculty, Employment Support Specialist

Terri has been a licensed intervention specialist since 2008 and has experience serving students of all ages. She has a bachelor's degree from Purdue University and a master's degree in special education (mild to moderate disabilities) from Xavier University. Terri joined the IDD Education Center team in 2022 and has served as an adjunct professor teaching in the TAP program and also provides employment support services to students in the CEES, TAP and IMPACT programs. She is originally from Cincinnati and lives in Anderson Township with her husband and their three children, ages 15, 14 and 10. She enjoys watching her children play sports, cheering on her favorite teams (the Bearcats, Bengals and Reds), and vacationing with family and friends.

IMPACT Innovation

Genna Kieper

Director of IMPACT Innovation

Dr. Genna Kieper serves as the Director of IMPACT Innovation, the adult day program at the IDD Education Center. She joined the IMPACT team in August 2024, bringing with her a wealth of experience from her previous role as the Employment Coordinator for WSU ROAR—an inclusive postsecondary education initiative at Washington State University. Dr. Kieper's professional background is rooted in research and program development aimed at enhancing employment outcomes, fostering self-determination, and implementing evidence-based practices for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). At the IDD Education Center, she leads strategic planning, program innovation, research and intervention design, and sustainable growth initiatives to better serve the IDD community. Outside of her professional endeavors, Genna enjoys reading, staying active, and spending time outdoors with her partner, Johnny, and their two beloved pets, Reggie and Romi.

Meredith Finn

Transportation Program Coordinator

Meredith Finn is the Transportation Program Coordinator for IMPACT Innovation. She has 25+ years' experience in coordinating projects, events, and volunteers through her work with Hamilton County Environmental Services, the Research Triangle Foundation, the Ohio Bicentennial Commission, and many years serving on PTO's and various boards. Meredith lives in Anderson Township with her husband, two sons and two giant Bernese Mountain dogs. While not working, Meredith enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading and any activity where she can be outside.

Joann Ramsey

Program Manager

Joann Ramsey brings so much experience to the IMPACT team. She began her career as a para-professional and worked for 11 years at the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC) working with children with intense behavioral needs. After departing WCESC, she decided to join the IDD Education Center team at UC as the program coordinator for IMPACT Innovation. She finds working with the IMPACT associates extremely rewarding and loves coming to work every day. When Joann is not at work, she juggles a busy life as a foster mom. For fun, she enjoys listening to a good live jazz band, singing a few notes at Karaoke, and her absolute favorite pastime is dancing!

Erica Thompson

Program Manager

Erica Thompson joined the IDD Education Center in the spring of 2024. Her prior experiences include the role of an intervention specialist, behavior coach, and program supervisor for various districts and organizations in the Cincinnati area. Her areas of professional interest include vocational and transition opportunities for individuals with Autism and other low-incidence disabilities, specifically focusing on independence and self-advocacy. Erica is a Cincinnati native and lives with her husband, 4 children, three cats, 2 dogs, and a turtle. She enjoys all Cincinnati sports, camping, live entertainment, and organizing. Erica is a proud UC alumnus - CECH '08 and '10!

Regional Autism Advisory Council (RAAC)

Sadie Everett

Director of RAAC

Sadie Everett holds a bachelor's degree from Miami University's Richard T. Farmer School of Business and a Master of Arts in Teaching from National-Louis University. Sadie has served as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education and as the Community Relations Manager for the IDD Education Center supporting the marketing, communications, and fundraising efforts. Sadie was named the director of RAAC in 2024 when the IDD Education Center acquired the program. Over the past year, she has led the development of RAAC's strategic priorities and membership model, while expanding training, professional development, and opportunities for community connection and resource sharing. Outside of work, you can find Sadie on a field or court watching her sons play sports. She also enjoys vacationing to the beach or mountains, exploring the great parks of Cincinnati and watching football with her husband and boys.

University of CINCINNATI | INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY EDUCATION CENTER

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