

# How Lions Connected creates change on campus

Rachel Folse, Staff Reporter August 15, 2022

Lions Connected is an organization on campus run by the College of Education to prepare young adults with disabilities to become contributing members of society. Each semester, Lions Connected students audit one academic course and one Kinesiology Lab course. They also participate in functional life skills courses. During their last semester, they have the opportunity to get supported employment.

The program offers a two-year or a four-year curriculum. The program costs \$3000 per semester, with Pell Grants and scholarships available to those who apply.

To be considered, a student must meet a list of requirements, including being 18-25 years old, having a career diploma from their high school, being capable of basic self-care, reading and math skills and demonstrating an interest toward personal independence.

Lions Connected usually admits four new students each year. Because of how relatively small the program is, there is the unique opportunity to know each student on a personal level, and the department creates a plan to accommodate each student's individual needs during the life skills course.

The program also includes mentors and other college students who help Lions Connected students with different tasks. Caroline Garrett, a junior social work major, explained how mentors work within the program.

"We attend class with them, work on homework, eat lunch, and play games. We are also able to teach skills such as making friends, budgeting, laundry, and identifying traffic signs. Because of this, life skills is my favorite class to participate in," Garrett said.

Although the program holds its own events such as Christmas parties and tailgates, Lions Connected encourages the students to attend the typical campus events such as Strawberry Jubilee and football games, accompanied by a mentor.

Garrett mentioned that the program helps with her personal goals as well.

"I am pursuing a degree in social work, with hopes of a career working with adults with intellectual disabilities. Working with Lions Connected has given me such an incredible opportunity to gain relevant experience in my field of interest while also earning money! Lions

Connected is very accommodating to student schedules and I've made incredible friendships with others" Garrett stated.

Lastly, Garrett explained why teaching students with intellectual disabilities is such an important cause to her.

"These young adults have the same goals as most people their age- going to college, getting a job, and working towards personal independence. Working with these students gives me the opportunity to encourage, empower, and equip them with the tools necessary to pursue their goals. Additionally, I'm able to spread a message of inclusion. I firmly believe that everyone should know a person with a disability and see for themselves how incredible they are," Garrett explained.

To learn more about the program, visit its Instagram page [@lionsconnected](#) or email [lionsconnected@southeastern.edu](mailto:lionsconnected@southeastern.edu).