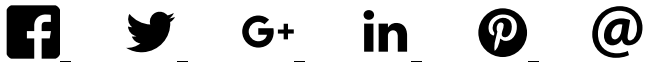


https://www.glasgowdailytimes.com/news/lifestyles/wku-receives-grant/article_1f041d60-3c87-11ea-9222-5bbef6b8ccd6.html

WKU receives grant

SUBMITTED

Jan 21, 2020



The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has awarded a \$246,863 grant to Western Kentucky University Public Broadcasting to develop and expand its workforce development training program for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The grant, “Embracing Differences, Finding Strengths: A Public Broadcasting Model for Autism Inclusion,” is led by project directors Molly Swietek and David Brinkley, director of WKU Public Broadcasting.

“The most significant goal of this Education Innovation grant is for WKU Public Broadcasting to serve as a model organization for hiring and employing individuals with ASD,” said Swietek. “Through partnerships with the Kelly Autism Program at the WKU Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex; area businesses and organizations; and other public media stations across the country, we intend to replicate our efforts and serve as a leading organization for ASD inclusion in the workforce.”

WKU Public Broadcasting received a \$10,000 planning grant from CPB in 2018 to research community educational needs and develop a project addressing those needs. WKU Public Broadcasting is one of four to receive additional funding from CPB to help implement and extend the project over a two-year period.

“WKU Public Broadcasting is uniquely positioned to lead this significant effort,” said Brinkley. “In 2017, we established the Brinkley Student Employment Fellowship program, which provides WKU students with ASD the opportunity to gain valuable job training and workforce development skills in the areas of television and radio production; engineering; marketing; community engagement; and general administrative duties.”

“Annually, we employ an average of 40 WKU students, including the Brinkley Fellows, and train them in all facets of public media services. With the tremendous support of WKU and CPB, we’re able to enhance our mission to serve the public in innovative and impactful ways,” he said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the estimated number of children with ASD is 1 in 59. Mary Lloyd Moore, director of the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex, said, “As these individuals transition to adulthood, it’s important to take a holistic approach and support their transition to the workforce, as well.”

“What’s so important about this grant opportunity is that WKU Public Broadcasting is providing a unique opportunity for our ASD college students to gain valuable job experience, and also educating the business community on the benefits of hiring neuro-diverse talent,” she said.

WKU President Timothy C. Caboni said the project meshes well with the University's vision.

“One of our key priorities at WKU is continually looking for ways to elevate our community, our state and our nation,” he said. “Through this grant, not only will students with ASD be educated in what's expected of them in the workforce, the workforce will be educated in the value of these students.”

Collaborators on the project include an interdisciplinary faculty team from the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. Drs. Christina Noel, Thomas Gross and Adam Lockwood will assist in developing assessment tools for evaluating the project's goals and outcomes.

In addition, an advisory committee of nationwide public broadcasting station leaders will work with the project team to ensure ASD inclusion is part of the national public broadcasting system.

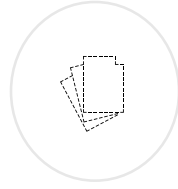
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