



SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION AFTER GRADUATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS (STAGES)

CUMULATIVE REPORT

Fall 2004 – Spring 2011

Mission:

Successful Transition After Graduation For Exceptional Students (STAGES) is a School District of Hillsborough County Transition Program at the University of South Florida (USF), College of Education that provides training and support to young adults with disabilities. STAGES in partnership with the Department of Special Education, offers each student the opportunity to explore career options, utilize public transportation, learn self-advocacy skills, interact with age appropriate non-disabled peers, and reach their potential as an independent member of the community.

Program Goals:

1. Increase students' levels of independence
2. Provide the opportunity for students to participate in on-campus and community employment training experiences
3. Prepare students to obtain competitive employment in a full or part-time paid position in the community
4. Prepare students to suitably interact with age appropriate peers
5. Increase students' social and communication skills across settings
6. Improve students' self-determination skills
7. Further develop students' age appropriate leisure and recreation interests
8. Assist students with engaging the support of adult service agencies before exiting the program

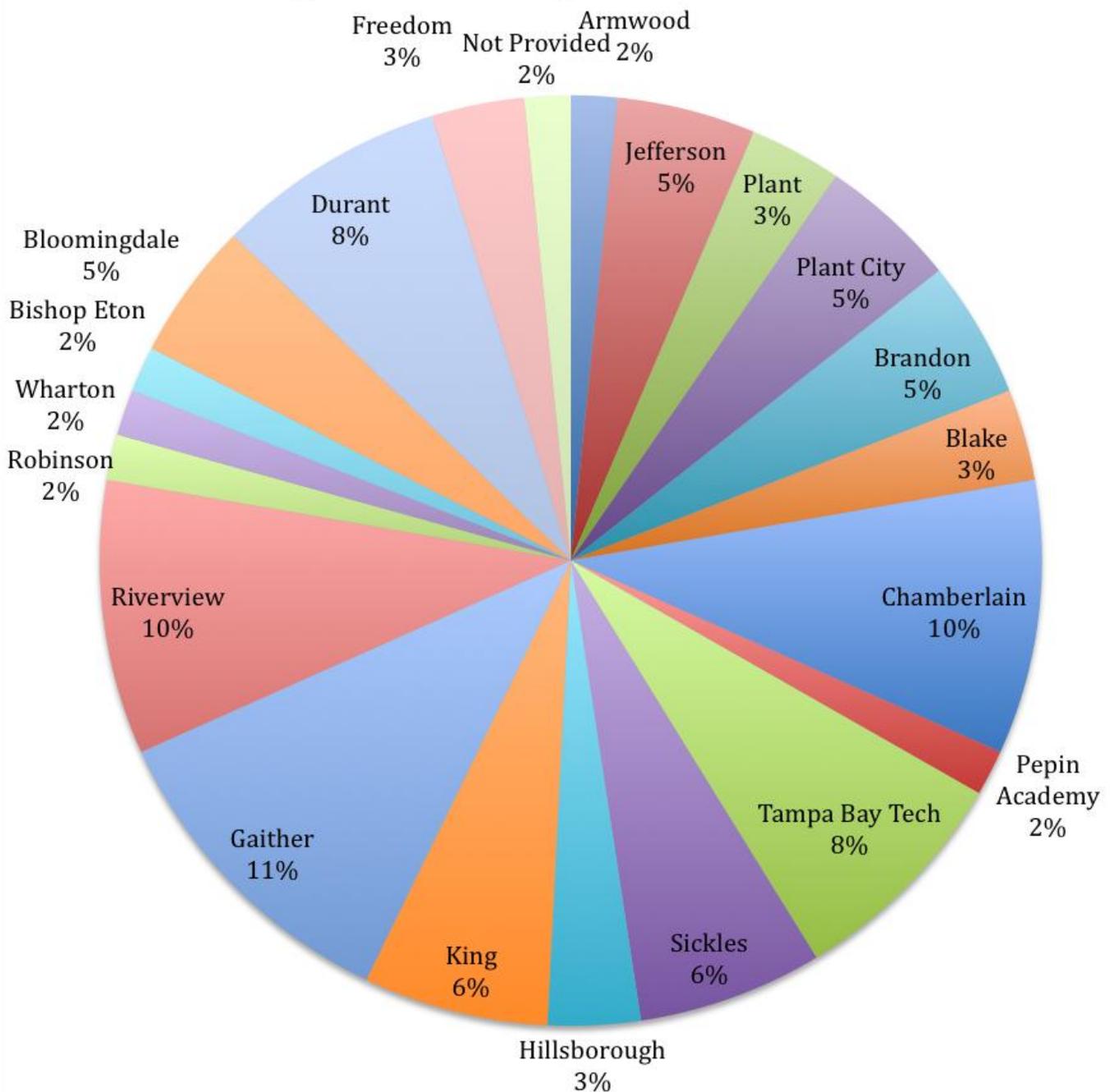
To fulfill its vision, STAGES is committed to:

- Offer internships and job training
- Collaborate with university personnel to facilitate maximum participation by STAGES students
- Continue a collaborative relationship with Hartline and offer individualized travel training
- Develop collaborative relationships with agencies, businesses and corporations to meet transitional needs
- Teach, support and monitor life skills
- Collaborate with USF development personnel to maximize fund raising opportunities

I. Cumulative Enrollment 2004-2010:

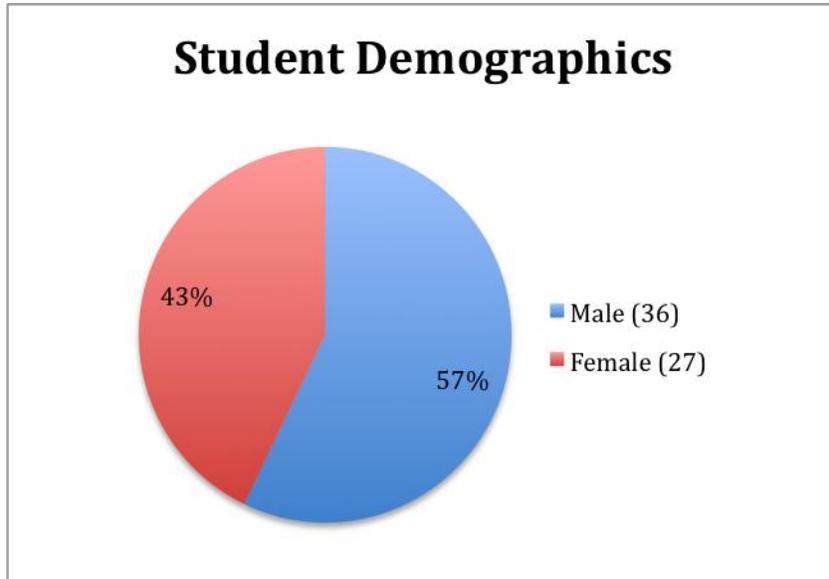
The STAGES program provided services for 63 students with varying exceptionalities that ranged in age from 18-22, and participated for up to two consecutive years within the program, over the span of 7 full academic years. A total of 36 males and 27 females who have participated in STAGES, represent a diverse group of participants who were selected from 20 different area high schools.

Area High Schools Represented 2004- 2011

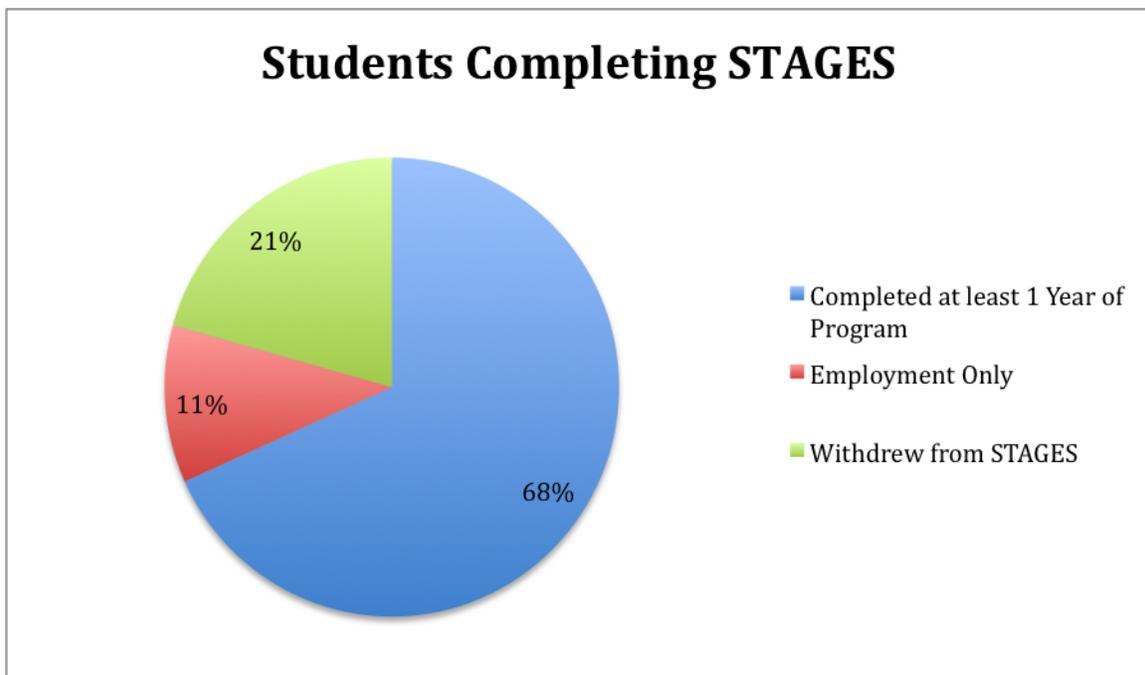


Student Participation:

There were 63 students who participated in STAGES between 2004-2011. Just over half of the STAGES participants over the past seven years were male.



Among the 63 students who participated in STAGES 43 students (68%) completed the STAGES program, 7 students (11%) entered STAGES for an employment experience only, and 13 students (21%) withdrew without completing the program.

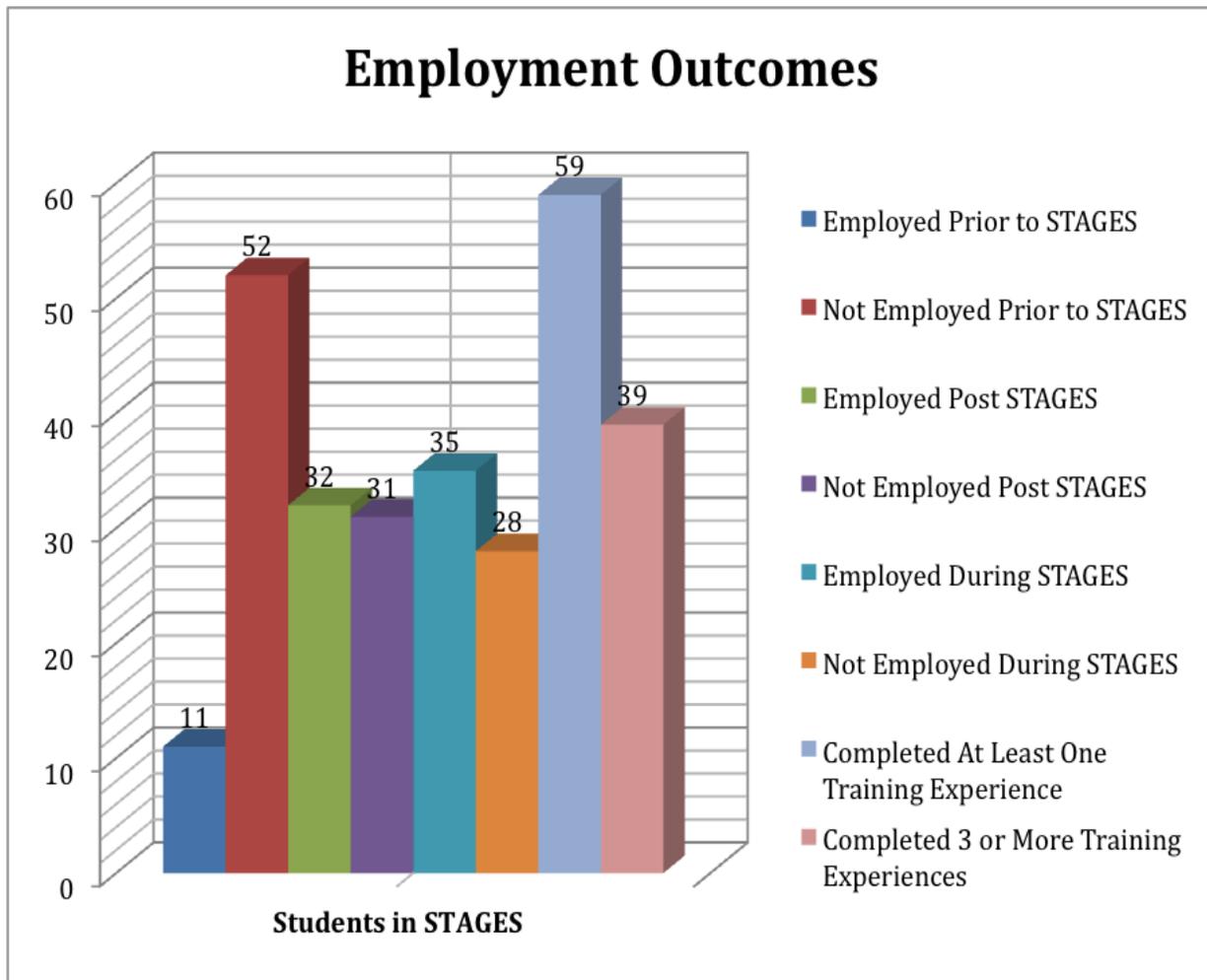


II. Job Training & Employment Outcomes:

Preparation for employment was one of the primary objectives of the STAGES program. Students participated in a number of job training experiences throughout their time in the STAGES program.

Students who participate in job training within the STAGES program partner with local businesses on and around the university campus. The job training placements are nonpaid internships, and students will rotate through multiple training experiences throughout the year. There were 59 students who participated in at least one internship while involved in the STAGES program and 39 students had the opportunity to participate in three or more internship experiences.

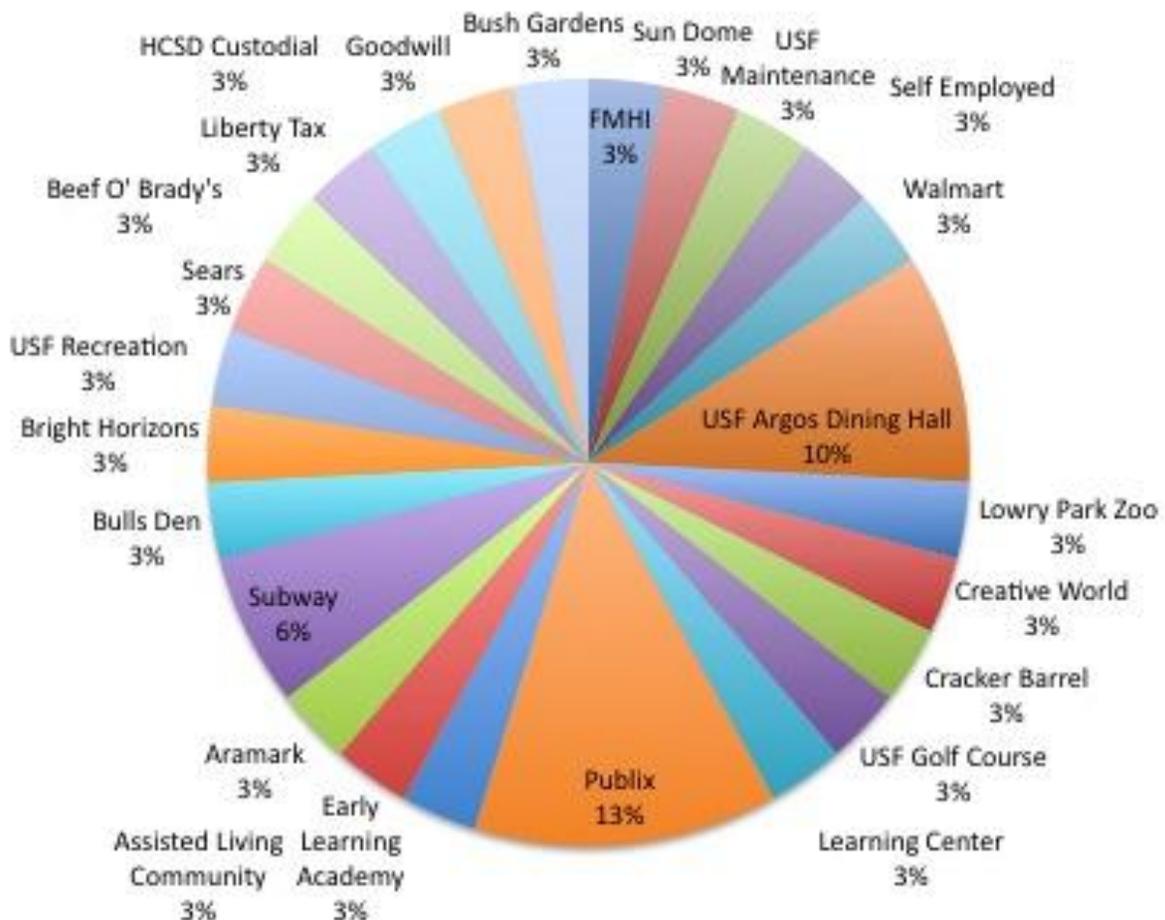
While some of the internship experiences are unpaid, many students have the opportunity to also work in paid positions during their STAGES experience. Over the past seven years only 11 students (17.4%) entered with paid work experience prior to their participation in the STAGES experience. While participating in the STAGES program 35 (55.5%) students were employed in a paid position. Upon departure from STAGES, 32 students (50.7%) were employed in a paid position.



Post STAGES Places of Employment:

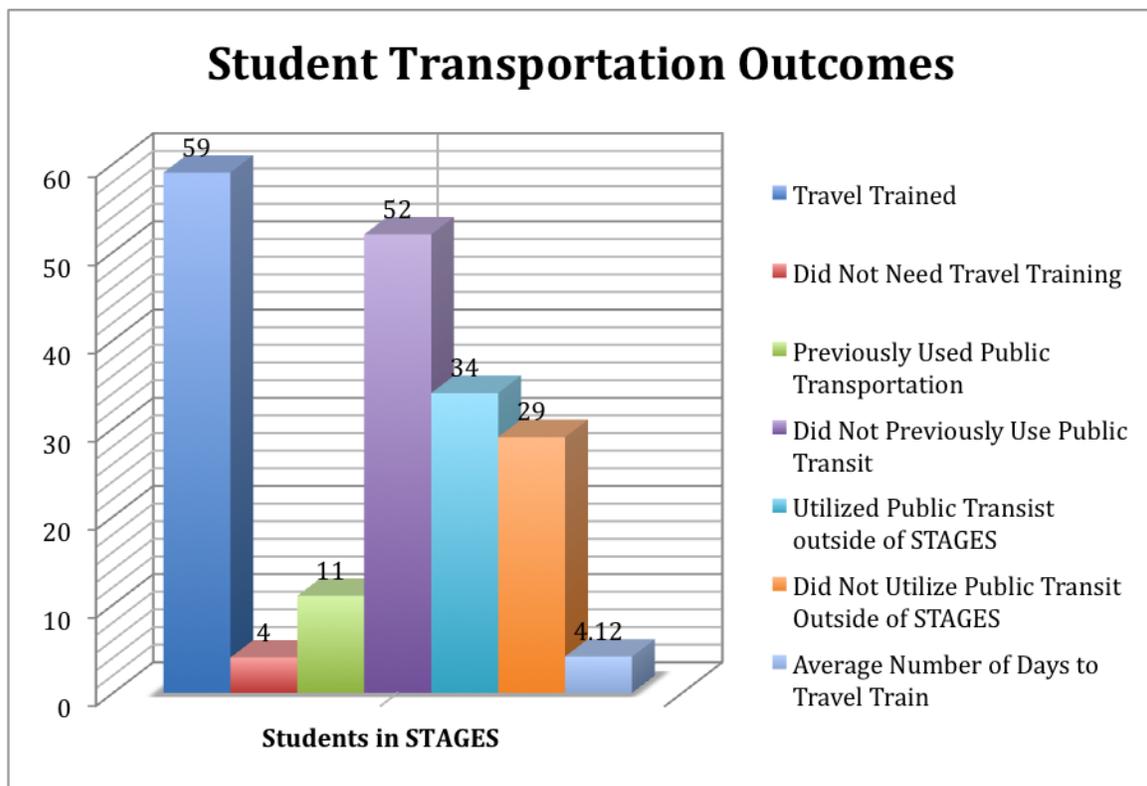
The STAGES program is grateful to the many area businesses that have worked with the students over the past seven years. The chart below provides details about the 32 students who exited the program and received paid employment positions at 25 different employment sites, immediately following their participation in STAGES.

Paid Employment Post STAGES



III. Transportation Training Outcomes:

The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) line stood ready to assist in the training of each STAGES participant. Over the past seven years, 59 students received travel training between 2004-2011. The students who participated in travel training were successful in utilizing the public bus system to new destinations. It took first year students an average of just 4 days to successfully master the training provided by the HART line staff. Prior to STAGES only 11 students had utilized public transportation through HART services. While students were strongly encouraged to use public transportation to commute to and from the university, once trained, 34 students also chose to utilize HART transportation outside of the commute to and from STAGES, as a means to access appointments, entertainment, and employment off campus.



IV. Noteworthy Accomplishments:

Inclusion opportunities vary each year due to student interests, instructor partnerships, activity schedules, and student employment schedules. Students are not enrolled in the courses. However, they do participate and interact with college students in projects or activities deemed appropriate.

- During the 2007-2008 academic year STAGES & the USF College of Education (COE) Department of Special Education partnered together. The students participated as group members in a semester long undergraduate class activity. The purpose of the activity was to explore

young adult interests and experiences related to family, leisure activities, employment and independent living.

- During the 2007-2008 academic year STAGES also partnered with medical students and faculty from the USF School of Medicine. The students in STAGES met with students from the medical school on a monthly basis to discuss various health care topics. The students exchanged ideas and got to know each other on a personal level. The main purpose for these interactions was for the benefit of medical students who learned to be more respectful toward patients with disabilities. The students in STAGES also benefited from the interactions because they became better self-advocates.
- Since 2007-2008 STAGES has had an active chapter of Best Buddies. The national organization partners university students with peers in the STAGES program. The students participated as members of the USF chapter of Best Buddies. Several students from STAGES held leadership positions in the organization and a STAGES student, as well as a STAGES alumnus attended the Best Buddies National Conference in Illinois.
- In 2008-2009 one student from STAGES completed requirements and passed the examination to receive their GED.
- Since 2004 10 students have joined the USF campus recreation center to workout and participate in fitness classes.
- Between 2004 and 2008, 17 students participated in university experiences including computing and technology workshops
- During the 2005-2006 academic year, 6 students participated in a group counseling, personal wellness course with staff members from the USF Student Health Services
- During the 2004-2005 academic year, 8 students participated in a visual and performing arts experience at USF

V. Conclusions:

In its first six years of implement STAGES has provided students the opportunity to participate in a diverse range of academic and employment experiences in and around the USF Tampa campus. STAGES created a space for students to interact with peers in a university setting. Students have also learned how to access public transportation, find and secure paid employment, participate in recreational opportunities and prepare for the successful transition to post-school life.