

Envisioning Equal Opportunities for All at CU Boulder

In order to ensure equal opportunities for all people in search for a college education, it is essential that the University of Colorado Boulder expands their programs and services for people with disabilities, particularly individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As an university who deems themselves as inclusive and accepting of people from all walks of life, the programs, or rather lack of programs, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is antiquated and contradictory to the advertised principles and values of this establishment. It is essential that the university withdraws from these unprogressive statutes and develops a newly reformed program that addresses this issue in order to provide an inclusive environment for all CU Buffs.

Whereas the University of Colorado Boulder has become a world leader in fields such as physics and engineering, it is essential that the university looks to consider what else can grow their presence as a global leader. Yes, the University of Colorado Boulder is a top tier university that has amazing research programs, incredible academic programs, and much more; but, we are not functioning at full capacity on this campus. The inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the University of Colorado Boulder is not something that would hinder the university nor its prestigious status, but rather serve as another way the university leads globally in progressive reforms. Thus, I believe that the university should adapt a program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the university.

Yes, this has been done before- however it is not common and it is essential that the University of Colorado Boulder derives a program to illustrate as a national example for what

inclusive programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities could look like. According to *Think College* there are only 268 universities in the United States. There are 1,040 universities in the country, thus only about 6% of universities in the country provide college access to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Some examples of schools that have four-year programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities include the University of California Los Angeles, Vanderbilt University, the University of Southern California, and Colorado State University. These schools are at equal caliber to the University of Colorado Boulder, if not higher. Therefore, it is arguable that the status of the university should play no role in the decision to derive a program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Furthermore, it can be said that the university is falling behind, in terms of these social reforms. In order to be an active leader on the global scale, the University of Colorado must achieve and surpass the goals of this proposal.

Ideally, there would be a four-year program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities enacted at the university. To deliver an example, I examined a program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through Peabody College at Vanderbilt University. Next Steps is a four-year program that aids students in working towards completing an individual Program of Study and Career and Community Studies Certificate. Thus, the program participants gain valuable skills in their selected major as well as transitional support aiding their path to a future career. The program promotes inclusivity on the Vanderbilt campus and creating a proper college experience for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There are other features that promote integration through Next Steps, such as the program requiring first year students to participate in the university's chapter of Best Buddies.

The Next Steps Program at Vanderbilt depicts what a program at the University of Colorado Boulder could look like.

As stated previously, we are not acting at our full potential at the University of Colorado Boulder. We cannot be a global leader if we cannot promote integration for all people within our campus. In order to help work towards fully attaining the university's mission of fostering an inclusive environment for all CU Buffs.