



THE UNION

EDGE

PROGRAM

The Union EDGE Program

E-Employment Training

D-Daily Living Skills

G-Godly Focus

E-Educational Enrichment



Who are we?

The Union EDGE program is a two year certificate program for students aged 18-26 with a diagnosed intellectual or developmental disability.

This program is located at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. Union University is a private Christian university affiliated with the Southern Baptist.

Students may choose residential or non-residential.

Students will audit college courses, participate in life skills classes, work in on-campus and off-campus internships and experience the full range of college life.

Our Purpose

The ultimate purpose of the Union EDGE program is to prepare students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to work in a preferred job setting by strengthening independent, social, communication, and vocational skills. Our measure of success will be based on students who leave Union with a job in place and are prepared to live and work as independently as possible. We strive to help students discover who God created them to be, step into their gifts, and use them to serve the church and society. We believe that each and every student is made in the image of God and that God has a purpose and a plan for each and every one of their lives.

Our Mission

The Union EDGE provides a holistic, post-secondary education for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, encouraging increased independent skills that lead to a better quality of life and aligning with Union's mission of providing "Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society."



IPSE Programs in Tennessee

IPSE: Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Union University is one of 8 IPSE program in the state of Tennessee. (UT, Vanderbilt, Lipscomb, Memphis, East Tennessee State, Dyersburg State, and Tennessee State).

We are one of two Christian universities offering this program in the state.

We are one of four residential programs in Tennessee.



Our Format

The program includes academic and skill-building courses, exercise sessions, internships, leisure time, and daily study periods.

Students will audit two academic classes per semester with traditional Union students based on their interests and career goals. The program director will work with university faculty to identify any necessary accommodations to the syllabi or course materials.

Students will also enroll in two skill-building courses every semester that focus on employment and technology skills. These classes will provide Union EDGE students with independent living skills that will help them to be better employees and give them the option to live on their own.

EDGE Course Offerings

Life Skills I: First Steps to College Living

In this first year course, Union EDGE students will learn about the culture surrounding a college campus, including academic study skills.

Additionally, students will complete a weekly agenda for assignments and discuss strategies for time management. Basic social skills will be emphasized including the understanding of the importance of “personal space.”

Life Skills II: First Steps to Employment Training

In this first year course, Union EDGE students will learn about the workplace environment and strategies for navigating it successfully.

Specifically, students will demonstrate the ability to: request personal needs and/or ask for help as needed, articulate rules for safety at the job site, follow multi-step instructions to complete a task, and exhibit proper grooming and attire for the work site. An emphasis is placed on learning to count money during this first year course.

Semester 1

EDGE Course Offerings

Life Skills III: Advanced Steps to Healthy Living

In this first year course, Union EDGE students will learn the basic elements of a healthy lifestyle. Specific topics include: cooking and nutritional needs, identifying emotions in self and others, and making healthy choices that match physical and emotional needs.

Life Skills IV: Introduction to Daily Technology and Finance

In this first year course, Union EDGE students will begin to understand the importance of using standards for appropriate use of technology, including personal computers and cell phones. Students will utilize computers to create, save, and print written documents. An emphasis will be placed on keyboarding. Students will be given the opportunity to open personal checking accounts and manage accounts using online banking services.

Semester 2

EDGE Course Offerings

Life Skills V: Advanced Steps to Independent Living Skills

In this second year course, Union EDGE students will further develop their understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Specific topics include: culinary and kitchen hygiene and a framework for decision making. Students will also move to a more independent approach to completing assignments in academic classrooms and internship sites.

Life Skills VI: Utilizing Technology and Community Resources

In this second year course, Union EDGE students will understand theoretical foundations of social media and relevant strategies to communicate with their broader communities. Additionally, students will understand and apply best practices when using the internet.

Semester 3

EDGE Course Offerings

Life Skills VII: Introduction to Professional Writing and Communications
In this second year course, Union EDGE students will use accepted principles of grammar and rhetoric to communicate professionally. Specifically, students will apply proofreading skills to a variety of professional documents and will begin to use multimedia tools to prepare presentations. Additionally, students will create a resume' for employment.

Life Skills VIII: Advanced Technology Skills and Finance
In this second year course, Union EDGE students will continue their understanding of the importance of using appropriate standards for use of technology. Specifically, students will use Microsoft Excel to create a basic spreadsheet, enter data, and track a weekly budget. This course includes the culminating activity, an electronic portfolio, demonstrating the knowledge and skills learned in the Union EDGE program.



Semester 4

Cooking Lab

Each semester, all students have a cooking lab. In cooking lab, they learn cooking skills. The instructors start with the basics of cooking, kitchen etiquette, and table settings and they work up to planning and preparing for a full dinner.



Sample Course Schedule

SAMPLE COURSE SCHEDULE

| Year 1-Fall | Year 1-Spring | Year 2-Fall | Year 2-Spring |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| CHR 111: Old Testament Survey | CHR 112: New Testament Survey | PHY 111: Principles of Physical Science | SOC 225: Relationships, Marriage and Families |
| SOC 215: Nutrition Across the Lifespan | COM 235: Interpersonal Communication | ECO 329: Personal Finance | SW 310: Social and Economic Justice |
| Life Skills I | Life Skills III | Life Skills V | Life Skills VII |
| Life Skills II | Life Skills IV | Life Skills VI | Life Skills VIII |
| Internship | Internship | Externship | Externship |
| 12 Credit Hours | 12 Credit Hours | 12 Credit Hours | 12 Credit Hours |

Individual Learning Plans

Union EDGE students take eight courses alongside traditionally-enrolled Union students that are taught by University faculty. Union EDGE students have the option of enrolling in these courses for credit or auditing the courses. If a student chooses to enroll for credit, the Union EDGE student is expected to complete the full measure of work as outlined in the syllabus, and they will be graded using the same standards as the traditionally-enrolled students.

Union EDGE students who choose to audit a course meet with the Program Director and course instructor to determine accommodations and modifications to the course content. The student's assignments, goals, and expectations for completing the course will be outlined in an Individual Learning Plan and signed by all parties.

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The Union EDGE Program
Individual Learning Plan

Student Name: _____ Date: _____
Student Phone #: _____ Email: _____
Course: _____ Semester/Year: _____
Instructor: _____ Department: _____
Instructor Phone #: _____ Instructor Email: _____

LEARNING GOALS

| GOAL AREA | OBJECTIVE | CRITERIA |
|---------------|--|----------|
| Attendance | Student will attend class and arrive on time. | 85% |
| Participation | Student will participate in class discussions. | 85% |
| Assignments | Student will complete the following assignments: 1. Weekly reflection journal 2. 5-page research paper 3. Group project 4. Final presentation on topic of choice | 75% |

Instructor: Please see attached Individualized Progress Tracking Rubric for a breakdown of how achievement of these goals and tasks will be assessed.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____
Instructor Signature: _____ Date: _____
Union EDGE Staff: _____ Date: _____

Person-Centered Planning

Throughout the Union EDGE Program, each student participates in a collaborative person-centered planning process to determine educational and career goals. This process is facilitated by the Union EDGE Program team, but is centered on the student's experience. Family members, service providers, friends, or teachers are also welcome to participate in this series of meetings if the student would like to include them.

Person-centered planning is a process that empowers a person with a disability to create a plan for his or her life alongside family and community members. Through person-centered planning, the Union EDGE Program seeks to: discover the student's competencies, unique gifts, and interests that may contribute to involvement in campus activities and classes; Create goals based on the competencies, gifts, and interests that will lead to developing skills necessary for future employment; Help the student have more control and choices about his/her life; Ensure the student's voice is being heard in the process of planning for his/her future.

Internships and Externships

Upon completion of the Union EDGE Program, students are better prepared to enter the workforce. Students will be placed in on-campus internships during the first year and off-campus externships during the second year of the program. The benefits of these internships/externships will include real-world experience, an opportunity for feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses from an actual supervisor, occasions for networking to develop contacts within the field, interactions with co-workers, and arranging for transportation to and from a job site. In preparation for gainful employment, the Union EDGE Program's on-the-job training will give students a sense of purpose, a chance for increased independent living, more financial independence, and an identity that extends beyond their disability. The students' job interests and abilities will be matched with available openings that align with the students' career goals.



Our Mentor Program

To support Union EDGE students as they become more self-sufficient, traditionally-enrolled Union University students will act as peer mentors for the Union EDGE students. Although the term “mentor” infers that one person in the relationship serves to help the other achieve a higher level of success, we anticipate that both parties will experience a mutually beneficial connection as they learn from one another and experience college together. Peer mentors will accompany Union EDGE students as they navigate campus, eat meals, exercise, and attend chapel and social events, and will assist Union EDGE students with coursework as necessary. The expected time commitment for a peer mentor is 3-5 hours per week.



Chapel

Union University gathers for chapel each Wednesday and Friday at 10:00 am. Students are required to attend a minimum of fourteen chapels each semester. All students must have their student ID with them in order to “swipe the card” and earn the credit for attendance.

On Campus Living

Union EDGE students are invited to live on campus and fully immerse themselves in the college experience. Union EDGE students will live in The Quad Apartments or Heritage. Union University's dorms are much desired apartment style living. There are 4 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, a living room, and kitchen in each freshmen dorm room. Second year students will move up to the Quad dorms with 2 bathrooms and a washer/dryer unit in each dorm. The Union EDGE student who choose to live on campus will be with alongside traditionally enrolled students, who have received training and information on living with a student with disability.

Eligibility

The applicant must be between the ages of 18-26 at the start of the program

The applicant must have a documented intellectual and/or developmental disability

The applicant must be able to sit through 90 minute courses and function independently for 2-hour blocks of time

The applicant must demonstrate basic literacy in reading and writing

The applicant must have the capacity to handle and adapt to change with supports

Eligibility

The applicant must demonstrate the ability to accept and follow reasonable rules and behave respectfully towards others

The applicant must demonstrate the desire to attend the Union EDGE and adhere to the Union EDGE policies regarding attendance and participation in coursework and required activities

The applicant must have the potential to successfully achieve his/her goals within the context of the Union EDGE program's content and setting

Application Process

Our application will be open on our website on October 1, 2024 and be open through February 2024.

Applications will go through a screening process. The application will be viewed independently by each member of the Admission Screening Committee, and each component (recommendation letters, transcript, IEP, etc.) will be assessed using the Application Scoring Rubric. Applicants who pass this screening will be invited to participate in an on-campus admissions interview with Union EDGE Program staff. The applicant and parents/guardians will complete a campus tour on the day of the admissions interview. Approved applicants will be invited on campus for an interview with the Union EDGE Program staff.



Costs

Tuition for the Union EDGE Program is \$17,000 per year (\$8,500 per semester). Additional fees for campus activities are totaled at \$765 per semester.

All Union EDGE students are invited to live on campus and fully immerse themselves in the college experience. Union EDGE students will live in The Quads Apartments or Heritage. Heritage: \$7700 per year (\$3850 per semester) Quads: \$8500 per year (\$4250 per semester).

140 meals per semester with \$150 in Buster Bucks –\$1,520 (minimum required for incoming freshmen)

Estimated total: \$30,070 per year before Financial Aid

****Tuition and fees are subject to change****

Financial Aid

Students who have been accepted to the Union EDGE Program *may* qualify for financial aid.

The first step is completing the FAFSA. We require students enroll in Vocational Rehab.

Currently, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation pays \$3,000 per semester toward IPSE programs.

Students may be eligible for the Tennessee STEP UP Scholarship (\$2,250) or a Pell grant.

WIOA funding may be available from your TN county.

Our Community Resource Coordinator assists family in connecting with resources available to them.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the Union University EDGE Program, contact:



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