



# COLLEGE AUTISM NETWORK

ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

## A New Home for CAN: Our NASPA Partnership

Starting January 1, the College Autism Network has a new home. [NASPA: Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education](#) is a well-established professional association with 16,000 members worldwide. Their interest in CAN has led to fruitful conversations and good advice about how we can best support students, professionals and families, and those conversations in turn led to an exciting offer: to become part of NASPA's family. The technical expertise NASPA can provide--website management, development of an online curriculum, member services (including this newsletter) and the planning and execution of the College Inclusion Summit, along with our shared values of inclusion, professional development and students at the center of our work--made this an ideal next step for CAN. Current CAN members will receive a free one-year NASPA membership with all of the many benefits their membership offers. We will continue to provide outreach and education beyond our official members through the College Inclusion Summit and our newsletter. We hope you will join NASPA and become a voice within the association for the support of students with autism.

To support these efforts, Lee Burdette Williams, CAN's Director of Higher Education Training and Development, has joined NASPA's professional staff where she will oversee CAN initiatives, including the Summit, an online curriculum, development of a speakers' bureau, and support of our scholars and researchers (CANVAS). Please contact [Lee](#) if you have any questions.

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## Program Spotlight: Beacon College Navigator PREP

College Inclusion Summit attendees had the opportunity to learn about an intriguing program offered by Beacon College in Leesburg, FL. Navigator PREP is “the first virtual transition-to-college program for neurodiverse students and their families.” It offers a highly individualized approach to address specific skill-based barriers to success in the transition to college.” Navigator PREP provides modules for participants that address skills like executive functioning, self awareness and emotional management skills. What’s particularly interesting about Navigator PREP is that it offers support for parents who are also making a transition of their own. The program provides parent webinars that cover crucial topics like financial aid, mental health and communication with campus professionals.

Beacon College is a small institution that focuses on students with learning differences, and Navigator PREP is part of their Transition Center. The program is obviously designed with a small college in mind, but there are aspects of it that are scalable, like parent webinars. For more information, check out their [website](#) or contact [Dale Herold](#), VP of Admissions and Enrollment Management.

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## Hechinger Report Features Campus-Based Autism Programs That Are Making a Difference

[This recent comprehensive article](#) about campus-based autism programs features CAN members and Summit participants UT-Chattanooga, Bellevue College, Eastern Michigan University and Marshall University. It’s a perfect article to share with campus colleagues who are new to this topic, or who manage resources and could use a better understanding of the higher ed autism landscape.

Some key points:

- Colleges are recognizing the growth in their populations of students with autism, and responding with increased support services.

- These programs cost money--either within the institution's budget or from families or state-based support. This means, of course, that some students do not have access to these programs.
  - The best programs offer a combination of social and academic supports.
  - Programs like the ones profiled here can have an impact on both the *recruitment* and *retention* of students with autism, and those students can graduate and go on to successful careers.
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## The Burkhart Center at Texas Tech is Hosting Another Think Tank!

Join our friends in beautiful Lubbock, TX for the [4th Annual Higher Education Think Tank](#) sponsored by the Burkhart Center for Autism Education and Research. This is a low-cost, friendly and informational couple of days (**March 24-25**), and a chance to visit with our CAN and Summit friends Wes Dotson, DeAnn Lechtenberger and Taylor Fidler. Registration is now open. Sign up by February 15 to get the early bird rate of \$250.

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## Upcoming Conference Presentations

Brad Cox and Lee Burdette Williams will be presenting at several conferences throughout the spring. Please encourage your campus colleagues to attend a session (you know how it helps to have an outside "expert" say the same things you've been saying):

- ASCA (Association of Student Conduct Administrators), Washington DC, Feb 4-8. Preconference and general sessions (Lee)
- ACPA: College Student Educators International, Nashville, TN, March 1-4. General session (Lee)
- NASPA: Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education, Austin, TX, March 26-April 1. General session (Lee and Brad)

CAN is also sponsoring the Sensory Room at NASPA this year!

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## CANVAS Spring Schedule

Please join colleagues from around the world for our monthly conversations about emerging research interests and trends in the world of autism-related scholarship. To be added to the mailing list, please contact Brett Ranon Nachman at [bnachman@wisc.edu](mailto:bnachman@wisc.edu)

- **Thurs, Feb 20 at 1pm EST**
  - Presenter: Amy Radochonski (College Living Experience)
  - Topical Focus: “Crosswalks” between postsecondary education institutions and independent autism programs
- **Thurs, March 26 at 11am EST**
  - Presenters: Dr. Jodi Duke and Dr. Grace Francis (George Mason University)
  - Topical Focus: Research on autistic college students and co-occurring mental health disorder; discussions on the impact of needs and coping strategies
- **Thurs, April 23 (time TBD)**
  - Presenter: Dr. Sean LaRoque (Mansfield Hall)
  - Topical Focus: Measuring autistic college students’ journeys to adulthood using the Pathway to Independence Inventory: Development, results and lessons learned at Mansfield Hall - a residential college support program for students with learning differences.
- **Thurs, May 28 at 12pm EST**
  - Presenter: Dr. Ryan A. Miller (University of North Carolina-Charlotte)
  - Topical Focus: Emerging research on the experiences of autistic LGBTQ college students

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## Contact Us

The CAN Newsletter is created by Lee Burdette Williams, Senior Director for Mental Health Initiatives and manager of the College Autism Network, a NASPA initiative. To suggest or contribute content, follow up on something you’ve read, or to share concerns, please contact Lee at [williams@naspa.org](mailto:williams@naspa.org).

NASPA, 111 K Street NE, 10th Floor, Washington, District Of Columbia 20002, (202) 265-7500

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