



### Questions and Answers with Next Steps at Vanderbilt University

**Q: What skills should prospective students have prior to applying to your program?**

A: Students should have

- A solid means of communication
- Strong cell phone skills to make and receive calls and text
- The ability to follow a schedule; if possible, the ability to use a phone calendar app
- Basic computer skills: Log onto computer, use Microsoft Word, type basic sentences to express ideas, use spellcheck to edit work, save files, create folders, locate files that have been saved, send and reply to basic email messages, and use search engines to find basic information
- The ability to move with ease on campus, including stamina and speed to move effectively on a large campus
- Safety awareness- ability to be aware of surroundings; i.e. cars, strangers, and new places to problem-solve and make good decisions
- Ability to manage one's behavior without direct supervision during free time

**Q: What opportunities do you have for prospective students to visit campus?**

A: We offer Open House visits to campus throughout the year and College Nights in the fall and spring. Teachers can arrange college campus visits for their classes. Students can attend the Next Steps Summer Institute and live on campus for one week in June each summer.

**Q: What does the application process look like?**

A: All applicants must complete an online application and upload supporting documentation. Students will participate in interviews followed by a preview day on campus.

**Q: What types of academic and social supports does your program offer?**

A: Each student has a Circle of Support that is comprised of Vanderbilt students that volunteer as peer mentors called Ambassadors. Ambassadors have different roles to support students throughout many parts of their week:

- Academic tutors
- Exercise partners
- Daily planners to help with time management and organizational skills
- Lunch partners
- Campus life ambassadors



The number of Ambassadors decreases each year as the students develop the skills necessary to invite others to participate in activities with them.

Each student likewise meets weekly or bi-weekly with a staff advisor to review program expectations, problem-solve, and celebrate all areas of the program.

**Q: How do you ensure your students are actively involved with the greater college community?**

A: Students must enroll in 1-2 Vanderbilt courses each semester, which they attend independently. Students are supported to investigate campus clubs, organizations, and intramurals; steps are taken to provide peer mentor support during initial attendance at club meetings when possible. Students are encouraged to participate in campus community art classes each semester and attend athletic events, lectures, concerts, and other campus life events/activities that are of interest.

**Q: How does your program differ from the other Comprehensive Transition Programs in Tennessee?**

A: We are the only 4-year program in Tennessee currently. We are the only program at a tier one research university, which gives Next Steps the opportunity to be involved in cutting-edge research. We are likewise the only program at a top 15 university in the country, with the #1 special education program in the country. This gives many of our students the opportunity to work with top-notch undergraduate and professional students as mentors and class facilitators.

**Q: What types of work experiences or employment opportunities does your program offer (paid/unpaid)?**

A: Students begin their freshmen year at Next Steps completing intensive career discovery and exploration activities. They have job shadowing visits to the 16 career clusters and start internships in the spring. For each following semester, students are involved in employment readiness internships that are developed based upon their preferences and abilities. These internships could be paid or unpaid. During their junior and senior years, we focus on off-campus, paid positions as much as possible. Students work longer shifts as they continue in the program and build their work skills.

**Q: What sorts of outcomes have alumni of your program achieved?**

A: Students self-report, and parents agree, that the students become stronger self-advocates, problem-solvers, and decision makers. Some of our students have moved into their own apartments. 91% of our total graduates from Next Steps at Vanderbilt have meaningful, paid employment.

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