

**INCREASING JOB
PLACEMENT RATES
FOR STEM STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**LAURA McCULLOUGH, KATHLEEN DEERY,
MICHAEL LAWLER, DEBRA HOMA
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT**

AAPT JANUARY 2015 SAN DIEGO, CA

THIS MATERIAL IS BASED UPON WORK SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION UNDER GRANT #1129682. ANY OPINIONS, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS MATERIAL ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION.

HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED

- **3-YEAR NSF GRANT FOCUSED ON IMPROVING JOB PLACEMENT RATES FOR STEM STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES BY TEACHING THEM SOFT SKILLS**
- **STEM MAJORS WITH DISABILITIES ARE LESS LIKELY TO GAIN EMPLOYMENT THAN THEIR COUNTERPARTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES**
- **2013 NSF DATA SHOWS 6.5% OF EMPLOYED SCIENTISTS & ENGINEERS HAVE A DISABILITY**
- **SOFT SKILLS ARE AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT PART OF GETTING AND KEEPING A JOB**

OUR PROGRAM

- RECRUIT SENIORS ABOUT TO GRADUATE FROM STEM PROGRAMS
- STUDENTS PARTICIPATE FOR 1/2 OR 1 YEAR IN THE PROGRAM
- PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM GET AN IPAD TO KEEP
- PARTICIPANTS USE IPAD DURING THE YEAR
- THREE STAGES IN THE PROGRAM:
 - CURRICULAR INTERVENTION
 - MENTORING
 - WORK-BASED LEARNING

CURRICULAR INTERVENTION

- **MODULE 1: PERSONAL AWARENESS**
- **MODULE 2: WORK & PERSONALITY**
- **MODULE 3: CRITICAL THINKING**
- **MODULE 4: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**
- **MODULE 5: JOB SEEKING SKILLS**

PERSONAL AWARENESS

- SELF CONFIDENCE
- SELF ESTEEM
- SELF EFFICACY
- PERCEPTION AFFECTING OUTCOMES

WORK & PERSONALITY

- THE “LUNCH BREAK” TEST
- MYERS-BRIGGS AND CONNECTING TO WORK
- WORDLE ACTIVITY ON 10-15 SELF DESCRIPTORS
- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

CRITICAL THINKING

- **PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS**
- **CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING/THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX**
- **PRIORITIZING TASKS**
- **TASK ORDER/MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS**

SOCIAL NETWORKING

- SOCIAL MEDIA'S PREVALENCE
- GOOD USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA (YOU CAN STILL BE ON FACEBOOK!)
- PROFESSIONAL PROFILE PICTURE
- GET LINKEDIN
- SCRUBBING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

JOB SEARCH SKILLS

- RESUME CLEANUP
- MOCK INTERVIEWING
- NETWORKING (IN PERSON & ONLINE)
- PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE

MENTORSHIP

- **STUDENTS ASSIGNED INDUSTRY MENTOR FOR SEVERAL MONTHS' CONVERSATION**
- **TOPICS FOCUSED ON SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, THINGS THAT STUDENT HAS IDENTIFIED AS INDIVIDUAL NEEDS**

WORK-BASED LEARNING

- **SHORT 40-HOUR INTERNSHIP FOCUSED ON LEARNING SOFT SKILLS**
- **NOT NECESSARILY IN THE STUDENT'S FIELD**
- **SURVEY EMPLOYER AT END OF EXPERIENCE**

WHAT ABOUT THE DISABILITY PIECE?

- EACH MODULE, DISCUSS CONNECTIONS TO
DISABILITY
- AS STUDENTS GET MORE COMFORTABLE, THEY
HELP EACH OTHER OUT BY SHARING STORIES
- HAVING DIFFERENT DISABILITIES IN ONE COHORT
EXPOSES STUDENTS TO DIFFERENT ISSUES

YEAR ONE RESULTS

- MAJORITY OF GRADUATES HAVE JOBS, MOST IN FIELD
- STUDENTS VERY HAPPY WITH PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT
- WANTED MORE FACE TO FACE TIME
- WANTED MORE MENTOR CONTACT BUT RECOGNIZED IT WAS THEIR JOB TO INITIATE
- WILLING TO PUT MORE TIME IN TO GET MORE OUT OF THE PROJECT

CURRENT THOUGHTS

- PROJECT FEELS AMAZINGLY SUCCESSFUL
- CONTACTED BY PEOPLE ACROSS US
- PROBABLY SHOULD START EARLIER IN STUDENTS' COLLEGE CAREERS
- DEFINITE NEED IN SOCIETY; NOW WE SHOULD PRODUCE GOOD RESULTS IN EMPLOYMENT

■ **WWW.SOFTSKILLS-HARDSCIENCE.ORG**

■ **THANK YOU!**