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Beyond Threshold

**FOLLOW-UP SURVEY
OF GRADUATES**

SATISFACTION EXPRESSED BY PARENTS ABOUT THE GRADUATES

- General level of independence
- Employment
- Social life



CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY PARENTS

- Social life (ability to make friends, find a mate)
- Financial dependence, money management
- Employment (now and in the future)
- Judgment, establishing priorities
- Physical health, weight gain and lack of exercise

SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL LEVEL OF INDEPENDENCE CURRENTLY		
	Graduates	Parents
Very satisfied	66%	51%
Somewhat satisfied	30%	32%
Neither sat/dissat	1%	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	3%	4%
Very dissatisfied	0%	4%

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 Jim Wilbur, Director

THE THRESHOLD PROGRAM

LESLEY UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MA

The Threshold Program at Lesley University is a college-based two-year certificate program that aims to prepare young adults with learning disabilities (LD) and cognitive limitations for employment and independent living. Founded in 1982, Threshold provides a combination of practical and academic experiences that enable students to learn vocational skills in early childhood or business services. In addition, the curricula of the two-year program includes money management, budgeting, apartment living skills, social skills, information about learning abilities and disabilities, self-advocacy, appropriate uses of resources and use of leisure time.

Graduates of the two-year Threshold Program may continue in the Bridge Program or Transition Year Program. The Bridge Program offers graduates, not quite ready for independent living and paid employment, an opportunity to live on campus while they work in supervised internships and further their learning of independent living skills through directed experiences. The Transition Year Program offers graduates, who are ready to live on their own in local apartments and to work in paid employment, the opportunity to do so with

supervision from the program and participation in weekly seminars.

The intent of this pamphlet is to share information relevant to the lives of graduates of the Threshold Program. Data presented are based on a survey administered by many members of the Threshold faculty under the direction of Frances T. Yuan in Spring of 2006. Graduates representing ten graduating Threshold classes (1996-2005) and their parents shared information about their post-Threshold experiences with respect to:

Employment

Living Patterns

Financial and Other Supports

Independent Living Skills

Personal Growth Dimensions

Satisfactions and Concerns

N.B. Use of terms “current” and “currently” refer to Spring of 2006 when data was gathered. Percentages do not always add up to 100% due to incomplete responses.

PROFILE OF GRADUATE AND PARENT RESPONDENTS

Who were the survey respondents?

- 93 parents and 125 Threshold Program two-year graduates from the classes of 1996-2005
 - 78 female and 47 male two-year graduates
 - 74 Transition Year Program and 24 Bridge graduates
 - 8 graduates of both Bridge and Transition Year Programs
 - 75 matched pairs of parents and graduates

What are the characteristics of the graduates?

- Age range: 21-36+ years; mean age 26.4 years
- Average scores on standardized achievement tests before enrollment in Threshold: 5th grade reading and 4th grade math
- Mean scores on standardized IQ tests were below the average range.
- All graduate respondents have been identified as individuals with learning disabilities. Other reported disabilities: poor vision, poor hearing, seizures, mobility problems, attention

deficit disorder (ADD), Asperger’s Syndrome, and other psychological or physical conditions.

- 43% reported no other condition.



EMPLOYMENT

What is the rate of employment of graduates?

- 80% currently employed. Of these, 62% work more than 30 hours; 16% work less than 20 hours; 15% work a second job
- 55% had no periods of unemployment for more than three months since leaving the program

Of Those:	Percent Employed
• Living in Greater Boston	N/A*
• Living Outside Boston	N/A*
• Graduates of the Transition Year Program	84%
• Graduates of the Two-Year Program	74%

*Not available at the present time.

What salary and benefits did graduates report?

- Mean hourly wage: \$9.84 (most reported wages between \$5 and \$15 per hour)
- Available benefits: 60% reported health insurance, dental insurance, paid sick days, and vacation days; more than one-third of these reported pension plans; some said tuition reimbursement

In what kind of jobs do graduates work?

- Aides, assistant teachers, or teachers in early childhood settings

- Receptionists, file clerk, assistant office managers, office managers; stock person or sales associates in retail stores; cashier or bagger in supermarket

Do graduates work in the majors offered at Threshold?

Majors offered	First Job after Threshold	Current jobs
Early Childhood	42%	33%
Human Services (discontinued)	8%	6%
Clerical/ Business Services	25%	34%
Not Offered		
Retail	11%	19%
Other	15%	8%

What percentage of graduates work in their major?

- 61% of all those currently employed;
- 78% of Early Childhood majors
 - 59% of Clerical/ Business Services majors
 - 78% of graduates had at least one job in their major since leaving Threshold

What are the reasons for job mobility?

39% of respondents chose to leave a job for one or more of the following reasons: Found a better job; other workers were unkind; commute was too long, job was too hard; not enough money

29% lost a job for one or more of the following reasons: Unable to do necessary tasks; job was cut; behavior and other social problems.

How long do graduates keep jobs?

- 61% of those out 6 years or more have held at least one job

Do graduates disclose their learning disabilities when seeking employment?

- Most of those employed disclosed on the job application, at the interview, or when they first met their supervisors.

How does the timing of their disclosure of LD relate to assessment of their work performance? *

- 79% of those who disclosed in the hiring process received raises and/or promotions
- 25% who did not disclose early on received raises and/or promotions
- Job skills ratings by employers of those who disclose early are closer to those of the general population than the ratings of those whose LD is disclosed over time

How do employees with LD compare with other workers? *

- Areas of favorable comparisons: attendance, punctuality, willingness to do tasks
- Areas of less favorable comparison: problem solving, speed

of task completion, decision making, ability to transfer learning, judgment and initiative

*Information provided by Fran M. Osten and Carole Noveck, Threshold faculty members, who conducted a survey in Spring 1996 of employers with workers known to have LD.

LIVING PATTERNS



Where do graduates live?

- 61% of graduates currently live in the Greater Boston area

Living Situation of all Respondents in:			Current Living Situation of:	
Residence	1 st year after Threshold	Current	Transition Graduates	Two-year Graduates
Live on own	61%	76%	86%	
Live at home	31%	16%	14%	

- 44% have lived on their own the entire time since graduation; average length of stay in an apartment was 2 years
- 56% have lived at home at some time since graduation; average length of stay at home was 3 years, though many only lived at home for a summer or less than one year

Why do graduates choose to live at home?

- Parents want them home, need for family support, financial reasons, unemployment, no affordable housing

What enables those who live at home to move out of their own?

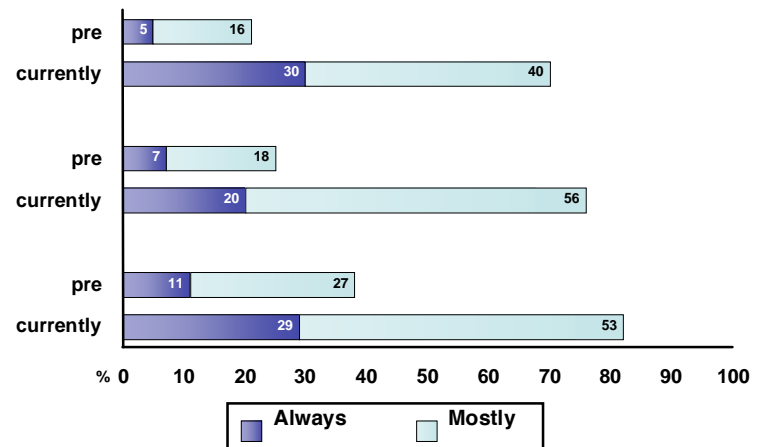
- Finding employment, moving in with someone else, contracting for outside support

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS



What are parents' perceptions of the abilities of graduates pre-Threshold and currently to:

- Manage money
- Shop and prepare food
- Follow through on household chores and laundry
- Attend to personal health care needs



- fully independent and mostly independent

Note: Categories not represented include sometimes, mostly dependent, and fully dependent.

Do those who live at home practice independent living skills?

- Approximately 30% of those who live at home assume responsibility for maintenance of their own living space and

laundry

- Approximately 20% shop for their own groceries and cook their own meals

What are graduates' perceptions of their current functioning on independent living skills?

- Money management
 - Most pay their bills on time; about 75% stay within their budgets; keeping their checkbooks updated on their own is still a challenge to some
 - 46% of parents reported helping their graduates with money management; 14% used a money management tutor at some time after Threshold
- Shopping and meal preparation
 - 74% keep enough food on hand; 56% prepare at least two dinners per week
- Household chores and laundry
 - Majority keep their own living areas clean, do their laundry weekly, and follow through on sharing household tasks
- Health care
 - About 90% have yearly physical exams and regular dental check-ups
 - 69% exercise regularly (including walking more than 15 minutes daily)

Do parents and graduates concur on their satisfaction with the level of independence of the graduate?

- 30 of the matched pairs of parents and graduates agreed that they were very satisfied with the level of independence.
- In general, graduates rated themselves as more satisfied with their level of independence than did their parents.

What do graduates say would add most to their level of satisfaction?

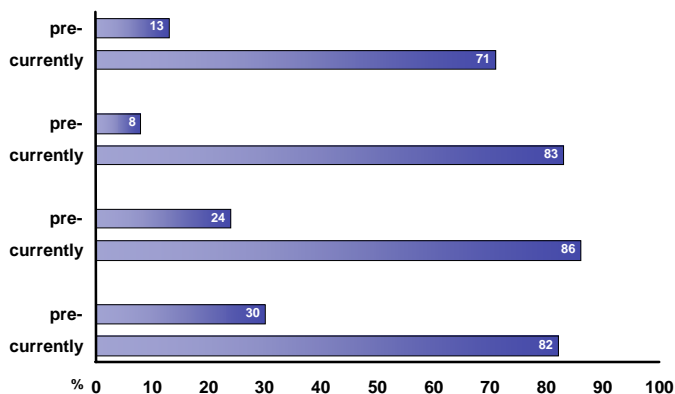
- Friendships
- Leisure activities
- Further education
- Dating opportunities



PERSONAL GROWTH DIMENSIONS

What are the parents' perceptions of the abilities of graduates pre-Threshold and currently to:

- 1) Advocate for themselves
- 2) Have realistic expectations of themselves
- 3) Engage in appropriate social interactions



Note: Categories note represented include sometimes, mostly not, and never.

What are graduates' perceptions of their current functioning on personal growth dimensions?

■ Self-advocacy

- 76% said they speak up for themselves when necessary; the remainder said they do so "sometimes"

■ Social interaction

- 68% feel their social life is what they would like it to be
- 8 surveyed are married; 3 have children; 18 were engaged
- 72% initiate social activities at least once a month; 60% participate in some social activity once a week
- 80% say they use good social skills to resolve problems

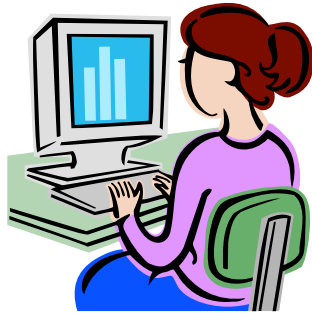
LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES OF GRADUATES BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

	On own	At home
Organized Social Group	12%	9%
Time with Friends	64	38
Watching TV	41	34
Restaurants, Club, Movies	36	34
Shopping	21	25
Physical Activities	37	41
Taking Courses	11	6
Religious Activities	5	25
Being on the Computer	29	31

How many took courses or continued their education?

- 37% took courses related to their field or areas of interest as well as leisure interests.

COMPUTER USE



How many use a computer?

- 92% currently use a computer
- More than half report using a computer for 1-3 hours a day
- More than 25% reported using a computer more than 3 hours a day
- Almost all use it to keep in touch with friends via e-mail
- Most use it to surf the internet
- Half use it to look up practical information, play games, read the news, and for word processing

FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT



What degree of financial support do graduates need from parents?

- 86% received some financial support in the first year out;
- 76% currently received some financial support

What are the trends in the use of financial support in the years after Threshold?

- **First Year:** Largest percentage was used for basic monthly expenses (food & utilities), rent/mortgage, unforeseen expenses, leisure activities, and health insurance
- **Currently:** Rent/mortgage continues to be a large area of need, basic monthly expenses and leisure expenses decrease; health insurance and funds for unforeseen expenses remains largely the same.

During times of financial independence, what is the source of income?

- Wages from work, Social Security Supplemental insurance

What other kind of support is needed from parents?

- About half need help with moving, emotional support, money management
- About one quarter need help with arranging for outside support, job support, and apartment maintenance

- Some need additional help with social relationships

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CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY PARENTS

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