

The Up the Hill Project

*Funded by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion,
Government of South Australia*



Flinders
UNIVERSITY

inspiring achievement

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_2PP89iym4&feature=youtu.be

Mission Statement

*To provide an inclusive and supportive opportunity at Flinders University which enables people who have an intellectual disability to, **access** the University environment, develop **social skills** and **social networks** and to experience a range of **educational opportunities** and **activities**.*



Aims

- Supportive environment
- **Audit** university topics
- Providing a mentor to assist with enrolment, lectures & general university life
- Support to access a variety of University services.
- Independence
- Social involvement
- Expanding and enhancing individual abilities and interests



Providing opportunities for people with an intellectual disability to...

- increase their range of interests and knowledge;
- develop their social networks;
- mutually benefit from interaction with academic staff and students;
- develop on their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- exercise their rights to ongoing education;
- explore their interests and exercise their choices for continued learning and development;
- function in a positive, inclusive and supportive environment;
- develop transferable skills for educational/vocational environments; and
- develop skills and abilities to transition into the broader community.

History

- Pilot Project in 1997 (**Gibson, 1997**)
 - 4 Participants aged 21 – 28 years old
 - Audited a 3rd year topic in the Disability Degree
 - Highly successful outcomes
 - Some Participants audited topics in 1998
- Project formally commenced in 1999

History (cont.)

- Follow up research in 2002 (**Lobban, 2002**)
 - 10 Participants aged 19 – 46 years old
 - 5 current participants; 5 past participants
- 35 topics had been audited
- 20 disability topics
- *15 topics from other parts of the University*
(e.g. Politics, History, Drama, Women's Studies, Criminology, and Sociology)
- Participants reported feeling more independent, enjoying meeting different people and a range of other social and educational benefits

The Process

- Applicants with an intellectual disability, **express a desire** to attend university.
- Submit an application form to the Coordinator
- Invited to an informal interview to discuss: eligibility, options, and decide if university if for them
- If accepted, the Coordinator invites the participant to a meeting to begin to **choose a topic of interest.**

Eligibility Criteria

(According to the funding agreement)

- have an intellectual disability;
- express a desire to attend university;
- facilitate their own transport to and from the university campus; and
- demonstrate their ability to attend lectures without causing disruption to the learning environment.



Participants

- Attending the Up the Hill Project exposes individuals to the opportunity that the University environment provides, such as social and emotional development.
- Highlights the **individuality** of each person and the unique talents that each participant possesses.
- Foundation Course to gain entry to formal university courses



Mentors

- University students supported and supervised by the Up the Hill Coordinator.
- Part of practicum placements within their degree.
- Students studying:
 - Bachelor of Disability & Developmental Education (Formerly Bachelor of Disability & Community Rehabilitation)
 - Health Science
 - Behavioural Science
 - Psychology
 - Education
- Flinders University's emphasis on *Work Integrated Learning*



The Role of Mentors

- Mentors support the auditing student
 - enrol in topics and obtain their student identity card and access to library and computer facilities.
 - with orientation by providing a familiarisation tour of the campus and surrounding areas.
 - meet lecturers prior to the commencement of classes and facilitate any modifications required for inclusion in the lecture.



Self-determination & Social Inclusion

- Mentors support participants to identify goals and review goals each semester.
- Participants work with mentors to identify the objectives required to meet their goals.
- Making friendships and being included requires self-determination skills.
- Mentors model social skills.
- Role-playing & practising these skills naturally.
- Presentations, social gatherings, class discussions.



Recognition of Achievement

- At the end of each semester all the participants and their families get together for a presentation day.
- Participants are invited to present on the topics undertaken that semester.
- Certificate of attendance.
- After three years participants receive a certificate of achievement at the main University graduation ceremony with the students who have been their mentors.



Outcomes for People with an Intellectual Disability

- enhanced social skills and social networks, through the formation of relationships with peers
- development of self-confidence and self-esteem
- learning skills transferable to the workplace
- greater independence



Additional Outcomes

- Social interaction with academic staff and fellow students provide mutually enriching, educational and social opportunities for all persons within the University environment.
- Positive influence to peers within university classes – they will be the policy makers and employers of the future, so it is important to promote inclusion and enhanced disability awareness.
- As seen in the video, encourages lecturers to implement inclusive teaching strategies which benefit not only the person with intellectual disability but also the other students.

“...I'm stoked to have crossed the floor yesterday and graduated from Flinders. The three years I spent there was thoroughly fulfilling and an enriching experience. I learnt new things about topics I've researched over and over again before starting out at flinders. I would also like to thank [mentors, lecturers, project director and coordinator] for supporting me during these past 3 years”



Participant, April 2013

“...the tense and the happy moments , the many changes of personality as well as the wonderful developing process it has been through. As a dedicated group of people we have shared in the pleasures of participants and seen the changes made to their lives as a result of their experience. For all of them without exception it has been **a world they had never imagined** they could have ever belonged to, and has given them a certain enrichment that they will never forget. Many have taken that experience and new found self confidence with a direction forward into a new and different world. We have seen some learn new skills through being at University and continue to develop these in rewarding and notable journeys. We have watched with pleasure how participants have worked along side students and been absorbed into the **social life** of the university. We have seen them **take risks** and hold their own and in so doing learn valuable lessons”

Parent and past Board Member, January 2013

Future Plans

- Matching what Participants do with the National Competency Framework
- Joining with others to research and promote inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the University sector
- Exploring the educational prospects as well as social inclusion
- Expansion at Flinders and other universities in South Australia and beyond
- Following up on the outcomes for Participants over the last decade

Further Research

- Pilot projects at the two other universities in South Australia (and then in other states of Australia)
- University student/ peer attitudes towards inclusive education for people with an intellectual disability.
- Lecturers perspectives about having people with an intellectual disability in their class

Thank You



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