

## **JSU to Ease College Transition for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Thanks to \$456K Grant**

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The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Jacksonville State University a grant totaling \$456,398 to support a five-year project titled "On to JSU: Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities Transition into Higher Education."

"On to JSU is an innovative program that simply does not exist anywhere right now in our area of Alabama," said Dr. Janet Bavonese, head of the JSU Department of Curriculum and Instruction, who co-directs the project with Dr. Cynthia Connor, assistant professor of special education, and Lynetta Owens, instructor of special education.

The idea for On to JSU emerged from Transition University, a project designed to cultivate relationships between high school students with intellectual and severe disabilities and JSU special education teacher candidates. While Transition University provides socialization and educational enrichment, On to JSU will provide a two-year postsecondary educational experience aimed at improving economic and independent lifestyle options.

Participants will take part in academic classes and social events with non-disabled peers, reside on campus, and complete an internship in food service or business basics. They will be paired with a peer mentor and have the opportunity to enjoy an on-campus college experience while earning a certificate in food service or business basics.

"We are excited about the award and its potential to impact students with intellectual disabilities and their trajectory for successful independent living," said Bavonese. "Furthermore, we hope to use this program to educate the JSU community on intellectual disabilities, thereby impacting future business leaders, health care workers, teachers, emergency management personnel and community leaders."

To qualify for On to JSU, students must have a previous Individualized Education Plan with a diagnosis of intellectual disabilities. Prior participation in Transition University is preferred but not required. For more information, contact Bavonese at 256-782-8340 or [jbavonese@jsu.edu](mailto:jbavonese@jsu.edu)