**The Granite State Challenge:**

**Increasing access to inclusive higher education opportunities for students**

**with intellectual disabilities in New Hampshire**

***Project Abstract***

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 makes possible Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary programs (CTP) at institutions of higher education designed to prepare youth and young adults with intellectual disabilities for competitive integrated employment and independent living. Yet New Hampshire is one of the few states in the country that does not have such a model available for our state’s youth leaving secondary education systems. The aims of the ***Granite State Challenge*** project is to build capacity necessary for implementing an inclusive 2 or 4 year certificate program for young adults with intellectual disabilities at the University of New Hampshire (UNH)-Durham campus; and, to strengthen coalition building through information dissemination, policy development, advocacy, fundraising, knowledge translation, and planning activities that, long –term, increase the number of CTP models available in the state of New Hampshire.

For the past two years, the University of New Hampshire has coordinated a CTP steering committee. Co-coordinated by the Assistant Vice President of Community, Equity and Diversity, and the UNH Institute on Disability, the steering committee consists of UNH students, operating staff from housing, residential life, financial aid, student accessibility services, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, campus recreation; faculty, self-advocates, UNH Office of Advancement, NH Vocational Rehabilitation, NH Bureau of Developmental Services, NH Department of Education and school districts. A strategic planning retreat hosted in January 2017 confirmed commitments from university departments, state agencies, and potential funding streams for model implementation. Since that time implementation activities have been limited by the lack of paid staff time available to build essential infrastructure for the UNH model, and to strengthen partnerships necessary to promote higher education in NH for this student population. This grant will provide the resources for the following goals:

* To establish all approvals necessary for an inclusive CTP at UNH with sufficient operating funds for implementation adherent with the Think College standards.
* To strengthen demand for higher education opportunities by engaging in knowledge translation activities through a targeted webinar series, social media campaign, planned events, statewide networking, policy assessment, and information dissemination to increase, long-term, higher education opportunity at University System of New Hampshire and private colleges in the state of New Hampshire.