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## UI program targets learning disabilities

Iowa City An innovative new University of Iowa program could be a national model for educating young adults with multiple learning and cognitive disabilities, UI officials said this week.

The program, called REACH, for Realizing Educational and Career Hopes, will launch next fall with 16 to 20 students. Plans call for the program to grow and enroll 25 students annually.

Students in REACH, a two-year certificate program, will live in UI residence halls, participate in campus activities and take core classes in academics, career development and life skills. The aim is to make independent living a reality for young adults who need help getting to that point, officials said.

The only similar program at a public university is at the University of California-Los Angeles, UI officials said.

"We're embarking on a magnificent experiment," UI President Sally Mason said.

The program's advisory board, led by former Iowa Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson, held its first meeting Wednesday in Iowa City. During that meeting UI officials announced \$1.4 million in private gifts have been raised to launch the program.

Pederson said the cause is important to her because she sent her autistic son to a similar program in Illinois. He completed that program one year ago and now lives in his own apartment in Des Moines and works at the Drake University legal clinic.

The program in Illinois taught her son about practical things such as paying bills, grocery shopping and schedule planning, as well as providing job training opportunities, she said.

"There needs to be post-secondary education for those students for them to realize their full potential," she said. "I saw such a dramatic change in my son and what he was capable of."

An unusual aspect of UI's program will be the integration of the students in residence hall life and on campus, program director Dennis C. Harper said.

"That brings with it challenges and opportunities. Parents are most excited about that," he said.

The program is housed in UI's College of Education.

Tuition isn't determined, but there will be scholarships. Applications are being taken for next fall, with the focus on people ages 18 to 25.

The \$1.4 million in gifts came from: \$750,000 for faculty costs and a \$250,000 challenge grant for student scholarships from Jon and Lillian Lovelace of Santa Barbara, Calif.; \$250,000 to meet the challenge grant from the Myron & Jacqueline Blank Fund; \$100,000 from Fred and Emily Weitz of West Des Moines; and \$50,000 from Michael and Barbara Gartner of Des Moines.

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