

A Model for Intentional College and Career Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

By Kathryn M. Burke and Kathleen Becht

INTRODUCTION

College is an opportunity for enormous growth in the lives of all students. Setting and working toward meaningful personal goals is one way to maximize those opportunities for growth. College programs for students with intellectual disability may struggle to address the independent living skills component of their comprehensive transition program without creating specialized, segregated courses. The College and Career Learning Model (CCLM) provides programs with a framework for students to attend college and gain many critical college and career skills without segregated courses. The framework outlines how students can:

- set goals
- choose the college, career, and community living skills they need and are interested in
- choose authentic, skill-building experiences to work toward their goals
- have the planning and mentor support to facilitate the process

This process enables students and those who support them to intentionally plan for and strengthen college and career abilities, gain related experiences in the campus community, and track progress. In short, students drive their own learning and progress in pursuit of their desired college and career roles.

Students drive their own learning and progress in pursuit of their desired college and career roles

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE AND CAREER LEARNING MODEL

Think College developed the College and Career Learning Plan resource (Hart et al., 2017). We have adapted the original materials to fit within a larger process of student-directed planning, action, evaluation, and support, which we call the *College and Career Learning Model* (CCLM). The CCLM was informed by the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction* (SDLMI; Shogren et al., 2019), the LifeCourse Framework for Person-centered Planning (Charting the LifeCourse Nexus, 2020), Causal Agency Theory (Shogren et al., 2015) and Social Role Valorization (Wolfensberger, 2000). The CCLM uses person-driven practices focused on goal setting and attainment with support from peer mentors, staff, and faculty. Not only does the CCLM enable students to identify desired roles while in college (e.g., club member, student worker, activist), but it also encourages students to think about roles they want in their future career fields (e.g., education, healthcare, graphic design).

THE CCLM AND PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

Person-centered planning is an individualized process during which a person identifies their strengths, aspirations, and support needs and develops a goal-oriented plan for their future with the collaboration and support of professionals and important people in their lives (Claes et al., 2010). Person-centered planning is a foundational component of inclusive postsecondary education practices (HEOA, 2008; Mazzotti et al., 2015; Weir, 2004). The CCLM is designed to incorporate the student's person-centered plan, enabling them to set self-directed, short-term goals for a given semester. On the CCLM goal page of the student form (see Figure 3), students can follow a series of step-by-step instructions for setting their semester goals. The CCLM process begins with a review of each student's person-centered plan.

COMPONENTS OF CCLM IN PRACTICE: A STUDENT PLAN EXAMPLE

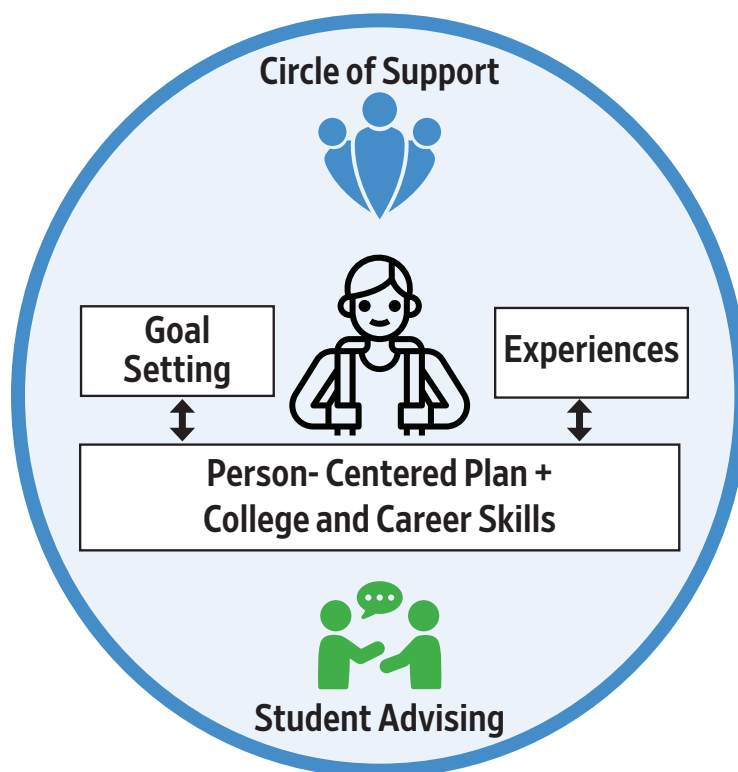
Leadership and Career Studies (L&CS) at Temple University is a 4-year certificate program for young people with intellectual disability in which they continue their education; develop their academic abilities, career ambitions, and self-determination skills; and earn a certificate. Students completing the L&CS certificate enroll in Temple courses (for credit or audit) and engage in internships, college life, and co-curricular activities. Students direct their supports and work with peer mentors (fellow Temple students) each semester.

In spring 2021, students began setting goals and gaining experiences using the CCLM. Over time, the faculty and staff have refined the process based on student and mentor feedback. Both mentors and students are encouraged to set and achieve goals through intentional experiences using the CCLM. As one peer mentor from Temple University shared, “It’s nice for us to have open communication about shared goals.” The process of identifying, setting, and working toward one or two goals and engaging in experiences occurs over the course of each semester. Faculty and staff provide guidance and support for students and mentors on how to use the CCLM through overview videos, example materials, and regular one-on-one check-ins during advising meetings. For instance, students and mentors learn about the parts of the model, how to set a goal, how to choose and plan experiences, and how to track their progress.

Students work on skills of their choosing that are directly related to their own personal goals for their future.

The components of the CCLM do not reflect a linear process of steps. Some components may occur simultaneously or in response to one another. See Figure 4 for a sample semester plan. The person-centered planning process and 1-page summary, along with the College and Career Skills, are foundational tools used to support the student’s self-determined goal setting process and corresponding experiences. The student’s goals and experiences continue to inform their person-centered plan and the College and Career Skills they choose to target. The CCLM model is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. ILLUSTRATION OF THE COLLEGE AND CAREER LEARNING MODEL



This case study is an amalgam of actual students' self-determined goals and experiences. This case study serves as one example of how a student ("Paige") works on and documents her short and long term goals, supported by intentional experiences, mentors, faculty, and staff through the CCLM process.

Component 1. Person-centered Planning

Each student uses their person-centered plan and a corresponding 1-page summary to drive their goals and experiences. Paige has listed social, academic, career, and independence goals on her 1-page summary:

- Paige's long-term goals for her **social** life are to make new friends, make more plans with friends outside of school, and make a travel blog.
- Under **academics**, Paige wants to learn new information about American history, get more experience with acting lessons, and expand her computer and smartphone editing skills for social media and blogs.
- When it comes to her **career**, Paige wants to work for a non-profit and/or work as an actress.
- Lastly, Paige wants to develop her **independence** by keeping a budget, getting her own apartment, cooking more, and balancing her social life and schoolwork.

Once Paige and her mentors review her long-term goals from her person-centered plan 1-page summary (see Figure 2), they focus on choosing the College and Career Skills (see *Table 1*) that she will need to achieve each of her goals. See the LifeCourse Framework for more information on person-centered planning (Charting the LifeCourse Nexus, 2020).

Component 2. Targeting College and Career Skills

Paige works with her mentors to review the list of College and Career Skills (see *Table 1*) to identify skills that she will need and is motivated to learn to attain her long-term goals. This is an important tenet of the model – students work on skills of their choosing that are directly related to their own personal goals for their future. These skills are listed under the four domains of (1) academic and career habits, (2) community engagement, (3) balance of multiple roles, and (4) self-direction.

Paige and her mentors look through the four domains together and talk about what these domains look like during their daily lives as students on campus. They discuss how these skills connect to the long-term goals Paige outlined in her person-centered plan. Right away technological know-how stands out to Paige and the mentors. This aligns with her interest in social media and starting a travel blog, along with her

Component 1. Person-centered Planning

Early in their college experience, the student develops an overall plan of what is important to them currently and in the future as part of the person-centered planning process. Program staff then work with the student to create a 1-page summary (see Figure 2) of their long-term goals, interests, and support needs as a resource. With support from their advisor, each student reviews and revises their 1-page summary each year.

Component 2. Targeting College and Career Skills

College and Career Skills are skills which are critical to students with and without disabilities for postsecondary education and adult success (Hart et al, 2017). There are four domains:

1) academic and career habits, 2) community engagement, 3) balance of multiple roles, and 4) self-direction. Students work collaboratively with peer mentors to review and discuss their strengths and areas to focus on for potential goals and corresponding experiences in each of the domains.

interest in traveling (something she really likes to do is camp with her family). Technological know-how is a skill Paige might want to focus on this semester.

Paige and her mentors continue talking through the College and Career Skills. When she gets to the self-direction section, Paige and her mentors talk about another long-term goal Paige has: learning to budget. Personal finances might be a skill she chooses to focus on this semester.

Once Paige and her mentors have reviewed the full list, they turn to the College and Career Learning Student Form (see Figure 3). Paige writes down a skill she would like to work on for the semester, thinking about how it connects to the long-term goals in her person-centered plan. Paige decides that technological know-how is what she is really interested in learning more about and focusing on. Developing this skill should help her meet her long-term goal of creating a travel blog, which aligns with both her personal and professional interests.

Component 3. Goal Setting, Progress Monitoring and Self-evaluation

It is time for Paige to write a SMART short-term goal and plan how she will track her progress (Bovend'Eerd et al., 2009). A SMART goal is (S) specific, (M) measurable, (A) achievable, (R) realistic, and (T) timely.

Something specific (S) Paige wants to do is create travel blog posts. She can make this goal measurable (M) by setting the number of posts she will write. She decides to write one travel blog per month. Paige's mentors discuss with her how to achieve her goal (A), identifying supports that might be helpful. One of Paige's mentors brings up the student groups on campus that focus on communications, marketing, advertising, and social media. Next, Paige reflects on whether her goal is realistic (R) for the semester. Is one blog post per month too many? Four blog posts in the current semester may be overwhelming, considering the other responsibilities Paige has as a student, but two travel blog posts for the semester might be more realistic. The last element for Paige to consider is setting a goal that is timely (T). How will Paige know when she is finished? Paige makes the goal timely when she sets it as a goal to achieve within the semester. Reflecting on her person-centered plan, Paige mentioned how important it is for her to have a planner where she keeps her schedule. Like many college students, Paige uses her planner as a visual support to keep track of time and tasks. After talking with her mentors, Paige decides that it makes sense for her to track her progress on each month's layout in her planner for the semester. In doing so, she can reflect on the actions and progress she has taken toward her CCLM goal. Her final SMART short-term goal is to write two travel blog posts this semester by using support from Temple student communications groups.

Component 3. Goal Setting, Progress Monitoring, and Self-evaluation

Students select and set short-term goals based on their long-term goals, interests, and support needs from their person-centered plan 1-page summary (from Component 1) and the College and Career Skills (from Component 2). Peer mentors and/or advisors support the student to document their targeted skills, corresponding goals and progress on the College and Career Learning student form (see Figure 3).

Paige's SMART Goals

S	Specific	S	Travel blog posts
M	Measurable	M	Two posts
A	Achievable	A	Student group support
R	Realistic	R	Two posts /semester
T	Timely	T	Semester end

Component 4. Circle of Support

Paige meets with her individual team of peer mentors (usually 2–4 mentors) for Circle of Support (CoS) meetings every two weeks to reflect on recent experiences and her overall progress, successes, challenges, and support needs. She is encouraged to take the leadership role in directing her CoS meetings, which gives her valuable experience in self-determination and self-direction. CoS meetings are also a great opportunity for Paige to talk with her mentors about additional goals, planning SMART goals, and discussing support she might want. Paige will continue to review her skill goals, experiences, and progress over the course of the semester with both her peer mentors and her advisor. To learn more about Circles of Support, see Araten-Bergman and Bigby (2022).

Component 5. Engaging in College and Career Experiences

Paige will work with her peer mentors and advisor to plan experiences in each of the four College and Career Skill domains: **1) academic and career habits, 2) community engagement, 3) balance of multiple roles, and 4) self-direction.** She will also work toward her travel blog goal. Some examples of experiences include attending campus events, joining a club and attending meetings or activities, or using campus resources, such as the library or tutoring center. It can be helpful to map out what the four experiences might be at the beginning of the semester, knowing the plan is flexible and can change. The characteristics column in the College and Career Skills (see Table 1) includes general ideas for skills and activities students can engage in through experiences that can be tailored to a student’s campus, based on their interests and what opportunities are available.

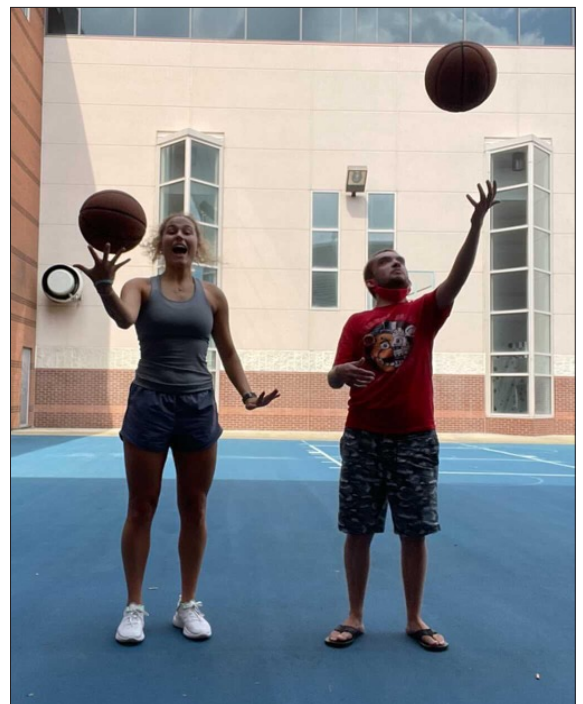


Component 4. Circle of Support

These biweekly meetings between students and their peer mentors represent the “boots on the ground” support for each student to accomplish their identified goals and experiences. The student and their peer mentors discuss successes, challenges, and supports related to academics and campus engagement and make plans for the upcoming weeks. Each meeting lasts approximately one hour, and students and peer mentors may hold as many as eight Circle of Support meetings in a semester.

Component 5. Engaging in College and Career Experiences

In addition to working toward one or two specific goals, the program encourages students to engage in intentional campus activities aligned with the College and Career Skills. In this way, even if students have not set a goal in one of the four domains (see Table 1), they are still building skills through campus engagement experiences that correspond to their desired roles—like club basketball player!



1. EXPERIENCES IN ACADEMIC AND CAREER HABITS

Paige decides that under *academic and career habits*, she wants to focus on communication. Exploring acting and drama is something in her person-centered plan that she has not focused on yet. She wants to prioritize communicating her interest in these areas when setting up her schedule for the next semester.

2. EXPERIENCES IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

When it comes to *community engagement*, Paige is still learning more about the campus community. In her home community, Paige has participated in neighborhood cleanups. Being green and thinking about conservation are important to her. On the student activities website, Paige identifies a *Green Council* meeting that she can attend in January.

3. EXPERIENCES IN BALANCING MULTIPLE ROLES

In *balancing multiple roles*, Paige sees an opportunity to focus on some of her long-term independence goals from her person-centered plan. She hopes to cook more and live on her own in the next few years. She decides she will sign up for some cooking seminars at the wellness center on campus.

4. EXPERIENCES IN SELF-DIRECTION

Paige sees *self-direction* as a strength, but still wants to work on communicating her needs and using campus resources. She wants to start by exploring the student recreation center and trying at least one fitness class.

CONCLUSION

The CCLM is both flexible and individualized, meaning no two students will have the same goals, experiences, progress, or outcomes in a given semester. The number of goals and experiences students are encouraged to set and the process for reviewing and revising them may also differ depending on the inclusive postsecondary education context. The CCLM encourages student learning in the natural context where students can practice skills in the context where they are used rather than in a separate classroom. It also provides an alternate method to develop and track students' learning in independence and life skills.

The Temple University program example shows how programs can use the CCLM to set up an individualized plan for instruction that is implemented with the support of peer mentors and program staff. Another way to use the CCLM is to incorporate it into existing courses at the college or university. Modeled after implementation of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI; Shogren et al., 2019), college professors can use the CCLM as a framework for students to set goals and engage in experiences related to their course.

For instance, in a course focused on motivation in education, the professor may ask students to use the CCLM to set a goal and engage in experiences over the semester related to their motivation as students. These goals and experiences, in turn, would relate both to the specific focus of the course and the core College and Career Skills (see Table 1).

As the field of inclusive postsecondary education continues to grow, higher education faculty, staff, and researchers must continue to explore goal-setting practices that maximize the opportunities to support students' engagement and intentional learning inside and outside the classroom, such as the CCLM.

College & Career Skill Areas

Academic & Career Habits
Community Engagement
Balance of Multiple Roles
Self-Direction

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TABLE 1. COLLEGE AND CAREER SKILLS

Domain	Skill	Characteristics
Academic and Career Habits	Attendance and punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains current course and work schedules • Gets to class and work on time
	Use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is aware of college supports (e.g., counseling, career, library) • Uses tutoring, coaching, mentoring, and disability services as needed
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates clearly and can make others understand their meaning • Checks for understanding, such as asking clarifying questions • Communicates with college faculty, supervisors, co-workers, residence hall staff, peers, and classmates • When engaged in class or a conversation, talks on topic • Initiates greetings and conversations with peers and classmates
	Quality of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans ahead to manage assignments • Takes or knows how to get class notes • Organizes class or work materials • Maintains good study and work habits, such as completing assignments and asking for help if needed
	Acceptance of direction and constructive criticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to valid requests • Listens to and evaluates feedback from peers, instructors, coaches, co-workers, and supervisors • Changes behavior as a result of assessments or feedback, if necessary • Accepts (or understands) work performance assessments
	Technological know-how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows email etiquette • Uses office software (e.g., word processing, spreadsheets, slideshows) • Uses cell phone to make calls, to text, and/or to leave messages, as appropriate • Uses mobile device to manage and monitor course schedule, assignments, and social activities • Maintains social media accounts responsibly • Uses on-campus learning management systems
Community Engagement	Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly attends class, job, and campus activities • Follows through on assigned tasks to completion
	Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adheres to college, work, and social rules and expectations • Demonstrates respect (as defined by culture/community) to peers, instructors, coworkers, and supervisors • Manages conflict, frustration, or disappointment appropriately
	Flexible attitude (or flexible thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns the attitudes and expectations of new environments • Creates and seeks solutions to problems • Can generate alternatives and identify additional solutions
	Responsible risk-taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions • Applies decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic, employment, and social situations
	Interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains reciprocal relationships with friends and peers • Manages respectful interactions with professors and employers, friends, and classmates • Engages in assigned group work during class
	Curiosity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks questions • Asks or looks for new information • Seeks new experiences
	Awareness and use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of campus and community resources (e.g., career center, public transportation, health services) • Knows how to find information

Domain	Skill	Characteristics
Balance of Multiple Roles	Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates fully in academic tasks or projects from beginning to end • Problem-solves when there are barriers
	Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates and follows a daily/weekly schedule • Can list places and times when best able to succeed at a task • Can list places and times when least able to succeed at a task
	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates with study/class/work partners • Contributes to group assignments • Performs a variety of roles within a group
	Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes familiar tasks at school or work without assistance • Is able to find and use needed resources
	Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in a variety of organizations and/or groups • Is motivated to learn • Demonstrates initiative in learning • Demonstrates initiative in getting involved in activities
Self-direction	Communicates needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks for help and asks for clarification • Uses campus and community resources
	Anticipates needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes and communicates personal support needs • Learns from experiences • Identifies possible problems or challenges • Takes initiative to solve problems
	Advocates for own needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows of and uses campus and workplace resources • Speaks up for self • Expresses desires • Articulates accommodation needs • Requests accommodations when necessary • Identifies own achievements • Engages in self-reflection, recognizing own improvement and growth
	Accesses health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedules preventative and necessary medical appointments • Manages prescription medication • Uses campus fitness centers
	Manages personal finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deposits and withdraws funds (ATM, checking account) • Pays bills on time • Safeguards money from others • Budgets funds effectively

FIGURE 2: PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING ONE-PAGE SUMMARY

PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

ONE-PAGE SUMMARY

Instructions: Use the information from your person-centered planning meeting to complete the three main areas of this summary: interests, goals, and supports.

Name: _____ Date: _____

MY INTERESTS: What I like and what I am good at

MY BIG GOALS: From my person-centered plan

ACADEMIC:

CAREER/EMPLOYMENT:

SOCIAL:

INDEPENDENCE:

MY SUPPORTS: What I need to achieve my goals

FIGURE 3. COLLEGE AND CAREER LEARNING STUDENT FORM

Goals	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review your person-centered plan 1-Page Summary. 2. Review the list of College and Career Skills (Table 1) under each domain of: Academic and Career Habits, Community Engagement, Balance of Multiple Roles, and Self-direction. 3. Pick a College and Career Skill you would like to work on this semester. It should connect to the long-term goals in your person-centered plan. 4. Write a SMART goal and plan how you will track your progress. 5. Work to reach your goal and meet with your advisor two times during the semester to discuss and review your progress. 	
What is the first College and Career Skill you would like to work on?	<i>Technological know-how</i>
How does it connect to your person-centered plan?	<i>One of my goals is to make a travel blog. I also want to get better with editing for social media and blogs</i>
How will you keep track of your learning?	<i>Writing down the steps I take on the month pages in my planner</i>
Write a SMART goal for the College and Career Skill	<i>I will write two travel blog posts this semester by using support from Temple student communications groups</i> S = specific, M = measurable, A = achievable, R = realistic, T = timely.
What date did you set your SMART goal?	<i>September 17, 2021</i>
Work on your goal. Be sure to track your progress!	
Advising Review #1: Date	<i>October 18, 2021</i>
Advising Review #1: How is your progress?	<i>I went to a workshop with a media group at Temple. I learned about building the “brand” for my blog. I decided on a theme for my blog and put my first post up. I’m getting a lot of comments, but don’t know what I want my next post to be about.</i>
Advising Review #2: Date	<i>November 29, 2021</i>
Advising Review #2: How is your progress?	<i>I went to a social event for the media group and made friends with other bloggers. I ended up making two more posts this month. I want to find a blog editing class or workshop to go to next.</i>

Experiences

Directions

1. Plan and engage in 4 Experiences on campus each semester.
2. Each experience should relate to a skill in one of the 4 domains from the College and Career Skills (Table 1). Examples might be attending campus events, going to club meetings, or using the campus health center.
3. At each Circle of Support Meeting, plan your next experience. Record each experience as you complete it.
4. Review progress with your advisor at your monthly advisor meetings.

Domain: Academic and Career Habits

What skill is your experience focused on?

Write the College and Career Skill here.
Skill: Communication

What campus or community activity will you participate in to gain this experience?

Looking at course catalog with mentors to find acting and drama classes, and letting the academic supports coordinator know what I want to take

What date did you participate in this experience?

November 10, 2021

Domain: Community Engagement

What skill is your experience focused on?

Write the College and Career Skill here.
Skill: Commitment

What campus or community activity will you participate in to gain this experience?

I like doing neighborhood cleanups, and I want to find a group like that at Temple. I'm going to go to the next Green Council meeting.

What date did you participate in this experience?

January 20, 2022

Domain: Balance of Multiple Roles

What skill is your experience focused on?

Write the College and Career Skill here.
Skill: Independence

What campus or community activity will you participate in to gain this experience?

Cooking seminar at the Wellness Center

What date did you participate in this experience?

September 8, 2021

Domain: Self-direction

What skill is your experience focused on?

Write the College and Career Skill here.
Skill: Communicates needs

What campus or community activity will you participate in to gain this experience?

Try fitness class at rec center

What date did you participate in this experience?

October 19, 2021

FIGURE 4. SAMPLE SEMESTER PLAN

Sample Semester Plan	
1. Set 1-2 goals and track progress	
Tool: College and Career Learning Student Form	Who: Student and mentors
Develop goal(s)	
Work on goal(s)	
Track progress	
Review and reflect on progress (student + advisor)	
2. Complete 8 College and Career Learning experiences	
Tool: College and Career Learning Student Form	Who: Student and Circle of Support
Plan and complete 1 experience every 2 weeks (using Circle of Support meetings)	
Plan and complete 2 experiences within each of the 4 College and Career Skills domains	