



NEWS RELEASE

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Able Trust Grant Will Fund Pilot Program at St. Petersburg College to Improve Employment Opportunities for Persons With Disabilities *“Student Employment Project” to help college graduates with disabilities enter the workforce*

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – In today’s difficult economy, college graduates are having a tough time finding employment in their chosen career field. A \$200,000 grant presented in St. Petersburg today will give a much-needed boost to graduates who have already proven their ability to overcome barriers in their path to independence.

St. Petersburg College Foundation is the recipient of one of two large grant awards to implement a model program helping new graduates with disabilities enter the workforce. The nonprofit Foundation will utilize the three-year grant from The Able Trust to assess, prepare and place college graduates with disabilities in professional positions in their field of study.

“Our primary mission at The Able Trust is to help create successful employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities,” said Dr. Susanne Homant, President and CEO of The Able Trust. “The grant we are providing to the St. Petersburg College Foundation for this model program was a natural fit for The Able Trust. With these funds, they will be able to put into place programs that will help prepare college students with disabilities to live a productive life and experience the highest degree of independence—which includes integrating them into the workforce.”

The Student Employment Project is a collaborative team effort of staff resources at St. Petersburg College to work with 60 students and to assist at least 30 of them to gain employment that matches their career goals and education over the three years of the grant. The program will create a Job Placement Specialist who will work to develop employment opportunities, coach students in workplace behaviors, resume development and job interview skills. The program will have a team of expert staff to further assist with job placement including the Disability Resource Office, Men Achieving Excellence program, Women on the Way program, the Veteran Services Coordinator and the Internship Coordinator. Support groups, transportation assistance and financial planning will also be made available to participants of the program.

“We are extremely grateful for this grant from The Able Trust,” said Frances Neu, executive director of the St. Petersburg College Foundation. “It will enable us to help persons with disabilities complete the process of learning to live independently. Preparing them with the proper training and skills is one thing; ensuring that they actually get hired is another. And that’s what we plan on doing with this program.”

Employment for persons with disabilities is much lower than for persons without disabilities. A 2010 Harris Interactive survey titled “The ADA, 20 Years Later,” the Kessler Foundation and the National Organization on Disability (NOD) found that only 21% of persons with disabilities aged 18–64 are employed full- or part-time, far below the 59% reported for persons without disabilities. The model program will help open doors and improve job opportunities for people with disabilities who have armed themselves with the education and skills required to succeed as professionals. Ensuring that the underrepresented disability community can find employment appropriate to their background and skills is a top priority of The Able Trust.

About The Able Trust:

The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501c(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities successful opportunities for employment. Since its establishment, The Able Trust has awarded over \$28 million to individuals with disabilities and nonprofit agencies throughout Florida for employment-related purposes, enabling thousands of Florida’s citizens with disabilities to enter the workforce each year. The Able Trust’s grant program supports a diversity of projects, including on-the-job coaching, supported employment, job skills-training, job development, employer outreach, ADA facility compliance, skills evaluation and other programs leading to employment. For more information about The Able Trust, visit www.abletrust.org or call 850-224-4493.

About St. Petersburg College Foundation:

The St. Petersburg College Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) corporation chartered under Florida statutes, and is a direct support organization of St. Petersburg College. In support of the vision and mission of SPC, the Foundation promotes the practice of philanthropy through partnerships with the community and accepts and prudently manages all gifts including cash, securities, property, bequests and trusts.