Building West Virginia's Diversity & Disability Fellowship Program: Creating a Successful Partnership with the WV LEND Project

Lashanna Brunson, MS, BCBA; Melina Danko, MS; West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities

West Virginia University CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DISABILITIES

The purpose of the Diversity & Disability Fellowship at the Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) at West Virginia University is to increase the diversity of trainees by creating a formal diversity fellowship experience that supports trainees from diverse backgrounds.

This program is designed to increase the knowledge of disability services and supports and improve workforce capacity to serve individuals with disabilities and their families.

The WV Diversity & Disability Fellowship Program partnered with the WV LEND project to develop and implement the training curriculum.

Objectives

- 1) Provide two graduate students with the opportunity to complete interdisciplinary clinic/observational and academic enrichment experiences
- 2) Provide students real-life experiences working with individuals with disabilities and their families through volunteer community-based field placements and capstone projects designed to foster systemic change
- 3) Disseminate the results and lessons learned with others interested in implementing similar fellowship programs

Program Description

We recruited graduate and professional level students who self-reported to be individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, with limited English proficiency, from underserved geographic areas (rural or urban), with disabilities, or individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.

Meet the Fellows



Nicoletta Ciampa
Elementary Education



Louma Sebaihi
RN, BSN - Family
Nurse Practitioner



Magda Rivera-Dillon ME, PMP, LPN- Health Sciences, Joint LEND Fellow

Joint Fellow

Through a partnership with LEND, a third student was selected to serve as a joint LEND/Diversity & Disability Fellow. The joint fellow served as a liaison between the two programs and evaluated the impact of the fellowship on the LEND project.



Fellowship Activities

Pre/Post assessment

Disabilities and the Family or Lifespan Disability Policy Course

Clinic/observational experiences - at least 5

Training opportunities - at least 5

Reflection papers on trainings and observations

Journal Club meetings - at least 4

Leadership seminars - at least 4

60-hour volunteer field placement

Knowledge sharing through AUCD & CED Trainee Listservs

Capstone project

Portfolio

Presentation for CED staff

Lessons Learned

- Partners for Advertising & Recruiting
- WVU Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- WVU Office of Graduate Education & Life (Social media and listserv)
- WVU Electronic Information Stations
- WVU Center for Black Culture
- Black Graduate Student Association
- Fraternities & Sororities
- Foreign Language Department
- Hispanic & Latino Student Organization
- LGBTQ Commission
- Refined recruitment requirements
- Reduced time requirements
- Refined pre/post assessment

Impact

- Program staff reported increased diversity among LEND applicants
- Fellows reported:
- More likely to advocate for individuals with disabilities
- Decided to pursue additional training
- More knowledgeable about disabilities
- More comfortable interacting with people with disabilities and their families

- Created the CED Diversity & Inclusion Committee



Future Plans

Establish a second-year curriculum

| Activity | First Year | Second Year |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Pre/Post assessment | X | X |
| Disabilities and the Family or Lifespan Disability Policy Course | X | |
| Clinic/observational experiences - at least 8 | X | X |
| Training opportunities - at least 8 | X | X |
| Reflection papers on trainings and observations | X | X |
| Journal Club meetings - at least 4 | X | X |
| Leadership seminars - at least 4 | X | X |
| 60-hour volunteer field placement | X | |
| Knowledge sharing through AUCD & CED Trainee Listservs | X | X |
| Capstone project | X | X |
| Portfolio | X | X |
| Presentation for CED | X | X |
| Mentor first year fellow | | X |
| Facilitate fellow participation in at least 2 diversity initiatives | | X |
| Shadow staff in WVU Diversity and Accessibility Services | | X |
| Participate on CED Diversity and Inclusion Committee | | X |

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