About the Career and Life Studies Certificate Program

The Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program at the University of Delaware (UD) is a two-year, non-residential certificate program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This Center for Disabilities Studies program provides academic, career and independent-living instruction in preparation for gainful employment or further education. CLSC students attend classes, participate in internships and work experiences, and engage in campus activities.

CLSC Highlights

The CLSC program provides students with the skills they need to become more independent in employment or education settings and their daily lives. Using a person-centered approach, the staff members develop individualized programs to help students meet their personal needs and goals. This includes classroom instruction and internships and other worksite experiences. The CLSC instructors support the students through:

- Life skills coaching, which focuses on skills needed to increase independence (e.g., scheduling paratransit online)
- Academic coaching to assist students who are taking undergraduate courses
- Student life coaching for participating in undergraduate campus activities

For more information about the CLSC program, contact Mary Thomas at the Center for Disabilities Studies at 302-831-6974 or CLSC-info@udel.edu.
Discussion with the Director

CLSC student Sara Giles caught up with Brian Freedman, director of the CLSC program, to learn more about the program and his take on having two groups of students in the program this year.

How are the programs for Year 1 and Year 2 students different?

In Year 1, CLSC students learn how to be college students. They orient themselves to the campus and learn about opportunities to be part of the campus community. They also take courses that have developed at CLSC on topics such as goal setting and advocacy.

In Year 2, the major focus is on “what’s next” after CLSC. We help students think about their experiences in life skills coaching and goal setting, and they work as interns in a field of their choice. Students are also connected with the critical community supports, such as adult service providers and case managers, they will need after CLSC.

Can you tell me about the grant for CLSC?

We received a federal grant called a TPSID—Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities. We are one of 27 universities around the country that received this grant to create programs like CLSC, evaluate them and determine whether or not these programs would work for students and the university. We are in the third year of the grant, but the hope, and part of my job, is to ensure that CLSC can become a permanent program at the University of Delaware.

What is your favorite part about CLSC?

I really enjoy hearing students speak up and advocate for themselves. Even when students describe a goal that appears outside the realm of possibility, we take it upon ourselves to support them in taking the initial steps toward that goal and evaluating it for themselves. I also really enjoy teaching the campus exploration course, as it gives me an opportunity to know the Year 1 students and help them feel more connected to UD.

What do you see in the future for CLSC?

This spring, we have our first graduating class, and we are really excited to have students preparing for the next steps in going to college or getting jobs. In the future, I see us creating programs like this at other postsecondary settings in southern Delaware, like Delaware Technical Community College’s Georgetown campus.

Classic Composers Inquisitions

By Ira Shepherd
Photos by William Edwards

The Classic Composers is a group of students from the CLSC program and several coaches who joined together to create a newsletter. We wanted the newsletter to be written by students, and for students and other young adults with disabilities.

Now, we are not necessarily the best writers. For some of us writing is a big challenge, but we are really excited to be a part of a team effort to tell others about our experiences at CLSC and let others see just what a group of motivated students can do with the right supports—our coaches. The coaches are awesome people who really work hard to help us to be the best we can be. They guide us by asking questions and pulling out ideas, and sometimes even transcribe for us—writing down what we say, then helping us to write it more interestingly. They have amazing patience and great senses of humor. They always expect us to work hard, because hard work pays off. You can tell that they enjoy working with us, because they always have smiles on their faces and they never run out of energy.

Let me tell you a little bit about our Classic Composers team. I met with three of our writers and two coaches and asked them some questions. Their responses tell a lot about who they are. Let’s meet the Classic Composers and their coaches!

Students

Sara Giles

Why did you choose to do your article?

I wanted to talk to Brian about CLSC. He is the director of the program—he is in charge, the boss. By doing this, it made me feel important. I had to come up with interesting questions and schedule an appointment to interview him. My coach came with me and typed every single word Brian said, which helped me write the article.

What is your favorite part about being in the Classic Composers?

I want to get more involved in the CLSC program’s activities. I like the classes, coaching and worksite experiences, but I wanted to make something to be proud of.

Michael Denny

Why did you choose to do your article?

I had a better grasp on the topic for my article “World of Work-craft” through my internship experience as a second-year student, so this was the best choice for me.

What is your favorite part about being in the Classic Composers?

I am learning so much. The coaches challenge me to try new things and that is good for me.

Sara Giles

Sara Giles works with CJ Meyer, one of the coaches.

Trey Howell

Trey Howell

What do you hope to achieve from helping with this newsletter?

I am excited to see the final outcome of the newsletter and I enjoy being a part of supporting the students with this project.

Why did you decide to be a part of the Classic Composers?

I enjoy working with the students. They are so motivated and energized by being a part of the newsletter team! I especially like that it is a student-composed newsletter—the ideas come from the students. We nurture their ideas and encourage them to stretch to their limit.

Caroline Yeager

What do you hope to achieve from helping with this newsletter?

I am thrilled to read this newsletter because it is entirely composed by the CLSC students. So far, I have seen some real talent and creativity within the Classic Composers writing committee. I can’t wait to see the final product.

What did you decide to be a part of the Classic Composers?

I like working with the CLSC program in general. I like the person-centered approach to supporting students. Being a part of the newsletter has helped me fuel the students’ creative energies.

Coaches

Alyssa Fiume

What do you hope to achieve from helping with this newsletter?

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Getting Involved: Being a UD Student

By Matthew Kuliszewski

CLSC students are encouraged to try new activities and clubs and experience all the wonderful opportunities that are available here on the UD campus. The students are involved in many different clubs and organizations that meet the diverse interests of our students. Why are clubs so important? Well, the CLSC program is really challenging with classes, internships and coaching sessions to work on our goals. Students need a break—we need time to have fun, chill out and de-stress. You need to have balance in your life, and we do that by joining clubs, enjoying cultural events and being involved in sports and recreational activities.

Another aspect I like is the after-meeting events. Sometimes we get frozen yogurt, but we also have talent shows and game nights. I like going to Inter-varsity because everyone is so nice—we’re almost like family. I am also in the Scrabble and Board Gamers Club. We play a bunch of board games like Battleship, Trouble, Jenga, Candyland and Scrabble. This club meets every Monday night in Memorial Hall. Sometimes, we have additional meetings in the dormitory lounges for those that can’t make it on Monday nights. We always have candy, junk food and games—a perfect match for fun. Each student gets to write down ideas of what games they want to bring. I like this club because I have some friends there and get to eat candy and play all the games.

Now let’s learn about some other clubs and organizations CLSC students are involved in:

**Best Buddies** is a group on campus where people with and without intellectual disabilities meet other students and create friendships, leadership development and employment opportunities. A few of our students are involved in Best Buddies, including Devon Dant, who has taken a leadership role to inform people of the group’s activities and encourage them to get involved. Some of our students are also involved in clubs with animals, such as the **Puppy Raisers of UD** (PROUD) and **Students for Animals** (SPOW).

CLSC students Lazyra Cornish, Geoffrey Steggell and Bill Edwards have been to Zumba Club, and they had a blast! Zumba is a Latin dance exercise session and a great way to stay fit.

**Central Complex**, which consists of 10 residence halls on UD’s Central Campus, chose the Center for Disabilities Studies as their partner to support during the school year. Central Complex invited CLSC students to participate in events such as “Spread the Word to End the Word” as part of a student-run initiative called the delAWARE project.

CLSC students Simon Valenzuela and Andrew Netta hang out in one of the dormitory lounges on the UD campus.

First, I would like to share my personal perspective on clubs. What I like most about clubs is that I get to try something new and make new friends. I also like hanging out with other college students. I really enjoy the Inter-varsity Christian Fellowship—a Christian club on campus that meets every Friday night. We have bible study, prayer and large group meetings. I like Inter-varsity because I have many friends there, which makes me feel connected and happy. At Inter-varsity, we sometimes have interesting discussions, which help me practice my communication skills and share my ideas with others. Some topics we talk about are meditation, self-discipline and procrastination.

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**Student Spotlight**

By Trey Howell

**Report**er Trey Howell interviewed with a few CLSC students. Let’s shine the spotlight on Drew Netta, Ben Hawkins and Ira Shepherd to see what they like about the CLSC program.

**Ira Shepherd** is a Year 1 student at CLSC. He is doing his worksite experience at the WVUD Radio Station on the UD campus. Ira enjoys all of his classes because they help him learn how to balance his school work and social activities. His favorite course so far was Communication & Problem Solving. Each course taught him skills that he will need in life to become more independent and learn how to express himself with confidence.

**Andrew Netta** is a Year 2 student and is completing his internship at Pet Kare. His favorite class is the Year 2 work portfolio class. Drew has learned how to function in the work world and what it takes to have a full-time job. Outside of CLSC, Drew spends his time with the Inter-varsity club on the UD campus. He admires the members and is inspired by them.

**Ben Hawkins** is a Year 1 student completing his worksite experience at the Newark Natural Foods Co-op. He enjoys the classroom experience at CLSC and his life studies courses. In his worksite experience, Ben learns about different foods. Outside of CLSC, Ben likes to draw, listen to music and spend time around the UD campus.

**Transition Conference 2013: “Lights, Camera, ACTION!”**

By Matthew Kuliszewski

A group of CLSC students presented at the annual Transition Conference on April 15. They shared information about their experiences at CLSC with the audience through a skit, pretending to be on the set of a talk show.

CLSC students were invited for the second year to deliver a presentation at the “Shared Work, Shared Vision” Transition Conference that happened in Dover on April 15. This annual conference is put together by several organizations, including the Delaware Department of Education and the Department of Labor’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The purpose of the conference is to share resources and information about what is happening in transition in Delaware. The conference attendees included students, their parents and the many professionals who help them to succeed in life, like teachers and case managers. Everyone was there to learn and network.

Our talk show skit, “Chit Chat with CLSC” helped the audience understand the nuts and bolts of CLSC. The cast included the director (Trey Howell), talk show host (Ira Shepherd), three VIP guests (Geoffrey Steggell, Matthew Kuliszewski and graduate assistant Josh Donaldson), camera crew (Lazyra Cornish), sound engineer (William Edwards), makeup artist (Devon Dant) and teleprompter (Sara Giles). The talk show proved to be the perfect way for the cast to share information about CLSC. Plus, it was a lot of fun for the students. The auditions to be in the skit were really competitive, even including a rubric to score our tryouts.

The workshop started with director Trey Howell saying, “Lights, camera, action!” The talk show host asked the VIPs questions about the program, including the courses, worksite experiences, opportunities to participate in clubs and other campus activities, engaging through mentoring and senior seminar, and even sitting in on UD academic courses. The VIPs also explained their personal experiences, their goals in one-on-one coaching and the person-centered approach of the CLSC program. By learning about the program, students can decide whether the CLSC program is a good match for them.

It was an awesome experience for us actors and actresses too. I am becoming more confident in speaking in front of audiences, and I really like being an ambassador for the program.
World of Work-craft

By Michael Denny

CLSC student Michael Denny met with Wendy Claiser, the team leader for the career studies unit, to capture the “world of work” that CLSC students engage in. These include worksite and internship experiences. Michael also had the opportunity to connect with several CLSC students to get their take on their internship experiences.

Worksite experience is for Year 1 students and consists of students spending two hours each week on campus or in the community at a worksite where they learn employment skills. In addition, students spend two hours per week visiting a variety of internship sites ranging from clerical, retail, grounds keeping, food service and even a radio station. These experiences help the students determine their interest and skills in those sites for deciding which location they wish to apply for an internship during their second year in the program.

During the spring semester, worksite experiences provide students with 22 hours of working in the community. Internships are for Year 2 students where they spend 132 hours in the community at a worksite where they learn employment skills. In addition, students spend two hours per week visiting a variety of internship sites ranging from clerical, retail, grounds keeping, food service and even a radio station. These experiences help the students determine their interest and skills in those sites for deciding which location they wish to apply for an internship during their second year in the program.

Now let’s get the inside report from CLSC students concerning their work experiences.

What have you learned during your internship(s)?

Lazya Cornish

The internship experience helped me in getting used to working at an actual job. One of my internships was at UD Alumni House, where I work on alumni event planning, data entry, and filing and sorting for the office. My biggest challenge is with communication and in my voice’s volume, since I am shy and very soft-spoken. I realized that this was not a good match at work and I had to adjust. It was really hard for me to do, but I was motivated because I really liked my job. I also learned that I have skills that match with a professional setting.

Devon Dant

I learned the importance of being on time, dressing appropriately, maintaining my energy level and practicing good customer service. My internships at Mainstream Nutrition and Walgreens during the spring of my second year were real work. Because of these experiences, I feel more prepared to get a job.

Ira Shepherd

My worksite experience clearly proved that I have to improve my skills in organization, being a team player and problem solving. I need to think on my feet and be more flexible. It was awesome working at the radio station.

Building Relationships: My Experience as a Mentee

By Matthew Kuliszewski

CLSC students have the opportunity to be matched with a mentor. A mentor is a UD student who is enrolled in a three-credit course here at UD to learn how to support people with disabilities. CLSC coaches Debbie Basin and Wendy Claiser teach the class.

The role of a mentor is to support CLSC students in reaching their goals and to learn about working with people with disabilities. A mentor is an undergraduate UD student who is interested in learning about and gaining more experience with people with disabilities. The mentee is a student in the CLSC program who is interested in having a role model to support them in reaching some of their goals.

The mentor-mentee relationship is special because the CLSC students get the chance to work with someone other than their one-on-one coach, and plan and participate in different activities like going to the library, meeting for lunch or playing sports. The mentor gets the chance to work with CLSC students and spend time with them to learn how they can support us better.

I became a mentee because I needed someone to help me explore activities on campus that would help me with the time I spend on campus with other UD students. I also needed help with accomplishing my personal goals. I met my mentor about three hours every week. We would email each other and schedule time together.

I thought that the mentoring program was a great experience. I loved getting to know more about my mentor and her life. I also learned a lot about myself. It was nice to have someone there to help me achieve my goals and plan activities for my free time.

Some of the most memorable experiences from the mentoring program were going to a UD lacrosse game; looking up swimming pool designs at the library; seeing the movie The Lucky One together; eating dinner with my mentor at Trabant, Perkins and Klondike Kates; and playing basketball at the Little Bob. As you can see, my mentor helped me explore my interests, be more comfortable on the UD campus and meet new people.

This program also helped me learn to work with other people. It showed me how to form an appropriate relationship with a mentor because I learned that a mentor is not a therapist or a guidance counselor. A mentor really isn’t supposed to be your friend, but still participates in activities and hangs out with you. I had a really great time with this program and got to do a lot of the things I wanted to.

I think my mentor grew too. Some of the mentors had great things to say about their perspectives, as well as how the program helped them:

I loved getting to know the students and working together with them to achieve their goals.

Coaching is challenging but rewarding, and I love being able to impact people’s lives.

The program helped me work with others, improved my communication skills, and showed me how passion, hard work and persistence can help achieve goals.

Congratulations!

The first class of students graduating from the CLSC program received their certificates of completion at the College of Education and Human Development’s Convocation on May 24. Convocation is a ceremony that recognizes all graduates and certificate recipients individually. The following CLSC students were personally congratulated by Dean Lynn Okagaki:

Lazya Cornish, Devon Dant, Michael Denny, Andie Downes, Oliver Dynes, William Edwards, Matthew Kuliszewski, Andrew Netta, Geoffrey Steggell and Simon Valenzuela. Several undergraduate students who worked as coaches and mentors with the CLSC program also graduated.
Thank You!

By Geoffrey Steggell

CLSC students have learned the value of networking and how important many people are to the CLSC program. The CLSC students would like to thank the following people for sharing their time, talent and passion:

- **Undergraduate and graduate coaches** for helping CLSC students be a part of the UD community through clubs, classes and senior seminars.
- **Career Studies and Life Studies teams** for supporting and teaching CLSC students valuable skills.
- **Director Brian Freedman** for leading the CLSC program and supporting our students.
- **UD Professors** for allowing CLSC students to visit, participate in or enroll in courses. This helps the students experience fields they are interested in.

Students can explore fields that they might want to learn more about in the future.

- **Organizations and clubs** at UD for helping the CLSC students have fun, meet other UD students and discover topics they are interested in.
- **Guest speakers** for coming to the seminar series class and sharing their “smartness” in different topics. We have had presenters on nutrition, healthy relationships and budgeting money.
- **Internships and worksites** for giving the students an opportunity to learn about the employment world. CLSC students practice work skills, get support from their supervisors and co-workers, and it is a great way to boost their resumes.
- **Mentors** for supporting the CLSC students by hanging out with them as part of the UD community.

The Classic Composers team includes CLSC students and several CLSC coaches. The CLSC students in Classic Composers are (from bottom left to right) Trey Howell, Sara Giles, Michael Denny, William Edwards, Matthew Kuliszewski, Ira Shepherd and Geoffrey Steggell. CLSC student Lindsay Tait is also in Classic Composers, but is not pictured. The coaches include Debbie Bain and UD students Alyssa Fiume, Alex Reichl, Caroline Yeager and CJ Meyer.

For more information or to receive application materials and program updates on CLSC, please contact clsc-info@udel.edu or 302-831-2940.