

# THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE RUNS THROUGH A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Going to college will help me achieve my dream.  
I'm learning to be independent, and speaking English  
24 hours a day. I've never done that before.

Community colleges can offer a path to independence for people with intellectual disabilities.

That's how it has been for Anna Ringstrom who is entering her second year at the Graduate Transition Program (GTP) at Montgomery College in Rockville Maryland.

For Anna, a woman with Down syndrome from Sweden, study abroad runs in the family. Her sister studied in Argentina, and her brother studied in the United States. It was only natural that she would also want to study abroad, and she strongly advocated with her family to support her in doing so.

"They support me very much. They are proud and happy for me. I call them every Saturday and sometimes on Sundays."

Anna and her family had many options to choose from but ultimately settled on Montgomery College. The family had made trips over the years from Sweden to the D.C., Maryland, Virginia-area to visit family including Anna's aunt in Silver Spring, Maryland. So it was not only a great place for their daughter to transition to independence, but also to do so while still counting on the support of relatives.

"I chose Montgomery College because it is my dream college. The Graduate Transition Program (GTP) has very good support, and the class sizes are the same as my classes in Sweden."



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE  
[ STUDY IN USA ]

ANNA RINGSTROM



SWEDEN ✈️ MARYLAND, USA

[ DURATION: 2 YEARS ]

STUDIES:  
COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION  
PROGRAM (CTP)

The Graduate Transition Program (GTP) is a post-secondary transition program for students with intellectual disabilities at Montgomery College. Students take a selection of classes in history, art, computers and the like. Each course is tailored for GTP participants, and there is extra support available in the form of tutoring and peer mentoring.

Anna also benefits from the support of a College Living Experience (CLE) center, part of a network of six centers around the United States which provide services for students with a variety of disabilities, including autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, and intellectual disabilities in programs like the Graduate Transition Program (GTP). CLE supplements the academic services that the students receive from the college by delivering independent living supports in a community setting, such as housekeeping, shopping and money management.

According to Janet Price, a member of Anna's support team at College Living Experience, families from overseas appreciate that community colleges have added to the breadth of options available for students with intellectual disabilities to attend college in the United States. There are a number of programs like the Graduate Transition Program (GTP) around the country, and six CLE support branches strategically placed to provide wraparound services for students in those regions.

Ever since Anna started at Montgomery College she has been expanding the breadth of her academic learning skills. She takes classes in English, math, science, history, and computer science. A tutor helps her when she has trouble with her homework at College Living Experience's support center.

For Anna it has not just been about academics but also transitioning into adulthood and getting to a place where she would feel confident orienting herself in a new community.



Think College

Learn More About Transition Programs in the U.S.

ThinkCollege is a great resource to learn about Graduate Transition Program (GTP) and other Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTP) programs in which students with intellectual disabilities build their confidence, independence, and career readiness by participating in college alongside their nondisabled peers.

ThinkCollege works to expand higher education options for students with intellectual disabilities by supporting research, guiding program development, recommending public policy, as well as engaging with students, professionals and families.

Learn more: [thinkcollege.net](http://thinkcollege.net)