

Project SEARCH case study article – Allen College

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Allen College is dedicated to be an example for all organizations in the Cedar Valley to promote and support diversity and inclusion. While the College has several current initiatives like Summer Nurse Camp, Campus Visit Days, and the ACE-SAP free clinic, one of the most successful inclusion activities has been our participation in the Project SEARCH program sponsored by the Waterloo School system in partnership with UnityPoint Health – Waterloo.

Initially, Allen College's participation in Project SEARCH was providing an internship for one of the Project SEARCH students in the environmental services department. Allen College's intern, Savannah Ward, was initially very quiet, shy and reserved. She went about her internship with determination, but she initially did not have much interaction with faculty and staff. As Savannah became comfortable with her surroundings, she became more open and outgoing and has become one of the warmest and friendliest persons you could ever meet. As Savannah's personality developed, so did her job responsibilities. Initially, Savannah was responsible for ensuring restrooms were stocked with soap and paper products, but that has now evolved into taking on cleaning responsibilities.

Because of Savannah's growth and development, both personally and professionally, Allen College offered her a full-time position as an environmental services assistant after her internship ended. Savannah continues to thrive and now regularly will interact with faculty, staff, and students. She also plays a significant role in ensuring the campus is clean and ready for our students and guests. Savannah is one of the most important members on our team, and if we did not participate in Project SEARCH, we would have missed this opportunity to include her as part of our organization.

Since Savannah's internship, Allen College has had a second student intern here during the fall semester, and a third internship will occur this spring. Participating in Project SEARCH has been a very successful inclusion endeavor and will serve as a benchmark for other successful projects the College embarks upon.

Savannah Ward, Allen College Environmental Services Assistant

