

The Learning Academy

at the University of South Florida is a 30 week program designed to provide a structured job readiness program for individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, between the ages of 18-25 after they have graduated from high school.

The program provides services, supports and experiential opportunities that will enable participants to develop and achieve employment goals and enhance independence. Employability skills addressed are self-knowledge, organization, time management, goal setting and attainment, conflict resolution and success on the job. Participants also engage in multiple career assessment activities to identify their strengths, skills, talents, interests and learn how they translate to work. Preparation for job attainment includes interviewing skills, resume development and finding employment.

Real life experiences and expectations through internships and peer mentoring complement the class work to provide generalization of skills and support personalized goals.

Outcomes for participants include:

- A clearly defined employment plan with follow up activities to measure achievement of identified goals
- Specific knowledge of one's strengths, abilities and preferences related to employment
- Strategies to set and achieve employment goals
- Awareness of and experience with customized techniques to enhance employment success
- Career research and exploration and job seeking skills

"My son has shown a remarkable increase in socialization and communication skills. He is also developing independence faster than mom can keep up with. It's great!" -Learning Academy Parent



The Learning Academy Program

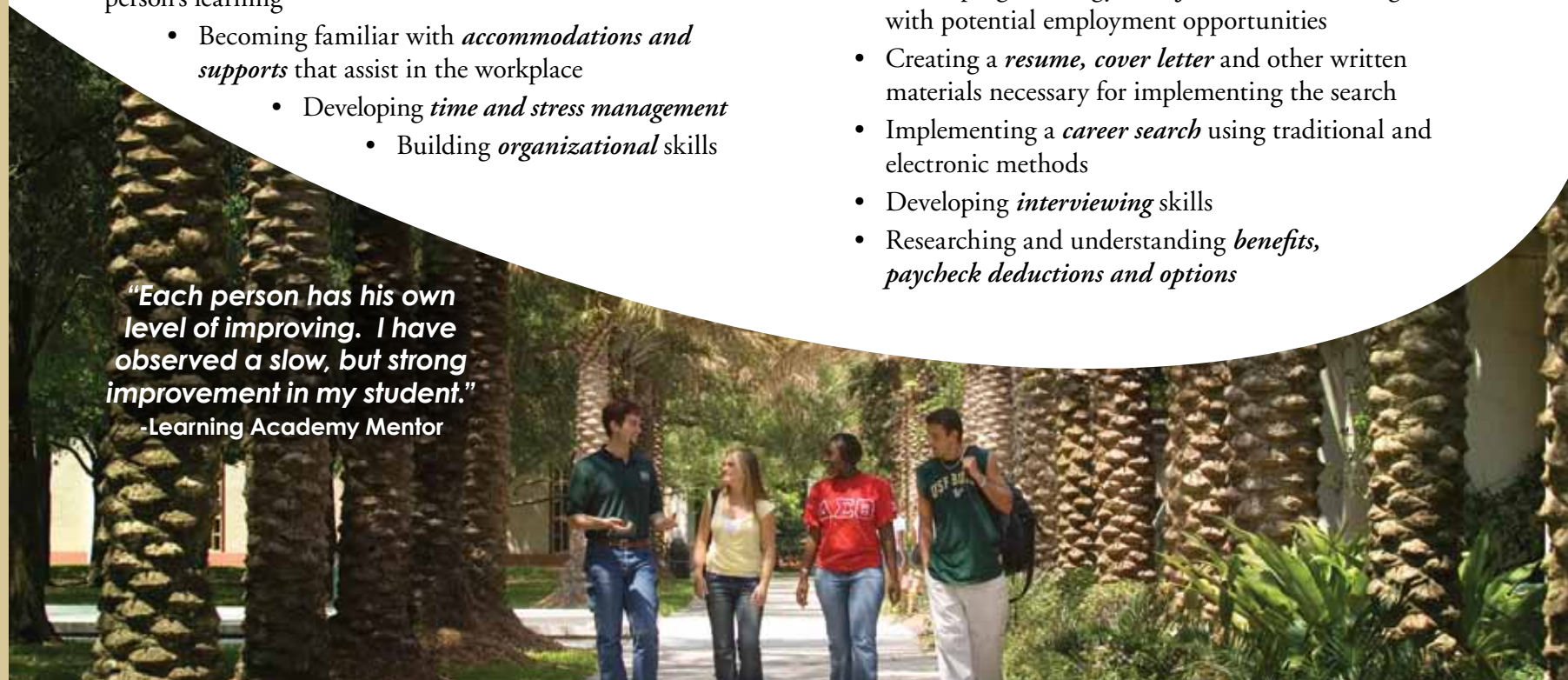
Learning Academy students receive a combination of individualized and group instruction, hands on experiential activities and interactive peer mentoring.

Topics include:

- *Understanding disability* and how it individually affects a person's learning
 - Becoming familiar with *accommodations and supports* that assist in the workplace
 - Developing *time and stress management*
 - Building *organizational skills*

*"Each person has his own level of improving. I have observed a slow, but strong improvement in my student."
-Learning Academy Mentor*

- Understanding and practicing *communication skills* in all aspects of career and community interactions
- *Identifying conflict* and appropriate ways to manage and resolve it
- Understanding why people work and the *value of work*
- *Self-assessment* activities to determine interests, aptitudes and abilities
- Finding out how values, interests, aptitudes, abilities and personalities *affect career*
- Understanding *career clusters* and preferences within a cluster
- *Exploring* information about careers and conducting extensive research on selected career
- Learning *what employers seek* in employees and identifying and enhancing those skills
- Understanding what is involved in *disclosure* of disability
- Completing an *internship* in the area of preferred career with supervision and mentor support
- Developing a strategy for a *job search*, matching skills with potential employment opportunities
- Creating a *resume, cover letter* and other written materials necessary for implementing the search
- Implementing a *career search* using traditional and electronic methods
- Developing *interviewing* skills
- Researching and understanding *benefits, paycheck deductions and options*



Student Participation Requirements:

- Attend all scheduled classes
- Complete assignments and projects
- Participate in all group activities
- Complete required mentoring time
- Complete internship

Eligibility Requirements:

- Completed high school and is between age 18-25
- Has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Has transportation to and from USF campus in Tampa
- Has a functional communication system
- Is independent in personal self-care
- Has a clear desire to work or attend college and can commit to a 2 semester program
- Has a proven ability to participate appropriately in classroom and/or work settings demonstrating conduct that exemplifies independence, motivation and stability



The Learning Academy at USF

The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute
College of Behavioral and Community Sciences
University of South Florida
13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MHC 2113A
Tampa, FL 33612
Phone: (813)974-2996
Fax: (813)974-6115



"The Learning Academy helped me identify my career goals by exploring my talents and skills."
-Learning Academy Student