



Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 2, 2018

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Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awards over \$444,000 in grants for integrated employment and inclusive education

Richmond, Va. – The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is pleased to announce it is awarding three federal grants, administered by the Board, for over \$444,000. The grants are designed to increase competitive, integrated employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and increase the number of students with developmental disabilities and other disabilities in K-12 education who are educated in inclusive settings.

The first grant for \$150,000 has been awarded to William & Mary (W&M) for its project, *The Next Move @ William & Mary: An Innovative Approach to Training Young Adults with Disabilities*. The project will increase competitive, integrated employment in southeastern Virginia through a university-community organization partnership that will feature internships and onsite training for adults with developmental disabilities.

“William & Mary has a deep commitment to inclusive hiring practices,” said John Poma, chief human resources officer at William & Mary. “*Next Move* will provide the opportunity for W&M employees to form transformative relationships with young adults with disabilities. I can’t think of a better program to bring to W&M to add to the richness and diversity of our campus community.”

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Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) has received a grant for \$150,000 for its project, *Promoting Integrated Employment with ABLES Teams*.

The project aims to develop and implement training in the Roanoke and Lynchburg areas of the state by and for persons with developmental disabilities, business leaders, and employment services staff to increase opportunities for community based integrated employment for persons with developmental disabilities.

“We are so excited to work with self-advocates with developmental disabilities in the Roanoke area to build ABLES teams and educate the region on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities,” said Jennifer McDonough, principal investigator with VCU. “A key role of this project will be held by self-advocates who will help develop and conduct training to businesses, employment specialists and individuals with disabilities. We will also have Stand Up, Inc., and Ed Turner (self-advocate and former member of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities) on our team, which will make a perfect pairing!”

The third grant for \$144,187 has been awarded to Radford University for its project, *Building Inclusive School Communities through Culture Shift, Collaboration, and Coaching (3 Cs Inclusion Project)*. The project aims to support inclusion implementation plans that increase the capacity of schools in the southwest areas of Virginia to sustain an inclusive academic, social/emotional, and physical environment that serves students with disabilities including those with developmental disabilities through targeted technical assistance.

“Inclusive education has been identified as a critical area of need in Virginia public schools as a practice to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities,” said Liz Altieri, an associate professor with Radford University and project co-director. “There is ample documentation of the effectiveness of inclusive educational practices that warrant support for a project designed to create two model school divisions – one county and one city – to build capacity and achieve systems change.”

“The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is delighted to be working with these three great institutions,” said Heidi Lawyer, the Board’s executive director. “The Board is committed to improving opportunities for students with developmental disabilities to be educated in inclusive settings and to helping create and promote business policies and practices that support competitive integrated employment. These grants support the Board's mission, the Commonwealth's Employment First Policy and the Governor's focus on improving educational outcomes for all students.”

VBPD serves as the Developmental Disabilities Council for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The projects funded by these grants will help the Board meet the goals set forth in its 2017-2021 five-year federal state plan. For more information about the Board and its grant activities, state plan, or other work, please [visit the Board’s website](#).

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