

# Institute for Innovative Transition

A Partnership of the  
B. Thomas Golisano Foundation  
and the University of Rochester's  
Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities  
and Warner School of Education



*Five-Year Community Report*



# LEVERAGING RESOURCES



*The Institute for Innovative Transition has touched the lives of over 3,000 young adults, families, and professionals.*

Dear friends:

Since 2008, the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation and the University of Rochester's Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities and Warner School of Education have partnered to improve the lives of young adults who have developmental and intellectual disabilities. This partnership led to the foundation of the Institute for Innovative Transition, whose mission is to support satisfying, successful adult lives for youth with developmental disabilities, with a particular focus on continuing education and competitive employment. The Golisano Foundation has invested \$1.9 million in support of this goal. In addition, \$5 million in federal funding has been leveraged to expand the mission of the Institute for Innovative Transition, transforming transition through programs, policies, and best practices. Today, the Institute for Innovative Transition continues to fill a much-needed gap in the educational and social service community for young adults and their families, as well as professionals who work in transition, who directly benefit from the innovative model programs, information dissemination, professional development and training, and systems change efforts put forth by the Institute.

Our work with the Institute is far from done. Our goal is to build on the momentum and success of the past few years and continue to innovate and collaborate with members of the community to support successful, engaged, and satisfying adult lives for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I look forward to a bright future—one in which we will strive for continued growth and development in the area of transition.

We are pleased to provide this report to the community that is intended to highlight some of the many lives that have been touched by the Golisano Foundation's investment in the Institute for Innovative Transition.

Sincerely,

Martha E. Mock, PhD  
Director, Institute for Innovative Transition  
Associate Professor, Warner School of Education and Department of Pediatrics



# make your move

Register for fall classes **TODAY!**

Registration deadline is



# INNOVATION

## Our Mission

The mission of the Institute for Innovative Transition is to improve the quality of life for adolescents and young adults with developmental disabilities and their families as they transition from school age to adulthood.

We hold a deep-seated belief that all young adults are capable of living a fulfilled life through employment, civic engagement, and social connections. We are committed to short- and long-term transformational change of a larger institutional system through partnerships with students, families, schools, and agencies.

One community partner describes the Institute: “The Institute for Innovative Transition connects partners to resources, such as funding, education, and networking opportunities, to expand and strengthen support for youth with developmental disabilities. They also advocate strongly for the adoption of asset-based paradigms that support full community engagement and inclusion. In addition, the Institute connects all of the resources in the community to make sure that youth are not lost in a complicated system.”

The Institute provides support to community members in the Finger Lakes region to effectively address transition issues for individuals with developmental disabilities. Community members include adolescents and young adults with developmental disabilities, family members, local educational institutions, and agencies that provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Over the years, we have focused our efforts in three areas: innovative transition programs, community outreach, and systems change. In order to support these initiatives, we provide the following services:

1. Information and Referral
2. Innovative Programs for Youth with Developmental Disabilities:
  - Project SEARCH™ (on-the-job training and education directed toward competitive employment)
  - Think College NY! (opening the door to inclusive higher education)
3. Technical Assistance
4. Training and Outreach
5. Policy Reform
6. Research

*Over 2,000 individuals have received training on key transition issues like planning, employment, and accessing college.*



## “It made me a new man.”

Robert was the first student to live on campus as part of the D.R.I.V.E. (Diversity, Responsibility, Inclusion, Vision, and Experiential Learning) Program at Keuka College. His time as a college student was an experience that touched and changed the lives of many. In addition to successfully recruiting college students to become peer mentors for the D.R.I.V.E. Program, he worked with Keuka staff to create a video that chronicles his life as a student with an intellectual disability. A true advocate for individuals with disabilities, Robert was often found sharing his experiences with others in the community and speaking about options for students with disabilities. On campus, Robert was known for being a motivated student. He went above and beyond the program's eight course requirement to successfully completing 16 courses, with a dual major in community living and helping professionals, by the time he finished the program in May 2013. In addition to his coursework and internship in the IKON mailroom, where he continues to work at Keuka, Robert served as a member of the student senate, dance team, and D.R.I.V.E. steering committee. And, he played a role in managing the college basketball team. “It made me a new man,” says Robert. “I learned a lot in the classroom and on campus with mentors.” Robert looks forward to continuing his employment at Keuka, where he will utilize his skills across a number of departments on campus.

—Robert Lonie, Keuka College



# COMMUNITY

## Successful Engagement with the Community

A key component of the Institute for Innovative Transition's mission is the dissemination of knowledge of and resources about the transition process for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To that end, we run an Information and Referral Center and provide training and outreach activities on transition to our community.

### Information and Referral Center:

- As a call/e-mail center, the Institute has assisted over 1,000 individuals and their families with transition-related questions.
- An information and referral specialist from the Institute reaches out to the community by attending community-based conferences and transition events, as well as facilitating numerous training sessions to families, students, and professionals.

### Training and Community Outreach:

- More than 30 professional development, outreach, and technical assistance events were held during the 2012-13 academic year, reaching hundreds of professionals and community members.
- Over 2,000 individuals received training on key transition issues like planning, employment, and accessing college.



*The Institute has assisted over 1,000 individuals and their families with transition-related questions.*



“...having a place and pet of my own.”

A member of the Project SEARCH™ class at the City of Rochester, Lanina developed several marketable skills—ranging from stress and financial management to customer service, health and nutrition, and CPR—through her internships with Rochester Animal Services and Building Services. And, she also learned how to successfully conduct an apartment search in the process. For Lanina, working with different pets in the animal shelter was the most amazing job of her life. When she graduated in 2013, she was offered a job as a dietary aide at Blossom Health Care Center. When asked what she looks forward to in the future, Lanina says, “taking art classes at Monroe Community College and having a place and pet of my own.”

—Lanina Hooper, Project SEARCH™, City of Rochester



# EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

## Model Program: Project SEARCH™

The Project SEARCH™ high school transition program is a school-year program for 18- to 21-year-olds with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Part of a national program that initially started in Cincinnati, Project SEARCH™ provides training and education leading to competitive employment and serves as an alternative for students in their last year of high school. The cornerstone of Project SEARCH™ is total immersion in a large business. Five days a week, students report to their host business, learn employability skills in the classroom, and develop job skills, while also participating in a variety of training experiences onsite in various departments throughout their host business.

Each Project SEARCH™ partnership involves a large business, school district, not-for-profit agency that provides employment supports for people with disabilities, state vocational rehabilitation services, and state offices for people with developmental disabilities. Project SEARCH™ students participate in two to three training rotations during the school year, with each rotation running eight to ten weeks. Hands-on training opportunities through Project SEARCH™ provide students with work experiences and transferable job skills that prepare them for full participation in the workforce. Project SEARCH™ staff work with students to provide the support and accommodations needed to become successful at the training site. Students also learn how to utilize “natural supports,” such as co-workers at their worksite placements, to assist in their day-to-day duties.

Employment Outcomes for Project SEARCH™ Students (2009-12)

	Number of Students	Completed the Program	Obtained Competitive Employment	Employed at Host Business
<b>2009-10</b>				
URMC	12	11 (92%)	9 (82%)	6
Wegmans (Year 1 Pilot)	2	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13 (93%)</b>	<b>11 (85%)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2010-11</b>				
URMC	12	9 (75%)	7 (78%)	6
Wegmans	7	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	6
City of Rochester	12	8 (67%)	7 (88%)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24 (77%)</b>	<b>21 (88%)</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2011-12</b>				
URMC	11	7 (64%)	4 (71%)	3
Wegmans	9	8 (89%)	8 (100%)	5
City of Rochester	9	8 (89%)	7 (88%)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23 (79%)</b>	<b>20 (87%)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>60 (81%)</b>	<b>52 (87%)</b>	<b>33</b>

*Since 2009, 91 students have graduated from Project SEARCH™ and 87% of them are currently competitively employed.*



“... I don't feel disabled anymore.”

When Sandy graduated Project SEARCH™ in 2013, she was offered employment at Wegmans. Having worked as a student intern in health and beauty, the bakeshop, and checkout at Wegmans, she accomplished a lot and gained several job skills. A big perk for her was learning how to work in a team environment. “Project SEARCH helped me get a good job, so that I don't feel disabled anymore,” she says. As Sandy embarks on her new job as a front-end cashier, she looks forward to becoming more independent.

— Sandra Olesik, Project SEARCH™, Wegmans Food Markets



# HIGHER EDUCATION

## Model Program: Think College NY! & TPSID

Think College NY! is our initiative focusing on local and state access to higher education. To this end, the U.S. Department of Education-funded Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) initiative helps students attend and succeed in college. Serving over 70 students annually, the local consortium of colleges and universities has served more students than any other TPSID grantee in the country. The following colleges and universities are part of the Western New York Consortium: Keuka College, Monroe Community College, Roberts Wesleyan College, and the University of Rochester. The Institute for Innovative Transition provides leadership, technical assistance, and coordination for the TPSID initiative.

Each of the four university-based projects offers an inclusive and meaningful postsecondary experience for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Each postsecondary institution has committed to implementing the following objectives:

- Conduct person-centered planning with all existing and incoming students.
- Develop (or expand) employment internships or jobs on all inclusive higher education campuses.
- Identify and expand course offerings (including faculty commitments).
- Develop and expand recruitment and marketing of TPSID projects to students with intellectual disabilities.
- Provide Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training to faculty at all four inclusive higher education campuses.
- Strengthen the interagency/institutional collaboration among inclusive higher education campuses; schools and adult agencies; Adult Career and Continuing Education-Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), formerly Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID); and the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).



*Over 70 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities attend one of the four participating colleges annually.*



**“You can accomplish whatever you want to be in life.”**

Twenty-one-year-old Branden always knew he wanted to go to college. He followed that dream and in 2013 completed the inclusive postsecondary program at Monroe Community College (MCC). As part of his college experience, Branden had the opportunity to work at two local daycare centers and a flower shop as an intern. While at MCC, he also took college classes, served as a committee member of the Student Events and Governance Association (SEGA), and spoke at conferences. These experiences not only helped Branden to become more independent and a self-advocate on campus and in the workplace, but they allowed him to develop skills that make him an attractive candidate for positions in childcare. His advice for other students with disabilities who are just starting college is straightforward: “Stay positive and work hard to achieve your goals.” Branden adds, “You can accomplish whatever you want to be in life.”

*—Branden Martin, Monroe Community College*



# OUTREACH

## Information and Referral Center

Calls and e-mails received by the Institute for Innovative Transition's Information and Referral Center address a variety of topics, ranging from questions regarding the legal rights of parents of youth with disabilities and inquiries about where to find specialized services and residential options to requests for information on social skills training and person-centered planning. The Institute continues to receive more calls and e-mails each year for information and referrals. Since its inception, the Information and Referral Center has responded to 857 telephone requests and 184 e-mail requests.

## nytransition.org

The Institute also gives transition an online presence. The Institute's website includes links to nearly 50 community organizations serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Our website is designed to provide individuals, families, school districts, professionals, and providers information about:

1. Resources that are available to individuals and families with developmental disabilities at the local and national levels
2. The transition process from school age to adulthood
3. The Institute and its initiatives

In addition to these resources, the Institute maintains a Facebook page for supporters: [www.facebook.com/nytransition](http://www.facebook.com/nytransition).

In 2012-13, more than 8,000 people visited the Institute's website: [nytransition.org](http://nytransition.org). Averaging 894 unique visitors per month, the site received more hits than most federally-supported websites for U.S. Department of Education or Department of Health and Human Services programs. These high numbers suggest that students, families, and other professionals find the Institute's website a valuable resource for their transition needs.



*Over 8,000 visitors have accessed the [nytransition.org](http://nytransition.org) website.*

### Information and Referral Accomplishments

- 857 calls received since the Information and Referral Center began
- 184 e-mails received since 'disability info' e-mail began
- Topics and issues most frequently queried:
  - Navigating the OPWDD eligibility process
  - Finding medical providers who are disability friendly
  - Navigating the ACCES-VR eligibility process
  - Addressing IEP questions about son's or daughter's transition outcomes
  - Finding options beyond day habilitation and workshops for students aging out of school



*First Project SEARCH™ Graduating Class*

## Outreach and Transition Training

The Institute for Innovative Transition collaborates with schools, service providers, and agencies to provide professional development to a range of community stakeholders, including teachers, Medicaid service providers, and other agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities. Since 2008, highlights of our outreach and transition training efforts include the following:

- More than 700 people attended seven conferences hosted by the Institute in Rochester and downstate New York.
- Nearly 65 students with disabilities attended the Institute's youth summits.
- Over 100 parents attended the Institute's conferences.
- More than 85 trainings have been conducted and over 2,000 people have attended these trainings.
- The Institute has been represented at more than 30 community transition outreach events.
- The Institute made over 40 state and national conference presentations.

Several staff of the Institute for Innovative Transition have offered training in the following areas:

- Overview of the Institute for Innovative Transition
- Transition 101
- Transition 202
- Introduction to OPWDD/ACCES-VR
- Transition for Students with Disabilities
- Project SEARCH™ and TPSID
- Transition Planning

Feedback from individuals attending these training sessions has been positive. Nearly 90 percent of respondents attending these events rated the quality as "excellent" or "good."



# SYSTEMS ADVOCACY

## Policy Initiatives: Employment Systems Change

The Institute for Innovative Transition continues to advocate for sustainable, meaningful change to the systems of support that exist across New York State for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We believe the best way to do this is in partnership with students and families, as well as with local, state, and federal agencies and professionals. Our efforts have included the following points of advocacy:

- Consistent implementation and interpretation of state VR and DD policy.
- Accessing state and federal dollars to support inclusive higher education and integrated, competitive employment opportunities. Our U.S. Department of Education TPSID grant and the Partnerships in Employment grant from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities have helped to support these efforts.
- Assisting students in developing self-advocacy skills so that they are well equipped to advocate for themselves.
- Providing families with clear, meaningful information so that they are able to advocate with and for their sons and daughters.
- Educating New York State members of Congress about issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



*The Institute has garnered over \$5 million in state and federal funding via five separate grants. Our grant application success rate is 100%.*



“This experience helped me to open up to people...”

When Nadia began the Bridge to Earning, Learning, and Living (BELL) Program at Roberts Wesleyan College, she was a shy, uncertain woman. Being a part of a college campus—taking courses, gaining work experience, and socializing with college peers—helped her to build social skills and become more independent. “This experience helped me to open up to people, especially strangers.” And soon, she began serving as a strong advocate and role model for others. With internships taking place on campus in the B. Thomas Golisano Library, Hastings Center for Academics, and Voller Athletic Center—Nadia developed skills for job success and is well on her way to pursuing her dream job as an auto mechanic.

—Nadia LaDue, Roberts Wesleyan College (pictured third from the right at the “Clinton Global Initiative University” in 2010)





# PARTNERSHIPS

## Partners & Funders

The work of the Institute for Innovative Transition is supported by many funders, including the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, New York State Education Department, New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, and the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

The success of the Institute is due in large part to our community partners, including:

- Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)
  - Arc of Monroe
  - Arc of Yates
  - City of Rochester
  - CP Rochester
  - Institute for Community Inclusion & Think College at the University of Massachusetts-Boston
  - Keuka College
  - Lifetime Assistance, Inc.
  - Midwest Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Center
  - Monroe 1 BOCES
  - Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES
  - Monroe Community College
  - New York State Education Department
  - New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities-Region 1 Office
  - Parent Center-Midwest Region
  - Penn Yan Central School District
  - Roberts Wesleyan College
  - Rochester City School District
  - Wegmans Food Markets
  - Westchester Institute for Human Development
- At the University of Rochester:**
- College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering
  - Golisano Children's Hospital
  - Rochester Center for Community Leadership
  - Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities-Division of Neurodevelopmental and Behavioral Pediatrics
  - University of Rochester Medical Center
  - Warner School of Education



*State funding from ACCES-VR and OPWDD had been obtained by Project SEARCH™ partners.*



“I feel proud when I do my work.”

Excited to begin Project SEARCH™, Kaitlyn has always loved to learn. As a student intern at the University of Rochester Medical Center’s Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities and Food and Nutrition Services, Kaitlyn learned more about herself. Rather than being tied down to a traditional office job, she now knows that she prefers a career that allows her to be more active. “I like to be busy,” Kaitlyn says, “and I feel proud when I do my work.” She looks forward to finding her dream job and saving money to go on vacation.

—Kaitlyn Cook, Project SEARCH™, University of Rochester Medical Center



# TRANSFORMING TRANSITION

## From Our Partners

"It's been our pleasure at Roberts Wesleyan College to work with the entire Institute for Innovative Transition team as we've created our program for students with intellectual disabilities. The program is already making tangible differences in the lives of students, and none of this would be possible without the expertise and personal passion of the staff of the Institute."

*David Basinger*

*Director of the BELL (Bridge to Earning, Learning, and Living) Program at Roberts Wesleyan College*

"Our partnership with the Institute for Innovative Transition over the past five years has provided students served by the Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES with life changing opportunities. Whether it be authentic work experiences at the Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong leading to competitive employment through Project SEARCH, or as fully integrated students on the Roberts Wesleyan Campus through the BELL Program, our students have reached heights never imagined before. The Institute has created a compelling vision and mobilized this community and others throughout our state to tap into the energy and commitment of our young adults with disabilities. We look forward to introducing more students to this dynamic and exciting journey with the Institute for Innovative Transition."

*Jo Anne Antonacci*

*Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES District Superintendent*

"Since Project SEARCH at the City of Rochester launched in fall 2010, we've had the pleasure of working with and guiding high school students with disabilities to be a part of the communities in which they live. By partnering with the Institute for Innovative Transition, we are not only helping these young adults and watching them grow as they gain competitive employment opportunities and valuable skills through their Project SEARCH internships, but the City of Rochester is benefiting as well. These students, who come to us with very high expectations for themselves, continue to inspire and positively influence everyone around them."

*Leonard Redon*

*Deputy Mayor, City of Rochester*



*The Institute for Innovative Transition has three strategic areas of focus: innovative programs, outreach, and systems change.*



## "... it changed me."

Lateisha's experience with Project SEARCH™ was a positive one. Her internships at the University of Rochester Medical Center helped her to hone her job, communication, and interview skills. They also helped her to become more professional and patient and taught her to never give up. When Lateisha looks back to when she started, she sees how far she has come. "I am actually happy that I joined Project SEARCH because it changed me," says Lateisha, who gained more self-esteem along the way. "I'm better at thinking before I do things. I got a lot out of Project SEARCH." She learned so fast and worked so efficiently that when a job opened up in Food and Nutrition Services, Lateisha was hired.

— *Lateisha Nugent, Project SEARCH™, University of Rochester Medical Center*



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# GOLISANO FOUNDATION

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**For more information on the Institute, contact us at:**  
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