



## 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual U.S. Conference on DISABILITY

### *Ability Focused Advocacy: Breaking Barriers to Achieving Careers and Independence*

Thursday, October 5, 2023

8:30 – 8:45 a.m. Opening Remarks  
*Rev. Joseph G. Marina, S.J.*, President, the University of Scranton  
*Victoria Castellanos, Ph.D., RD*, Dean, The Panuska College of Professional Studies  
*Edward R. and Patricia Leahy, Honorary Conference Co-Chairs*

8:45 – 10:00 a.m. *Advancing DEI: Access for People with Disabilities* **1.25 CEU**  
*Mason Ameri, Ph.D.*

This keynote presentation explores the critical issue of disability employment, starting with an examination of current employment rates and contributing factors. It discusses practical strategies and potential pitfalls in the employment process, including innovative interview techniques, disclosure timing, impression management, assistive technology, and self-advocacy. The talk concludes with a discussion on advocating for enhanced company practices through effective DEI signaling and a holistic DEI strategy, serving as a call to action for advancing access and inclusivity for people with disabilities in the workplace.

10:00 - 10:30 a.m. Break & Networking

10:30 – 11:30 p.m. *VR - Building Careers Through Business Relations* **1.00 CEU**  
*Kathy West Evans, MPA, CRC Director of Business Relations, National Employment Team (NET) at CSAVR*  
*John P. Evans, BPA, HRDC*

The presenters will provide an overview of the work that has been done to promote a dual customer strategy within VR and the advocacy that led to legislative changes and amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The dual customer approach engages business in supporting the careers of individuals with disabilities through relationships that support the DEA&I work within a business. This approach focuses on building careers based on the engagement of, direct feedback and involvement of businesses who are working to recruit, hire, promote and retain these candidates. The session will include personal journeys, lived experience and the impact it has made on advancement in the careers and independence of VR customers.

11:30 – 12:00 p.m. *Nothing Changes Unless Something Moves* **0.50 CEU**  
*Michelle Bornman, M.Ed., CRC, Annuitant, PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation*

This session will provide a variety of experiences that demonstrate how local innovation and problem solving has led to new and even larger initiatives. The presenter will

also offer a simple process that can inspire participants to implement local innovation that can lead to replication and enduring future change.

- 12:00 – 12:15 pm Break & Networking
- 12:15 - 1:00pm. Lunch  
**Victoria Castellanos, Ph.D., RD**, Dean, The Panuska College of Professional Studies  
Blessing, **Dan Cosacchi**, Vice President of Mission and Ministry, The University of Scranton
- 1:00 – 1:30 p.m. **Taryn Williams**, Assistant Secretary, Department of Labor Office of Disability  
Employment Policy (ODEP) (**recorded presentation**) **0.50 CEU**
- 1:30 – 2:00 p.m. **The Greatest Challenge** (virtual presentation)  
**Theo W. Braddy**, Executive Director, Council for Independent Living **0.50 CEU**  
  
The speaker will provide a concise overview of the most significant societal challenge that predominantly impacts individuals with disabilities.
- 2:00 - 2:30 p.m. Break & Networking
- 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. **Interactive viewing of the award winning movie – CRIP CAMP** **2.50 CEU**  
  
After introductory remarks with director and disability advocate, **James LeBrecht**,  
The film will be paused at various points for discussion and questions with the audience.