

STUDENT PROFILES

Robert's Passion for Theatre Put Him on the Path to College

by Ross Hooley and Holly Cardoza

Robert has always loved the theatre. At the Old Rochester Regional High School in Mattapoisett, Massachusetts, he appeared in 11 productions, including Chicago, Jesus Christ Superstar, The Boyfriend, Oklahoma, and Our Town. When it came time for his friends in the drama club to start thinking about college and beyond, Robert naturally began the same thought process. In his senior year Robert even asked his father, "When am I going to look at colleges like my cousins?"

Despite being directed to different vocational and life skills training programs, his parents were clear that they wanted Robert "to have a liberal arts education and a college experience". During their research, they discovered the Think College website, and gathered information on the opportunities available for students with disabilities to go to college. Through Robert and his parents' advocacy, and with the support of the school, he enrolled at Bridgewater State University (BSU) as part of the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative program (MAICEI) to further pursue his interest in the performing arts.

GOALS

1. To take college classes in the performing arts
2. To develop self-advocacy skills
3. To pursue a career in the theatre field

PLAN

At the start of Robert's first semester at BSU, with the help of his academic advisor and educational coach, he developed a person-centered plan that included short-term and long-term goals focusing on his vision of working in the theatre. Each semester, Robert updated this plan with his team, who also helped him choose courses and campus internships that fostered his interest.

LEARN

Over 3 years, Robert audited a variety of undergraduate classes that gave him a strong foundation in the performing arts. These included Introduction to Acting, Creative Dramatics, Introduction to Public Speaking, Theatre Appreciation, and Jazz, Pop, and Show Choir.

Robert used the skills he learned in one class to succeed in others. For example, in his Theater Management class, he used

The Think College Transition (TCT) project is an inclusive dual-enrollment transition model designed to improve post-school outcomes for students aged 18 to 21 years who have intellectual disability and autism. The key feature of this model is assisting students to be involved with college classes, work experiences, and social networking opportunities on a college campus with their same-age peers, rather than having typical transition services in a high school.

the drawing and design skills from his Drawing I class to create a poster. Some of the classes Robert took proved useful when he worked at the YMCA as an assistant drama counselor.

SUPPORT

In collaboration with his professors and academic advisor, Robert and his educational coach developed accommodations that made the college curriculum more accessible. He received help with note-taking and completing the course readings. His coach created graphic organizers that helped frame information clearly, and reworded test questions for better comprehension.

Robert met every two weeks with his academic advisor to ensure that he was on track with his studies, and to get support with reviewing his goals, time management, and work organization. Robert also met with the career and development specialist, and attended monthly Career Connections workshops that covered topics such as developing a resume, cover letter writing, and interviewing skills.

After orientation and instruction from his coach, Robert became more independent in using the campus facilities. Robert's school district also arranged for its speech therapist to meet him on campus to help develop his conversation skills.



WORK

Robert's love of theatre went beyond the classroom. He participated in several on-campus internships, including working at the costume shop and theatre woodshop, where he experienced many of the different aspects of drama production, including organizing costumes and building and painting sets.

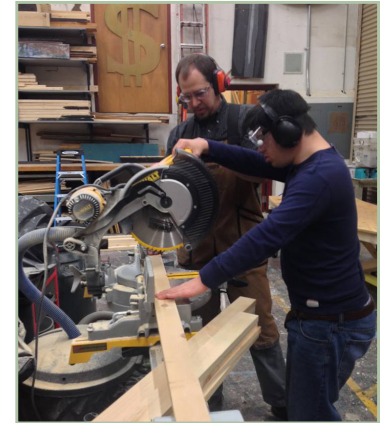
Robert used his networking skills to get a full-time internship working as an assistant drama counselor at summer camp at the Mattapoisett YMCA, the camp he attended when he was younger. One of Robert's responsibilities was leading the younger campers in activities, through which he was able to put into practice skills he had learned in his Creative Dramatics class at BSU.

Robert also joined a local community theatre group, and appeared in a number of its productions, including Fiddler on the Roof and Hairspray. In 2016, he worked as an extra in a major studio film, Bleed for This, after responding to an advertisement in a local newspaper.

OUTCOMES

Robert's experience at BSU has given him a liberal arts education. He has gained work experience in the theatre, his self-confidence has increased, and he is becoming more independent in advocating for himself. Outside the classroom, Robert is a typical college student who likes to go to the cafeteria for lunch with his friends, do his homework at the library, and go to football games and theatre productions.

However, Robert's favorite part is taking classes. He especially likes being on campus in the evening, because "it makes me feel grown up." Robert is definitely a full member of the Bridgewater State University community.



ROBERT'S COURSE OF STUDY

	PLAN	LEARN	WORK	SUPPORT
Fall 1	Robert, parents, coach and academic advisor helped plan course selection. Person centered plan developed.	Intro to Acting		Robert required 1:1 support in class and accessing campus facilities.
Spring 1	Robert met with academic advisor and career development specialist to review short term social, academic and personal goals.	Two-dimensional Design	Internship at Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust	Robert more independent in using cafeteria, gym, and library. 1:1 job coaching support required at internship.
Summer 1	Robert used his network to obtain job as assistant drama counselor at local YMCA.		Assistant drama counselor at YMCA Camp	1:1 job coaching support provided.
Fall 2	Robert met regularly with academic advisor for guidance and support. Academic accommodations identified.	Creative Dramatics Intro to Public Speaking		Reduced support needed for academic classes. Robert more independent in advocating with class instructor.
Spring 2	Classes and internship reflected Robert's vision of working in the performing arts.	Theatre Appreciation World History to 1500	Internship, BSU Costume Shop Movie extra: Bleed for This	Robert more responsible for completing homework assignments.
Summer 2	Robert met with YMCA director regarding his job responsibilities for summer position.		Assistant drama counselor at YMCA Camp	Decreasing support provided at summer job.
Fall 3	Short term social, academic and personal goals updated each semester.	Drawing 1 Multimedia Storytelling	Internship at BSU Print Shop Joined Little Theatre Production: Fiddler on the Roof	Robert independent in internship.
Spring 3	Academic accommodations reviewed and updated as needed.	Play Production Jazz, Pop and Show Choir	Internship at BSU Theatre Woodshop	Robert independent in accessing campus facilities and internship. Robert required less support in completing course assignments.

The Think College Transition Model Project, in collaboration with three Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment partnerships developed and implemented a college-based inclusive dual enrollment transition model for students with intellectual disabilities and autism between the ages of 18-21.