



Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education

MAIPSE

Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2022

Creating Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, and other Developmental Disabilities

FAQ's regarding the new higher education law in Massachusetts—October 2022

Are Massachusetts public institutions of higher education required to include students with severe intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and other developmental disabilities who have not passed MCAS and do not have a high school diploma?

Yes. Public institutes of higher education, in consultation with the MA Department of Higher Education are required to establish guidelines to select students with severe intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and other developmental disabilities to participate in higher education as non-matriculating students. This may include determining campus capacity regarding the number of students that may participate and limiting student participation to students who receive support from their school district, the Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission or other state agencies. These students will be allowed to participate in undergraduate academic courses, extracurricular activities, internships, work-based trainings, and other aspects of campus life that include matriculating students.

Are public colleges and universities required to apply for Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education (MAIPSE) grant funds?

While public colleges and universities are required to include students with severe intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and other developmental disabilities, they are not required to apply for the MAIPSE planning and implementation funds available through the Department of Higher Education. Funds are made available to support planning, implementation activities, and a program coordinator for this initiative. Colleges involved in MAIPSE receive training, technical assistance, and other resources.

Will the campuses need to actively recruit students into the program? Or do we need to be ready when students show an interest and contact us?

Public institutions of higher education who receive MAIPSE planning, and implementation funds are expected to collaborate with schools and adult disability agencies to identify students who may show interest in attending college. Together these partners may find it useful to develop student recruitment materials (e.g., social media posts, website information) that is consistent with the selection guidelines developed by the college or university. Campuses who do not use MAIPSE funds are also expected to prepare for eligible students who show an interest in their college courses and activities.

Who is expected to initiate the partnerships between colleges and local school districts?

Campuses that plan to offer inclusive dual enrollment opportunities to eligible students are advised to partner with neighboring school districts- even one to two initially- because these partnerships provide supports to successfully include students in classes and campus life. This can include student recruitment and support, transportation, education coaches, travel trainers, and in-kind support. It's also beneficial for colleges and universities to partner with adult service agencies such as the Department of Developmental Services and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

What is the typical number of students a college supports the first year?

Typically, new programs start slow—perhaps including just one to three students the first semester. By doing so, they can develop and implement a process for planning student schedules, collaborating with the institution's departments such as registration, disability services and career services, and developing staff and peer mentor schedules. As everyone learns what works best for their campus, the college or university typically increases the number of students they support to between 6-10 students the second or third semester. After that, the college or university, in collaboration with its partners, determines how many students it can support.

What is the typical timeline for a college to plan for and then enroll students in classes?

The average time for colleges who receive MAIPSE grant funding for program planning is expected to be four to six months.

Are the campuses required, once the program is up and running, to hire a Career Specialist? Or can campuses offer support through programs that are already in place?

MAIPSE programs are using a range of resources to support students' career development. These include hiring a career specialist, tapping into a school's or agency's already available job developer, or connecting with existing career resources on campus. The most important point is that career development is included in the student's college experience. However, research suggests that programs including a career specialist whose only responsibility is job development are more successful in providing students with employment opportunities.

If there is a staff member in place that has the expertise to start such a program, can the MAIPSE grant funds be used to support a certain percentage off their existing salary?

Yes, there is MAIPSE funding available to supplement a percentage of an existing employee's salary if the employee has been assigned as a coordinator to launch a program to include this population of students.

What supports are available for colleges that support students with severe intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and other developmental disabilities?

Massachusetts has a range of important resources to share with public institutions of higher education (IHEs) that support students with severe intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and other developmental disabilities. In addition, the Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education website, hosted by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, provides videos and other resources that can be shared with college personnel, school personnel, students and families, and also has the current list of IHEs and school districts participating in MAIPSE. Think College, housed at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, also provides a large range of free resources including a resource library, webinars, and affinity groups to learn more from colleagues in Massachusetts and throughout the country who are successfully including this population of students.