PPSC
ASPIRE Scholars
PIKES PEAK STATE COLLEGE

ASPIRE SCHOLARS HANDBOOK

WELCOME TO ASPIRE SCHOLARS

Welcome to the ASPIRE (Achieving Success through Personalized Inclusive Real-world Education) Scholars Program at Pikes Peak State College! Our goal is to foster an inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment where students of all abilities can thrive academically, socially, and professionally. We are excited to support you as you embark on this journey of personal and academic growth.

This handbook is your guide to understanding the services, policies, and procedures that will help you succeed in the ASPIRE Scholars program.

MISSION, VISION, AND PURPOSE

Mission

TheASPIRE Scholars Program provides equitable access to higher education for students with Intellectual Disability (ID), focusing on personalized academic support, social inclusion, and career development. Our goal is to empower students with diverse abilities to live self-directed lives and transition seamlessly into their communities and professional environments.

Vision

Tocreate a transformative learning experience that redefines inclusion and fosters academic success, social engagement, and career readiness for all students, particularly those with Intellectual Disability (ID).

Purpose

ASPIRE aims to support students who have historically been excluded from higher education by offering individualized academic support, career development opportunities, and social experiences that promote independence, community engagement, and professional readiness.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

TheASPIREScholarsProgramfocusesonfour key areas:

1 Academic Success

- Individualized academic support and modifications tailored to student needs.
- Personalized academic advising to help students develop and meet their educational goals.
- Integration of inclusive coursework that aligns with career development goals.

2 Social Inclusion

- Participation in campus clubs, organizations, and social events.
- Opportunities to form meaningful connections with peers through structured social activities.

3 Independent Living Skills

- Provide training in essential skills for independent living, including budgeting meal planning, navigating transportation, and personal organization. Offe
- guidance in building effective time management strategies to help individuals prioritize tasks, establish routines, and organize their schedules effectively.

4 Career Development

- Internship and employment experiences that align with student interests and career goals.
- Job coaching and vocational training to foster professional skills and support meaningful employment.

CORE PROGRAM FEATURES

ASPIRE is designed to provide a structured and inclusive learning environment where students can:

Earn a College Certificate: ASPIRE students work toward a Comprehensive Higher Education Certificate tailored to their individual goals and academic needs. The program includes coursework in academic, social, and career-related areas to help students develop the skills needed for employment and community engagement. Students access individualized academic support, including accommodations and modifications.

Engage in Career Exploration and Job Development: With support from our team, students will explore a variety of career options, practice interviewing and resume-building skills, and receive on-the-job training.

Benefit from a Personalized Curriculum: ASPIRE Scholars offers personalized planning through guided workshops and one-on-one meetings that support academic, social, career , and independent goal attainment.

Participate in Internships: We provide internship opportunities that align with each student's career goals. Students gain hands-on experience through on-campus and community internships, helping them build a professional network and workplace skills.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

ASPIRE Scholar students, at Pikes Peak State College, are expected to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress by maintaining a minimum 2.0 GPA. Participation in all courses, sessions, and activities is required, and students must adhere to the attendance policies for each course. Additionally, students are expected to engage in sessions with student mentors to study, review readings, and complete assignments.

Students in the ASPIRE Scholar program must follow the same academic honesty standards and code of conduct as all other students at Pikes Peak State College. They will be held accountable for any violations. Therefore, it is essential that you (or any other support person) refrain from doing the student's work for them. If assistance is needed, encourage the student to seek help from a mentor or reach out to the ASPIRE Scholars program Manager. For more information, Pikes Peak State College's student code of conduct can be found at Student Conduct.

The inclusive coursework in the ASPIRE Scholars program can be modified to meet student needs and will result in a modification note on their transcript. Approved modifications will be provided by ASPIRE staff and based upon interactive person-centered planning. These modifications are designed to ensure that students have equitable access to learning while maintaining the integrity of the course outcomes.

ASPIRE SCHOLARS SERVICES:

>>>>> ACADEMICS

COMPREHENSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

Choosing anArea of Study

Students receiving services through the ASPIRE Scholars program are non-degree-seeking students. They are not working toward earning a degree. They are working toward earning a Comprehensive Higher Education Certificate in their individual area of study.

All coursework and internships are centered around each student's personal career goals. The ASPIRE Scholars program will work with the student to choose coursework and internships that will build skills for future employment related to their area of study.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Comprehensive Higher Education Certificate, students should be able to:

- Apply basic computer functions to complete simple tasks with office applications and internet browsers.
- Practice appropriate communication skills in various settings.
- Identify common workplace expectations.
- Prepare essential job application materials with support.
- Identify personal interests related to chosen area of study.

General Education Courses *COM 1250*	**18 credits**
Interpersonal Communication CIS 1018	*3 credits*
Intro to PC Applications PSY 1005	*3 credits*
Psychology of the Workplace PSY 1016	*3 credits*
Stress Management ENG 094 0094	*3 credits*
Studio 121 ENG 1021 English Composition	*3 credits*
I: CO1	*3 credits*

Elective General Education Options	**18 credits**
Area of Study Course Area of Study	*3 credits*
Course Area of Study Course Area of	*3 credits*
Study Course Area of Study Course	*3 credits*
Area of Study Course	*3 credits*
	3 credits
	3 credits

Total Credit Hours: 36 credits

ASPIRESCHOLARS SERVICES: ACADEMICS

- Students enroll in a maximumof9 credit hours per semester, meet the attendance and assignmentrequirements for each course, and communicate with their professors and mentors regarding absences.
- ASPIRE Scholars provides students with individualized, appropriate coursework modifications as needed. The ASPIRE Scholars Manager works with mentors and faculty to discuss the program and student support needs to complete the class successfully.
- ASPIRE Scholars staff meet with students in their small group Team Meetings weekly to discuss academic progress and provide recommendations and support to help students meet their academic goals.
- ASPIRE scholars have access to all accessibility services provided at Pikes Peak State College, which can be found here: Accessibility Services. Through participation in the ASPIRE program, the Program Manager will facilitate all accessibility needs and should be the primary contact for accommodation/modification requests.

Academic Advising

Students receiving services through ASPIRE Scholars are advised by the Program Manager once per semester. During this meeting, the student will share their goals and progress and evaluate their plan.

Registration for Classes

The ASPIRE Scholars staff will work with students to register for classes. Courses are chosen based on the student's area of study and required coursework. Classes will be discussed during the student advising meeting each semester. **Families do not register their student for classes.**

ASPIRE SCHOLARS SERVICES:

>>>>> SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ENGAGEMENT

ASPIRE emphasizes the importance of social inclusion. Students are encouraged to:

- Attend campus events, join clubs, and participate in group activities.
- Take an active role in planning social outings and developing friendships with their peers.
- Engage in community service projects to foster a sense of social responsibility and connection.

Students are required to participate in a minimum of two social events per month. Peer mentors will assist in identifying and organizing activities, helping students build confidence in social settings.

ASPIRE SCHOLARS SERVICES:

>>>>> INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

ASPIRE offers regular workshops that provide training in various independent living skills to support students in achieving self-sufficiency and independence. Students are required to participate in ASPIRE workshops that build these skills at least twice during their time in the program, focusing on the following areas:

- Budgeting: Students learn to manage their personal finances, track expenses, and save for future needs, equipping them with essential financial literacy skills.
- Meal Planning and Cooking: Students receive guidance to create weekly meal plans, shop for groceries, and prepare nutritious meals, fostering healthy eating habits and self-reliance.
- Transportation: Training is provided on how to use public transportation or navigate campus shuttles, helping students develop independence in commuting to classes, work, or social events.

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ASPIRE SCHOLARS SERVICES:

>>>>> CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career preparation is a central focus of the ASPIRE program. Students will:

- Participate in unpaid internships, aligned with their chosen career paths.
- Receive support in career exploration, resume building, and interview preparation.
- Engage in job coaching to ensure successful transition from education to employment.

The goal is for each student to graduate with real-world job experience and the skills needed to pursue meaningful, competitive employment.

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FAMILY COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES>>>>>

We recognize the importance of family involvement in supporting students' success. Families are encouraged to:

- Communicate regularly with their students about academic and personal goals.
- Attend advising sessions with ASPIRE staff once per semester.
- Foster independence by allowing students to make decisions and solve problems on their own, with guidance when necessary.

Families are invited to participate in ASPIRE events and celebrate milestones, but are encouraged to support the student's transition to adulthood and self-advocacy.

College is a time for growth and transformation. We are committed to providing the services necessary for your student to grow and direct their own life. Here are some important points to consider:

- Support and services are tailored to each student, focusing on independence and success using data and best practices.
- Encourage your student to set their own goals, which may differ from your expectations. Practice open communication to understand their aspirations.
- Students will be held to high expectations for attendance and communication, promoting employability, self-determination, and academic skills.
- Communicate with your student as you would with any other college student, respecting their schedule and independence.

For communication with the ASPIRE Scholars staff, please reach out to Dr. Kassy with questions or concerns. The ASPIRE Scholars follows Think College best practices and does not provide daily or weekly updates on individual progress. Families are invited to formal advising sessions once per semester and can connect as needed throughout the semester.

As your student gains independence, your role will shift from advocate and decision-maker to advisor, supporter, and role model.

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FAMILY COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES CONTINUED

The ASPIRE Scholars program fosters meaningful relationships between students and their professors to create authentic, inclusive experiences at Pikes Peak State College. Family involvement in communicating directly with professors can negatively impact these relationships and hinder the student's academic growth and independence. Therefore, families should not contact their student's professors or use their student's email account to communicate with college faculty. It is important that students write their own emails and learn to seek assistance from ASPIRE Scholars staff when needed.
If you have academic-related questions or concerns, please reach out to Dr. Kassy, who will be happy to assist.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Under FERPA, the rights you previously had to access your student's information in elementary and secondary school are transferred to your student once they turn 18 or enroll in a postsecondary institution, regardless of who pays for their education. Your student has the right to grant or withdraw consent to share their information at any time without notifying you. In accordance with FERPA regulations, ASPIRE Scholars and Pikes Peak State College cannot release information about your student without their written consent. All college staff, including those in Accessibility Services, are bound by this law.
The Accessibility Services adheres to FERPA guidelines. Students are responsible for sharing their academic progress and other Accessibility Services-related information with their parents unless they have signed a Student Records Information Release or the parent has legal guardianship.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition & Fees

ASPIRE scholars will pay the same tuition and fees as all Pikes Peak State College students. Tuition and fee rates can be found here.
Additionally, ASPIRE scholars will pay an inclusive service fee: $1,500/semester
This service fee covers specialized courses and all individualized academic, social, independent, and career supports provided by ASPIRE staff.

Students are responsible for paying tuition and fees each semester and are encouraged to seek financial support from the following agencies:

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Case Management Agencies (CMAs)
- Local & National Scholarships

For more information on available financial resources, please visit inclusivehighered.org.

Financial Aid & FAFSA

Once ASPIRE Scholars receives a federally designated Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program (CTP) status, scholars are eligible to complete the FAFSA and receive certain forms of federal financial aid. Please note, ASPIRE scholars may be eligible for Pell Grants and work study funds, but not student loans due to their modified certificate. Aid is variable based on the expected family contribution as calculated on the FAFSA. This calculation includes many factors – family size, family income, number of children in college, tax filing, etc.
To learn more about financial aid see:

- Pikes Peak Financial Aid Information
- FAFSA Q&A

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for admission, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Completed High School (no SAT/ACT) A strong desire to pursue a career.
- A commitment to attend and engage in a community college experience.
- Have a documented Intellectual Disability that impacts their academic performance.
- The ability to manage personal care needs independently or with the assistance of a personal care attendant.
- Active participation throughout the duration of the ASPIRE Scholars at PPSC program.
- The ability to safely and independently navigate the campus after an initial orientation and training.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply, complete and submit the ASPIRE Scholars at Pikes Peak State College Application Packet to the ASPIRE Program Manager by the deadline. The following documentation MUST be included along with the application:

- Most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Junior year IEP
- High School transcript
- Letter of recommendation form completed by a teacher
- Letter of recommendation form completed by a community member

Once your complete application has been received, you will be contacted to set up a mandatory student interview and on-campus observation visit. Admission decisions regarding the 2025-2026 academic year will be made no later than May 2025.

Decisions are based on:

- Applicant's learning needs and desire to attend college.
- The ability of the ASPIRE Scholars Team to meet the applicant's needs and goals.
- The ability of the applicant to negotiate transitions between classes and buildings, lunch, and non-academic activities.
- Potential of the applicant to successfully achieve their goals.
- Commitment from the applicant's family/caregivers to support the goals of the student.

PROGRAM COMPLETION

The Comprehensive Higher Education Certificate, offered through the ASPIRE Scholars at PPSC program, provides inclusive higher education opportunities for students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). ASPIRE Scholars at PPSC is dedicated to fostering academic growth, preparing students for meaningful employment, developing essential independent living skills, and encouraging full social engagement with the campus community.

Upon completing the program, students earn a modified Certificate of Completion and acquire critical life and occupational skills. The program emphasizes a three-year progression of fully inclusive academic access, outcome-driven vocational training, and personalized student development, all while supporting natural social engagement. Flexible timelines allow for customization based on each student's goals and achievements. This highly individualized certificate is tailored to align students' vocational aspirations with relevant PPSC coursework and real-world experiences.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

We are excited and honored to be part of the ASPIRE Scholars here at Pikes Peak State College. We are committed to each student:

- Enhancing their academic skills and expanding their knowledge through coursework
- Building essential communication skills for meaningful friendships, relationships, and professional environments
- Experiencing an exciting and enjoyable journey
- Developing problem-solving abilities to navigate life's challenges
- Advocating for themselves and shaping a fulfilling life they love

The ASPIRE Scholars staff is deeply passionate about empowering every student to succeed. We're here to support you, so if you ever have ideas to share or need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you for supporting your student at PPSC!

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Personalized Inclusive Real -World Education