

Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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MISSION STATEMENT

By partnering with students, their families, employers, educational institutions, researchers and policymakers, the Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health promotes and equalizes the opportunity for economic independence, equitable employment and full civic engagement of college graduates with physical disabilities in communities in Indiana and throughout the United States.

DIRECTOR'S LETTER



It has been close to 20 years since Greg Fehribach asked me why he didn't see more people with disabilities in leadership positions and what we were going to do about it. Greg's goal was to "build a bench" of younger people with disabilities, ready to become leaders. Through research and many discussions with current and former college students with disabilities, we realized that far too often, students with disabilities were struggling to find equitable employment after graduation and thus not rising through the ranks to become leaders. One reason for this struggle was that college students with disabilities were much less likely to complete internships than their peers without disabilities. Greg's vision and leadership led to the creation of the center named for him, and what began with one student interning at Eskenazi Health in 2013 has led to 266 students completing 536 paid internships. These students have come from 46 colleges and universities across the Midwest, and they have interned at 56 different Indiana employers.

You will read about several of these interns and the great work that they are doing in this report. I am especially pleased to share an update on three of our interns from a few years ago: Lizzie Ford, Preston Radtke and Abigail Russell. While I am not surprised these three are doing great things, I believe that you will be very impressed reading about their successes and the advice that they share with current interns. My colleague, David Parker, Ph.D., has written often on the topic of self-determination, which is essentially the ability to chart one's own course in life. I can't think of any better examples of self-determined individuals than Lizzie, Preston and Abigail.

In addition to reading about our current and former interns in this report, you will also learn about our research efforts and the role we are playing at a national level in educational outreach. While our internship program will always be focused on bringing students to Indiana for their internships, we piloted a program in the last year with the University of Washington to assist staff there in providing focused career development opportunities and creating internships in the Seattle area for University of Washington students with disabilities. This pilot was very successful and will lead to two colleges joining us on an annual basis in this initiative. We want others across the country to borrow from our model to help ensure that talented college students with physical disabilities have access to quality internships.

The Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health staff grew this year to four full-time members. Joining me, Carlos Taylor and David Parker is Donelle Henderlong, our coordinator of mentoring & leadership development. I am so pleased to have Donelle on our team. She will be initiating a leadership development academy and a structured mentoring program for our former interns in 2026. These new programs will hopefully help achieve a goal of Greg's from many years ago — students with disabilities becoming leaders.

Thank you for your kind support of and partnership with the Fehribach Center in 2025, and here is to another year of progress in 2026!

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Larry Markle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Larry Markle

Director, Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health

FEHRIBACH CENTER INTERNS CO-RECOGNIZED WITH GILMER AWARD FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING



Ian King and Maggie Mann

Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health (Fehribach Center) interns Ian King and Maggie Mann are the 2025 co-recipients of the Dustin Gilmer Award for Excellence. This recognition is named in honor of Dustin Gilmer, a Fehribach Center intern in 2014 and 2015, who died in 2020. Gilmer was recognized as a leader and mentor for his peers. He worked for the City of Indianapolis Department of Public Works after graduating from Ball State University.

King and Mann teamed up to urge peers to join gatherings this past summer. As Fehribach Center Director Larry Markle put it, "The sense of community that interns experience is such a vital part of the Fehribach Center, and Maggie and Ian really stepped up for us in that aspect in 2025."

Both returning interns, Mann and King had hung out briefly the previous year, but last summer, "we just instantly clicked," King said. They bonded over their shared hearing loss. Mann says King was the first person she'd met her age with the same disability. They also discovered they were "very passionate about making this program really great for interns," said King.

King and Mann led ice cream outings, game nights, grocery trips, dinners and other Indianapolis adventures, checking on accommodations in various spaces beforehand if their peers were too shy to do so. "I don't want somebody to leave an event or a situation saying, 'Oh well, *this* would have been more helpful,'" said Mann. "I'm going to make sure it gets done."



A chemistry major at Wright State University, Mann doesn't hesitate to advocate for others, but she didn't ask for accommodations for herself until college, despite wearing hearing aids for years. She avoided asking others to repeat what they'd said. That has changed. "If I have a question, I'm going to ask you," she said. "I deserve to know what's going on too to the full extent as everyone else."

Born deaf in both ears, King plans to help other kids with hearing loss through a career in audiology. He's a student worker in the audiology clinic at Western Michigan University. Deaf children usually have hearing parents. King wants to reassure these parents that their children are "going to be OK" through his interactions with them on school tours and in his future profession. "I can speak," he says. "I can hear. I can do all these amazing things."

One of the amazing things he lists experiencing is the Fehribach Center internship program, which he initially thought sounded "too good to be true." His first internship was at Eli Lilly

and Company, where his supervisor was eager to give him a project that “relates to my interests and something that I could be proud of,” King said. He especially enjoyed making presentations accessible for those who are colorblind. The following fall, he was invited to a conference by his supervisor, where he got to “see Oprah literally 20 feet away from me.”

In his second summer internship with Eskenazi Health Specialty Pharmacy Services, King helped develop a training program for the customer service staff, which was “really fun,” he said. He even performed as a patient actor, which he described as being like “a spy.”

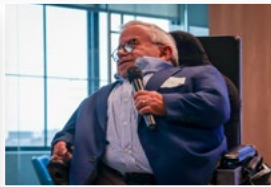
Mann worked at Eli Lilly and Company in the sales and marketing department her first year, which “helped me understand what it’s like to be part of a company, how your work benefits others,” she said. This past summer she interned in the chemistry and microbiology labs at Marion County Public Health Department, where she loved getting to apply what she’d learned in class, doing “a lot of hands-on work,” she said, “which I really like.” Now president of her university’s chemistry club and a supplemental instructor in organic chemistry, Mann is considering teaching after pursuing her master’s degree to convince students that “chemistry doesn’t have to be something you dread.”



She is passionate about teaching another topic as well: weightlifting. Mann sent group texts urging interns to join her workouts this past summer, with King and Trey Couch, another Fehribach Center intern, becoming regulars. People with different disabilities, she found, “can still do the exact workout, just [with] some modifications to it.” She’s taken this idea back to her university, where she’s begun a new group fitness offering, Lift Lab, with accommodations available.

King has been inspired by his experience this summer as well. “I don’t really know that many disabled people in my life or at college,” he said. “So, to be surrounded by only disabled people who know exactly what you’re going through and who are here for the same thing It was just really great for Maggie and me to do all these things for them and also be nominated.”

“The job experience is great - 100%,” said Mann. “I would not be able to find an internship like what I had this summer anywhere else but I think what makes me want to go back, and a lot of other interns that want to go back, is the community it provides.”





ASPIRING MEDICAL STUDENT WINS 2025 PERSEVERANCE AWARD



Ash Bishop

Fehribach Center intern Ashley "Ash" Bishop was the 2025 winner of the Perseverance Award, an honor bestowed by Emily Earle, a former Fehribach Center intern now serving as the clinical education program coordinator at Eskenazi Health.

"Everybody that has come through the program has persevered in some way or another," said Earle. She bases the award on interns' "attitude, their actions and how they present themselves within the internship." Earle said she wishes she could give the honor to more than one recipient since it means so much to her to support the Fehribach Center.

The award recipient impressed Earle not only through her successes in two Fehribach Center internships and at Purdue University Fort Wayne, but also because she had been earning money to put herself through school, even managing a restaurant, and is planning to continue her education in medical school.

Bishop has traced her interest in health care back to childhood viewings of her mom's favorite medical shows, which convinced her she would one day be a doctor. Her grandmother and mother were certain her career choice would change, but it never did.

Her first year in college presented an obstacle to that career goal. That's when Bishop started noticing she had to "focus really, really hard to listen to my professors."

Bishop had experienced ear infections "every other week when I was little" and had an early ear surgery, she said. But this time was different. When she asked doctors what was wrong, they told her, "You have a giant hole in your eardrum."

After her first partial tympanoplasty, Bishop discovered a cure wasn't in her near future. "Only 15% of those surgeries don't work, and unfortunately, I was part of that 15%," she said. That's when the grit she'd inherited from her grandmother began to kick in, a woman so resistant to limiting options in her eighties that Bishop "had to take her ice skates away."

At first Bishop resisted seeking accommodations from her university, convinced her condition wasn't severe enough. Once she sought assistance, she discovered several methods didn't work for her, such as artificial intelligence and live captioning. Little helped until she gained access to an interpreter. Meanwhile, she kept noticing that customers in the restaurant she managed didn't know how to respond to her hearing loss, yelling at her or overenunciating instead of facing her, as she'd requested.

Going through these experiences while adapting to college changed Bishop.





"I'm 100% a different person than I was even just starting out freshman year of college to now, learning how to adapt so much and so quickly," said Bishop. "It was difficult. I wasn't sure if I was going to graduate on time."

Becoming an intern at the Fehribach Center enabled her to join "the community that I was now a part of," she said. The company of others with hearing loss also led to useful suggestions about ways to adapt to her disability.

Her first Fehribach Center internship was with the Center for Youth and Adults with Conditions of Childhood, where she was interested in the research of a doctor she worked with and appreciated the dedication of the social workers she shadowed. In her second internship with

Eskenazi Health Occupational Health, she engaged with patients and staff, which confirmed her interest in a medical career. "I'm not only working with the doctor," she said, "but I'm working with medical assistants and nurses and nurse practitioners."

Her co-workers have been a cheering section for her, Bishop said. When she won the award, Bishop was touched that her co-workers and manager from Occupational Health wanted to witness her being honored. "It was amazing just having a team that actually wanted to be there for me," she said.

That kind of support is something her ice-skating grandmother — her "number one fan" — gave her throughout her life: attending her events, showing kindness to everyone and inspiring Bishop with her irrepressible spirit. In her grandmother's memory, Bishop wears a pendant that is an imprint of her finger. "I think about her every day honestly," Bishop said, adding, "I just want to make my grandma proud."

Bishop plans to pursue a degree in osteopathic medicine (D.O.), a career which will enable her to get to know her patients and to focus on "the whole person," she said. Once a D.O., she hopes to someday have a Fehribach Center intern herself.

"I feel like it would be very fulfilling," she said.

FEHRIBACH CENTER 2025 INTERNSHIP REPORT

In 2025, students from 29 colleges and universities participated in 65 paid internships facilitated by the Fehribach Center. While the Fehribach Center facilitates a limited number of spring and fall internships, most internships occur during the summer, with 58 students participating in the summer of 2025. While most of these internships were onsite, some students worked remotely. Following are some of the internships and projects students completed in the summer of 2025.

Emmalee Hoot is a student at Valparaiso University, where she is studying electrical engineering. Last summer, she interned with KBSO Consulting, an engineering consulting firm based just north of Indianapolis in Carmel, Ind. During her internship, Hoot worked on various projects and completed rotations through several departments within the company, such as electrical, lighting, technology, mechanical and plumbing. During her time with each department, she was asked to learn responsibilities of that area and the knowledge required to carry out those responsibilities. One of Hoot's favorite tasks consisted of converting a music center into a home goods store, a job that enabled her to experience the entire scope of a project.

Heather Emmert is a student at Wright State University, where she is majoring in social work. Last summer, she interned with Eskenazi Health Center of Hope. Center of Hope works with prosecutors, local law enforcement and victims' assistance agencies to provide care for victims of sexual assault and family violence in Indianapolis. During her internship, Emmert worked collaboratively with social workers and forensic nurses. She visited patients to provide resources, observed sessions conducted by social workers and attended court hearings to see how the center supports victims. Additionally, Emmert attended numerous meetings and lectures and assisted with paperwork required to complete monthly reports.

Hannah Simon is a student at the University of Notre Dame. She is double majoring in psychology and English. Last summer, Simon interned with Eskenazi Health Palliative Care. The program coordinates complex medical care for patients with life-threatening illnesses. During her internship, Simon worked with a palliative care doctor and a social worker. She also shadowed a board-certified music therapist with Eskenazi Health Music Therapy and participated with patients in music therapy sessions. She visited patients with an Eskenazi Health Center for Spiritual Care & Education chaplain. Simon also assisted with the onboarding of volunteers, created a list of grief support resources, performed a variety of administrative tasks and helped to relaunch the No One Dies Alone (NODA) program at Sidney & Lois Eskenazi Hospital. NODA enables compassionate volunteers to visit with patients during the final moments of their lives.

Michael Hedenberg is a student at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, where he is studying mechanical engineering. Last summer, Hedenberg interned at BraunAbility, a global leader in wheelchair-accessible vehicles and wheelchair lift equipment. During his internship, Hedenberg designed and conducted tests on lift and ramp assemblies to determine the loudness of the equipment. He also toured the production plant in Winamac, Ind., and attended an abilities expo in Chicago with colleagues. Additionally, Hedenberg gained experience working in BraunAbility's research and development lab.

Martrell Stevens is a graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he majored in recreation, sport and tourism. Last summer, Stevens interned with Christel House International. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Christel House operates nine schools across five countries and is dedicated to serving children from under-resourced communities. During his internship, Stevens worked as a data analytics intern, collaborating with their information technology (IT), data analytics and fundraising departments on various projects. Stevens gained exposure to nonprofit operations on a global scale as he interacted with colleagues located in countries outside of the United States. His intern experience greatly aligned with his career goals as he hopes to oversee a nonprofit in the future.

“ I felt proud seeing my work in newsletters, which gave me a satisfying sense of accomplishment even though recognition was not my goal. ”

- Fehribach Center intern



“ I got what I was always looking for: a means to combine my broadcasting past with my new interest in social change. ”

- Fehribach Center intern



Anna Schneider is a student at Ball State University, where she is studying interior design. Last summer, she interned with Eskenazi Health Facilities Planning and Management. During her internship, Schneider participated in design meetings, visited project sites and edited design documents. Additionally, she had an opportunity to visit some nearby design firms.

In addition to providing students with internship opportunities, the Fehribach Center sponsored a variety of professional development events in summer 2025. These events gave interns learning opportunities to build upon their interview skills, professionalism in the workplace and other career competencies known to enhance employability. Interns worked for a variety of organizations in various locations. Therefore, all professional development events were held

virtually using video conferencing platforms. Following are the events that were offered in the summer of 2025:

- A panel of three former Fehribach Center interns discussed the role internships played in their professional careers. They also shared how they have disclosed their disabilities to their respective employers and gave helpful suggestions on how 2025 interns can maximize their opportunities.
- Mary Ciccarelli, M.D., from the Center for Youth & Adults with Conditions of Childhood at Eskenazi Health, gave an interactive presentation about various governmental programs for people with disabilities.
- Tehanee Ratwatte, the Fehribach Center's career consultant, gave a highly engaging presentation entitled "The Importance of Failing," in which she discussed how interns can learn and grow professionally in moments when they don't succeed.
- Representatives from CNO Financial Group gave a presentation with important tips for performing well in job interviews and creating strong resumes.
- Heather Evans, Ph.D., director of the disability studies program at the University of Washington, led a discussion entitled "Knowing Your Rights as a Job Seeker with a Disability."
- Representatives from Regions Bank gave a presentation entitled "Banking Basics," in which they discussed financial basics that can help interns make informed decisions for years to come.
- Greg Fehribach, the founder of the Fehribach Center, led an engaging discussion on leadership in which he emphasized the significance of active civic engagement.



“ All in all, I left with improved technical proficiency, a deeper comprehension of clinic operations, and a distinct awareness of how front-line health care service is supported by back-end work. ”

- Fehribach Center intern

- Representatives from the recruiting team at Eli Lilly and Company gave an enriching professional development presentation entitled “Career Readiness: Tools, Planning and Self-Advocacy for Success.”
- The Fehribach Center hosted a virtual summer intern recognition event to recognize the accomplishments of summer 2025 interns.
- High Alpha hosted the annual summer celebration - a reception for the Fehribach Center in downtown Indianapolis. Guests included interns, former interns, internship supervisors, community leaders, family members and friends of the program.
- The Fehribach Center funded a social outing to a minor league baseball game at Victory Field in Indianapolis for summer interns.
- A visit to the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis for summer interns was funded by the Fehribach Center.
- The Fehribach Center funded an outing to the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site in Indianapolis, where summer interns toured the home of the 23rd president of the United States.





Additional Supports for Interns

In addition to the paid internship and professional development opportunities that interns received, the Fehribach Center also provided interns with the following:

- Interns who lived outside of the Indianapolis area were provided free housing at apartments on the Indiana University (IU) campus in downtown Indianapolis next to Eskenazi Health.
- Eskenazi Health Medical Transport provided rides for interns who could not drive to their worksites. This service provided transportation both for interns living at the IU Indianapolis apartments and to those living in the Indianapolis area.
- The Fehribach Center also provided transportation assistance to interns by using Uber vouchers. This allowed for a greater expansion of transportation services.
- Disability accommodations were offered to interns by the Fehribach Center. Among the accommodations provided were screen enlargement software, screen-reading software, large screen monitors and orientation and mobility training for blind and low-vision interns.
- Interns were given the opportunity to complete a career assessment with David Parker, Ph.D., the Fehribach Center's program manager for research, educational outreach & communications. Several interns participated, receiving highly personalized information about their personality types, how they make significant decisions, what types of jobs they have a propensity to thrive in, and which kinds of work environments would be most successful for them. Participants were provided with a detailed report that offered recommendations for building on their internships as they begin looking for employment.



- Interns were given an opportunity to schedule virtual meetings with Tehanee Ratwatte, the Fehribach Center's career consultant for current and former interns. Ratwatte's role is to assist with all aspects of career development for those who intern through the Fehribach Center. She assists interns with tasks such as creating or modifying resumes, honing interviewing skills and helping current students identify what career resources are available on their respective college campuses.



ENHANCING SELF-EFFICACY AT THE FEHRIBACH CENTER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

BY ROGER WESSEL, PH.D., FEHRIBACH CENTER PROGRAM EVALUATOR



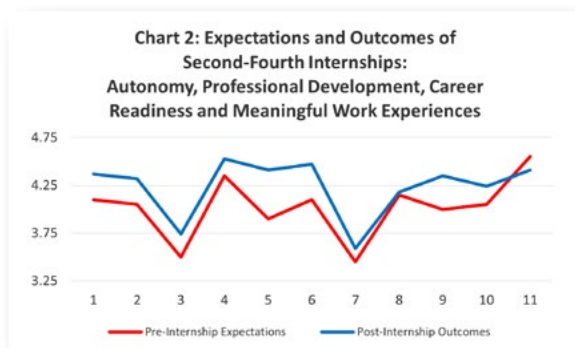
The Fehribach Center's internship program gathers reliable data used by program administrators to verify outcomes of the program and to make improvements to the program for future participants (i.e., student interns and employer partners). This evaluative data may also be helpful to stakeholders (e.g., individuals and organizations that fund and sponsor the program), others who may be interested in replicating the program and researchers of college students with physical disabilities.*

The internship program's intent is for participants with physical disabilities to gain work experience and to show enhanced self-efficacy. This is done by demonstrating greater autonomy and self-determination, increasing knowledge of skills through professional development, and empowerment for career readiness. These desired achievements are measured by 11 intended outcomes:

1. Possessing confidence in the ability to control one's life
2. Being an independent person, able to take care of oneself
3. Becoming financially independent, leading to the ability to financially care for oneself
4. Being able to self-advocate: able to express goals, assert rights and seek assistance when needed
5. Acquiring confidence in the potential to succeed professionally
6. Possessing the skills needed to succeed professionally
7. Displaying time management by efficiently controlling how hours of the day are spent
8. Solving problems by finding solutions to difficult issues
9. Being aware of organizational culture, why things happen the way they do in a workplace
10. Professionally networking with others on work interests in a real-world workplace
11. Demonstrating proper work etiquette by acting appropriately in a real-world workplace

In the summer of 2025, the Fehribach Center provided 58 students from 29 public and private universities in Indiana and other Midwestern states (i.e., Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio) with internships. All the participants completed pre-internship reports during the first week of the internship, and 55 interns (95%) completed usable post-internship reports during the last week of the internship. The internship program's success was indicated by their responses to the intended outcomes listed above. In short, the internships had a positive influence on the students. Program experiences outpaced expectations for first-year interns (see Chart 1). On a scale of 0-5, with three representing "slightly agree," four representing "agree," and five representing "strongly agree," interns reported that what they experienced was more than what they had expected in 10 out of the 11 intended outcomes. The exception was "self-advocacy" (outcome four): their ability to self-advocate, expressing goals, asserting rights and seeking assistance when needed. Given that this may have been a student's first internship, they may have realized that self-advocating in the workplace can be more challenging than they expected.





For interns in their second through fourth Fehribach Center internships, program experiences also outpaced expectations in 10 of the 11 intended outcomes (see Chart 2). The only exception was in proper work etiquette (outcome 11): demonstrating proper work etiquette by acting appropriately in a real-world workplace. Interns may have arrived at the reality that workplace behavioral expectations may differ from those in collegiate settings.

Table 1 provides average outcomes for the first compared to the second through fourth-plus internships. It also compares pre-internship expectations with post-internship outcomes for both groups. Interns expressed high

confidence levels in their abilities prior to the internships; this may be somewhat unexpected for maturing young adults with physical disabilities. However, even after starting with such confidence, the internships had positive influences on them.

This table also provides two additional data points. Interns were asked in the post-internship report to share their level of agreement on:

- How meaningful their work-related responsibilities were
- Their perceptions of their levels of competency in performing internship-related responsibilities

For both criteria, participants in their second through fourth-plus internship strongly agreed and first-year interns agreed.

When interns reflected on what they had learned during the internship, they discussed significant personal and professional ways they were maturing that benefited their development. The importance of communication and flexibility were common themes. The interns also expressed the importance of overcoming fear and self-doubt, learning how to manage time, and being confident. The interns agreed that they had meaningful work experiences and felt competent in performing their work-related responsibilities.

**Note: 2025 summer data is part of a 2019-present data bank of quantitative and qualitative program evaluations for the Fehribach Center. It contains data from hundreds of college students with physical disabilities and the co-workers who supervised them, specifically:*

- Participant responses to pre-internship expectations of intended program outcomes and narratives related to improving self-efficacy. At the completion of the internship, interns responded with post-internship experiences, including numeric outcomes and response narratives.
- Weekly intern journals, reflecting on what they observed and learned during an internship.
- Internship supervisor/co-worker reports, including numeric outcomes and response narratives on enhancing workplace culture.
- Intern data on their post-internship career statuses.

The intent of the data is to inform program decisions, but it may also be usable for researchers seeking data on students with physical disabilities. For more information, please contact Larry Markle, Fehribach Center director, at Larry.Markle@EskenaziHealth.edu.

Table 1: Intended Outcomes for Interns (Ordered by Internship Number) 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Slightly Agree, 2=Slightly Disagree, 1=Disagree, 0=Strongly Disagree	First Internship			Second-Fourth-Plus Internships		
	Pre-Internship Expectations	Post-Internship Outcomes	+/-	Pre-Internship Expectations	Post-Internship Outcomes	+/-
Autonomy and Self-Determination						
1. I am confident in my abilities to control my life.	3.87	4.00	.13	4.10	4.37	.27
2. I am an independent person, able to take care of myself.	4.08	4.33	.25	4.05	4.32	.27
3. I am becoming financially independent: soon, I will be able to financially support myself.	3.03	3.42	.39	3.50	3.74	.24
4. I can self-advocate; I am able to express my own goals, assert my rights and seek assistance when needed.	4.45	4.22	-.23	4.35	4.53	.18
5. I am confident I will succeed professionally.	4.16	4.36	.20	3.90	4.41	.51
Professional Development						
6. I have the skills needed to succeed professionally.	4.00	4.31	.31	4.10	4.47	.37
7. I manage my time by efficiently controlling how I spend the hours of my day.	3.68	3.89	.21	3.45	3.59	.14
8. I solve problems by finding solutions to difficult issues.	4.16	4.25	.09	4.15	4.18	.03
9. I am aware of organizational culture; I understand why things happen the way they do in a workplace.	3.29	3.94	.65	4.00	4.35	.35
Career Readiness						
10. I network by professionally interacting with others on work interests in a real-world workplace.	3.39	4.06	.67	4.05	4.24	.19
11. I demonstrate proper work etiquette by acting appropriately in a real-world workplace.	4.34	4.36	.02	4.55	4.41	-.14
Meaningful and Accessible Work Experiences						
12. I had meaningful, work-related responsibilities in my internship.	N/A	4.28	N/A	N/A	4.59	N/A
13. I was competent in my work and able to perform my responsibilities well.	N/A	4.39	N/A	N/A	4.59	N/A

FEHRIBACH CENTER ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

BY DONELLE HENDERLONG, COORDINATOR OF MENTORING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Celebrating its 12th year of operation, the Fehribach Center remains steadfast in its mission to empower students with disabilities to achieve economic independence and active community participation. Our continued relationships with alumni offer valuable insight into the program's long-term impact, and we are proud to share several of their post-graduation journeys below.

Preston Radtke

Preston Radtke serves as an internal accessibility specialist in the engineering department at Zoom Communications, where he leads large-scale technical rollouts for major clients, including Fortune 100 companies, banks and universities. A two-time Ball State University graduate, Radtke earned his bachelor's degree in public relations in 2016 and a master's degree in emerging media design and development in 2018. During internships with Eskenazi Health Public Affairs & Communications and Hirons, a marketing and communications firm, he conducted interviews, drafted press releases and created communications materials. Beyond technical expertise, Radtke values the professionalism and customer service experience he gained during those internships — skills he now applies daily in client communications at Zoom.



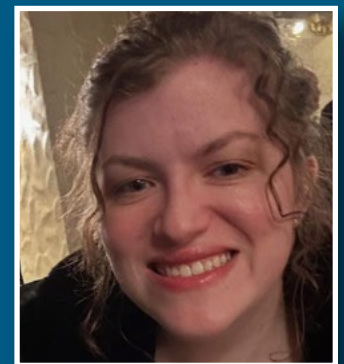
Originally from the Chicago suburbs, Radtke credits his internships with helping him gain independence as he navigated life in Indianapolis, which was a brand-new city to him during his internship with Eskenazi Health. Balancing summer coursework in Muncie, Ind., while interning in Indianapolis during his next summer at Hirons strengthened his time-management skills and confidence, ultimately preparing him for later relocations to employment opportunities in New Jersey, New York City and Chicago.

Outside of work, Radtke runs marathons and mentors high school students through a virtual program. He shares his advice with Fehribach Center interns: "Build a relationship with a co-worker who can serve as a mentor. Watching how professionals present themselves and communicate is key to your own growth."

Lizzie Ford

Lizzie Ford is an associate attorney at Barnes & Thornburg, where she supports partners with research and project coordination focused on health care regulation. A graduate of the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law, Ford earned her juris doctor degree in 2023 after completing a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling at Ball State University in 2020.

She completed three internships through the Fehribach Center, including two at Sandra Eskenazi Mental Health Center, where she helped allocate resources, plan programs, and facilitate art and group therapy sessions for clients managing borderline personality disorder and addiction recovery. Her third internship with Eskenazi Health Legal Affairs sparked her own legal career as she researched



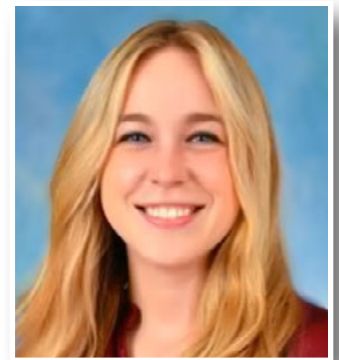
and reviewed HIPAA policies. Lizzie also completed an externship with Indiana University Health's HIPAA and privacy department in addition to several other professional development experiences.

Outside of work, Ford serves on the Joseph Maley Foundation's Young Professionals Board, contributing to fundraising and event planning. She shares her recommendations with Fehribach Center interns: "Your internships are some of the only times in life when your main expectation is to learn — use them to strengthen your soft skills, especially teamwork."

Abbey Russell

Abbey Russell is a pediatric resident at the University of North Carolina. Knowing from a young age that she wanted to pursue a career in medicine, Russell earned her undergraduate degree in biology with a minor in biblical literature from Taylor University in 2020, followed by her medical degree from Indiana University School of Medicine in 2025.

As a student, Russell completed three internships with the Fehribach Center, including two experiences with Eskenazi Health Family Beginnings. There, she had the opportunity to shadow in triage, participate in staff meetings and assist with various office projects. She also shadowed a nurse during several Monday night shifts, where she observed deliveries, surgeries and bereavement counseling.



Russell's third internship was with Eskenazi Health Center West 38th Street, where she shadowed a pediatrician, assisted with food distribution and contributed to the Addressing Social Health and Early Childhood Wellness (ASHEW) Project — an initiative aimed at improving screening processes at the practice. Russell credits these experiences with solidifying her passion for the medical field. Beyond her professional development, she especially enjoyed building friendships with other interns and fondly recalls a group outing to an Indiana Pacers game, where they watched from box seats.

When she's not working, Russell enjoys cooking, exercising, spending time with friends and family and exploring new coffee shops. In the future, she hopes to serve on the Young Leaders Board for the Alexander Graham Bell Association.

Russell offers this advice to current Fehribach Center interns: "Have fun and be open to saying 'yes' to any opportunity your internship provides. Because I said 'yes' to everything I could, I never felt like I missed out on anything."

“Nearly every single person is more than happy to help if I ask them. It’s overall a very professional, get-your-work-done type of environment, but people seem to genuinely care about one another, including weekly one-on-one check-in meetings to ensure you are doing well and succeeding.”



– Fehribach Center intern

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

BY DAVID R. PARKER, PH.D., FEHRIBACH CENTER PROGRAM MANAGER FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS



Beginning with a 2019 synthesis of existing literature, David Parker, Ph.D., has been charged with influencing the Fehribach Center's use of research to better understand challenges that college students with physical disabilities encounter on their career journeys and best practices that can minimize those barriers. This directive quickly evolved into the creation of the center's national Research Advisory Board (RAB) in 2020 (see "Leaders of the Fehribach Center" on page 25 of this report). These scholars meet with the center staff virtually twice a year. The center also funds up to three grants annually to support RAB members' new studies at the intersection of career preparation and physical disability, focusing on current/former Fehribach Center interns, existing national datasets or both.

Research findings serve the following important purposes:

- Provide proof of concept — that the center's internship program works
- Unpack the mechanisms of the program's success to strengthen program development
- Create evidence to support funding requests
- Depict key components of the Fehribach Center model that can help programs in other parts of the country develop their efforts to expand career development and internship opportunities for physically disabled college students

To advance these outcomes, the center strives to fund research with practical implications and then share those findings in an accessible format with a wide audience.

Thanks to a generous gift from Lilly Endowment Inc., Dr. Parker's position shifted from half-time to full-time at the beginning of 2025. This has led to expansions of the center's research operations.

Two new scholars were invited onto the RAB this year: Rob Trombley, MPP, who has extensive experience coordinating the use of employment/disability data for the U.S. Department of Labor, and Aliza Lambert, Ph.D., director of the STRIDE Center at Michigan State University. RAB members Roger Wessel, Ph.D., Allison Fleming, Ph.D., and Bonnie Swenor, Ph.D., are working with Dr. Parker this year to formalize the center's research mission. They are partnering with RAB member Melinda Messineo, Ph.D., to create a website presence through Ball State University that will disseminate the center's research purpose and findings as well as what is known from related research conducted around the country. The goal is to create an accessible hub that can be easily used by students, families, educators, college personnel, employers, other researchers and policymakers for access to meaningful data for their own use.

Four research studies were underway in 2025. The first two were in Year One; the second two will be completed in 2026. Those studies were as follows:

- John Andresen, Ph.D. (Indiana University): "Feeling Included: Campus Engagement across Multiply Marginalized Students with Physical Disabilities." Using large-scale statistics from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), this research will help fulfill the Fehribach Center's priorities by addressing access to postsecondary education opportunities for young adults with physical disabilities, specifically focusing on intersections with other historically marginalized communities. This project is intended to create several issue-brief products to help share findings with several audiences, including individuals with disabilities and their families, post-secondary faculty, administrators and policymakers.

- David Botana, former Fehribach Center intern and doctoral student, and Brad Duerstock, Ph.D. (Purdue University): “Investigating the Impact of AT on Independent Self-Advocacy Skills of Incoming Students with Physical Disabilities Transitioning to College.” This pilot study aims to investigate how early assistive technology (AT) training in the fall semester affects student outcomes. This research will focus on students with physical disabilities who complete AT training in the spring semester after completing a previous semester without Purdue University’s AT services. By assessing students’ self-determination and AT problem-solving skills before and after the intervention, this research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted AT training in preparing students for successful transitions into higher education. This work contributes to a broader understanding of how short-term AT and self-advocacy training can empower students with physical disabilities to transition to college. The Fehribach Center is very pleased with Botana’s involvement; he is the first former Fehribach Center intern to be awarded a research grant.
- Joy Banks, Ph.D. (George Mason University): “What Factors Contribute to Self-Advocacy for College Students with Disabilities: Mixed Methods Study.” Successful college completion and seamless transition to employment require knowledge of discipline-specific skill sets. Success for college-age youth and early career employees with disabilities is also dependent upon their ability to develop knowledge of and act on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The purpose of this study therefore is to explore the ways that disability type and student characteristics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, regional location) influence knowledge of the ADA and the subsequent outcomes of self-advocacy.
- Sharon Field, Ed.D. (Wright State University, retired and 2BSD: Resources for Self-Determination) and Katie Brendli Brown, Ph.D. (Cornell University): “Assessing the Impact of Coaching Services on Self-Determination and Psychological Capital.” The purpose of this project is to determine the impact of the Fehribach Center’s individualized coaching program on the development of participants’ self-determination and psychological capital. These two constructs are closely tied to employment success. The researchers are working closely with the center’s career consultant, Tehanee Ratwatte, who provides career coaching to any current or former Fehribach Center intern.

This team shared highlights from their current study to illustrate the kinds of investigations the center is committed to funding and sharing with the field:

One major aspect of our research focuses on the self-determination of college-age interns with physical disabilities before and after receiving coaching services. We have been intrigued by the number of interns who have reported entering the study with high levels of self-determination already, with multiple [interns] reporting their self-determination stems from their need to advocate for themselves over the course of their lives or persist at something even when others tell them they can’t do it, because of their disability. This finding is an example of how self-determination can develop early in response to a person’s lived experiences, while emphasizing the importance of self-determination across the lifespan.



Of the interns who have completed the study, two have found new jobs — ones they were specifically targeting; two have shared that they feel more confident having conversations that they were nervous about with their supervisors — one with regards to gaining more experiences, one with accommodations; and two have shared that they have the tools they were looking for to move forward in their career journey.

Dr. David Parker represents the Fehribach Center as a co-chair of the Career Planning Knowledge and Practice Community (KPC) for the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). This is the international professional association for college disability service providers. Active work within AHEAD's KPCs includes hosting webinars, maintaining a resource website and presenting at national conferences to share the center's work. During AHEAD'S conference in July, another KPC in which Dr. Parker actively participates recognized the importance of this body of work by awarding him with the Distinguished Career Contributions to Postsecondary Disability Research Award.



“I am hoping that I can find my way back here during medical school as I love this clinic and this hospital.”

– Fehribach Center intern

“It has been interesting to observe interdisciplinary collaboration between departments to ensure that the patient receives the care and resources they need.”

– Fehribach Center intern

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

BY DAVID R. PARKER, PH.D.

The Fehribach Center is committed to working with colleagues across the country to build upon what we learn from our interns and employer partners. These outreach efforts allow center staff to collaborate with outstanding families, educators, employers and other leaders in Indiana and beyond. We are expanding efforts to partner with colleagues on college campuses to promote best practices in career development for students with physical disabilities as they prepare to launch their careers. We are also exploring new ways to educate and support high school students with physical disabilities, their families and school-based educators as those students prepare for both college and careers. In addition, center staff are frequent presenters at state and national conferences, enabling them to provide ongoing updates to the field about the Fehribach Center's work in ways that can be adapted by others.

One key educational outreach project is known as "Campus Collaborations: A Community of Practice (CoP)." This project, a year-long engagement with three campuses in or near Indiana, began with Indiana University, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and the University of Evansville in 2021. Through four virtual meetings with teams of disability services and career services professionals, the project enables campuses to showcase their collaborative efforts to provide disability-informed careers services and events for students with disabilities while sharing guidance and resources with peers. In 2025-26, the center is partnering with teams from Purdue University, Hanover College and the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Not only does the CoP project promote best practices through innovative campus partnerships, but it also creates examples of effective collaborations that the center shares through publications and conference presentations.

In 2024, the CoP project tested its application at a national level by piloting an expanded version with the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle. Their multi-office team not only engaged in highly effective best practices but also created paid summer internships for two UW students with physical disabilities who worked for Seattle-based companies. This successful experiment has led to the launching of a three-year national CoP model beginning in Fall 2025 that includes the UW team as well as a team from the University of Kentucky. Each year, two new campuses around the country will join this national CoP project, receiving support and guidance from the center and the veteran peer campuses for three years. The goal is to help campuses develop their own versions of the Fehribach Center's summer internship program while delivering best-practice career services during the academic year.

In addition to the CoP projects, center staff are frequent presenters at state and national conferences. These opportunities facilitate networking, the sharing of current examples of the center's programming and research findings, and the ability to learn about related initiatives in other settings. In 2025, staff members made numerous presentations. These included in-person national conferences in the following locations:

- Denver: the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
- Boston: the University of Connecticut's Postsecondary Disability Training Institute
- Madison, Wisc.: the Vocational Rehabilitation's National Center on Quality Employment

Additional in-person presentations took place at Kentucky's and Indiana's AHEAD state conferences as well as other Indiana employer- and campus-sponsored events.

Virtual events included:

- A national webinar for AHEAD, focusing on a current Fehribach Center-funded study about career coaching. It was conducted by Sharon Field, Ed.D., and Katie Brendli Brown, Ph.D.

- A webinar series in partnership with Indeed, which included former center interns as speakers for the National Association of Colleges and Employers
- A webinar hosted by UW for a national group of employers

A third example of educational outreach in 2025 involved a Fehribach Center intern from Wright State University, Lily Berkow. Under the supervision of Dr. David Parker, she created a survey sent out to current and former Fehribach Center interns to learn about how their high school experiences prepared them for college and careers. Over 40 interns responded, providing the center with key statistics and insights. Over 57% of participants indicated that they had a part-time job in high school, while 50% performed some form of volunteer work. Interns were often the only students in their high school with their disability. Many felt that school personnel, while well-intended, lacked a good understanding of their potential and needs.

Survey findings are being shared with educational leaders and will inform the center's educational outreach efforts to high school groups and Indiana disability services providers. Respondents' comments reflected how self-determined Fehribach Center interns are to achieve their goals, often through their own initiative and perseverance. Sample quotes included:

- "I was the only student with my disability for most of the time I was there. [During] my senior year there was one student who transferred in. Overall, the school did an OK job. They never denied me anything but also never offered me anything, so it was always my advocacy/responsibility to get what I needed."
- "While I had some assistance from my high school on knowing how to advocate for myself in college, I had consulted with the colleges I was interested in attending (such as meeting with disability services on my tours) to learn about accommodations. Thankfully, I've always been good at advocating for myself, and my parents were very invested in making sure I had a great and accessible college experience. I didn't end up having questions after communicating with each disability services office."
- "I think much of having a disability is figuring it out as you go, leaning on others when you need help — most people, teachers and students, in high school — are not disabled themselves. Services are tailored to meet the needs of 'most' students, which often doesn't take into account the specific needs of students with disabilities."

“Although I proved to myself that I am capable, I also found acceptance in my body and having to use daily accommodations from being around the other interns in the program.”

– Fehribach Center intern

EXPANDING THE CENTER'S REACH: THE COORDINATOR OF MENTORING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Donelle Henderlong has been named the coordinator of mentoring & leadership development for the Fehribach Center. She formerly worked in disabilities services offices for two different universities.

Henderlong is designing new programming for the Fehribach Center, which will increase the professional development opportunities available to former interns.

The first program she's developing is a leadership academy. Alumni of the Fehribach Center internship program will learn skills to enhance their community contributions. This includes preparation for a particular leadership role, a board membership or another civic position. The program begins with coverage of the Disability Rights Movement to provide a historical context, then proceeds to leadership values and styles, communication and personal branding, emotional intelligence and conflict navigation, and finally to community engagement.

"I wanted it to be as broad and open to as many people as possible," Henderlong explained.

This academy will involve preparatory reading and monthly group gatherings with notable subject matter experts for each topic. It will conclude with a capstone project about six months after it begins. Program participants will identify an issue in their community, develop a plan for addressing it and determine what form their proposal or promotional push will take.

The second program Henderlong is designing focuses on mentorship. Alumni of the Fehribach Center will be connected to professionals who work in a career field they are pursuing or with experts who have skills alumni want to develop. These one-on-one partnerships will last four months, at which point there will be an observation period. If the mentor and mentee want to continue, they will be welcome to do so.

There is, Henderlong acknowledged, "a lot of work ahead, but it's all fun work." She likes the model of assisting former Fehribach Center interns through these two programs, then saying, "Here's how you give back to your community."

She's working with a consultant for each program, gathering topics and pre-work for the academy and considering the shape of the mentorship program.

A third program that is planned once the first two are established is for Fehribach Center alums to act as mentors for high school students who have the same or a similar disability. These alums can help prepare students for the transition to college.

Henderlong has a long history not only with disability services offices, but also with those who developed the Fehribach Center. While pursuing her master's in student affairs administration at Ball State University (BSU) in 2013, she was a graduate student for Larry Markle, director of the Fehribach Center. Markle was then running BSU's disability services office. She remembers initial meetings with Markle and founder Gregory Fehribach about beginning the internship program. Henderlong was in awe of Fehribach's achievements and "commanding" presence.

She was thrilled when she was given the job offer for the position. “I said, ‘Yes, of course. I’d love to. I love watching the program grow.’” As a disability services coordinator, she always enjoyed referring interns to the program and hearing about their experiences.

It’s important to Henderlong to ensure those with busy schedules and issues with transportation can still get involved in the two programs. The leadership academy involves four hours per month, with an hour and a half synchronous and the remaining time self-paced. “I really wanted to make it as flexible as we could,” she said.

Henderlong knows from her years in disability services at Valparaiso University and Purdue University Northwest that the onus is always on the student to self-advocate, which, she pointed out, is also true in the workplace. Her mission, she said, is to “show people that they can come to the table and speak up for themselves, but we have to open the table to them.”



“It’s so important to get diverse voices to a table and diverse voices in leadership positions,” said Henderlong. She’s thrilled to be part of the next chapter of a center that’s making that happen.

“Wow, I’m not alone. There are other people who are going through the same thing, similar age or similar major or goals or disability wise ... And it just felt so nice to not be the only one in the corner of the room. I’m in the middle of the room pretty much. I’m right there under the spotlight with everyone else.”

– Fehribach Center intern

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