

\$25 Million GROWWTH Grant Championed by FCBE Leaders

A community partnership led by the University of Memphis (UofM) received a record \$25 million Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative (TOPI) Implementation Grant for its Growing Relational and Generational Wealth for West Tennessee Households (GROWWTH) proposal. The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) Families First Community Advisory Board awarded the grant. The Fogelman College of Business and Economics' (FCBE) Center for Workplace Diversity and Inclusion (CWDI) and Crews Centers for Entrepreneurship are two of the several centers included under the UofM umbrella which is playing a key role with the GROWWTH collaborative.

The GROWWTH collaborative is comprised of lead agency UofM, three regional workforce boards, the Hooks Institute, and other local care providers. This grant will be used to mitigate benefit cliff effects and promote self-sufficiency for TANF (i.e., Tennessee Assistance for Needy Families) families.

The GROWWTH proposal was one of seven awardees selected from 17 finalists and an original pool of more than 80 statewide applicants. TOPI grants are designed to move families from a temporary safety net of benefits to self-sufficiency and economic mobility.

“The TANF grant awarded to the University of Memphis will be transformational to Southwest Tennessee both to its residents living in poverty and to its employers. Regarding the latter, the Center for Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in the Fogelman College of Business and Economics will play a key role in ensuring that local organizations have both the inclusive work cultures and clearly defined career paths to make them employers of choice for residents completing the grant's new GROWWTH Academy,” said, Dr. Kurt Kraiger, FCBE associate dean and chair of the Department of Management.

Experts from the CWDI are supporting GROWWTH's efforts to provide sustainable wages to TANF-eligible recipients while helping area employers build more inclusive workplaces.

“We are excited that Fogelman's Center for Workplace Diversity and Inclusion (CWDI) can play a critical role in the University's TANF grant,” said Dr. Kristen Jones, interim director of CWDI and associate professor of the Department of Management. “This not only shows that creating inclusive workplaces can play a major role in improving career outcomes for residents living in poverty, but that D&I plays an important role in seeking and obtaining research funding.”