



TRANSFORMING LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Expanding access to technology can greatly improve independence, quality of life for Ohioans with disabilities

Many Ohioans with disabilities encounter obstacles in daily tasks and activities as well as in accessing education and job training. But these are barriers that technology can help overcome. Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) partnered with Columbus State Community College (CSCC) to demonstrate the effectiveness of navigation technology to improve access to education and employment for individuals with disabilities. By using BlindSquare, a smart phone application that uses Bluetooth to verbally communicate data received through a combination of GPS locations and Bluetooth beacons, a CSCC student with a visual impairment can now utilize seamless indoor and outdoor navigation support around campus.

- **Independence is enhanced through the use of technology.** Individuals with visual impairments often have to rely on sighted people, which causes them to be dependent on their guides' schedules and availability. Work is always being done to increase accessibility – the CSCC Office of Disability Services currently supports more than 300 students with blindness or visual impairments, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, mobility impairments, cognitive impairments, and traumatic brain injuries. Over the past three years, OOD has supported more than 80 students with disabilities at Columbus State Community College with the appropriate vocational counseling and equipment need to succeed in their studies.
- **New technology opens doors for people with disabilities.** The BlindSquare app offers verbal navigation within a three mile radius of CSCC, helping to decrease the barriers to accessing campus. Now users can ride the bus, walk from nearby locations or use ridesharing services to deliver them to their exact destination.
- **Partnerships guarantee the very best in technology and information.** Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities provided \$10,000 to CSCC for the installation of the beacons and development of the customized directional messages. Columbus State Community College provided location details and maps to improve access to its campus and training programs, as well as coordinated students for testing and feedback. Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) provided information on bus stop locations and bus routes to CSCC students who utilize the BlindSquare app.

BOTTOM LINE: Access to technology is important for everyone in our society, particularly for those with disabilities. Through the use of the BlindSquare application, provided in partnership through OOD, CSCC and COTA, more people will have the opportunity to experience independence and access education.