

Next Stop: UNH

Grant will help support IOD program for students with intellectual disabilities

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The UNH [Institute on Disability](#) (IOD) has received a \$150,000 grant to help build a more inclusive college experience for students with intellectual disabilities. The grant, which comes from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's John Vance ACCESS Fund, will help support the implementation of the [UNH-4U](#) program.



LAURA DAVIES IS SEEN HERE AT HER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE. DAVIES, WHO HAS AN INTELLECTUAL DIABILITY, WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND COLLEGE WITH HER PEERS. PHOTO: TOBEY PARTCH-DAVIES

“UNH-4U will combine traditional classroom time with inclusive housing options, peer mentoring and academic coaches from same-age peers,” explains Tobey Partch-Davies, IOD project director on poverty and disability. “We’re excited to establish a model that will help young people with intellectual disabilities achieve their life goals through meaningful careers and social endeavors in all aspects of adulthood.”

UNH-4U will be an inclusive two-year comprehensive transition program on the Durham campus. “It has the support of stakeholders and partners from across the university and the state,” explains Matt Gianino, associate director of the IOD. “Beyond improving academic and competitive employment outcomes, UNH-4U will provide an authentic campus life experience including opportunities for social development, independent living and recreational endeavors.”

The IOD was established in 1987 with a mission to promote full access, equal opportunities and participation for all persons. According to the institute’s research, more than 35,000 residents living in New Hampshire have an intellectual disability, and youth and young adults with intellectual disabilities are significantly more likely to be

underemployed and live in poverty than peers of their same age without intellectual disabilities.



GARRETT SHOWS IS SEEN HERE WORKING WITH HIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASSMATES. ONE OF HIS GOALS IS TO ATTEND COLLEGE. *PHOTO: DAN HABIB*

“The majority of these young people, particularly those from low-income families, lack access to meaningful post-secondary education and career opportunities that would help them change these outcomes,” Gianino notes.

Jason Vance, advisor of the John Vance ACCESS Fund, praises the new program: “Providing individuals with inclusive educational opportunities that contribute to rewarding work, career and personal opportunities was precisely the work of my father, John Vance, and the dedicated staff of ACCESS for over 20 years,” he explains. “We are excited by the partnerships involved both within the university and with outside partners and believe there exists a great need for this innovative educational model in New Hampshire and beyond.”

The IOD is seeking the additional \$150,000 in matching contributions needed to begin the admissions process for students and donations may be made through the [UNH-4U](#)

site. “The John Vance ACCESS Fund’s belief in our work is invaluable to this initiative,” Partch-Davies says.

Interested in learning more about UNH-4U? Visit the IOD website.

PRODUCER:

Jennifer Saunders | Communications and Public Affairs | jennifer.saunders@unh.edu | 603-862-3585

INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY



University of New Hampshire

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