



ALL FOR ONE

Xavier University/Great Oaks

Partnering to Meet the Needs of All Learners Through a Diverse
Workforce

(No. 015332-00002 Ohio Dean's Compact)

Fall, 2024

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What is Project Search?

- Project SEARCH is a one-year school-to-work transition program designed for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These young adults have completed the requirements for a high school diploma and are continuing school age services to learn transferrable entry level work skills at Xavier University.
- Through this program, these young adults develop tools necessary for employment and skills needed for self-determination, self-management, and self-advocacy.
- The central concept of Project SEARCH is workplace immersion in a host business in conjunction with related agencies.
- The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches, and employers. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often employed in nontraditional, complex, and rewarding jobs.

Project Search at the Collegiate Level

- The program was developed in collaboration with Great Oaks Career Campuses, Xavier University, and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency.
- These organizations together focus on education and employment for people with mild disabilities. Within Project SEARCH, students are at internship sites for one school year and work as interns, without pay.
- The current PS program at Xavier University serves 12 students from various school districts across Cincinnati, and works in collaboration with OOD, Great Oaks Career Campuses, The IKRON Corporation, County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, and affiliate school districts.
- While at Xavier, the interns rotate through three work site internships which allow them to build technical skills and focus on communication and problem solving for greater independence.
- Regional partnerships will sustain grant outcomes with scalability.



Goal and Objectives

- Xavier University (XU) and Great Oaks Project Search (PS) will collaborate to increase authentic career readiness experiences for all students.
 - XU and PS in partnership with local schools and agencies will increase the diversity of field experiences college-aged students with and without disabilities experience.
 - XU and PS will develop intentional approaches to disrupt systemic isolation and cycle of low expectations of people with disabilities.
 - The interns will learn job duties based on their individual abilities and interests so they can become independent in a competitive work environment, continue with their education, or vocational training

Objectives Continued

- Throughout the interns' rotations, they receive skills trainer assistance, apprenticeship guidance from Xavier employees, internship site accommodations and interaction with various employees and students at Xavier University. The goal is competitive employment and can occur anytime throughout the school year, either on campus or back in the intern's home community.
- For the academic year 2023-2024 we had 9 interns at Project SEARCH at Xavier University. new sites in 2023-24 were the Cintas Center, TriHealth, and Faith and Justice. Working at the new site (Cintas Center) gave interns opportunities to engage with student athletes, many of whom became mentors despite not being education majors. Working in the Faith and Justice Center exposed interns to interactions with people from many different backgrounds & cultural identities.
- Provided new volunteer opportunities for interns: XU Golf Outing (by invitation), Manresa Move-In, and Java with Jesuits (preparing community meals every Tuesday).

ams Physical Plant

W. RAYSON
COLLEGE

Strategies

- *A Grow Your Own (GYO) Apprenticeship model*
- *Tutoring*: PS interns, teacher candidates, content candidates
- *Cohort Program* to create the social, cultural, and academic support systems necessary to increase the pool of individuals with disabilities in the workforce
- *Mentoring* to support the social, emotional, and professional learning needs of individuals with disabilities in the career pathway
- *High Expectations*
- *Develop Knowledge* of the Students'/ Candidates' Identities
- *Simultaneous Renewal*: The PS network will share their strategies to support candidates' retention with the PS international network
- **Community of Practice**



Focus Group Comments

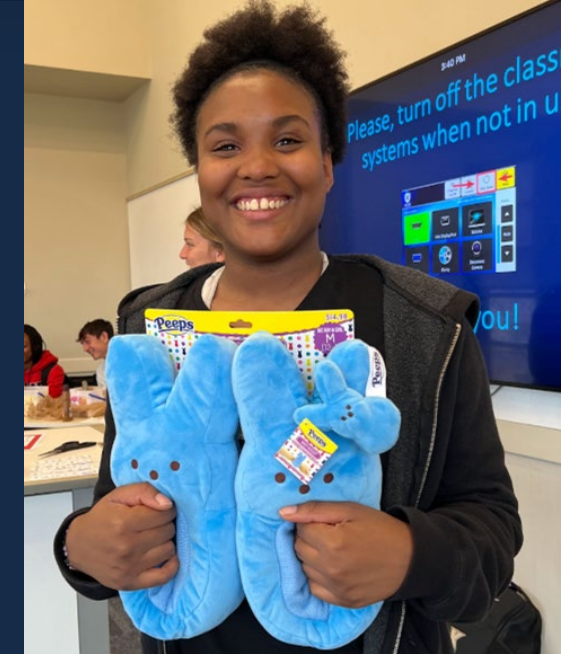
- Some people don't understand that things can be more difficult for me.
- People don't understand how kind we are.
- Some people have disabilities that you don't see.
- Sometimes it's hard to tell if people have disabilities.
- I'd like to show them (mentors) what is "behind the scenes" –the parts of Xavier we see that they don't.
- I want my mentor to come to see me at my job site and see the work I do.
- Others feel bad for/pity others with disabilities. But they can do everything we can do. They are capable of anything.





Hearing more from the interns:

- “My mentors tell me about their college classes which I like because I was in Early Childhood Education when I attended Great Oaks. It is nice to know that they do different things. One runs track, one is learning to be a teacher and one is in the theater program. I feel like I know them very well. I have their cell numbers and we text. I also have the cell number of another mentor who is not my mentor and we also text. We follow each other on Snap Chat, Instagram and Tik Tok.”
- “I like having a mentor. We talk about our weekends and our holiday breaks. I see them on campus and we wave and talk if we have time. I text them to ask about their day and they also text me. We also text about our lunch days and if we have a conflict.”



Results

Strategy	Evidence of the Relative Effectiveness of the Strategy
<p>Objective 1, Strategy A: A Grow Your Own (GYO) Apprenticeship model will be employed to expand our PS program to attract P12 students with disabilities into high- demand careers. PS interns are partnered with various professionals within the university (Examples: Mailroom, Offices, Physical Plant, Retail, Athletics, Food Service) for three, eight-week training cycles across the academic year based on the interns' interests and skills. Job coaches will be provided.</p>	<p>9 Project SEARCH Interns (up from 6 Interns during 2022-23) with 3 Skills Trainers and 1 instructor</p> <p>Applications for 24-25 are the highest ever: 16 applicants, but there are only positions for 12; extra XU PS interns were directed to other PS sites which ensures that they will have enough interns to run next year. This program is attractive and contributes to sustaining programs at other local sites.</p> <p>Provided new internship sites for practicing new skills that led directly to jobs: new sites in 2023-24 were the Cintas Center, TriHealth, and Faith and Justice.</p> <p>Provided new volunteer opportunities for interns: XU Golf Outing (by invitation), Manresa Move-In, and Java with Jesuits (preparing community meals every Tuesday)</p> <p>Created a video to encourage departments on campus to consider having an intern. These opportunities disrupted systemic isolation because interns knew they were sought out by entities on campus, and the workplaces sought out intern involvement.</p> <p>Trained for high-demand careers at Starbucks, Hoff Dining, Mail Center, Health United Building, TriHealth, All-for-One Bookstore, Baseball Games Spirit Shop, Cintas Center</p>

Results

**Objective 1,
Strategy B:
Tutoring: PS interns,
teacher candidates,
content candidates (such
as social work, nursing,
accounting, film, and
exercise science) will have
opportunities to practice
newly learned skills
through tutoring
opportunities.**

Four tutors were paid by the grant.

One Athletic Training major- developed the Health and Wellness Curriculum

One Special Education major – planned & led the Book Club (Smile, a customer service strategy book), facilitated between all three project search sites on Mondays

One Business major - accompanied one intern in class: taught time management, organization, study skills, planning through studying

One Special Education major – engaged interns in career exploration activities (Ohio Means Jobs), job searches, budgeting training, and other career-readiness curriculum

Tutor training: the interns' instructor provided former lesson plans, guidance, modeling, and parameters. All four tutors observed interns learning from their instructors; two brought knowledge from their coursework in education, and others learned basic tenants of education.

Results

Objective 1,
Strategy C:
Cohort Program: The PS interns will work collaboratively with their same-age college peers to create the social, cultural, and academic support systems necessary to increase the pool of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

The number of mentors doubled this year, evidence of the popularity of the program. The PS interns and same-age peers worked collaboratively to create the following cohort programming:

Social: exchange with NKU Project Search interns to a women's basketball game, bingo, karaoke, video gaming night, cookout, ice cream social, bowling, sand volleyball, basketball, pumpkin painting

Cultural: 4 former PS interns shared success stories w/other interns (at multiple events) about what to expect after PS; grant paid for XU theatre tickets for interns & families & student mentors to attend a Shakespeare performance

Academic: PS curriculum was delivered by same-age peers who revised the original curriculum (adding Kahoots and other enhancements). While PS is usually career-focused, the one student who took a course had a tutor attend class and study partner.

Hearing from the Xavier Students:

- “...you learn to be nicer to people. It comes from being around them and seeing how they treat people. They never have anything negative to say, and it makes you rethink your life & wonder why you say negative things.”
- “I have become more aware of my surroundings and more respectful of others. It makes me more kind in general across all kinds of diversity and inclusion.”
- “I like having lunch with them... last year and this year, you get a deep one-on-one connection with them. It’s the best part of my week and theirs, having lunch. When we played volleyball, they got so into it. I look forward to meeting with them. I love everything about the club.”
- “Hearing about all of the stories made me want to join, and now I have my own. It’s so fun to see them around campus – their faces light up, and it makes me so happy. A lot of [other mentors] aren’t in special ed (I’m the only one!) and I love how it brings people from a different background together. I love the sense of family.”
- “I love his energy. He’s something I always want in my life.”



Results

**Objective 1,
Strategy D:
Mentoring: XU and
PS will develop a
mentoring program
to support the
social, emotional,
and professional
learning needs of
individuals with
disabilities in the
career pathway.**

XU and PS worked together to develop a mentoring initiative that reached beyond the structures of the preexisting program. The numbers of mentors doubled this year to 20-30, so now every intern gets several mentors. Interns ate for free if they worked in the cafeteria, and the cafeteria provided tickets for 5-6 mentors to eat for free during lunches with interns. At events, students were inclusive of all. Outside of events, they stopped to chat around campus, mutually initiating authentic, unplanned meet-ups.

Emotional Supports:

Mentors listened to, affirmed, and gave advice as natural friendships & mutual respect naturally developed. Interns consistently modeled positivity and joy. Students and interns alike reported that greetings and meetings “made their day.”

Cultural Supports:

Interns received trainings throughout the year on social skills, communication strategies, health and wellness techniques, and customer service norms that helped them both in their career development and in their personal relationships.

Academic Needs:

One student who took a college course received extensive study skills training and successfully completed the course with the thorough assistance of his tutor. Other interns participated in a book study and in frequent coaching to assist with time management and preparation for career readiness.

Results

<p>Objective 2, Strategy A:</p> <p>High Expectations: Students interested in auditing a course will be given this opportunity with peer tutoring support and peer attendance in course as a note taker.</p>	<p>1 intern enrolled in and successfully completed a course.</p> <p>That intern has applied to UC for the 2024-25 academic year; the tutor assisted him in learning from his mistakes, obtaining a clear understanding of what a college course looks like, and he enjoying the content and the social elements of coursework. It is likely that the intern might not have cognitively understood how difficult college would be without his tutor there to walk him through the process. It was a positive experience for the intern and his family, and he reported feeling accomplished.</p>
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Results

Objective 2,

Strategy B:

Developing Knowledge of the Students'/Candidates' Identities. We will develop a system “for getting to know the PS interns” through informal methods and formal methods. Given this information, social events with mentors, tutors, and Ed Club peers will be scheduled to encourage high expectations of participating in the collegiate social life.

Interviews (January & April)

[Interviews](#) linked here.

Relationships developed organically; students sought one another out socially outside of planned activities for connections on social media, running a race together, and meeting up for meals.

Both students and interns reported having spirits lifted, feeling authentic connections, and mutually leaning from one another.



Social Events:

- university women's basketball game
- bingo
- karaoke
- video gaming night
- cookout
- ice cream social
- bowling
- sand volleyball
- basketball
- pumpkin painting



Results

**Objective 3,
Strategy A:
Mentorship Expansion:
Additional PS internship
locations at college campuses
will be mentored to support
their development of a
college PS location.**

The multi-site book club had never been done before. It was offered virtually and included other PS interns at 5th 3rd & Cincinnati Children's. The book is something each site read on their own before, and they met together to discuss it. The idea for the book club came from a student who was mentoring and tutoring interns.

The NKU connection was powerful. The interns shared with one another what they do at their sites, and it was so enriching that it is already scheduled again for next year.



A family member of one intern:

“My husband & I have been blown away by the program. Our son talks about his squad on campus and that he is so excited that he has events to go to and people to go with. He talks about why he is so popular on campus, and a significant part of it is the mentorship program. He feels that he belongs, has a place – because he eats with someone once a week, attends events like everyone else does. It has done more for his self-confidence than I can put into words.”



Results

**Objective 3,
Strategy B:
Simultaneous Renewal: The PS
network will share their
strategies to support
candidates' retention with the
PS international network.**

Personnel on the grant have presented at several meetings/conferences, and there are several upcoming presentations this summer.

Participated in the ODC Post-Secondary Options day-long conversation in September; presented at March Compact Conference Poster Presentation; a national Project Search conference in July, Angie's Business Meeting (people from ICRON & Opportunities for Ohioans w/Disabilities (OOD), Great Oaks meetings, other state-level people, Hamilton & Warren Co. Developmental Disabilities.

Information will be shared in a 1-page statement with outcomes & advice toward implementation.

There is a plan to write an IRB & collect data from the start of the year next year. The Xavier ESA students will continue to build on last year's successes and learning.

Results

**Objective 3,
Strategy C:
Community of Practice:
Strategies will be shared with
the Dean's Compact
Community of Practice (CoP) to
be extrapolated to other post-
secondary sites.**

Information was/will be presented in various formats, including a poster presentation, at the Ohio Dean's Compact and Community of Practice meetings, and PowerPoints and implementation guides.

The team presented at the National Project Search Conference in New Mexico in the summer 2024.

Next Steps...