

FUTURE ASSETS, STUDENT TALENT
FAST

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RESEARCH GRANT REPORT
Melody Goforth, Coordinator, FAST
July '92 thru July '93
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Research Objectives:

- 1) To determine what impact the FAST Program has on the students who participate.

Is the student more likely to enter a career path associated with math and the sciences than he/she was prior to program exposure?

- 2) What impact has the program had on professionals in the business/industry community in terms of attitudes towards persons with disabilities and the FAST Program?

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FAST BACKGROUND/HISTORY

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Future Assets, Student Talent (FAST) motivates and prepares talented students with disabilities to further their education and achieve High-Tech and Professional employment.

The FAST program, is managed by local professionals, business and industry leaders, it is modeled after High School High Tech project "TAKE CHARGE" started in Los Angeles in 1983. Through cooperative efforts of Alabama Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult and Children Services and the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities, north central Alabama was chosen as the second site for a High School High Tech project. In 1986 local business, industry, education, government agencies and rehabilitation representative started Future Assets, Student Talent "FAST" a High Tech and Professional Project for students with disabilities.

FAST, initially set up to operate as an all volunteer organization, changed its direction and became a low budget community supported program. A Coordinator was hired to insure that opportunities continue to be offered to students with disabilities. FAST received it monetary start through a United Way "Venture Grant", but relied heavily on business and industry contributions and volunteer services from education, government, and community organizations.

The FAST program is part of the Huntsville Rehabilitation Center, a division of the Huntsville Rehabilitation Foundation. The Huntsville Rehabilitation Center because of economics problems requested an increase of funding from United Way. United Way, because of problems of their own, required the Center to prioritize. A decision was made to cut back the work force and drop the FAST Program. The Foundation stated, if new sources of funding were provided by the volunteers, they would continue the program.

Emergency funds from AVEX, Martin Marietta, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services and NASA has kept the program going while volunteers evaluated the situation. A decision was made by FAST volunteers to separate from the Huntsville Rehabilitation Center, and form FAST, Inc. a non-profit 501 (c) 3, Public Charity. The Huntsville Rehabilitation Center will administer the program till 31 December 1992.

A FAST Transition Board, has developed Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, applied for Employer's number, filed Form 1023 with IRS with the assistance of Sirote & Permutt Law Firm. The Transition Board is seeking new funding resources and will have a Executive Board appointed prior to 31 December 1992.

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FAST OBJECTIVES/GOALS

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Typically students with disabilities do not become educated or employed in fields such as Science, Electronics, Math/Accounting, Engineering, Law, etc. Students with disabilities are an untapped employment resource within our communities.

Survey results, released by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, show that:

- * Employers usually rate their employees with disabilities work performance as - good to excellent.
- * It is cost effective to hire persons with disabilities
- * Employers have not hired persons with disabilities in the last few years because of a lack of qualified applicants.
- * College Freshmen, with disabilities are older than their non-disabled counterparts.
- * College students with disabilities, high school grade average and standing, lower than non-disabled peers.

The FAST volunteers have set the following as goals/purpose:

- * To identify students with disabilities who have potential for hi-tech and professional careers
- * To motivate FAST students to prepare properly for those careers
- * To expose FAST students to hi-tech and professional jobs and role models
- * To build self-confidence in the FAST students
- * To encourage parents, students, educators, and employers to expect success
- * To offer appropriate training opportunities for developing work readiness skills and attitudes
- * To facilitate cooperation and coordination among private, public and non-profit sectors
- * To promote increased employment opportunities and acceptance of persons with disabilities

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The following is a list of services available through the FAST Program:

- * Mentor program
- * Industry tours
- * Professional Shadowing
- * Information on Scholarships, Careers, Vocational, and Rehabilitation Services.
- * Workshops
- * Work Opportunities (summer hire, co-op, etc.)
- * Laser Lab visits
- * Speakers (at schools, in the class-rooms)

Other types goals set by the volunteers are to:

- * network among businesses, industries, education, community organizations, national organizations to:
 - share experience, knowledge and resources
 - identify in-kind and volunteer services needed to provide opportunities for FAST students
 - identify new opportunities and services for FAST students
 - work toward the goal of creating a barrier free environment for persons/students with disabilities in and out of the work place
 - address the issue of public awareness and attitudes toward persons with disabilities
 - educate/show parents, teachers, employers the potential of persons with disabilities
 - provide information and resources to other communities to set up programs for students with disabilities
- * Recruit additional professionals, business, and industry to participate in FAST
- * Create new and better career exploration opportunities for students
- * Identify additional opportunities in summer employment, co-op, scholarship information to provide for students

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PROGRAM RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FUTURE ASSETS, STUDENT TALENT
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106 students have been served by FAST from 1986 to present

60 students have graduated from high school

10 students have graduated college

38 have begun College / Jr College / Technical College

5 have dropped out after 1 to 2 years of college

2 college drop-out have returned to school

(unable to locate and follow up on every student)

Special Education representatives, teachers and counselors have stated that:

"... summer hire program opportunity has helped, he is more mature and confident in his ability and performing better in the class room."

"....., was so excited about her shadowing opportunity and brought a sample of the product to show class-mates ... a positive reaction for this shy student."

" Ms. Ayers, talked about her disability in a positive way she told the students that they weren't dumb that they had to work harder on some things in order to accomplish them..... she was able to motivate some of the students."

" Linda, was able to involve the students in her talk. She demonstrated that the individuals with a disability can accomplish many things..... she also, demonstrated how she accesses and drives her own car.... our students need more of this type of encouragement."

" Teaching students how to fill out an application ... providing an opportunity to practice interviewing with employers is a wonderful idea I think you should do that each year....."

"going to a FAST meeting ... one that I don't mind because its a great program which has been of some benefit to our students."

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FAST Activities:

Summer hire employment opportunity -

To qualify for summer hire students must meet the following requirements:

- * High School - Must be 16 or older
Junior or Senior (can be waved)
Maintain C Average
Full time student
Participate in other FAST activities

- * College - Full time student
Grade point Minimum average of 2.5
Business & Industry related Majors
given priority)

At NASA priority is also given to targeted disabilities.

Students are sent SF 171, Self Identification of Handicap, Statement of Physical Ability for Light Duty Work and instructed to fill out the SF 171 form in black ink and to fill out other forms if they apply. The students are to include a Verification of Disabilities Statement which they can obtain from their State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

Students are sent additional applications from local business and industry with instruction on how to apply.

Students are encouraged to complete and return applications by 10 March. Late applications are not considered for placement.

1992 NASA Summer Placements:

- * Three high school students
- * Two college students*

Two FAST students participated in the co-op program at NASA.

AVEX Summer Placement:

- * One college student

The AVEX student works part time during the school year, full time during spring and summer break. All students are required to maintain a minimum of 2.5 grade average.

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FAST Workshop:

Four workshops are to be presented during the 1992-93 school year. FAST students are required to attend a minimum of three of these four workshops, but are encouraged to attend all.

October 16 - This one day workshop was designed to help students understand his/her self-

Attitudes
Values
Interests
Empowerment

Who are you? How do you feel about yourself?

Students learned how and when to talk about ability and disability. It is believed that knowing about the Americans with Disabilities Act will help with understanding about accommodations in the work place as well as outside of the work place.

Finally, the workshop addressed what work place expectations are so that the student could begin to practice appropriate behavior and attitudes.

* 18 students received information and registration forms for the workshop, 16 students participated.

Interpreter service and reader/note taker service was provided for hearing and vision impaired students. Transportation service was also available.

This school year will be an interesting year. In the first workshop, student participation was spontaneous. Students, asked questions concerning talking about abilities and disabilities and about ADA in relation to interviewing and employment qualifications. They also had some interesting remarks and opinions concerning work ethics.

There were some positive remarks concerning the workshop expressed by the students and their teachers.

January 22 - Self Awareness

This workshop is designed to help the student become more aware of strengths, interests, and future goals. It will be a useful beginning step in evaluating career directions and how to pursue that career choice.

The participants will identify specific career pathways and where to find information on careers/jobs.

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March 12, 1993 - World of Work

This workshop will give the students an opportunity to think about the kind of work he/she would like to do. They will start considering making decisions that could effect their adult life style.

This workshop will also include a panel of professionals from different careers who will talk about their jobs. Students have an opportunity to ask tough questions.

During the final segment of the workshop the student will find out how to present him/her self to prospective employers through resumes and applications and will see a sample interview.

April 23, 1993 - Success The Job Search

The student will have an opportunity to visit and talk with professionals from local industries and businesses.

This workshop has a pre-work assignment requiring the student to bring a completed application. An application with instructions will be sent to the students prior to this workshop.

There will be a panel discussion about what recruiters and interviewers are evaluating during an interview process.

Practice interviews will be conducted with local employers. Students will get helpful hints about their interview.

Shadowing:

Shadowing opportunities give the students a realistic/on-hand look at careers. One shadowing experience has been arranged at NASA and additional ones will be arranged at NASA, Martin Marietta and AVEX Electronics for the 1992-93 school year.

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Survey Results, Question and Comments

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See Attachments: A / B / C / D for the survey questions.
These questions were sent to:

FAST students - graduates from college
college students
high school students

Volunteers - Speakers
Workshop Instructors
Mentors
Etc.

Business/Industry/Government Agencies
Summer hire
Shadowings
Tours
Workshops

Also conducted:

Phone Survey of Teachers/Special Education Representatives
Changes in Attitude, motivation, etc.?

Phone Survey of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
*FAST students status
*Students readiness after graduation from high
for vocational and educational services.
*Suggestions and/or problem areas FAST should
address.

FAST Impact on Students

Career goals prior to FAST?

- * Majority of students had Interest/Goals defined before acceptance to FAST.
- * Majority of the students who expressed goals/interests in the areas of Engineering and Computer fields had no specific goals such as Electrical Engineers, Design Engineers, Computer Programmer.
- * Majority of the students also have multiple choices of careers. Examples: Computer - reading; Science - Space - Law - Engineer - Computer; Wrestling -Fishing - Musical Performer; Business Management - Dancer; Artist - Interior Decorator - Design Engineer.
- * A few students expressed that they are unemployable. Many really have no idea what they want to do. They mention careers, in which family members and friends are working.

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Have your career goals changed?

FAST Student Survey Comments:

"My goal has become more specific. The goal now is to be an industrial/systems engineer, preferably in production or project management."

"My work at NASA through the FAST program has helped me learn what it is like working in a legal office" (Junior - College present career goal Criminal Attorney)

.... career goal change? "Maybe, I like working at NASA "

"My goal then became Management Information System I majored in business but I also took Physics, Fortran for Engineers and through Cal II I thought more than once, I can't do this, but I did! My desire to work at NASA, instilled by my co-op job, kept me going."

* The majority of the students goals have changed before graduation. Many change their minds also after starting college. Students have usually selected a field by the time they start college. Their goals are more realistic because they've reached their decision based on self evaluation of skills and interests along with basic knowledge of different careers.

* Unfortunately some of the students change their goals for the wrong reason. When studies become difficult they choose an easier course or degree. Students are encouraged by representatives within the educational institution to drop a class rather than take a low grade. It is sometimes suggested that the student take some easy courses to bring up their grade average. This problem seems to be on the increase. F.A.S.T. will develop a workshop which will address this issue and network with local educational institute and Vocational Rehabilitation Services concerning this issue.

* Over 50% of FAST students enter College / Jr. College / Technical College. Majority of those students stay in school and many are planning on pursuing a Masters Degree, two students have already started.

What is your education status at the present?

"... I hold a B.S.B.A. from UAH."

"... Junior, majoring in Industrial Engineering at Auburn University."

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".... Senior, in Nursing ... at University of Alabama in Huntsville..."

"... three months, I'll be a Junior..." (College)

".... Sophomore, at Jackson State University..."

"... Senior Huntsville High"

".. 11th grade, History- C, Science- A, Adv. English C, Math B, Spanish A"

"I've one more semester, to finish Jr. College and I plan to enroll at Auburn University next fall."

* There has been only one high school dropout. The student dropped out because of family problems. The student has returned to school and is making A's and B's and is a senior this year.

* Few students have lost their Vocational Rehabilitation Services funding for education because of grades, a majority of those students sought employment and paid for their own education.

* Students who worked in the FAST Summer hire, felt that they gained valuable work experience as well as established good contacts with persons in various careers.

* FAST helped them to learn how to present themselves during job interviews.

* FAST helped them to set career goals

* FAST gave them the opportunity to work with different people and learn to communicate.

FAST Impact on Professional

Comments and Summary from Business/Industry and professionals representatives in the community.

"FAST is a great idea but, out of reach for most disabled youth."

Knew the students had potential "some - need encouragement and opportunities and parents need to believe in their abilities"

After working with students either through work-shop / shadowing "Want to see greater participation by

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students."

Before working with FAST program/students, I would describe by feelings Knew the students had the potential ... "and took active positive steps to become involved and help make some positive contributions to this end."

My feeling toward youth with disabilities was ... "felt sorry for them and wanted to do something to help them."

After working with students my feeling toward FAST students goals and career potential is.." highly positive and supportive."

... change in your attitude toward people with disabilities?
"Yes, in a very positive way."

".. through training, the entire attitude of our employees has changed in a positive sense of awareness to the needs and attributes of people with disabilities."

"..... a great positive impact on the lives and goals of children in our community with disabilities."

"... I feel FAST students are merely differently abled and have a great amount of potential and should be encouraged to set goals pertaining to education and desirable employments."

"I Think the FAST program really serves a purpose in that students get encouragement and direction that they may not be getting at home or at school."

"... This is the best possible approach for assuring efficient use of programs and money and getting results."

change in your attitude toward persons with disabilities?
"somewhat personal involvement is always helpful for change."

Did you have to make any modifications?

Attitude - "expectation of success important."

Presentation -"Consideration for hearing difficulties..."

Communication-"Consideration for hearing difficulties.."

Opinion of FAST program and its goals..." very positive. May need to take more responsive action toward utilizing corporate and government I think growth is possible in these areas in Huntsville especially City Government."

* A majority of persons felt sorry and protective of students prior to meeting them.

* After working with students a majority of persons feeling had changed and they focus on the ability not the disabilities.

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* Majority of Persons who work with students in employment, rated the students positive in areas of: Working with others, Initiative, Quality of work, Quantity of work, Dependability, Judgement, etc.

Approximately five (5) out of thirty (30) students had some difficulty in their employment:

A) One of comments made; takes too much initiative by "trashing" things she considers not important; she will work diligently until assignment has been completed; interferes with others duties by taking responsibilities no one has given to her; Never a problem with constructive criticism; Enthusiastic, industrious, interested in work.

This particular student is used to a lot of attention with family and friends and demanded a lot of attention during workshops and shadowing.

B) "pleasant, did a good job but, wanted to wander around and visit with people who were trying to work."

This student, did not want to work. She was encouraged by her parents to follow through. She related that she accepted the position because she did not want to disappoint anyone. She was not ready for work.

C) "Student, wanted everyone to help with her work."

* Majority of students with disabilities, do not have good social and communication skills. Different activities within the FAST program have been developed for the purpose of improving those skills. FAST encourages students to participate in its activities.

One of the suggestions that came from volunteers and employers is to only allow those students who have participated in FAST activities on a regular basis an opportunity to participate in summer hire. They also suggested that FAST students be required to attend a work shop on work ethics, filling out applications and interviewing prior to summer placement.

* FAST students summer hire program, has worked better than other summer hire programs. The results show that the majority of students with disabilities show up at work, get to work on time, and appreciate the opportunity to gain experience and earn their own money.

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Industry and business representatives enjoy working with the youth. Their attitude and understanding of persons with disabilities overall has changed in a positive way. Students with disabilities, because of these efforts; will be qualified for future employment in High Tech and Professional jobs and; the community will be ready for them because, of the positive attitude that has developed as a result of their involvement in the FAST program.

Many business and industry leaders like the idea of working with students with disabilities. When it came down to it they had majors concerns. Would the student be interested? Would they be able to do the jobs, if they were qualified? What if the student can't do what you planned for them? What can they do? A majority of the industry and business had no problems, with the Shadowing, Summer placements. They were surprised to find that accommodations is not a big problem.

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Attachment A (one of the forms that is required, by the
Student Selection Committee)

FAST STUDENT SURVEY

Name _____ Phone (h) _____
(w) _____

Home Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____ Phone (h) _____
(w) _____

What are your hobbies, special interests? _____

What careers are you interested in? _____

Do you like to read? ____ If so, what kind of books do you
like? _____

What are your favorite sports? _____
_____ What sports do you play, if any? _____

Do you like indoor _____ or outdoor _____ activities?
What? _____

Do you like music? ____ What kind do you like? _____

Do you dance? _____ Do you play an instrument? _____

What would you like to do in F.A.S.T. this year? _____

What careers would you like to learn about? _____

What schools, college, education, training would you like to
learn about? _____

Are there businesses you would like to visit? _____

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Attachment B (developed for this research - students form)

Did you have any career goals prior to FAST? _____

If the answer was yes, what was your goal?

Has your career goal changed? _____

If the answer was yes, what is your new goal?

What is your education status at the present?

Additional Comments or Suggestions:

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Attachment C (cover letter, evaluation and survey forms -
employers)

Page 1

Melody Goforth, Coordinator
(205) 722 6830

AVEX Electronic Inc.
4807 Bradford Drive
Huntsville, AL 35805

Dear

Attached is a FAST Summer Hire Evaluation form and a survey sheet. The FAST program is a community program which motivates and prepares middle and high school students with disabilities to further their education and achieve high tech and professional employment. The opportunity to compete for Summer Hire Employment is an important part of the program. It was developed for the following reasons:

- * Career Exploration Opportunity
- * Build self-esteem
- * Develop social skills and work ethics
- * Motivate students (requirement are to be a full time student, C average and above and participate in other program activities)
- * Show students that persons with disabilities can be productive and that they need to set goals to succeed
- * Show students that jobs are not designed for persons with disabilities but, that the work place can be made accessible for qualified individuals.

(College students are also offered the chance to compete for summer hire opportunities if they meet the above requirements)

The purpose of the evaluations and survey is to help us evaluate the students performance. To see if the student understands he/she must compete with his/her not-disabled counterparts; or if the student expects special treatment because of his/her disability. This information will hopefully alert us to problem areas that we need to address.

I would appreciate your response, be fore 10 November 1992.

Sincerely,

Melody Goforth

enclosures

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Attachment C

Page 2

Melody Goforth, Coordinator
(205) 722-6830

AVEX Electronic Inc.
4807 Bradford Drive
Huntsville, AL 35805

Evaluation of FAST Students in Summer Hire, Co-op, Stay-in-School programs

Please check the appropriate statement that will give a description of the student employee's performance. Comments on how the program could be improved, students better prepared, and types of skills needed are encouraged.

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

COMMENTS

- Works very poorly with others
- Has some difficulty working with others
- Gets along satisfactorily with others
- Works well with others
- Exceptionally well accepted by others

INITIATIVE

- Must be pushed frequently
- Hesitates
- Does all assigned work
- Goes ahead independently at times
- Proceeds well on his/her own

QUALITY OF WORK

- Very poor
- Below average out-put
- Average
- Very Good
- Excellent

QUANTITY OF WORK

- Low out-put slow
- Below average out-put
- Normal amount
- More than average
- Unusually high out-put

DEPENDABILITY

- Unreliable
- Sometimes neglectful or careless
- Usually dependable
- Above average in dependability

JUDGEMENT

- Consistently uses poor judgement
- Often uses poor judgement
- Usually makes the right decision

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- Above average in making decision
- Exceptionally mature in judgement

Attachment C

Page 3

ABILITY TO LEARN

- Very slow to learn
- Rather slow in learning
- Average in understanding work
- Learns work readily
- Learns work exceptionally well

ATTITUDE - APPLICATION TO WORK

- Definitely not interested
- Somewhat indifferent
- Average in diligence and interest
- Very interested and industrious
- Outstanding in enthusiasm

ATTENTION IN REGARD TO TIME

- Always tardy
- Often tardy
- Sometimes tardy
- Usually punctual
- Always punctual

MATURITY-POISE

- Quite poised and confident
- Has good self-assurance
- Average maturity and poise
- Seldom asserts himself/herself
- Timid
- Brash

EFFECTIVE RESULTS WERE OBTAINED WHEN DIRECTIONS WERE GIVEN

- Verbal
- Written
- Demonstration
- Combination of above (which?)

HOW DID THE STUDENT RESPOND TO SUPERVISION?

- Very poor
- Below average
- Average
- Very good
- Excellent

Signature (Supervisor) _____

Date _____

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Attachment C
Page 4

F.A.S.T., Inc. Survey

Before employing the F.A.S.T. summer worker, I would describe my feelings about hiring a worker with a disability as:

- a) offering charity
- b) reluctant
- c) having no concerns
- d) having significant concerns

Comments: _____

I worked with a F.A.S.T. student who had _____ disability.

Comments: _____

After my experience with the F.A.S.T. summer worker, I would describe by feeling about hiring a worker with a disability as:

- a) having significant concerns
- b) having no concerns
- c) motivated by charity
- d) reluctant

Comments: _____

My opinions about hiring persons with disabilities

- a) changed for the positive
- b) changed
- c) did not change
- d) changed for the negative

Comments: _____

The summer worker with a disability

- a) worked harder than co-workers
- b) worked no different than co-workers
- c) worked with less motivation

Comments: _____

The most difficult barrier to working with the person with the disability was _____

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Attachment C

Page 5

The work place had

- a) to be significantly modified to accommodate the summer worker with a disability
- b) no modifications necessary to accommodate the summer worker with a disability
- c) some minimal modifications necessary to accommodate the summer worker with a disability

Comments: _____

Modifications made

- a) were more than \$1,000
- b) were less than \$1,000
- c) insignificant
- d) none were made

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Attachment D (Volunteers Survey)
Page 1

F.A.S.T., Inc.
FUTURE ASSETS, STUDENT TALENT

Following questions and areas for comments are to determine a change in attitude toward recognizing abilities rather than a focus on disabilities; feed back is needed also on what you think about the F.A.S.T. program.

Before working with F:A.S.T. program/students, I would describe by feelings about High-tech and professional career goals/opportunities for youth with disabilities were:

a) Great idea but, _____

b) Seem like a nice thing to do _____

c) Knew the students had the potential and wanted to be involved in motivating and preparing them. _____

My Feeling toward youth with disabilities was:

- a) I felt sorry for them
- b) I felt protective of them
- c) I felt uncomfortable around them

Comments: _____

After working with students either through work-shops / shadowing / tours / mentors / board / committee my feelings toward F.A.S.T. students goals and career potential is:

If other co-workers were involved did they feel uncomfortable about being involved? _____

Has there been a change in your attitude toward persons with disabilities? _____

Were you able to focus on the abilities of the student rather

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than the disabilities? _____

Attachment D

Page 2

Did you have to make any modifications?

Equipment _____

Attitude _____

Presentation _____

Communication _____

Comments: _____

Opinion of the F.A.S.T. program and its goals: _____
