Inclusive Education at the University of Sydney - Tertiary Education for People with Intellectual Disability

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A Journey to Inclusive Education

The Sydney Experience

How it all started
Where we are now
Where to next?
Prior to the Convention

Include binding treaties and non-binding statements

1976 The UN adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, ---

1991 The General Assembly adopted the Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care.

1992 World Program Action for Disabled Persons, and then followed up in -

1993 with the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
Article 24 Education: States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.
Inclusive Tertiary Education
How it all started
Audit students

› Reported feeling integrated, accepted and very satisfied to have the opportunity to attend university

› more confident about following their career pathways, having developed job related skills

› Saw university as a place to meet people and make friends.
Overall findings

Lecturers

› perceived that having students with ID in their lectures fulfills the student’s educational right for inclusion

› expressed that having these students within their classes was a positive experience for them as lecturers and for the class

› supported the notion of offering a supportive environment, creation of accessible materials and providing adequate tutorials
Overall findings

Peer students

› reported a significantly positive change in their views about people with intellectual disability

› they had come to believe that every university should welcome students with intellectual disability for everyone’s benefit.
Breaking down historical barriers to tertiary education due to rigid entry requirements, prejudice, social expectations from peers and university staff

- Gaining a student number
- Sense of belonging as an audit student
Where we are now
Doubled student numbers

Auditing across 5 different faculties

Students are discovering and developing an academic identity
  - explorers vs following a pathway
  - experience driven by the student's interests

Student interests drive our expansion within the university and the support that we gain from that

Growing support within the University
  - Reflected in steering committee membership
  - University increasingly taking ownership

Continued support from peer mentors effective and essential for integration within the University community
“The real joy has been Danielle's enthusiasm and delight at appreciating and enjoying the fruits of her studies. A chance to wander through the silver and jewellery galleries at the V & A had her enthralled. She saw Napoleon's Josephine's necklace and jewellery that she had put in her uni assignment. Ancient rings and necklaces and all manner of design inspired by the classical world.”
(Dan’s mum)
Where to next?
Where to next?

› Secure on-going funding for a sustainable future
  - Opportunities arising through the launch of NDIS

› Further refining of program strategies based on lessons learnt
  - Offering mentor training
  - Workshops for parents/family members
  - Decision regarding program duration
  - Develop individual PATHs with each student to assist in the learning and transition process
  - Lobbying for increased access to University privileges, such as student numbers
  - Increase presence on campus through stall at O-week, linking with existing mentor networks and presence on University website
Thank you!
A lay summary of the pilot findings can be accessed on