Benjamin Wimett is an Assistive Technology Access Specialist working at the Assistive Technology Tryout Center in Rutland, serving the population of southern Vermont. He has worked for the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion in the College of Education and Social Services since 2014.

The role of Assistive Technology Access Specialist aligns itself well with the Our Common Ground values: Ben’s job is to provide specialized supports, training, demonstrations, and consultations for Vermonters with disabilities and aging-related needs. Integrity, respect, and innovation are all required when forming a relationship with clients and finding creative high- and low-tech solutions for their needs.

It is Ben’s own beliefs and dedication to justice, equity, and responsibility that make him an exemplary employee. Ben is excited to equip people with tools that allow them equal access, and when Ben works with a client, he also has a keen ability to bestow confidence. Clients leave his office with a sense of hope and possibility.

Ben’s efforts partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation and with educators, medical providers, individuals with disabilities, and related services professionals to improve the quality of living, learning, working, and playing for Vermonters is only the beginning of the work he has done that makes him deserving of this award. Ben has also used the Our Common Ground qualities of innovation, respect, integrity, justice, and most of all his sense of responsibility and openness to help improve the University of Vermont. Bringing his humanist perspective and lived experience to the table, Ben has facilitated discussions and action in the name of accessibility and inclusion on campus. He formed a committee within the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion to assess our own use of space, led an initiative to make a restroom not only power-chair accessible but also gender-inclusive, became an active member on the President’s appointed taskforce on physical accessibility, and co-led a professional development workshop during EDU@UVM to give other UVM employees the opportunity to start assessing their own spaces.

Ben encourages collective responsibility for this work through his positive, generous, and tireless attitude. He utilizes barriers as a catalyst for dialogue about the things that need to change. Ben’s honesty, compassion, and tolerance serve as a reminder that improvement occurs not in silence, but in collaboration.