DAVID PECH: First of all, I would like to really thank everyone for their time coming to hear us speak and obviously thank you also to all the amazing Pathways organisers for this opportunity.

I will transition to the next slide. Tahli is going to do the acknowledgment of country.

TAHLI HIND: Before we begin, I would like to make an acknowledgment of country and acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the countries on which we are meeting today. We are joining the meeting from the land of the Bidgigal and Gadigal people of the Eora nation and pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for these countries.

DAVID PECH: Thanks, Tahli. I’ll just transition to the next slide.

I’ll just a little bit more about who we are and where we're from. The Centre for Disability Studies is a non-profit organisation affiliated with the University of Sydney. We've been in operation since 1997 and the Uni 2 Beyond program we've been talking about has been running for about 10 years.

To introduce the both of us, yes, Tahli Hind, as Caroline said, is alumna of the program. I am the Uni 2 Beyond career advisor.

I just want to start by doing a little overview of what we're going to be talking about this afternoon, so on to the next slide. Firstly, just a bit of an overview of what Uni 2 Beyond is because it's a fairly unique program. Secondly a little bit about intellectual disability and employment because that's a major focus for us, next about how the program supports our students to find meaningful careers. Then, lastly, we'll speak specifically about our internship program. I will just transition to the next slide.

Currently in Australia the inclusion of people with intellectual disability into mainstream secondary schooling, primary and secondary schooling, is becoming more common. However, the transition into tertiary level education is a new frontier.

Likewise, many workplaces remain closed to the inclusion of people with intellectual disability. Uni 2 Beyond exists to break down barriers of people with intellectual disability who want to experience university life and employment.

To introduce the initiative in a bit more detail we would like to show you a short video. I would like to note here that this video includes Tahli which is wonderful and also our previous director, Patricia O'Brien who recently retired. I'm also going to put a YouTube link in the chat for this if there' are any troubles with streaming, great.

VIDEO

“’I think what makes it unique is that it is enabling students with intellectual disability to gain a post secondary education. Here at Sydney University Uni 2 Beyond gives the students the opportunity to choose whatever subjects they have great interest in and they audit those subjects over a period of two years. Students with intellectual disability are going to university with the next frontier.’

‘When I heard about the Uni 2 Beyond program I said, “Yes, I’ll do it.”’

‘I just love being able to be like a regular student coming to uni, socialising with people, getting to know people, learning things that I wouldn’t ordinarily get to learn.’

‘When I was first approached to have someone in my class from Uni 2 Beyond I was like “Absolutely. Without a doubt this is the program that I am inspired to be a part of, to have someone with a disability in my classroom studying as a regular student on board.’

‘When I was first approached by Uni 2 Beyond I had a bit of trepidation. I wasn’t sure that I had enough training to help them and teach them effectively because I was worried that the Uni 2 Beyond students wouldn’t integrate well with the other students in the classroom. My fears were totally baseless. They integrated well. The other students made them feel welcome. They helped them out on the tasks and they didn’t treat them like they were different. It was beautiful to watch. I see they’re eager, they’re bright, they’re enthused. They really want to get involved so their capability is large. Time and time again I see inclusion is a major, major thing, improving and it makes a huge impact on the lives of people with disability.’

‘As a university student they have two mentors. One is an academic mentor and one is a social mentor.’

‘Throughout the semester they just become friends and they’re like your friends for life.’

‘From my perspective I see them having a chance to engage with other students. They learn a structure, coming to university, finding a table to sit in the tutorial, interacting with other students. Everything has its challenge.’

‘I was excited for uni even though I had no idea what to expect. Starting uni took some getting used to but it has become the most fun learning experience so far. My favourite part of being a uni student is just being on campus and having the freedom to do what I want at uni, getting lunch and hanging out with friends in my classes.’

‘By introducing internships our students can have a taster of what they might like to do in terms of employment, so we talk with them and find out what’s an area that they would like to work in and then we match them with a placement, whether it’s in commerce or whether it’s in industry, retail, so that they can have an opportunity to see if this is what they want to pursue in the future.’

‘I am proud of the work that we have been doing and I hope to be involved in this program as long as I work at the university.’

‘I think in terms of the Uni 2 Beyond program it’s really kind of advancing how we see disability and breaking down a lot of those barriers and that can have such an impact on the individual and then also on university culture as we embrace diversity and inclusion which is such an important part of life here.’

‘The students grow in confidence. They grow in their own self esteem. They stand a mile higher than they did before they came. They network with other university students and they no longer feel different.’”

VIDEO ENDS

DAVID PECH: Great. I've just transitioned to the next slide there. Hopefully that video worked well for everyone but, like I said, I will make sure I put the YouTube link in the chat. Now maybe Tahli you can tell us a bit more about what it was like to be a Uni 2 Beyond student.

TAHLI HIND: Hi, everyone. I'm Tahli. I was in the presentation. So, yeah, I really loved Uni 2 Beyond. It's a two year initiative and students can choose subjects on their own. It's not their parents. It's really what you want to do. For me, I did some health, I did some music, I did creative arts and I did really enjoy being on campus, being able to learn, feeling like I was part of the general society and just really enjoying it.

With Uni 2 Beyond, we don't have to do the big assessments, assignments, tests and exams that normal uni students do. We do see an academic mentor once a week or once a fortnight who pretty much breaks down the barriers, breaks down each unit of each subject that each individual does and would go through - say for example I was studying health and we were looking at water, one student for example might have to write a one-page report where someone else would just have to get 10 pictures. It's really specified for each individual. That's what I really loved about it. Everyone can show what they're capable of and there's not really any boundaries of who can and who can't do it because everyone is working on their own and achieving their own goals and working on their own units really.

DAVID PECH: Wonderful. Thank you, Tahli. I appreciate you sharing that. As I am sure you can all imagine, things have changed a little bit in the COVID environment. For semester 1 everything was entirely online and then semester 2 we did have some students returning to a little bit of in-person study. It's certainly been challenging but I really think that all our students have risen to the challenge and made the most of what I think has been a really difficult year study-wise.

Generally in terms of the Uni 2 Beyond program, we're also looking at expanding the model possibly within Australia or overseas. That's something we're really excited about for the future.

I've talked a bit about Uni 2 Beyond and the university size, the response for the need to include people with intellectual disability in Australian universities, and now we would like to turn to look at the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in Australian workplaces.

I will transition to the next slide. In 2018, 38.9% of working-age people with intellectual disability were in the labour force compared with 53.4% of people with other types of disability, and 84.1% of people without disability. As you can see there are heightened impacts beyond that of other people with disability, for people with intellectual disability in the world of work.

To think about what these statistics really mean, you know, we would say that they represent a loss for people with intellectual disability who want meaningful careers, a loss for employers of potentially valuable employees and a loss for society of the working contribution and diversity that people with intellectual disability could bring to work which is why we in the last few years have added a career advisory service to the Uni 2 Beyond program to facilitate these transitions. This service is available both for our current students and for our alumni students.

Moving to the next slide, just a little bit about what kind of support we provide for students. For our current students and for alumni we do things like assisting them to find jobs, undertake internships which we'll talk a little bit more about in a minute, to connect with employment services like DES providers, to learn new work skills and in some cases to find further study. Tahli, maybe you could talk a little bit about the work you've done with the career advisory service at Uni 2 Beyond.

TAHLI HIND: The career staff at Uni 2 Beyond have really helped me just really find a DES provider and while I was looking for a DES provider helped me look at other options of what I could do in the interim before I get a job, looking at TAFE courses, looking at TAFE courses online, just be there like a backbone for someone with intellectual disability who may be a bit lost and may find it a bit challenging and give them more support where their parent or carer may not be able to provide that. Thank you.

DAVID PECH: Cool. Thank you, Tahli. I appreciate hearing about your experience. We want to go into a little bit more depth specifically about our internship program. I will go to the next slide. Here we are. Uni 2 Beyond students have the opportunity to undertake paid internships, to explore possible career aspirations. We've partnered with a diverse range of institutions to host Uni 2 Beyond interns including major banks, city councils, engineering firms, cultural institutions and our own university, the University of Sydney. In fact, we currently have an internship in progress at KPMG Australia. Tahli, you were a Uni 2 Beyond intern. Would you be happy to tell us more about your internship experience?

TAHLI HIND: I did mine at KPMG. That's not me on the screen but I did it at the same company. It was two days a week for six weeks. I did various tasks from putting their Christmas party function together, looking for a venue, looking for fun games, tidying up the office, doing filing, stationery orders, decorating the office for Christmas, organising the Christmas lunch for the staff in the office that I was working in, so just really whatever needed to be done, I was just like a helping hand, an extra pair of hands to help.

DAVID PECH: Wonderful, thank you, Tahli. If you wanted to, you could talk a little bit more about your work since then.

TAHLI HIND: Since Uni 2 Beyond I have got a current casual job at a community centre in Woollahra at the Holdsworth Community Centre but I'm still looking for a permanent part-time office admin role. In the interim I've done some TAFE courses. Last year I did a retail course at Ultimo TAFE in New South Wales where we are based for anyone outside of New South Wales. That's like in the heart of the city. Then this year because of COVID I'm still looking for a job but it's been a bit challenging so I decided to do an online TAFE course. This year I did an intermediate Excel course which I really, really thoroughly enjoyed. I think for me it was just proving to myself that I could study online. I never thought I could do it. I actually got through it. I've completed the course and I've got my statement of attainment, so, yeah, good on me.

DAVID PECH: Thank you, Tahli, that’s wonderful. I think we've come pretty much to the end of our time. I just wanted to offer if anyone wants any further information, I’m quite happy to provide a summary or an easy read summary of information we talked about today. I also really want to thank Tahli for coming to speak and being such a great advocate for the program. I was hoping we would have some time for questions. I wanted to quickly acknowledge Susan Beard's comment, absolutely the Up the Hill program at Flinders is amazing. We're developing our links with them and they do great work. Lastly, I will quickly put my email in the chat box. I’m quite happy to be contacted if anyone has follow-up questions.