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## SUCCEED Student Claudia Swyres discusses her first year experience in SUCCEED



After high school, I was trying to figure out what I should do with my life. At the time I was not planning on going to college until my parents found a program at UMSL called SUCCEED. SUCCEED was a program that help students with disabilities learn how to live independently, get the chance to get a job, and to get the college experience. It would have given me a chance to go to college so I applied for the SUCCEED program and I was accepted into the program. I was very excited and I knew this was going to change my life.

The SUCCEED Program changed my life by giving me the chance at independence. I was able to have my own room and my own space. I was also able to learn how to live with roommates. The program also helps me with learning job skills and getting the chance to take degree classes. When I moved in on this campus, I knew I wanted a job. There was a class in SUCCEED that taught me different job skills. Without this class I would not be successful in my job today. At UMSL SUCCEED, I was required to take at least one-degree class. The class I chose was photography. I knew I wanted to be a photographer since my senior year of high school. My teachers told me during my senior year I could not be a photographer because of how difficult the classes were and the fact I had a disability. In my mind this really hurt me. I wasn't going to let what those teachers said hurt me. I was going to prove those teachers that I am able to take a degree class and I did prove those teachers wrong. My goal after I graduate from the SUCCEED Program is to come back to UMSL and finish my Bachelor's degree in photography. This is how the SUCCEED program changed my life.