

9-23-2008

## Press release : 2008 : 09 : 23 : Dukes Awarded Statewide Education Grant

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### Recommended Citation

Marquez, Melanie, "Press release : 2008 : 09 : 23 : Dukes Awarded Statewide Education Grant" (2008). *USFSP News and Press Releases*. 769.

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## Dukes Awarded Statewide Education Grant



Filed under [eNews Newsletter](#), [Homepage Articles](#) on Tuesday, September 23, 2008 by Author: Melanie Marquez.

Through a state grant funded for \$1.02 million annually, a USF St. Petersburg professor will lead a program designed to assist special education personnel in all Florida school districts to prepare students with disabilities for a successful shift from school to adult life.

Project 10: The Transition Education Network replaces the Transition Center previously run from the University of Florida. The grant, with operations based at USF St. Petersburg, has Lyman Dukes, PhD, associate professor of special education, as principal investigator and Jordan Knab, Ed.S., as full-time project director. Project 10 will be the primary conduit between the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services and school district personnel in addressing law and policy, effective instructional practices and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities.

"The goal is to impact every student with disabilities in the entire state of Florida," Dukes said. "We hope to eventually see reductions in our state dropout rate for students with disabilities, see an increase in graduation rates as a function of our work, and see an increase in the number of students with disabilities accessing and completing postsecondary education and also employment."

District leaders in special education, school-based transition specialists and classroom teachers work to provide students with disabilities the knowledge and skills needed to pursue further education, employment and to live independently. Project 10 initiatives will help implement practices for students to determine their personal strengths, preferences, and interests which will allow students and their families to better determine their post-high school goals. Instruction can run the gamut from traditional college preparatory coursework to instruction in daily living skills, leisure skills, community participation, understanding of health needs and communication skills. In its first year, Project 10 will focus on four initiatives: capacity building to implement secondary transition services; interagency collaboration; transition legislation and policy; and student development and outcomes. These initiatives will help provide training and technical assistance for personnel throughout the state working to improve the future success of students with disabilities.

"We believe students with disabilities can achieve the same quality of life outcomes as any other student completing high school in our state," Dukes said.

Dukes joined the faculty of the College of Education at USF St. Petersburg in 2001. He has published extensively in the area of disability in college settings and is currently co-editing a book titled, *College Students with Disabilities: A Practical Guide for Transition*. He received his PhD in Special Education from the University of Connecticut.

Knab, Project 10 director, served for five years as a research faculty member with the Florida Mental Health Institute at the University of South Florida. He was the director of the Transition to Independence Process Project, which focused on transition of youth with emotional and behavioral challenges. He received his Ed.S. from The George Washington University.

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