

project
FOCUS



Focusing Opportunities with
Community and University
Support

2027-2029 Application for Admission

Application Due:
Friday, October 23rd, 2026



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
College of Education

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Please direct all inquiries about the Project FOCUS application process to →
Carrie Hollman email: chollman@arizona.edu cell: (520) 262-0168

Program Information

Project FOCUS (Focusing Opportunities with Community and University Support) is a two-year transition program designed to support accessibility to the University of Arizona's academic courses, work internships and collegiate social events to increase every student's independence, self-determination, community engagement and employability. The University of Arizona's College of Education provides a unique dual-enrollment transition option for Pima County students (ages 18 to 22), who have an intellectual and/or developmental disability. To accomplish this goal, Project FOCUS provides highly trained instructional staff, individualized materials, research-based best practices (including same-age peer mentor support), state-of-the-art technology, employment preparation curriculum and work experiences through campus and community internships.

Students who will be 18 years old by August 23, 2027, with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD), from a Pima County school or district, are invited to apply!

Program Structure

Project FOCUS provides support for fully inclusive academic, internship and social opportunities at the University of Arizona (UArizona). Every student in Project FOCUS will receive instructional support to attend university courses totaling twenty-four credits over two years (six credits per semester); students also receive employment support and participate in work internships. Successful completion of these experiences results in a Project FOCUS Workforce Readiness Certificate.

Once accepted into Project FOCUS, the student will follow the UArizona 2027-2028 and 2028-2029 academic calendars. Students' personalized program of academic courses, internship experiences, support needs, accommodations and modifications will be individualized through the Person-Centered Planning (PCP) model, which occurs prior to the start of the fall semester. Students will be provided with academic coursework, instructional and behavioral supports, job coaching in inclusive internships and a wide variety of social opportunities available on a college campus to improve communication and increase independence.



Student Participation and Conduct

As dually enrolled students, successful participation in our program requires adhering to both the referring school district's Code of Conduct and the UArizona's policies pertaining to Student Conduct and Rights. All students in our program will agree to abide by the standards of behavior set forth by the Student Code of Conduct to create a safe, healthy and responsible environment that allow UArizona students, faculty and staff to be successful in their daily endeavors and to achieve long term goals. Once a student has been accepted by and enrolled in the University of Arizona, any potential violations of the UArizona Code of Conduct will be addressed through the Dean of Students Office.

Home Support, Communication and Conduct

The successful participation of students in our program is built upon a strong foundation of support from the home (including, but not limited to, parent(s), guardian(s), other adult relatives and non-related adults providing any programmatic support). Our staff and peer mentors work closely with our students' families and other adults involved with home support to provide a strong collegiate experience that that also reinforces important life skills. Because our learning environment often extends to the home and coordinating with a student's support network, we hold both the students and their network to the same conduct expectations. Our expectation for our students and their personal support network is that all interactions (including, but not limited to, in-person conversations, phone calls, texts, emails, etc.) with our program staff are conducted with mutual respect, honesty, and professionalism both in message and tone. We reserve the right to terminate acceptance and/or participation in our program at any time if the student or any other adult associated with the student does not adhere to the above expectations in a manner that interferes with the learning or working environment of the program.

Program Costs

Students will be enrolled in six units per semester. UArizona has tuition costs; students and their families are financially responsible for tuition, fees and other charges.

The anticipated financial commitment per semester is approximately \$750, plus minor fees. Project FOCUS has limited, partial student scholarships of \$500 available for the 2027-2028 school year to be awarded based upon financial need.

We anticipate being able to award a select number of students scholarships each semester. Families should prepare in advance by saving now to cover cost responsibilities. The total anticipated cost over two years is \$3,000.

Students and families will receive more detailed tuition and scholarship information during the application process.



Admission Process

The Project FOCUS admission process occurs in two competitive phases, each one culminating in a selection round, whereby not every application may make it to the next phase.

Phase One: Project FOCUS Application -- Timeline: September and October 2026

First Selection Round: You will be contacted by email to confirm your application is complete and to discuss the next steps.

Phase Two: Comprehensive Review -- Timeline: November and December 2026

PART 1) High School Visit (Observation and Informal Interview)

Second Selection Round: You will be contacted via email again to move on to Part Two (scheduling your campus visit) or a denial letter.

PART 2) University of Arizona Campus Visit (Formal Interview and Assessment)

Final Selection Round: We anticipate contacting you no later than Friday, December 18, 2026 with either a Project FOCUS acceptance or denial letter. In certain circumstances we can institute a wait list to be resolved by late January.

Phase One: APPLICATION

The 2027-2029 Application for Admission is the first step in identifying students that may be viable candidates for Project FOCUS.

The application includes six parts:

1. Student Information
2. Parent/Guardian Information
3. Eligibility Checklist
4. Partner Agency Information
5. Work History
6. Skills Inventory
 - a. communication
 - b. transportation
 - c. personal care

The application packet also includes five attachments:

1. Personal Essay
2. Professional Letter of Recommendation
3. Personal Letter of Recommendation
4. Copy of your most recent IEP
5. Copy of your most recent MET

Applications that do not include all of the above components will not be considered. Optional materials may also be submitted (see Attachments section).



Phase Two: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

The Comprehensive Review phase is designed to gain practical information that supports a candidate's potential for success in Project FOCUS.

Part One – High School Visit (Observation and Informal Interview)

This involves an assessment of the student in their current education setting. The specific location for the educational observation is determined by the student's educational team.

Part Two – University of Arizona Campus Visit (Formal Interview and Assessment)

The campus visit follows a planned sequence whereby students will be interviewed, supported and assessed while participating in activities within academic and non-academic settings. While the student is engaged in the activities with staff support, the parent(s)/guardian and school district liaison will remain with the Project FOCUS team to discuss the expectations, collaboration and logistics of our program. This portion of the process will also include specific questions posed to the parent(s) and family members to ensure that the student's success will be supported through a shared philosophy of a fully inclusive university environment that fosters independence, socially appropriate communication and self-determination.

All candidates will be notified by email of their final selection status on or before Friday, December 18, 2026.

The Project FOCUS application and attachments must be submitted no later than 5:00pm on **Friday, October 23, 2026.**

The completed application plus attachments should be EMAILED to all:

Carrie Hollman

chollman@arizona.edu

Sylvi Gonzalez

sylvig@arizona.edu

Dr. Stephanie MacFarland

szm@arizona.edu

Please submit via email:

- completed application packet (fillable PDF)
- personal essay
- two letters of recommendation
- copies of most recent IEP & MET

If you have ANY challenges with technology or access, please don't hesitate to reach out to Carrie Hollman at chollman@arizona.edu or (520) 262-0168.



Section 1: STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name:

Current High School & School District:

HS Referring Teacher or Case Manager/Advocate:

Date of Birth:

Own Guardian *(yes or no)*:

Student Cell Number *(leave blank if you don't have one)*:

Student Email *(leave blank if you don't have one)*:

Current Mailing Address:

Home Phone Number *(leave blank if you don't have one)*:

Release of Information

Student

By typing my name in the box, I agree that members of the Project FOCUS Team may have access to my student records, all contents of this application, and may speak with my family members, other stakeholders, my school staff, and any agency personnel that I work with as part of my application review.

Student Name:

Date:

Parent/Guardian

By typing my name in the box, I agree that members of the Project FOCUS Team may have access to my daughter/son's student records, all contents of this application, and may speak with our family members, other stakeholders, the school staff, and any agency personnel that we work with as part of my daughter/son's application review.

Parent/Guardian Name:

Date:





Section 2: PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Primary Adult Contact

Parent/Guardian Name:

Relationship to Student:

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number *(leave blank if you don't have one)*:

Work Phone Number *(optional)*:

Email Address:

Secondary Email Address *(optional)*:

Current Mailing Address:

Alternative Adult Contact

Parent/Guardian Name:

Relationship to Student:

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number *(leave blank if you don't have one)*:

Work Phone Number *(optional)*:

Email Address:

Secondary Email Address *(optional)*:

Current Mailing Address:



Section 3: ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All of the following requirements determine basic eligibility. As the referring party, please check all of the boxes that apply. Any deliberate misrepresentation can result in a student's ineligibility for Project FOCUS.

- ☐ Student is currently enrolled in a public, charter or private high school in Pima County.
- ☐ Student will be 18 years old on or before the first day of classes (August 23, 2027).
- ☐ Student has a documented intellectual and/or developmental disability.
- ☐ Student is motivated to become more independent and self-determined.
- ☐ Student demonstrates a desire to attend UArizona academic courses.
- ☐ Student demonstrates a willingness to learn new skills by working at internship sites.
- ☐ Student is able to remain calm in typical UArizona environments (including classrooms and workspaces) for up to two hours without being disruptive.
- ☐ Student shows respect for self and others, both in language and behavior (does not harm self/others).
- ☐ Student has had minimal absences during the two most recent high school semesters.
- ☐ Student is able to attend Project FOCUS events one week prior to the start of UArizona classes (week of August 16, 2027).
- ☐ Student will have control over their own smart phone to use while on campus.
- ☐ Student is medically stable.
- ☐ Student (with the support of family and others) is able to cover the reduced cost of UArizona's tuition, including fees.



Section 4: PARTNER AGENCY INFORMATION

Please complete the contact information for any of the agencies that currently work with you. Leave the box blank for any agencies you are not currently utilizing but check the box if you are willing to apply with support from Project FOCUS.

Division of Departmental Disabilities (DDD)

DDD Support Coordinator:

Phone Number:

Email:

☐ I am NOT enrolled in DDD but I am willing to apply for DDD services.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

VR Counselor:

Phone Number:

Email:

☐ I do NOT currently use VR services but I want to work and am willing to apply for VR.

Behavioral Health

Agency:

Type of Service(s):

☐ I am NOT currently using behavioral health supports.



Section 5: WORK HISTORY

Please list and describe any work experience you have had in the past; this includes paid, internship or volunteer work in any environment (community-based, at your school, through your church or other organizations, etc.). It is OK to leave blank if you have not yet had any work experiences.

Job #1

Location:

Length of Time Worked:

Tasks Responsible For:

Job #2

Location:

Length of Time Worked:

Tasks Responsible For:

Job #3

Location:

Length of Time Worked:

Tasks Responsible For:



Section 6: SKILLS INVENTORY

COMMUNICATION

Students may use one or more forms of effective communication when interacting with new people. Effective communication is an essential skill for self-determination, independence and future workplace integration. Please check all of the methods you currently use to successfully communicate. Where indicated below the check box, please describe or explain.

☐ Verbal Communication

List languages:

☐ Written Communication

Describe abilities:

☐ Sign Language

☐ Augmentative Communication Device

List all devices (including mobile technologies):

☐ Use of pictures, photos or drawings

Explain:

☐ Pointing

☐ Facial Expressions or body language

Describe:

☐ Behavior

Describe:



Section 6: SKILLS INVENTORY

TRANSPORTATION

Although students are not required to be independent in community travel to be eligible for Project FOCUS, increasing independent travel is an area of emphasis for students to become better integrated into campus life and the surrounding community. Family members and/or guardians are expected to be supportive of this process. Please check all that apply to the student's current transportation status.

- ☐ Student uses public transportation independently (SunTran bus or SunLink streetcar).
- ☐ Student is willing to learn how to use public transportation independently and safely.
- ☐ Student uses door-to-door paratransit systems (Sun Van, Sun Shuttle, Dial-a-Ride, etc.).
- ☐ Student is willing to explore using paratransit systems in the Tucson area.
- ☐ Student independently makes reservations and/or uses the app for paratransit rides.
- ☐ Student requires assistance in making reservations for paratransit rides.
- ☐ Student uses door-to-door private transportation services (Uber, Lyft, taxi cabs).
- ☐ Student independently calls for private transportation services using mobile tech.
- ☐ Student uses school-provided transportation services.
- ☐ Student uses family members for rides.
- ☐ Student has a state issues identification card.
- ☐ Student can independently and safely cross intersections with pedestrian signals.
- ☐ Student can independently and safely cross intersections without pedestrian signals.
- ☐ Student exhibits situational awareness around other pedestrians, bikes, e-scooters, etc.
- ☐ Student can independently and safely navigate high-traffic areas with common sense.
- ☐ Student is interested in learning how to be independent in successfully following known routes within the UArizona campus (e.g. classes, student union, library, rec center).



Section 6: SKILLS INVENTORY

PERSONAL CARE

Although students are not required to be independent in all aspects of their lives to be eligible for Project FOCUS, increasing overall independence is an area of emphasis for students to become better integrated into campus life and the surrounding community. Please check all of circumstances that apply. Where indicated below the check box, please describe or explain.

☐ Student takes medication and can do so without supervision or support of any kind.

☐ Student takes medication but requires support.

Describe supports needed:

☐ Student is able to eat and drink safely and independently.

☐ Student requires support when eating and drinking.

Describe supports needed:

☐ Student is able to use the bathroom independently (including knowing when to access).

☐ Student needs support in the bathroom.

Describe supports needed:

☐ Student is able to manage stress or navigate stimulating environments on their own.

☐ Student requires support to manage stress or navigate stimulating environments.

Describe supports needed:



Attachments

1) PERSONAL ESSAY

Please type and attach a personal essay that answers each of the following questions. Students may submit an essay through their own writing, through supported dictation, drawings, pictures, photos or other alternative means of expressive communication.

- a. How will attending UArizona fulfill a dream or goal that I have?
- b. How will attending UArizona encourage me to achieve greater levels of independence?
- c. How will attending UArizona improve my quality of life?
- d. How will attending UArizona provide me with greater employment opportunities?

1a) PORTFOLIO

This is optional – encouraged but not required.

Please include up to ten photographs of student engaged in instructional activities, school or community events, etc. You may also send a short (2 mins max) video if you would like.

2) PROFESSIONAL LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This can be written by a teacher, employer, coach or any other person that has a professional relationship with the applicant. The letter should specifically address the student's character, skills and potential. Please limit letter to one page and include date and contact information.

3) PERSONAL LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This can be written by a friend, family member or any other person that has a personal relationship with the applicant. The letter should specifically address the student's character, skills and potential. Please limit letter to one page and include date and contact information.

4) INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

Please include a copy of the most recent IEP for the student.

5) MULTIDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION TEAM (MET) REVIEW

Please include a copy of the most recent three-year MET document for the student.

