<u>**CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 8.13.21**</u>

People in Attendance

- Alex Sturm (Loyola Marymount University)
- Amanda Wynter (Purchase College)
- Amy Radochonski (College Living Experience)
- Andy Halpern-Manners (Indiana University)
- Becky Colgan (Gettysburg College)
- Beth Felsen (Spectrum Transition Coaching)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (NC State | College Autism Network)
- Cecilia Gigante
- Cindy Wu (Baylor University)
- Dan Burger (Frist Center for Autism and Innovation)
- Dayna Holbel
- Eric Endlich (Top College Consulting)
- Jane McLeod (Indiana University)
- Jess Monahan (University of Delaware)
- Kathryn Szechy (Wayne State University)
- Katie McDermott
- Kayden Stockwell (University of Virginia)
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Kim
- Lauren Baczewski (UCLA)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Margot Margarones (AACTE-CT)
- Patrick Dwyer (UC-Davis)
- Rachel Schuck (UC Santa Barbara)
- Sally Andersen (Link OT)
- Summer West (Universitat Kassel)
- Susanne Bruyere (Cornell University)
- TC Waisman (University of Calgary)

Meeting Plan

CANVAS Updates

- Join our CANVAS list-serv - Our primary means of connecting, sharing info
    - Click here to join
    - Send email to the list
      https://groups.google.com/a/collegeautismnetwork.org/forum/#!forum/can-canvas/joinby
      emailing can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org
- College Autism Summit (Oct 26-29)
    - Keynote Speakers

- o Lee shared that Pheedloop (our platform that we will be using) has a Summit countdown clock
- o Conference reviewers are currently reviewing proposals.
- o Pre-conference workshops for emerging programs and developing an employment pipeline will be held.

- **Autism-Specific College Support Programs Database** has launched!

SHARE A RESOURCE

Are you conducting any research studies that you'd like the community to know about? Read an interesting article recently? Discovered a cool resource? This is your chance to briefly share that news with the CANVAS group! List your name and any relevant links below so others may access it at their convenience!

- EdTech Magazine article on autism-supportive online colleges (Nachman mentioned it)
- Autistic input in social skills interventions published! (Jess Monahan shared this new article that debuted, with much of the additions input later in the manuscript process drawing from insights within the CANVAS community)
- Avoiding Ableist Language: Suggestions for Autism Researchers (Lee Williams talked about this helpful article)
- Announcing the launch of the Stigma and Autism Research Network, which is in collaboration with Dr. Monique Botha and Dr. Eilidh Cage. This has a similar listersev and meeting format to CANVAS, and also features a Discord. Talks and workshops are in the works. Join listserv here; Kayden Stockwell listed it)
- Livestream event on Wed, Aug 18 at 5pm PT/7pm CT/8pm ET for families: a Q&A with College Disability Services, featuring staff from three colleges (mentioned by Eric Endlich)

Research Presentation

Presenter: Dr. Jane McLeod (Associate Executive Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, and Provost Professor of Sociology; Indiana University)

Presentation: College and Beyond for Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum

Description: This presentation will describe the background, motivations, and (to the extent possible) preliminary results from the first wave of a panel study of educational, occupational, and health trajectories for college students with and without a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder. Data were collected from students at 10 post-secondary institutions in Indiana, in March 2021, through an online survey.

Presentation Notes

- The study's origins emerged from recognizing prior research on autistic college students. Often there are lower college graduation rates for autistic students, however. Jane mentioned the lack of employability among autistic college students, as well as common research issues entailing the lack of multi-site institutional studies and lack of non-representative samples, which hampers generalizability. There has been a lack of

attention to general theoretical models of college success. Prior studies have relied on binary indicators for autism and lack comparison groups at times.

- The current study extends research done as part of The Sociological Research Practicum in 2017. The Sociological Research Practicum offers grad students in Sociology the opportunity to engage in a faculty-led research study, many of which are pilot studies that may lead to more substantive efforts moving forward. This pilot entailed around 3,000 students from Indiana, with more than 100 students identifying on the spectrum. Among the many findings were that autistic students did not differ on the health front compared to students with other disabilities (although both groups of students differed from neurotypical students who did not report disabilities), were less likely to engage in internships, and were more likely to report academic challenges. Engagement with their academics was not different than their neurotypical peers. This was a cross-sectional study.
- She and her colleagues applied for a National Institute of Health (NIH) grant, and thankfully obtained funding. They were ready to send out a survey in March 2020, though that is when the pandemic hit. Initial data collection was delayed by a year.
- Their study focuses on educational, occupation, and health outcomes for autistic students, accounting for comorbid conditions. The research questions entailed six, including asking about the association of autism with educational, occupational, and health outcomes varying based on socioeconomic status.
- Their theoretical framework draws from prior research on success in higher education, and modules that "conceptualize postsecondary success as the end point in a. process driven by two broad sects of factors: pre-college experience and student engagement in college." Autism may influence college success directly, as well as through other personal attributes that inform their preparation in higher education. Institutional culture and resources are other factors that shape their college experiences.
- The study entailed a four-wave panel study, situated in Indiana. 46 institutions were eligible, and smaller colleges were left out of the sample due to not having many students. Both autistic and non-autistic students were included in the sample. A refreshment sample, incorporating new students joining the institution, will increase the number of students with autism over time. The initial students will be followed for four years. Interviews will be conducted with students at some of the smaller schools that could not be included in the survey.
- The survey instruments covered both general areas (e.g., academic experiences at current institution, parental education and occupation, health and well-being), as well as a COVID module that attended to its impact.
- The 2021 sample featured 2,925 respondents, including 93 on the spectrum (if they were in the registered sample or reported an autism diagnosis).
- Preliminary results entail the following:
  - No difference in educational aspirations.
  - College preparation varied; autistic students had lower high school GPAs and were less likely to take higher-level courses. Autistic students were more likely to be transfer students.
  - Autistic students had significantly lower GPA in college.
  - Autistic students had more challenges in time and course management.
  - No differences in studying abroad.

- o Autistic students were more likely to work with faculty on research projects.
  - o Autistic students reported having fewer close friends, and less likely to feel like they could rely on their friends regarding important issues.
  - o Students on the spectrum were less likely to be working for paid positions.
  - o Autistic students were more likely to report worse health outcomes.
- COVID
  - o No changes to college plans, in terms of expectations or courses
  - o Autistic students were twice as likely to illustrate their uncertainty about reaching their intended level of education.
  - o Students on the spectrum had increased poorer mental health, although it's worth noting that neurotypical students experienced similar increase.
- Next Steps for the Study
  - o The team will continue to analyze data from Wave 1.
  - o They will engage in a panel survey following many groups of students.
  - o Research will also encompass employing refreshment samples.

Q&A

- Kayden asked: "Will you be/were you able to follow any students that drop out during that time? Perhaps something an exit interview if the student is willing? I see very little work on autistic people who were in college but didn't finish their degree."
  - o Jane: Yes, they plan to follow up with students who drop out.

- Brett asked about how they interpreted some of the findings being rather disappointing in nature, and how that works in concert with encouraging signs.
  - o Jane: Autistic students engage in less binge drinking, for example. She also mentioned these distinct findings being worthy of further inquiry. Results may be analyzed based on institutional affiliation.

- Lee: "Do you have thoughts about the "autism-friendliness" of a campus and how that impacts students' experiences?"
  - o Jane: They are excited to explore institutional status, and perhaps other characteristics, that may influence the openness and friendliness of settings.

- Beth: "I'm curious about your preliminary finding regarding reproductive health. Is your sample of students on the spectrum large enough to try and figure out any differences among ASD subjects in this regard?"
  - o Jane: They have not explored this aspect in much depth yet.

- Jess: "Have you considered ways that you can get feedback on these findings (especially related to implications and next steps) from the autistic community? I think bringing these to an Advisory Board or council would be powerful and you'd likely hear recommendations that the research team didn't think of ."
  - o Jane: They would love to engage with the autism community more saliently moving forward. This led several CANVAS members to mention other resources that Jane could consult, including an article by Christina Nicolaidis and

colleagues that featured recommendations from AASPIRE (Patrick shared the link), working with Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (Beth mentioned the organization), and the value of having autistic community members in assisting with coding (per Kayden's experiences)

- Kathryn: "I am wondering about a survival analysis or time to event analysis to look at potential differences among those that remain in the study versus those that leave over time, as well as students that drop out of college and don't complete degrees. (You may have considered this already."
  - o Andy Halpern-Manners (Jane's colleague): The team should be able to explore that in their data.

Upcoming CANVAS Meetings

Friday, September 17 at 2 p.m. ET – **Dr. TC Waisman (Autism Training Academy)**

Friday, October 15 at 11 a.m. ET – **Dr. Hyejung Kim (Binghamton University)**

Friday, November 19 at 1 p.m. ET – **Dr. Mary Baker-Ericzén (San Diego State University)**