

Letter of Inquiry

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**CENTER FOR
MEDIA INNOVATION**
Point Park University



November 12, 2020

Mr. Matthew A. Groll
Allegheny Foundation
One Oxford Center, Suite 301
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Mr. Groll,

On behalf of Point Park University and Unabridged Press, please accept this inquiry to the Allegheny Foundation. We respectfully seek \$15,000 toward the All-Abilities Media Project, which focuses on training persons with disabilities in interviewing and digital media production. Over the course of the past two years we have facilitated the education more than 40 individuals with disabilities in introductory media skills. Your support would enable us to continue this valuable education service. Additionally, it would sponsor a four-part podcast and livestream video event directed toward educators of high school and college aged students focused on providing resources for those students with mental health issues. This will be used to further community involvement and awareness of the issues concerning students with mental health issues.

The All-Abilities Media project is a collaboration between Unbridged Press and the Center for Media Innovation at Point Park University. Unabridged Press publishes news and features writing, video and podcasts primarily about disability issues. Unabridged Press publisher and project manager of the All-Abilities Media Project Jennifer Swezda Jordan will be our leader and primary point of contact for this project.

The primary goal of this project is to utilize the skills of the students All-Ability Media assists to produce four podcast segments with Rachel Kallem-Whitman and Darah Thompson. Kallem-Whitman teaches "Unpacking Ableism" at Duquesne University's Psychiatry Department and is the author of [Instability in six colors](#). Thompson is a peer support specialist for people recovering from mental health breaks and struggles. These segments would include:

1. Kallem-Whitman and Thompson discussing their own experiences with teachers and school systems regarding mental health – both good and bad.
2. How each woman educates others about mental health wellness and struggles, as well as recommended resources.
3. A montage of voices from the courses taught by Kallem-Whitman – discussing their personal experiences with mental health challenges, successes and how schools did or did not help.
4. A similar montage of voices from those who Thompson supports discussing the same issues.

These segments will be accompanied by a self-care bingo game based on Kallem Whitman's book [Instability in Six Colors](#). The timeline for the project is to conduct interviews in the summer of 2021 with editing, marketing and publication occurring in fall of 2021.

The requested support will provide for top-level podcast and radio professionals, alongside Point Park University staff, faculty and students to oversee the team helping to produce this project. Production will be coordinated with on-campus support – including assistance with paperwork for the application process – that will ease access to the project for those interested but potentially otherwise challenged due to learning disabilities. These individuals have sought and not received adequate support for this from the state's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (we have been part of the communications and verified this). All Abilities Media is committed to maintaining inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities on our team, something which makes our work unique in the disability podcast space.

The Center for Media Innovation at Point Park has provided increasing support for our work, thanks to a grant from the Allegheny Foundation in 2016 sponsoring the launch of the CMI. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic they have provided technicians both virtually and on-site as needed. The CMI has committed to using one of their allotted federally sponsored work study student positions for the All Abilities Media Project. Finally, The CMI has allowed us to utilize its public relations department, creating opportunities to reach the broader community through their monthly newsletter, annual report and events. We are hopeful that you will reaffirm your belief in the important role The CMI plays in Pittsburgh by helping their team and ours with your support toward this project.

The All-Abilities Media Project is sustained through major donors, as well as smaller grants, donations and partnerships. Your support would be directed entirely toward the development of the upcoming podcast series outlined above. We are anticipating support from the FISA Foundation for a capacity-building training program in 2021 that would also assist this project.

Finding meaningful and diverse work continues to be a challenge for people with disabilities. Your support will enable us provide both education and community resources to assist in building a dialogue about the importance of mental health programs in regional communities. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Jennifer at 412-###-###. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Jennifer

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