



Burton Blatt Institute
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

NEWS RELEASE

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Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University meets with top White House staff on Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK – On Monday March 28, 2011, Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University Executive Director Michael Morris, Senior Vice President Gary Shaheen '86 M.P.A., and BBI Board of Advisor member John Robinson '90 NEW met at the White House with Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy Kareem Dale, Senior Policy Advisor Doug Rand, and two senior staff from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to discuss options for replication of BBI's [Start-Up NY/Inclusive Entrepreneurship](#) program and greater involvement of individuals with disabilities in the new [Startup America](#) initiative.

Startup America, announced by the White House on January 31, 2011, has two major goals: the removal of policy barriers that are holding back entrepreneurs as well as small businesses from growing the economy and creating new jobs; and second, building public-private partnerships that increase access to capital, education, and capacity building activities to stimulate small business startups.

As an entrepreneur with disability, Robinson shared his challenges in growing his business and the barriers of limited public awareness of the achievements of disabled business owners. Shaheen described the success of Start-Up NY/Inclusive Entrepreneurship, which has helped more than 60 individuals with disabilities establish new small businesses.

During the White House meeting, Morris also shared a short list of policy recommendations to improve coordination of capacity building activities to help entrepreneurs with disabilities across federal agencies and increase access to capital through enhanced performance requirements of banks and community development financial institutions.

“White House officials appeared very interested in BBI’s ideas,” says Morris. “Based on the discussion, BBI has been asked to prepare more detailed information on the proposed policy recommendations, and also provide further ideas on how to increase support for entrepreneurs with disabilities as part of Startup America.”

About the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University

BBI reaches around the globe in its efforts to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities. Officially launched in 2005, BBI builds on the legacy of Burton Blatt, former dean of SU’s School of Education and a pioneering disability rights scholar, to challenge thinking and attitudes to better the lives of people with disabilities. BBI engages in projects on civil and human rights, inclusive entrepreneurship, employment, and economic empowerment. With a staff of more than 60, BBI has offices in Syracuse, N.Y., Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Ga., New York, N.Y., and Tel Aviv, Israel. For more information, visit <http://bbi.syr.edu>.

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