

Aggies Elevated Model Is The Basis For For Expanded College Options In Utah | CPD Blog

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Young adults with intellectual disabilities in Utah will soon have two new college options, thanks to a \$1.9 million Department of Education grant. A collaborative effort across three universities, this five-year grant will create new, post-secondary programs at [Utah State University Eastern](#) and Utah Valley University. It will also provide additional funding for [Aggies Elevated](#), the well-known post-secondary program on USU's Logan campus.

The new programs will be based on the successful model used by Aggies Elevated, which is a joint project between the Center for Persons with Disabilities and the [Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling department](#) in the [Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services](#) at USU.

“Higher education is typically considered a learning environment for individuals who have high levels of intellectual ability,” said Robert Morgan, professor of special education at USU. “Programs like Aggies Elevated, and the two new programs, are designed for students who are high achievers with high motivation who have finished their high school years in special education but want to keep learning.”

The Transition and Post-secondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant is designed to allow students with intellectual disabilities ages 18-26 to enroll in college courses with their traditionally admitted peers. The goal of the TPSID programs is to make competitive, paid employment possible for participants after graduation. Aggies Elevated boasted a 90% post-graduation employment rate before the COVID-19 pandemic caused job losses.

Aggies Elevated in Logan will continue to serve up to 20 on-campus students per year, and its staff will also provide technical assistance to the two new programs. UVU's program will offer a three-year commuter-based program serving up to 30 students per year. USU-Eastern will also offer a three-year program, serving up to 5 students in rural Utah.

UVU and USU-Eastern offer industry-recognized credentials—such as welding and graphic design—which fit the career needs and interests of many students with intellectual disabilities. Based on the Aggies Elevated model, both programs will include support from project coordinators and trained peer mentors who are also college students. Courses will cover career development and exploration, skills for academic success, social and independent skills development, and self-advocacy instruction.

Parents and family involvement, a key ingredient to success of the programs, will be emphasized from the outset.

In addition to the new programs, the grant includes the development of the Utah Higher Education Inclusion Alliance, an advisory board that will oversee development of the new TPSID programs and promote additional inclusive higher education opportunities in the state of Utah. Co-chairs of the board are Morgan and Jane Carlson, assistant professor at UVU.