



Questions and Answers with the FUTURE Program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville

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

A: Before submitting an application, prospective students should consider if they can demonstrate the following minimal requirements:

- Active student participation throughout the application/interview process
- Have proof of eligibility for IDEA or 504 accommodations while in school
- Possess, or expect to possess prior to beginning the FUTURE program, a state-recognized high school diploma in any of the 4 TN Diploma Pathways: Regular, Special Education, Alternate Academic, or Occupational
- A fourth grade reading level or higher is recommended (Applicants with lower reading levels may be considered for conditional admission.)
- No severe behavior or emotional problems
- Basic mathematics understanding and ability to use a calculator
- Ability to function independently for a sustained period of time
- Ability to change supports and schedules without becoming overly stressed
- Ability to be successful in competitive employment situations
- Desire and motivation to complete a postsecondary education program
- Have health insurance (Medicaid, Medicare, or private)
- Be between the ages of 18 and 29 at the start of the program
- Demonstrate ability to communicate with staff, faculty, and mentors

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

A: The FUTURE program welcomes visitors at just about any time. We are especially interested in meeting with prospective students, their teachers, and families. You can contact the program coordinator, Dr. Emma Burgin, at eburgin@vols.utk.edu to arrange your visit.

When visiting, you can choose to simply learn about the program, or you can visit a FUTURE classroom. Please let us know if you are interested in sitting in on a class so we can time your visit with our schedule. Our classes include Life Skills, Career Life and Planning, and Digital Literacy. Other aspects of the program you might want to ask questions about during your visit are audit courses, physical education courses, internships, Fun Fridays, Best Buddies, campus organizations, UT Libraries, Disability Services, and peer mentorship. Please indicate if you are interested in specific areas of the program so we can tailor your visit to be the most helpful.



Q: What does the application process look like?

A: Applications for enrollment are due March 1 for the following academic year (August start date). After the application deadline, the Application Screening Committee will schedule on-campus interviews in mid-March. Individuals will be informed of an admission decision by the end of April.

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

A: FUTURE assigns each student a circle of support consisting of peer mentors that assist the student with their school work both in and out of the classroom. FUTURE also provides independent living mentors for returning students who decide to live on campus. Students also have access to UT Student Disability Services. FUTURE has an Academic Support Specialist who works closely with instructors all over the university who host our students in their classrooms. This person works to modify assignments and syllabi based on each student's individual needs and also coordinates accommodations with the student, instructor, and UT Student Disability Services.

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

A: FUTURE students have full access to student organizations and club sports, as long as they are subject to the same admission criteria as other students. The FUTURE Program works closely with specific campus partners such as Best Buddies, Advocates for Autism, the Therapeutic Recreation Association, and others to provide our students with the best campus experience possible! We also schedule Fun Friday events each week to give our students the opportunity to engage in campus recreation, educational activities, and fun campus events that include all UT students.

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

A: FUTURE works with other Comprehensive Transition Programs through the TN Inclusive Higher Education Alliance to provide consistent programming across the state. FUTURE is a 2- to 3-year program with residency options available to returning students. We provide access to undergraduate college courses, an internship, and 3 FUTURE-specific courses each semester with peer mentor assistance. FUTURE serves approximately 20 students per academic year.

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

A: FUTURE offers internships with campus and community partners each semester that are tailored to the interests of the student. Recent internship sites include, but are not limited to: UT Hearing and Speech Center, Thornton Athletics Student Life Center, UT Alumni Office, VOL Dining, the VolShop, UT Gardens, Knoxville Mobile Meals, Knoxville Community Television, and Visit Knoxville. A very limited number of our internships are paid.



FUTURE has a letter of agreement with Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation to provide Transitional Learning to its students and then offer job placement and limited job coaching services upon graduation. This partnership has enabled better outcomes for students looking to be placed in jobs after completing the program.

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

A: FUTURE alumni have a more than 80% employment rate after graduation. Using the skills and connections they receive at FUTURE, alumni have maintained employment in positions such as: Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, UT Athletics, various retail and food service locations, local church offices, Knox County Schools, etc.

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