

## It's About Independence, Empowerment and Friendship.

Intellectual disabilities should not be a barrier for living life to its fullest — or to having the benefit of a college experience.

ClemsonLIFE (Learning Is For Everyone) is a post-secondary education program with the specific purpose of helping young adults with intellectual disabilities obtain the life skills necessary to gain employment and live independently.

The LIFE program opened its doors in 2009 as a two-year program with three staff members and an initial cohort of five LIFE students. Since then, the program has grown into a nationally recognized four-year program with 40 students, eight full-time staff members, 12 part-time staff members and more than 500 student volunteers.

ClemsonLIFE graduates have an impressive 84 percent employment rate, which is more than twice the national average (between 14 and 34 percent) for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program has also been extremely successful in helping students live independently, with 44 percent of graduates living independently. This is nearly three times the national average (16 percent) for this population.

## LIFE Students are Clemson Students.

All LIFE students attend classes, eat in the dining halls, workout at the campus gymnasium and attend sporting events. They are involved in a variety of clubs across the university, including Greek life and intramural sports. Their participation, characterized as enthusiastic and inspiring, contributes to the overall Clemson experience for other students across campus.

## We are More Alike Than We are Different.

A public university setting is ideal for this kind of training for young adults with intellectual disabilities because:

- All young adults go through a similar development process that requires certain activities, experience and support.
- All young adults must develop skills and understanding about themselves and the world around them in order to fully participate in society and to become successful, contributing adults.
- Higher education is a vehicle for self-empowerment, access to social networks, employment and independence.
- Group membership provides essential motivation and support for learning and participation in community life.

ClemsonLIFE incorporates academics, independent living, employment and social/leisure skills in a university setting with the goal of producing self-sufficient young adults. Along with one



traditional course, ClemsonLIFE students participate in a number of functional academic courses to help them gain employment and live independently, including:

- banking and budgeting;
- functional literature;
- independent living skills;
- social skills;
- self-advocacy and safety;
- employment skills; and
- supervised job placement and internships.

During the first two years of the program, students live on campus in four bedroom apartments under the direct supervision of an independent living assistant. Students accepted into the advanced program move into apartments off campus without an independent living assistant but are monitored closely by a transition specialist as they practice independent living skills, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping and paying bills.



## ClemsonLIFE Can Grow and Thrive with Your Support.

### *Support for Scholarships*

Initially supported through a three-year grant from the College Transition Connection, the LIFE program does not receive any funding externally or through the University and is completely self-sustaining through student tuition and private donations. It is dedicated to providing a structured, high-quality, well-supervised program focused on vocational independent-living success for young adults with disabilities. This requires significant financial resources. The total cost for a LIFE student to attend the program for one academic year is more than \$36,000. This cost is prohibitive for most families, especially in light of the fact that many have exhausted savings on special care needed during the K-12 years.

The program is on track to reach its goal of 50 students by 2025, with 40 students currently enrolled. Sustaining this program will require additional funding for personnel, scholarships, research and facilities. Clemson University is committed to continuing and expanding this successful program and is in need of private funding to support these dedicated students. Your financial support ensures that ClemsonLIFE continues to encourage, guide, mentor and foster the abilities of these young people – abilities that will serve them for a lifetime.



### *Support for Research – Helping Those Beyond Clemson.*

Under the College of Education, the ClemsonLIFE program is making a lasting impact on its students and preparing them for a future they never imagined. But the college's impact upon those with intellectual disabilities does not end there – research focusing on intellectual disabilities is impacting those outside of Clemson. Although the program continues to grow, ClemsonLIFE, unfortunately, can only accept a fraction of all students who apply. This makes research about intellectual disabilities imperative, allowing researchers to create resources that can be implemented outside of our University to help all individuals with intellectual disabilities live their lives to the fullest. Therefore, in addition to funding scholarships for ClemsonLIFE, contributions to research within the College of Education are also imperative to support this extraordinary group of individuals.



ClemsonLIFE has strived to be a leader in the field of research for individuals with intellectual disabilities. For several years, the College of Education has worked closely with the School of Computing to develop several smart phone apps to help individuals with disabilities with community mobility, meal planning and task analysis. These apps – which are now available through the Apple store – allow the benefits of this research to extend far beyond Clemson. Researchers have also worked closely with Clemson's International Center for Automotive Research (ICAR) to enhance community mobility for individuals with intellectual disabilities through simulator training.

Your support and generous donations to scholarships and research will allow Clemson to continue to not only improve the lives of ClemsonLIFE students, but to positively change the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities across South Carolina and beyond.

Visit <https://cualumni.clemson.edu/give/LIFE> to make your gift.



ClemsonForward will position Clemson for the next 50 years and make an impact on real issues facing the people of our state and nation. Clemson Forever supports the goals of ClemsonForward through its unrelenting mission to strengthen the University by building a solid financial base of private giving, providing exemplary stewardship of those gifts and clearly communicating to donors the impact of their gift and the gratitude of the Clemson Family.

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