

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

[CFDA No. 84.333]

**Demonstration Projects To Ensure Students With Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education; Notice of Final Priorities and Invitation for Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1999**

*Purpose of Program:* The Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education program provides grants to institutions of higher education (IHEs) to develop innovative demonstration projects. The purpose of the demonstration program is to provide technical assistance and professional development for faculty and administrators in IHEs in order to provide them with the skills and supports that they need to teach students with disabilities. The program will also be used to widely disseminate research and training to enable faculty and administrators in other IHEs to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities.

*Effective Date:* March 18, 1999.

*Eligible Applicants:* Institutions of higher education.

*Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:* May 5, 1999.

*Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:* July 4, 1999.

*Applications Available:* March 18, 1999.

*Available Funds:* \$5,000,000.

*Estimated Range of Awards:* \$100,000–\$350,000.

*Estimated Average Size of Awards:* \$100,000–\$290,000.

*Estimated Number of Awards:* 17.

**Note:** The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

*Project Period:* 36 months.

*Applicable Regulations:* The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 82, 85, and 86.

Because there are no program specific regulations for the Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education program, applicants should refer to the authorizing statute in Part D, Title VII of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). In preparing applications, IHEs should pay particular attention to the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), as detailed later in this notice. Applicants must address the requirements in section 427 in order to receive funding under this competition. Section 427 requires each applicant to

describe the steps it proposes to take to address one or more barriers (i.e., gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age) that can impede equitable access to, or participation in, the program. A restatement of compliance with civil rights requirements is not sufficient to meet the requirements in section 427 of GEPA.

**Waiver of Rulemaking**

It is generally the practice of the Secretary to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed priorities. However, in order to make awards on a timely basis, the Secretary has decided to publish this absolute priority in final under the authority of section 437(d) of GEPA (20 U.S.C. 1232(d)).

**General Statutory Requirements**

(a) Projects funded under this notice must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in project activities; and

(b) Applicants and grant recipients funded under this notice must involve qualified individuals with disabilities, such as students with disabilities with experience in higher education, in planning, implementing, and evaluating the projects.

**Priorities**

*Absolute Priority—Demonstration Projects To Ensure Students With Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education.*

**Background**

The Federal Government has previously funded a number of research, model demonstration, and training projects related to students with disabilities in postsecondary education. To promote the greater use of the findings generated by these projects and to further promote access to a wide range of higher education opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the Secretary establishes the following priority.

**Priority**

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority:

A project funded under this priority—

(a) Must coordinate activities with other federally funded projects, such as the Rehabilitation and Research Training Center on Educational Supports and the National

Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities.

(b) May not duplicate existing federally supported projects if the primary purpose of the proposed project is to conduct activities to synthesize research and information, as authorized by section 762(b)(2)(B) of the HEA.

(c) Must include letters of support from institutions of higher education that will be the recipients of the training if applicants apply for a grant to provide professional development and training under section 762(b)(2)(C) of the HEA.

**Invitational Priority****Background**

Research indicates that students with disabilities are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education than their nondisabled peers. Moreover, when students with disabilities attend postsecondary education, they are more likely than their nondisabled peers to attend two-year or vocational programs, rather than four-year, degree-granting institutions. Many of these students who attend two-year programs do not go on to four-year institutions. Furthermore, when students with disabilities do attend four-year, degree-granting institutions, they are less likely than their nondisabled peers to persist in these programs and, therefore, do not earn baccalaureate degrees. One way to create lasting change in an IHE's capacity to enable students with disabilities to persist in attaining a four-year degree is through widespread appropriate professional development for faculty and administrators. Focused efforts in this area will support systemic change in that institution and result in an environment that can effectively support the educational needs of students with disabilities in higher education.

**Priority**

Within the absolute priority specified in this notice, the Secretary is particularly interested in applications that meet the following invitational priority. However, under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1) an application that meets this invitational priority does not receive competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

Applications that propose to develop and implement innovative demonstration projects that will be incorporated into the university's overall plan to improve supports and services for postsecondary students with disabilities, including departments that previously enrolled few, if any, students with disabilities. This requirement is

essential to ensure that funded projects contribute to lasting and systemic change within departments, colleges, or university-wide. Applicants should include sufficient information, including letters of support from institutions that will be the recipients of the training, to demonstrate their ability to successfully carry out the proposed project.

#### **Selection Criteria**

In evaluating an application for a new grant under this competition, the Secretary uses selection criteria under 34 CFR 75.209 and 75.210 of EDGAR. The selection criteria to be used for this competition will be provided in the application package for this competition.

#### **Intergovernmental Review**

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early

notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

#### **FOR APPLICATIONS OR INFORMATION**

**CONTACT:** Amie Amiot, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Portals Building-6222, Washington, DC 20202-5247. E-mail: Amie\_Amiot@ed.gov Telephone: (202) 260-0415. Please fax your requests for an application package to (202) 260-9271. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of the application package in an alternate format, also, by contacting that person. However, the Department is not able to reproduce in an alternate format the standard forms included in the application package.

#### **Electronic Access to This Document**

Anyone may view this document, as well as all other Department of Education documents published in the

**Federal Register**, in text or portable document format (pdf) on the World Wide Web at either of the following sites:

<http://ocfo.ed.gov/fedreg.htm>

<http://www.ed.gov/news.html>

To use the pdf you must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader Program with Search, which is available free at either of the previous sites. If you have questions about using the pdf, call the U.S. Government Printing Office at (202) 512-1530 or, toll free, at 1-888-293-6498.

Anyone may also view these documents in text copy only on an electronic bulletin board of the Department. Telephone: (202) 219-1511 or, toll free, 1-800-222-4922. The documents are located under Option G—Files/Announcements, Bulletins and Press Releases.

**Note:** The official version of a document is the document published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: Title VII, Part D of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

Dated: March 15, 1999.

**David A. Longanecker,**  
*Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education.*

[FR Doc. 99-6642 Filed 3-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P