

THE ABLE NETWORK

March 2022

I am pleased to feature another partner in this issue -- the **Florida College Access Network (FCAN)**. As with other partners across Florida, FCAN is committed to strengthening our state's education and training in order to ensure we have a quality workforce that includes Floridians with disabilities.

As we highlight our partners and participate in various partner events, webinars and other activities, we see how truly important collaboration and relationship-building is to meeting the goal of positioning Florida as a leader in inclusive employment. This is also the goal of the Inclusive Florida Listening Tour we will embark on in the next few weeks.

It is crucial that we all work in concert, sharing information and learning from one another. I find that I can learn so much from simply listening when people talk, or in having a conversation. There are going to be a lot of opportunities to listen, learn and converse over the next few months.

In addition to The Able Trust Listening Tour there are a plethora of conferences and gatherings coming up. I hope that you can take advantage of some of the upcoming opportunities, and if you do, make sure to let me know. There is a good chance either me or another Able Trust staff member will be there, and we'd love to grab a cup of coffee.

I have listed below a few of these important resources and partners. If you are attending events or webinars not listed here, but would benefit other partners, please let us know and we will be sure to share them on our website, social media and regular communications.

- [CareerSource Florida](#)
- [FCAN](#)
- [FEDC](#)
- [Florida Philanthropic Network](#)
- [SBDC](#)
- [HR Florida](#)

Thank you for all you do every day to support the employment of persons with disabilities.

I hope to see you at an upcoming partner event!

Best regards,



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SHARE A "BEST PRACTICE"

Is there an employment program you consider a best practice and would like to see highlighted in an upcoming issue?

If so, please [click here](#) and send us your name and we will contact you for more information. We look forward to sharing these effective programs that will help us all in accomplishing our goal of expanding inclusive employment.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

Charleita Richardson, Executive Director Florida College Access Network



Q: What is the Florida College Access Network?

FCAN is at the heart of a movement to ensure today's students are prepared for tomorrow's jobs. By 2025, 2/3 of all new jobs will require some education beyond high school. Our work is focused on helping those who tend to be underserved in higher education – including those with disabilities – prepare for and succeed in education beyond high school. We do our work in three primary ways:

- Research, data, and advocacy that help leaders make informed decisions and understand the complex issues within postsecondary degree and certificate attainment.

- Local coalition-building that brings various sectors together to

collaborate on removing barriers to student success in higher education and in connecting students to workplace experiences and careers.

- Statewide initiatives called College Ready Florida that provide free resources to schools and community-based organizations so that students have help planning for their future, applying to college or a career/technical program, completing the FAFSA that helps pay for their education and celebrating their plans.

Q: What is FCAN doing this year that you are most excited about?

We have partnered with many statewide organizations to co-host College 101 in the [fall](#) and [spring](#) so that students, no matter their zip code or circumstances, can learn more about the college-going process. We also created the [Cash for College](#) campaign, to promote and educate students and families on ways to make college affordable through tools like the FAFSA. Students leave over \$300 million in money they would have qualified for (and not have to pay back) on the table in Florida each year, simply by not completing the FAFSA, so our campaign explains the steps in FAFSA completion and identifies resources for students. Four out of five college students in Florida use a combination of local, state, and federal financial aid to pay for college, yet too many students don't apply for that aid, which often delays their plans to continue their education. Then life gets in the way, and they never go back. We need to change this scenario.

Q: Is there one initiative or program that FCAN operates that you think is most important to improving educational attainment?

Affordability is the biggest barrier to continuing education after high school, so if I had to pick one, it would be to get everyone involved in the [Florida FAFSA Challenge](#), which seeks to increase the number of students completing a FAFSA by 5% or more each year. Florida is 5th in the nation in terms of the number of students who qualify for Pell grants, yet we are 48th in the nation in terms of FAFSA completion. FAFSA is what unlocks all types of financial aid, not just Pell grants so it's the most important step students can take to plan for their future.

Q: If one of our readers wants to connect with FCAN, what is the best way for them to do so?

Please contact FCAN by reaching out to Kathy McDonald at kmcdonald@floridacollegeaccess.org or by phone at 813-974-0141.

VIEWPOINT: BOARD MEMBER MAVARA AGRAWAL

What labor shortage? Floridians with disabilities are ready to work | Opinion

By MAVARA AGRAWAL
SPECIAL TO THE SUN SENTINEL | MAR 01, 2022 AT 11:58 AM



As our nation begins to shift policy addressing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we know that getting everyone back to work and school is essential to the economic, physical and mental well-being of our nation. Looking back at the Great Resignation — what's also been called the [Great Reprioritization](#) or [Great Reshuffle](#) — we are beginning to see an improvement in the overall unemployment rate. And yet, a stroll past local restaurants and shops reminds us that many employers are still [experiencing a worker shortage](#). These employers should look to one significant group in which unemployment remains high.



Notably, during the third quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate for people with a disability was 10.6%, which is [more than twice that](#) of people with no disability (4.9%). This is the opportune time for us to think about how we engage with these individuals. It's a win-win situation: quality jobs that provide financial security and professional growth for employees, and an untapped population of potential workers for the employer. We have a ready, willing and able workforce within our nation and in our communities: individuals whose success is

To view the complete article, [click here](#).

WHAT WE'RE READING

HR Magazine: How Managers Can Help People With Disabilities Advance

Whether an employee with a disability is afforded the same leadership development opportunities as other employees often depends on the individual's manager.



Leaders “need to look for ways to give people with disabilities opportunities to be visible in front of a group,” says PwC Tax Director Rob Rusch, a disability inclusion advocate. “If we live in a world where an individual in a wheelchair is visible, then it starts to break down that perception” that someone in a wheelchair may not be capable of performing a certain job.

Read the complete article for ways managers can provide advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities.

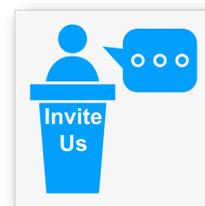
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more



Your support ensures Floridians with disabilities have opportunities



Forward this newsletter to other colleagues, and business and



We welcome the opportunity to

to gain meaningful employment.

To make your tax-deductible donation to The Able Trust, [click here](#).

community leaders who care about being more inclusive.

[Click here](#) to join our mailing list

share information about disability employment. Invite us to speak at your upcoming board meeting, conference or webinar.

[Click here](#) to fill out our Speaker Request form



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