Another semester complete!
Another semester gone and another semester that I continue to be so impressed with all the accomplishments! Think College welcomed 3 new students and 5 new mentors into the program this past fall. All 8 of them have been a wonderful addition to our Think College community. We had 3 successful internships, a variety of classes and plenty of time for dance, skating, swimming, Feel Good Food Club, running, rock climbing, Burlington 101 and a Halloween party. Please enjoy reading about this past semester. I cannot wait to see what the spring will bring!

Message from our Executive Director:

Think College Vermont at UVM and JSC is celebrating its fourth year! Here are some of our major accomplishments:
- 12 students have completed the Certificate of Professional Studies at both UVM and JSC.
- All graduates are employed in competitive integrated jobs in the community earning at or above minimum wage.
- Our mentors have excelled in their own academic pursuits and have supported the academic inclusion of our students.
- Think College students are fully included in academic courses at UVM and JSC.
- Courses students have taken in Fall 2014 include: Written Expressions, Human Development, Communication Methods, Contemporary Dance, Math and US History.
- Students report that they have gained more confidence, have made more friends, and have developed technology, social media and academic skills as a result of being involved in a post-secondary education program.
- Think College co-sponsored the 3rd Annual Opening Doors to College and Careers conference. 110 of participants were in attendance.

During Spring 2015 the staff of Think College will be working to ensure each student secures a job in the community upon graduation. We will also be working to sustain the program after the funding from the U.S. Department of Education grant ends in September 2015.

If you would like to learn more about the project please contact me directly. We are so pleased with the success of the project and the value of post secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities.

To opening doors,
Susan Ryan, Ph.D.
TCVT Project Director
CDCI Executive Director
FROM THE STUDENTS:

Keshia McDonald:
Keshia just finished her third semester at Think College and what a busy one she had! In addition to taking her Communication Methods class, Keshia also took swim lessons at Patrick Gym, and tried her hand in a few different clubs and activities!

Keshia explains, “I am going to miss everyone when I leave college next year. The thing I like the most about Think College is that I met new people that I didn’t know before. I hope that who ever joins Think College will have fun like I did when I was here and I am happy and sad that I am going to be leaving all the mentors and the students. Goodbye love you all thanks for letting me be part of Think College…”

Brittany Noyes:
Brittany finished her most impressive semester yet! She put forth such effort and it showed in all of her work. This semester not only did she continue working at both SKIDA and Noyes Automotive and Tire but she also took US History. Brittany said, “I love my teacher, she knew what she was teaching. I learned a lot about the American Revolution and the civil war. I love hanging out with my friends and I loved seeing the mentors. On Fridays I liked getting free coupons from Rally Cat when you wear UVM gear.”

Alex Casavant:
We were so excited to have Alex as a part of Think College this year! Alex is one of our new students and we were quickly impressed with her strong work ethic, friendly personality and organization. Not only did Alex enjoy studying, but she also enjoyed participating in several activities such as running, rock wall climbing, and our annual spread the word to end the word campaign. She also enjoyed downtown Burlington and loved beating everyone at games like Life, SORRY and Connect 4. Great first semester Alex!

April Hartley:
April had an extremely busy third semester! She had an internship at the Burlington City Arts Center that had her traveling to 2 different places. She also took a hip-hop dance class where they learned Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” for a Halloween flash mob. April also wrote a fashion article for the UVM paper.

April documented her experiences in journal entries and blogs: “My experience here at UVM has been fun. Like going to classes and exploring around the UVM campus. I like my internship and I have two of them at the BCA center and at the Memorial Auditorium helping with parents and kids doing arts and crafts and clay. Yes it is time for me to say bye to UVM because I’m a senior and going to graduate in May 15. I loved all the mentors here at Think College. I would recommend it to the people who need help. I will let you know when I am completely done with the program. I still have 7 more months to stay here at think college and explore. “
**Christian Sell:**
Christian came into this year ready to work and dance. This year Christian took a contemporary dance class and went to see the Martha Graham Dance Company at the Flynn Theater. Christian’s parents wrote, “Christian really got into the performance there. His arms were above his head and the upper part of his body swaying with the music. After the show ended a very exhausted Christian looked at us and said, ‘Christian do it, Christian dancing.’”

In addition to being a huge asset to the dance class, Christian also worked on navigating the UVM campus by taking the CATS bus system around campus. Between his internship last year at Patrick gym, his dance class this year on the Trinity campus and hanging out at his favorite eatery Brennan’s at the Davis Center, Christian could give anyone a tour of the UVM campus!

**Jason Gross:**
Another semester and another impressive internship for Jason! Sticking with his love of radio, Jason found himself interning at VPR and taking a math class. He wrote “I finally completed my internship at VPR as well as my math course at CCV. I received the equivalent of an A for the course. Due to the awesome grades I accomplished during the semester, I was exempt from taking the final exam! I want to thank all the mentors who worked with me on the math assignments.” Nice Job Jason!

**Jasmine Roupe:**
Jasmine is a first year student who impressed us all with her boundless energy. Almost every afternoon she was on campus, Jasmine wanted to go to the gym and go running and work out. She would challenge herself to go faster and longer than the time before. We were all inspired by her dedication. In addition to running, she also tried ice-skating, became a huge fan of the Wellness Center AND participated in the Essex Community Players Christmas Extravaganza Holiday Show. With all her activities Jasmine still found time to write a 7 page final paper in her English class. Talk about a great first semester!

**Kelsey Reed:**
We were so excited when Kelsey decided over the summer to join us for the fall semester. She made great strides in her Human Development class and we can’t wait to see what she will do next semester.

Kelsey described her first semester by writing, “I like the mentors a lot because they help me with homework, writing notes from my class, working out with me at the UVM gym, talk about how my Human Development class is, and they go to UVM games with me. My friends from Think College are really nice to me and getting along really well!”
Matt Saunders:
Matt had a terrific semester this past fall! He had an amazing internship at the Burlington City Food Shelf, worked hard on all his assignments and again spent his Fridays donating his time to Feel Good Food program at UVM.

“I came to UVM and Think College in 2013. How I first got to UVM was with the help of my sister. She helped me to apply to the Think College Program, and ever since I have been so happy to find a place that I belong. I feel like I belong here because of the mentors, students, and the program leaders. I believe that Think College has helped me to learn more about myself. I have become more confident and involved at UVM because of the guidance and support that the mentors, students, and program leaders show.

“What I like most about UVM is that it is a very supportive environment. I think that most people in the program, like the mentors and students are very unique in their culture and background. The mentors are great because they are beautiful, strong, and smart and they always do whatever is in the best interest of us as students. All students should have a mentor because they are awesome and have the knowledge to help you find a job and gain experiences to help guide us down a positive and progressive road. Like the Rascal Flatts say ‘if one door opens to another door closed, I hope that you keep on walking until you find the window.’ I think that a lot of student’s dreams might come true. So make your goals bigger and great things will happen!”

MENTOR FAREWELLS: Thank you both for all you have done! We will miss you!

Dear Think College,

It is so difficult to write this farewell letter because Think College has been such an important part of my college career. I started in the Spring of 2013 and have loved every minute working with the program. Each and every student that I worked with had an impact on me and has helped me grow into a better person. I am certain that my work with Think College will continue to help me in the future, as I become a teacher.

Think College has taught me so many important skills but most importantly perseverance. I have seen so many great successes over my four semesters with Think College and celebrated with every student as they got your test scores back, did performances, finished internships and handed in projects. It is hard to imagine the UVM experience without Think College.

Every mentor and student in this program is doing something really wonderful and I am so glad that I was part of the group. I know that you will continue to do amazing things throughout the next semester and on. Although I will be student teaching next
Where does the time go?! It is so hard to believe that I have just completed my final semester as a mentor for Think College. Words do not express how much this program has given me throughout my time at UVM. The family in Think College is something so special, and one that I have been so proud and thankful to be a part of. Since becoming a mentor, I have had the opportunity to work with the most incredible people. So many of the students in Think College have accomplished so much, and there is nothing more rewarding than watching them succeed. During these last three years, I have seen myself grow, and I can attribute that to every single person in Think College. Because of Think College I have established the most incredible friendships that I will forever cherish!

Thank you so much to everyone that makes this program happen! I have only positive things to say about Think College and words do not do it justice for how much it has meant to me! Everyone in Think College is so special and cares so much about one another, and it has truly been a highlight of my time at UVM. Thank you so much to everyone in Think College who made it so special… I will miss you all!

All My Best, Abby Dorfman

ACADEMIC UPDATE – FALL 2014

“Education is learning what you didn’t even know you didn’t know.” – Daniel J. Boorstin

Think College students were challenged this semester as they were engaged in courses related to their interests and potential career paths. Peer mentors, tutors from the Writing Center, and specialists from the ACCESS office supported students throughout the semester.

Keshia MacDonald took Communication Methods with Jonathon Leonard. In this course students develop their individual and group public speaking skills through giving and analyzing presentations. These are important skills for students seeking employment and learning how to advocate for themselves.

Brittany Noyes took U.S. History after 1865 with Jacqueline Carr. She studied the pre-Revolutionary period up to the Civil War era. Brittany has volunteered at the Ethan Allen Homestead. She enjoyed studying this period in history and learning from her professor.

Jason Gross took Basic Math at Community College of Vermont with Brett Hinson. He improved his skills in basic math concepts and processes. UVM mentors
supported Jason with homework and his understanding of math concepts. Jason’s hard work and persistence helped him have a successful semester at CCV and UVM.

Christian Sell took Contemporary Dance with Paula Higa. He learned about expressive and receptive communication through movement of the body. Listening and observing are important aspects of communication. Students in the class become physically stronger and they develop a stronger memory through the practice of dance. Christian enjoyed being a part of this class. He attended a performance by the Martha Graham Dance Company at the Flynn Space as part of his course requirements.

Jasmine Roupe took Written Expression with Kira Braham. In this course, Jasmine developed her reading, critical thinking, writing, and revising skills. She finished the semester by writing a seven-page paper!

Alex Casavant and Kelsey Reed took Human Development and Family Studies with Larry Shelton. They studied human development from birth to older adults. This course gives students a foundation for working with people of all ages.

April Hartley took Hip Hop Dance with Lois Trombley. She learned warm ups, strengthening exercises, and choreography in the style of Hip Hop Dance. In October, the class performed a flash mob on campus to Michael Jackson’s Thriller! Think College students have demonstrated that they can rise to the high expectations at UVM with support and hard work! Their presence on campus and their contributions to the UVM community continue to amaze all of us! We are looking forward to the spring semester with this exceptional group of students.

Deb Baker-Moody
Academic Coordinator

EMPLOYMENT UPDATE: FALL 2014

“If you want something in your life you’ve never had, you’ll have to do something you’ve never done.” JD Houston

Students in the Think College program have been working hard and gaining valuable employment skills during their coursework and vocational internships. Students did some career exploration as they attended the fall Job Fair hosted by the UVM Career Center. The Job Fair had representation of over 125 local and national employers. The Job Fair is a great opportunity for students to explore various career options and make connections for internships and employment.

Jason Gross completed an internship at Vermont Public Radio (VPR). Jason worked on several different projects cataloguing previous shows and learning the inner working of a radio station. Jason had a previous internship at WRUV radio where
he undertook an intensive DJ training. He currently has his own radio show, “DJ Jay’s Mix Tape Hour” every Thursday at 105.9 the Radiator. Jason is building an impressive resume for a career in radio. Thanks to Laurie Kigonya at VPR for providing such a great experience!

April Hartley completed an internship at Burlington City Arts where she worked with children and their families on various art projects. April worked with the “Pollywog” group of toddlers and stated, “I’m excited to see the kids and I look forward to teach them the world of creativity.” April assisted with many projects included painting, pottery, glitter pinecones, Christmas decorations, finger painting and macaroni necklaces. April was such a great worker at Burlington City Arts they don’t want her to leave! Many thanks to Zoe, Julia and Katie!

Matt Saunders completed his internship at Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf where he packaged bulk foods for distribution. Matt has a passion to help those in need and is interested in local food systems. He took a Farm-to-Table course at UVM and has his own home egg business. The Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf was a perfect place for Matt to hone his skills and help others. His supervisor commented, “Matt is a very hardworking individual and a pleasure to be around.” In addition to his internship, Matt also worked at FeelGood at UVM where he prepared grilled cheese sandwiches for students. Their motto, Ending world hunger one grilled cheese at a time... matches Matt’s mission as well. Thanks to Anna McMahon for providing such a great experience for Matt at the Food Shelf.

Think College also hosted an intern this semester. Alice Coates-Martin, a senior at South Burlington High School spent time getting to know the students and worked with them on study skills and developing their electronic portfolios. Alice will be back with us next semester to continue her work and introduce the concept of “Mindfulness” to the students. Thanks for your help, Alice!

On October 29, 2014 we co-hosted with Vermont APSE our third, “Opening Doors to College & Careers” conference at the University of Vermont Davis Center. Self-Advocate, Kris Medina got the conference started with an inspirational keynote address encouraging all to look beyond appearances and expect more from people with disabilities. “Raising awareness to Presumption of Competence is vital in my work. People should never be looked upon as empty spaces. Presuming that one is not intelligent, just because of outward appearances is a tragedy. Judging ones understanding by their form of communication or ability to socialize is deadly.” The conference highlighted educational and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We had over 100 people in attendance with excellent sessions and vendor tables. Many thanks to our generous sponsors including SerVermont-AmeriCorps, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Center on Disability & Community Inclusion.
COMING THIS SPRING!

Keshia McDonald will use her final semester to do an internship and take a Hip-Hop dance.

Brittany Noyes is interested in playing Hockey, doing an internship AND taking a class!

Alex Casavant is taking her studies of human development even further and studying Human Bio.

April Hartley will be doing a second internship and will be advancing to Hip Hop 3&4 dance class.

Christian Sell enjoyed his dance class so much he decided to take another dance class and an internship.

Jasmine Roupe will continue exploring the UVM campus and the City of Burlington. Kelsey Reed will be taking Written Expressions.

Matt Saunders was so successful in his first internship at the Burlington Food Shelf that he looks forward to continuing working in a position where he can help people make a difference.

Thank you all for another fabulous semester! We could not do it with out you!!

Best,

Cassandra George

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