Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

Office of Communications

John R. Kasich, Governor
Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

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Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities and Columbus State Community College Announce First in the Nation Service at a College to Assist People with Vision and Mobility Impairments

COLUMBUS, OH – Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) and Columbus State Community College announced today that Columbus State is the first community college in the nation to offer an innovative navigation support system for blind and low-vision students at its downtown campus.

Through OOD funding, the college is now navigable by smart phone technology through the free BlindSquare Event app utilizing Bluetooth technology and GPS beacons at key locations on campus like never before. The BlindSquare beacons interact with the app to guide users by supportive audio instructions around the school and to adjacent public transit.

Governor John Kasich joined OOD Director Kevin Miller and Columbus State President David Harrison, to announce the collaboration making it easier for individuals with vision impairments and other wayfinding disabilities to successfully pursue higher education and career advancement.

"Universities and community colleges across this state ought to fund this immediately," Kasich said. "There is a lot of progress that can be made, but we've got to do this together and make sure this is just the beginning. With Columbus State here, you're looking at the future of education."

"Embracing technology that supports assisting those with disability challenges is rapidly becoming the norm," Miller said. "Innovative approaches to removing barriers are necessary in this age of technology. OOD's partnership with Columbus State is a standard for which others should follow."

"Columbus State is proud to be a leader in serving people with disabilities among our students, faculty, staff and visitors," Harrison said. "Incorporating BlindSquare functionality advances our commitment to inclusion while furthering accessibility for anyone who can benefit from location and directional support."

BlindSquare works by determining a user's location using an iOS device's GPS capabilities and looking up information about the surrounding environment, which at Columbus State is provided by a series of beacons around campus and in select buildings. After finding directional information, the app speaks it in a clear, synthetic voice. It can track the user's destination and periodically announce the distance and direction while traveling, as well as mark locations so they can be found more easily later on.

OOD is the state agency responsible for assisting individuals with disabilities to gain meaningful employment, to live independently or receive disability benefits through the Social Security Administration. www.ood.ohio.gov.

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