Access to employment is one of the greatest challenges facing Americans with disabilities. Only one in four college students with disabilities is employed, leading to poverty rates twice the national average.¹

Those who do secure employment face lower earnings than their peers: In Massachusetts, graduates with disabilities earn, on average, nearly $16,000 less than nondisabled graduates.²

Low employment has roots in both how universities prepare students with disabilities for careers and how these students are recruited and hired. Known factors include:

- Lack of collaboration between campus offices of career services and disability services.
- Confusion among universities and students about whether a student should disclose his/her disability during the hiring process, leading to missed opportunities for students to be reached by employers.
- Lack of mechanisms for employers to reach these students after graduation.

**THE ISSUE**

**A SOLUTION**

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) is a private, non-profit organization that promotes full participation of America’s 57 million people with disabilities, with a focus on increasing employment opportunities for the 80-percent of unemployed working-age Americans with disabilities. NOD works with leading employers and partners with educational and philanthropic institutions to pilot innovative approaches to disability inclusion, then scales effective models for broader impact.

The Campus to Careers program will develop an employment pipeline for college students with disabilities in Boston. NOD will work with participating universities and employers to overcome barriers and fine-tune recruitment practices to more effectively reach these students. NOD will track results – including employment outcomes for participating students, employers, and universities – and report out for adoption across the country.

To design and implement Campus to Careers, NOD has partnered with Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, an organization that connects college students with disabilities with employers, and the University of Massachusetts Medical School’s Work Without Limits initiative, a Massachusetts consortium of employers dedicated to strengthening disability inclusion.³

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The project team will:

- Select and work with approximately seven employers to facilitate connections between them, and universities, and students and graduates with disabilities. The project team will provide disability inclusion training for recruiters and hiring managers, deliver meaningful access to candidates with disabilities, and develop effective connections to campus disability and career services offices.
- Select and assist approximately ten universities by training career and disability services staff, fostering better connections between those offices and employers, ensuring students and graduates with disabilities have access to employment opportunities, and employers have the talent pipelines.
- Work and follow up with participating college students and recent graduates with disabilities to ensure they receive support to become “job ready” and make effective connections to employers for both internship and full-time employment opportunities.

Anticipated outcomes include:

- Internships and full-time, professional employment opportunities for students with disabilities;
- Changes in employer practices, in particular campus recruitment, to include new methods of recruiting, interview techniques, job descriptions, and skill/experience requirements;
- Demonstration of which specific services are most effective to and valued by employers in changing practices and building a pipeline of professional talent amongst students with disabilities; and
- Development of new or enhanced relationships between employers with disability and career services offices.

Given the need for effective models linking employers and qualified candidates with disabilities - along with Boston’s rich ecosystem of higher education institutions and employers motivated to hire top talent - Campus to Careers represents a unique opportunity. Not only will NOD’s expertise in developing successful employment programs help students with disabilities transition from college to careers, but more notably, the program will determine which specific services deliver results-driven outcomes demanded by leading employers and, ultimately, create a suite of services that will be shared and repeated for broader impact.

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¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics.
³ In addition, NOD has engaged a third party evaluator to inform program design and mid-course corrections, report outcomes, and determine effective strategies. During the first year and at the end, participants will convene to discuss lessons learned, program outcomes, and needed refinements.
Participating University Considerations

DETAILS

- Project Team: Representatives from the National Organization on Disability (NOD), Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD), and Work Without Limits (WWL)
- Location: Boston and suburban areas
- Length: Two years: Summer 2017 – Summer 2019, which includes the academic years of 2017 - 2018 and 2018 – 2019
- Services Provided: onboarding, training, customized campus recruitment and services, data collection, and evaluation

CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION

- Submission of statement of interest and disability inclusivity assessment
- Ten universities with a strong presence in the Greater Boston area and willingness to ensure collaboration between campus offices of disability services and career students
- Participation in third-party evaluation
  - Confidential data-sharing regarding students and graduates with disabilities, as well as training and career readiness programs, and employment rates and salary ranges for these students

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

- Assessment of each university’s current disability inclusion practices
- Training in disability etiquette for career and disability services offices and other college personnel
- Training in career readiness, resume writing, interviewing for disabled college students and graduates
- Development of new or enhanced relationships with leading employers committed to hiring college students and graduates with disabilities
- Information on and exposure to leading best practices in disability inclusion

TIMEFRAME

- Fall 2017-Spring 2018: college recruitment events/supports; other services as needed
- Summer 2018: Year One convening regarding lessons learned
- Fall 2018-Spring 2019: College recruitment events/supports; other services as needed
- Summer 2019: Year Two convening regarding lessons learned, final evaluation
- 4x/year: Confidential data and evaluation shared with third-party evaluator

For information, please contact our Felicia Nurmsen, Program Director, Campus to Careers
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