



NCTI 2009 Innovators Conference

Lunch Keynote

Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President, Disability Policy

Monday, November 16, 2009

Summary: Kareem Dale described how the Obama Administration has begun to lay the groundwork to bring about significant changes in education and technology for people with disabilities, including action from the FCC, the Department of Justice, and the commitment to education from IDEA and ARRA.

Discussion

- Technology/education is very personal for Kareem, dealing with disability as a person who is blind, AT has been primarily responsible for his ability to get his education. Window Eyes® and Braille Note® in particular helped him get his degrees. However, in his undergraduate work one year after ADA was passed, Kareem recorded his classes and would go home to write out the notes on a Braille writer, which took twice as long.
- It is important to support technology so that it is inclusive for people with disabilities. The commitment of this president and this administration is to make sure that all children with disabilities have access to technology to be successful in education shows the importance of this issue in our education system. This administration has set the groundwork to bring about significant changes in education and technology for people with disabilities. The U.S. is ready to ensure equal rights for people with disabilities around the world and is trying to lead from example by the top using the following strategies:
 - **FCC:** The FCC is leading the President's initiative for broadband access. If accessibility is not available from the beginning, it becomes a huge problem for the future. Julius Janikowski, who has a history of supporting technology and accessibility for students with disabilities, is committed to strengthening the disability rights office at the FCC to make a bigger and more important player, and will ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind.
 - **Department of Justice:** The President's campaign for the protection of civil rights for people with disabilities has a team at the Department of Justice, including Assistant Attorney General of Civil Rights Tom Perez and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Sam Bagenstos, which is committed to fulfilling the hopes of the community for people with disabilities.
 - **UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** Signing this convention signals this administration's recommitment to the protection of human rights and autonomy to people with disabilities around the world.



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- **Education:** The Department of Education is committed to equal education for students with disabilities. The historic commitment to IDEA with ARRA made evident that even when times are tough, people with disabilities are important. Because of the money from the recovery fund, people have been able to use technology and provide additional resources that may have had to have been cut. They are committed to keeping up the work for education, and working daily on improving the situation for students with disabilities across the country.

Discussion and Q & A

Question from Gil Garcia: Given the number of unemployed Americans, what would you say that other federal agencies absolutely must do to make sure that Assistive-type Technologies are made available to the unemployed workforce of the country so they become employable?

- **Kareem Dale:** Other federal agencies must provide services that make sure people have what they need to get employed. There are many people in place to help get things moving at different agencies. Several new initiatives began in October, including:
 - Schedule A training. The Office of Personnel Management will be leading this initiative with a job fair in spring 2010. They encourage all feds to come to the fair ready to hire people. This effort will train hiring managers in the federal government to improve and increase employment for people with disabilities.
 - The ARRA provided funding for educational rehabilitation insurance for people looking for jobs and provides funding for people find educational technology.

Question from John Weans: What is the administration doing to entice the private sector to employ people with disabilities?

- **Kareem Dale:** When the President returns from Asia, he will have a jobs forum on December 3rd. People with disabilities are represented at every event. One of the things for the private sector is for the White House to lead by example because “our house is not in order.” The White House is going to start working on employing people with disabilities. The White House meets with top companies in the private sector about employing people with disabilities and discusses public/private partnerships for people with disabilities. They will also continue to better publicize the advantages of hiring people with disabilities, which directly results in a better bottom line.