Problem to be addressed:

Thus far, concerns for post-secondary supports for students with disabilities have primarily focused on those students who met institutional criteria for admission, but because of their disabilities, required supports and services to enhance the likelihood of their success in post-secondary programs.

Little attention has been paid to opportunities for those students with significant developmental disabilities, including cognitive disabilities, to participate in post-secondary educational programs, or to programs to encourage them to become life-long learners. These students would not meet the usual admission criteria to matriculate in vocational or community college programs. Many community colleges accept a high school diploma or GED for admission. Many of these students receive a certificate of completion of high school rather than a diploma.

When their eligibility under IDEA ends at the age of 21, many of these students, anywhere along the continuum from mild to moderate disabilities, lack continuing opportunities for inclusion with peers in living, learning, and social activities. Self-determination at the age of 21 provides few choices when post-secondary educational opportunities are closed to them and job opportunities are very limited. Many of these young adults spend their post-high school years sitting alone at home, or if they have jobs, work only a few hours a week.

With almost no funding at the federal level and lack of enthusiasm at the local level, the persistence of some families has resulted in some successful matriculations of students with significant cognitive disabilities in post-secondary colleges. A national survey has identified few pilot programs underway in several states to expand opportunities for students with significant developmental disabilities.

Questions to be Addressed

- What is the literature on promising post-secondary program models and practices for students with significant developmental disabilities?
• Have any model projects been funded at the federal level to support the inclusion of students with significant developmental disabilities in post-secondary institutions?

• If there are current successful program models in place, what are the characteristics of the programs and the institutions with inclusive post-secondary programs for students with significant developmental disabilities?

• What are the characteristics of the students who have matriculated in those programs?

• What kinds of course work has been available for those students?

• What are the measures of “effectiveness” to be applied to measuring student outcomes?

• How does the inclusion of students with significant developmental disabilities in post-secondary programs enhance the likelihood of their successful subsequent employment?

• What policies and recommendations are appropriate to further expand opportunities for the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in post-secondary educational programs?

• What are the research questions that need to be answered to encourage an expansion of opportunities to this population?

• Identify the requirements to establish a model program to demonstrate successful inclusion of students with significant developmental disabilities at the local level.

Method

Exploratory Pilot Study: During Phase I of the Strategic Plan of Research for the RRTC on Post-Secondary Educational Supports, a national survey was conducted to identify whether any post-secondary community college programs were providing inclusion opportunities for young adults with significant developmental disabilities. About half-dozen programs were identified in various states. Only one program, “Post-secondary Education: A Choice for Everyone Program,” at the University of New Hampshire UAP was identified as receiving federal funding. That program has just completed the second year of a two-year grant.

A number of individual parents were identified who have personally navigated the system to create opportunities for their son or daughter to participate in a college learning experience.

Currently no database exists on what is happening across the nation to indicate, what is working and what is not working. No policy agenda exists to expand opportunities for these young adults to provide choices for self-determination and to encourage them to become life-long learners.

Phase I Activities (June 1 – October 1, 2000):
1. Conduct a literature search individuals with significant developmental disabilities who have successfully matriculated in post-secondary institutions and on past program models and practices.
2. Identify any federally funded programs that may have provided services to this population.

3. Further identify (who are not included in published literature) current programs and families who have achieved a successful placement (without federal support).

4. Produce a summary document summarizing the state-of-the-art related to the inclusion of students with significant developmental disabilities in post-secondary educational programs.

Phase II Activities (October 1 – March 31, 2002)

1. Write an article for publication in a professional journal summarizing the current status, policy and research needs for the inclusion of students with significant developmental disabilities in post-secondary institutions.

2. Develop an Advisory Panel to include young people with significant cognitive disabilities, parents, and professionals who have or are operating successful post-secondary programs for students with significant developmental disabilities.

3. Bring the Advisory Panel together for a two-day national meeting to review the state-of-the-art; to identify unmet research needs, to define model program characteristics, and to generate policy recommendations.

4. Facilitate the broader discussion of this topic at four national meetings of disability groups.

5. Establish a research project to address the unmet research needs identified by the Advisory Panel.

6. Develop a model demonstration project (in Hawai‘i) based on the model program characteristics.

7. Facilitate the inclusion of the Advisory Panel policy recommendations into local, state, and federal policies.

8. Produce three articles for publication in professional journals.

Phase III (April 2 – September 30, 2002)

1. Facilitate a meeting of the Advisory Panel to assess status and make recommendations for further expansion of supports for students with significant developmental disabilities into post-secondary educational settings.

2. Present to state and federal agencies identified research, policy, and funding mechanisms needed to further the development and expansion of model projects.
Proposed Budget Framework

1. Personnel and Fringe
   Coordinator (Johnson ?)
   Contributed (?)
   Graduate Assistant (.5 FTE)

2. Travel and Meeting Support for Advisory Panel
   $15,000

3. Materials and Printing of Products
   $ 3,000

Indirect costs

Total