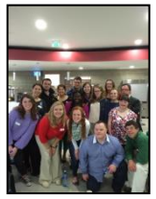
Inclusive travel: Making study abroad attainable for ALL college students

Seb M. Prohn, Ph.D, *Academic Coordinator*
Kelly R. Kelley, Ph.D, *Program Consultant*
University Participant Program
Western Carolina University



LITERATURE

- When responding to semi-projective methods, adults with intellectual disability (ID) **expressed a desire to travel domestically and abroad** (Dykens, Schwenk, Maxwell, & Myatt, 2006).
- After traveling without family, adults with ID were rated by their guardians as **more self-confident, better decision makers, more independent, and better at handling money** (McConkey & McCullough, 2006).
- Reading maps, paying for transport, time management, literacy, and problem solving have been shown to be **barriers to travel** for adults with ID (Davies, Stock, Holloway, & Wehmeyer, 2010)

SPED (Special Education) 493

The course used site visits, personal interaction, guest lectures, and readings to introduce students to services and experiences for adults with developmental disabilities in England and Ireland. Including:

- **Laws and policies**
- **Living arrangements**
- **Employment options**
- **Postsecondary education options**
- **Attitudes**

Students without Disabilities | Students with Disabilities | Instructors

SUPPORT

Daily Activity Schedules

Natural Student Support

Same-aged peers without disabilities provided assistance when needed. The assisted with

Travel: Airport security, customs, accessing plane, bus, train, or subway tickets, selecting correct buses and trains.

Leisure: UP Students and supports co-created site seeing and recreation agendas

Academics: Film or transcribe daily journals; assist with course readings and assignments; co-present at organizations

Daily routines: Choosing food options; morning/night routine; packing suitcases; arriving/leaving on schedule

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR INSTRUCTION

Flexible journal formats: video logs, web logs, written journals, bit strips

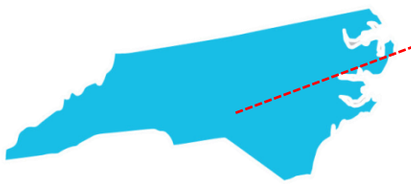
Multiple final project options: asset mapping, creating an adult service organization, creating a conference presentation proposal, writing mock letters to Parliament, creating a digital video.

Scavenger hunts were used as a method to build student knowledge on programs, researchers, and policies.

Rubrics were instructed in advance and placed in the syllabus.

Collaboration and choice was encouraged.

SUCCESSES	CHALLENGES
• Direct interaction with English and Irish adults with ID. • Inclusion and group cohesion • Collaboration, connection, and future opportunities with NUI-Maynooth • Students became more experienced and knowledgeable users of public transportation • Students directly observed the UP Program components in action	• Staff transition in WCU International Studies office increased faculty workload • Greater travel expenses than anticipated • Plane tickets and study abroad deposits were due at approximately the same time • Family member anxiety and fear • Financial aid eligibility required more credit hours than course offered • Students misunderstood security regulations • Finding suitable class times



“I had a great, super, awesome time.”

UP STUDENT Reflection Themes*

FUN
1. Enjoyable experiences
2. Positive affect

SOCIAL INCLUSION
1. Sharing activities
2. Making friends
3. Identifying with others

“I feel like I can blend in very well.”

“I made lot of friends in Maynooth. At lunch we talked with them, just bonding with them.”

“They talked about how it can be hard to be at college at first, but how you can overcome the problems...It was hard for me at WCU at first too, having friends and supports made it a lot easier. I think it might be easier for them if they had more supports to guide them.”

DEVELOPMENT
1.Public speaking
2. Critical thinking
3. Community skills

“When I spoke today it was great...They told me they were glad that I came to visit, and to hear me say what I wanted to say.”

“I had to get some euros to use from the ATM machine which was so neat also to try.”

LIFE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
1. Individuals with Disabilities
2. Organizations/ Programs

“It was very moving to hear what those people said. When Michael [a Maynooth student] showed us his video about his life it made me cry. What made me cry was he was talking about his experiences in the university and how it made a difference in is life and all around him.”

TRANSPORTATION
Exploring many types of transport- planes, buses, trains, subways, boats, taxis, and walking.

“I rode on a train to different stops and the train station was on a very different time schedule.”

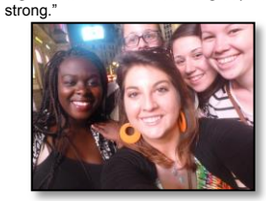
STUDENT SUPPORT Reflection Themes*

STUDENT GROWTH
1.Professional development
2. Self-discovery; identity
3. Change agent

“A couple of days ago I was doubting myself and wondering if working with the Special Needs population was what I really needed to be doing, but after our visit today, I’m quite convinced I’m right where I need to be.”

BONDING
Building friendships with people with and without disabilities.

“Our common bond of wanting to make the lives of individuals with learning disabilities more meaningful is what brought us all together and what makes our group so strong.”



INCLUSION
1. Enhanced the experience
2. Benefits everyone
3. Everyone needs support

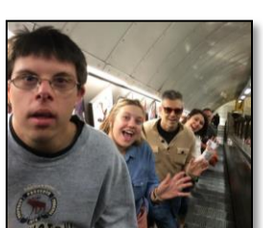
“It really brings home the fact that Inclusion often helps those of us without a disability more than it does those who have disabilities.”

BARRIER AWARENESS
1. Inaccessibility in physical environment
2. Exclusion
3. Negative attitudes and behaviors
4. Lack of resources

“At customs check in, we were stereotyped and separated into the line for medical assistance with a big ol’ handicap symbol taped to the window.”

LIFE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
1. Individuals with Disabilities
2. Organizations

“Josie [an employee with disabilities] was all about handing us leaflets and making copies of Easy Read parliament information for us. They are really pushing for their rights and their voices among the government agencies.”



* Themes were derived through open coding (initial & axial coding) of student journals. Approximately 8 journal entries per student.