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PRESS RELEASE

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ICI's Think College Launches Accreditation Agency for Inclusive Higher Education

Boston, Ma. — [Think College](#), a center within the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, announced today the launch of the Inclusive Higher Education Accreditation Council (IHEAC), a new accrediting agency for inclusive postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disability (ID).

In 2020, Think College set out to establish a process for implementing national program accreditation standards to ensure the quality and accountability of college programs for students with ID. The Think College National Coordinating Center (NCC) received funding from the US Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education for this work.

The [NCC Accreditation Workgroup](#) has created a guidance manual as well as self-study and site visit processes. The Workgroup is currently field-testing the full accreditation process. Dr. Kelly Kelley at the [UP Program at Western Carolina University](#) volunteered to complete the first accreditation self-study report and seek accreditation from the IHEAC.

Accreditation Workgroup members Carol Britton Laws (University of Georgia), Bill Loyd (University of Iowa), and Cynthia May (College of Charleston) served as peer reviewers for an accreditation site visit for the University Participant (UP) program at Western Carolina University. They met with current students, alumni, faculty, staff, employers, university partners, and families to discuss the UP program. All reviewers have extensive experience in the area of inclusive higher education.

NCC Accreditation Workgroup Chair Dr. Martha Mock stated, "We are excited that the IHEAC will now provide the opportunity for inclusive higher education programs to obtain accreditation and grateful to the UP Program for their willingness to be the inaugural program seeking accreditation."

The creation of the new agency builds on the work of previous accreditation workgroups, which started in 2011. In 2020, [a Report to Congress from the NCC](#) described the work to date and shared finalized program accreditation standards for the first time. Debra Hart, Co-Principal Investigator indicated that "the resulting standards and accreditation process will go a long way to ensuring that higher education options for students with ID are of the highest quality."

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The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities through training, consultation, clinical and employment services, and research. ICI is a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities based at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Boston Children's Hospital.