



APPLYING TO THE PROGRAM

Next Steps welcomes students who want to engage fully in a college community, develop their skills, gain more independence, and work toward a meaningful career.

Eligible students must:

- Be between the ages of 18–26
- Have an intellectual disability
- Be able to learn to independently navigate a college campus
- Demonstrate responsibility and appropriate behavior when on their own

Apply online at vu.edu/nextsteps



NEXT STEPS at VANDERBILT



Excellence In Inclusive
Higher Education

GRADUATION AND BEYOND

When they complete the program, Next Steps students walk in a graduation ceremony and earn a certificate of completion from Next Steps, a federally recognized Comprehensive Transition Program. Graduates leave the university as self-advocates who have gained:

- A solid foundation in lifelong learning through immersion in the exceptional academic opportunities of a top 20 university
- A clear path to a meaningful career through guided career development and internships
- Increased social skills through lasting relationships with peer mentors
- A sense of belonging to the university as Vanderbilt alumni
- A further developed purpose as active citizens in their communities



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Several financial aid opportunities exist, including federal financial aid, the Tennessee Lottery-funded scholarship, vocational rehabilitation funds, and more. With this financial support, many of our families receive more than 50% tuition assistance.

“College will open up your mind in a variety of different ways.”

—Bud Suggs, Next Steps Graduate, 2014

“I got to go to college just like my sisters!”

—Rachel Pearson, Next Steps Graduate, 2013

CONTACT US

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FOLLOW US

Instagram: [@nextstepsatvanderbilt](https://www.instagram.com/nextstepsatvanderbilt)

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VANDERBILT
PEABODY COLLEGE

“Our students see their place in the world, they’re asking for more, and they’re expecting it to happen.”

—Tammy Day, Director of Next Steps



ENROLLMENT OPTIONS AND DEADLINES *Early Consideration: November 15 | Regular Consideration: January 15*
Rolling Consideration: If space is available, applicants may still be considered after regular deadlines. To apply, complete the online application at vu.edu/nextsteps

FOCUSING ON ACADEMICS

Next Steps is committed to including students with intellectual disability in all aspects of the university and surrounding community. Students devise an individualized Program of Study, a unique guide for achievement in academics, independent living skills, career development, and university life. Each semester, students enroll in one or two Vanderbilt courses that fit their personal academic interests, needs, and future goals.



“Undergraduate students in my class have remarked many times that the students in Next Steps bring such an excitement, engagement, and appreciation for this educational opportunity that it has made them reassess their own appreciation for the education they are experiencing at Vanderbilt.”

—Sharon Shields, Associate Dean for Professional Education and Professor Emerita

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Peer mentors, called Ambassadors, partner with Next Steps students in relationships that offer mutual personal and professional growth. Ambassadors support Next Steps students in academics, program requirements, and social skills through positive and trusting friendships. In 2016, Partners for Youth with Disability inducted the Ambassadors Program into the National Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame.

“Some of my favorite memories of college were times spent with Next Steps students. They taught me how to love, how to live in the moment, and how I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. I watched how the program not only transformed my own views, but how it transformed Vanderbilt into a community filled with acceptance, support, tolerance, and compassion.”

—Alyssa Greenstein, Ambassadors, Class of 2013



EXPLORING CAREERS

Preparing our graduates for meaningful employment is a vital part of the Next Steps program. More than 86% of program graduates find paid employment within three months of graduation. This far exceeds national employment rates of 18%. Each student’s interests and plans for the future drive career exploration, vocational training, and on- and off-campus internships.

Our graduates have worked at places such as Best Buy, the Gardner School, Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville Convention and Visitors Corp, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, and more.



“I had internships at places like the Vanderbilt Post Office, The Parthenon, and the Country Music Hall of Fame. These helped prepare me for a great job after I graduated. I am currently employed at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum as a guest relations specialist. I have a voice, and I have learned how to use it.”

—Hardin Manhein, Next Steps Graduate, 2015

NEXT STEPS at VANDERBILT

A world-class research university dedicated to equity, diversity, and inclusion, Vanderbilt opened its doors to students with intellectual disability in 2010. Next Steps at Vanderbilt transforms the lives of students with intellectual disability through inclusive higher education in academics, social and career development, and skills of independence.

The program is housed at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College, in partnership with the Department of Special Education, which are both among the top-ranked programs in the United States. The program also partners with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, an interdisciplinary research and training institute committed to supporting people with developmental disabilities and helping their families to flourish.

“The most significant changes in my daughter’s functioning, well-being, and independence occurred during her years at Next Steps.”

—Bill Gavigan, Next Steps Parent