

EXCEL OPENS DOORS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH I/DD

Young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have few options for higher education. Fortunately, Georgia Tech offers the Excel Program, a four-year college program for young people with I/DD.

“Excel is a four-year college program where students complete two certificates in social engagement, academic enrichment, and career exploration,” said Ken Surdin, director of Excel. “They have the opportunity to develop a social network, to be included in college classes alongside their traditional Georgia Tech peers, to explore career opportunities through internships and jobs, and then to follow up post-college by applying for those jobs.”

Currently housed in the Institute for Leadership and Entrepreneurship in the Ernest Scheller Jr. College of Business, the Excel Program offers coursework in traditional academic areas such as reading and writing comprehension,

math, science, and technology. In addition, Excel’s curriculum provides participants with training in areas such as financial literacy and money management, interpersonal communication and social skills, and career exploration and preparation. Students participating in the Excel Program are exposed to the entire curriculum; however, coursework mastery is modified to meet individuals’ functioning levels.

To help ensure that Excel continues to thrive, McKenney’s Inc. has established the Donald L. Chapman Endowment Fund in support of student enrichment and outreach programs, activities, and initiatives for individuals with learning disabilities or similarly vulnerable or disadvantaged populations. As specified by the donor, the fund will target its support to the Excel Program first.

Donald L. Chapman, IM 1961, served for 40 years on the McKenney’s board of directors. He has also served on several other boards including the Community

Foundation for Greater Atlanta and the Marcus Autism Center. He and his wife Beverly are members of The Hill Society, and Chapman established the Tedd Munchak Chair in Entrepreneurship.

Philanthropy has provided the ideal venue for McKenney’s to express its support of the mission of the Excel Program, which provides valuable training opportunities to a disadvantaged population. At the same time, the program offers traditional Tech students the opportunity to mentor Excel participants. “Students who complete programs like ours are more likely to live independently, to have a job that they like, and to have a developed social network,” Surdin said. “Anyone who has ever been excluded knows that to be included is gigantic.” ///

*For more information about supporting the Excel Program, please contact Director of Development for the Scheller College of Business **John P. Byrne** at john.byrne@scheller.gatech.edu or **404.385.3878**.*

