$250,000 Kessler Foundation Grant to Investigate How Students with Disabilities Find Work after College

Foundation’s Signature Employment Grant given to University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability to examine the employment experiences of recent college graduates with disabilities.

EAST HANOVER, N.J. (PRWEB) February 03, 2020 -- Kessler Foundation has awarded a two-year, $250,000 Signature Employment Grant to the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability. They will investigate the experiences of recent college graduates with disabilities as they transitioned into the workplace, including experiences related to career planning and preparation, searching for a job, disability disclosure, onboarding, and accommodations.

The grant is part of over $2.4 million in grants awarded by Kessler Foundation in 2019 to organizations across the U.S. to support initiatives that create and expand job training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The UNH Institute on Disability will design and field an online survey to 4,500 individuals (2,250 with disabilities and 2,250 without disabilities) to investigate the transition from higher education to employment. The participants, all of whom will have graduated college within the last five years, will answer a 15-minute survey consisting of multiple choice and open-ended questions. The results will advance knowledge of the challenges and successes faced by college graduates with disabilities when preparing for, seeking, and obtaining employment.

On July 26, 2020, it will be 30 years since the ADA was passed addressing discrimination against people with disabilities in education and employment. Individuals with disabilities now comprise about 11% of college students, which matters because educational attainment is associated with gainful employment. “Although the employment gap between people with and without disabilities persists, employment prospects are favorable for people with disabilities who have college degrees,” explained Elaine E. Katz, MS, CCC-SLP, senior vice president for grants and communications at Kessler Foundation. “Yet, research is lacking about the ways college graduates with disabilities successfully navigate barriers to find work.”

This survey will address this gap in knowledge by researching several key questions—what supports and services were most helpful to recent graduates during college, what kinds of jobs did they find, how did they decide whether or when to disclose their disabilities to employers, and what were employers’ attitudes toward them?

“Findings from this research will support the development of interventions and tools to improve employment outcomes and increase the degree to which college pays off for people with disabilities,” said Kimberly Phillips, UNH research assistant professor. “College career and vocational rehabilitation counselors will benefit from a greater understanding of the barriers and opportunities unique to people with disabilities within higher education and when seeking work after completing a degree.”

This survey is part of a larger effort in partnership with Kessler Foundation to generate new, actionable information to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. This work builds on two prior projects, in 2015 looking at workers with disabilities who were striving to work, and in 2017 where job supervisors were surveyed for their perspectives on employing workers with disabilities.
About the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability

The University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability was established in 1987 and is a University Center for Excellence in Disability working to improve knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of people with disabilities and their families. Through innovative and interdisciplinary research, academic, service, and dissemination initiatives, the Institute on Disability builds local, state, and national capacities to respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families. The Institute promotes full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons by strengthening communities and advancing policy and systems change, promising practices, education, and research. For more information, visit iod.unh.edu.

About Kessler Foundation

Kessler Foundation, a major nonprofit organization in the field of disability, is a global leader in rehabilitation research that seeks to improve cognition, mobility and long-term outcomes, including employment, for people with neurological disabilities caused by diseases and injuries of the brain and spinal cord. Kessler Foundation leads the nation in funding innovative programs that expand opportunities for employment for people with disabilities. For more information, visit KesslerFoundation.org.

Apply Now

Kessler Foundation is accepting applications now for its 2020 grant programs. To learn more and to apply, please visit our website. Signature Employment Grants applications are due February 14, 2020. Community Employment Grants applications are due by April 6, 2020. Inquires accepted for Special Initiative Grants on a rolling basis.

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Contact information:

Kessler Foundation
Carolann Murphy, PA
973-324-8382
CMurphy@KesslerFoundation.org

Gerth
973-323-3675
RGerth@KesslerFoundation.org
Contact Information
Carolann Murphy
Kessler Foundation
http://kesslerfoundation.org
973-324-8382

Rob
Gerth
http://kesslerfoundation.org
973-323-3675

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