

CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 9-17-21

People in Attendance

- Alex Sturm (LMU/UCLA)
- Amy Accardo (Rowan U)
- Annette Bade (Nova Southeastern University)
- Ariana Riccio (EDC)
- Auston Stamm (Saint Mary's University)
- Ava Gurba (Stony Brook University)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (CAN | NC State University)
- Brian Irvine (ACER, University of Birmingham, UK)
- Christy Giambastiani (Sonoma State University)
- Christy
- Cindy Wu (Baylor University)
- Courtney Butler (Rutgers University)
- Dan Burger (Vanderbilt University | Frist Center for Autism and Innovation)
- Doug DeHaan (Towson University- Hussman Center for Adults with Autism)
- Eric Endlich (Top College Consultants)
- Florencia Ardon (Cornell University)
- Hyejung Kim (Binghamton University)
- Jackie Lorraine (Washington University in St. Louis/Maryville University)
- Jennifer Williamson (University of Calgary)
- Jess Monahan (University of Delaware | Spectrum Scholars)
- Jessica Millington (University of Sussex)
- Jill Underhill (Marshall University)
- Jodi Duke (George Mason University)
- Jong-Woo Suh (University of Alabama)
- Jordan Spencer (Mississippi State University)
- Kathy Dow-Burger (University of Maryland-College Park)
- Katie McDermott
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Kirstie Pickles (University of Nottingham, UK)
- Kristen Gillespie-Lynch (CUNY)
- Lauren Baczewski (UCLA)
- Lauren Mathews (University of North Texas)
- Laurie Ackles (RIT | Spectrum Support Program)
- Lawrence
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Lindsay Blankenship (NYU Langone)

- Lindsay Hill (Michigan State University)
- Lisa Pennisi (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
- Maratea Cantarella (Hunter College, Silberman School of Social Work | TECA2e.org)
- Mary
- Meredith Cola
- Michele Marjason (LeTourneau University)
- Nick Top (Utah Valley University)
- Patrick Dwyer (UC Davis)
- Rachel Schuck (UC Santa Barbara)
- S Owocki (Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Ontario, Canada)
- Sasha Zeedyk (CSUF)
- Summer West (Universität Kassel)
- Susanne Bruyere (Cornell University)
- Susan White (University of Alabama)
- TC Waisman (University of Calgary)
- Tom Beeson (Clemson University)
- Yasamin Bolourian (UC Riverside)
- Several other individuals joined us as well, though I was not able to document their names

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/join> by emailing can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org
- [College Autism Summit](#) (Oct 26-29)
 - Early bird rates through October 1
 - [Excellence in Autism Practice and Research Awards](#); apply through Oct 1
- [Autism-Specific College Support Programs Database](#) has launched!

Share a Resource or News

- [“Autistic professor denied accommodation over mask”](#) (Madison.com article, just featured in Inside Higher Ed, too; Brett mentioned it)
- [S Owocki shared a Spectrum 10 K article](#)
- Michele is defending dissertation on social needs in college this month!
- Ariel is starting a new research project on different meanings of autism and work.
- Jordan is also new to CANVAS!
- Christy, who shared a message on the list-serv, asked about resources in residential life (particularly regarding navigating relationships with roommates)
- Brian, also new to CANVAS, is an early-career researcher who looks at specialist autism mentoring in the UK.

Research Presentation

Presenter: Dr. TC Waisman (Autism Training Academy)

Presentation Topic: How higher education leaders, faculty, and staff can enhance services and outcomes for Autistic students

Notes

- This research endeavor was based in Canada, centered on ways to improve outcomes for autistic students in higher education in Canada. The challenge is that no national research in the country privileges autistic student-centered perspectives on making improvements in the system, and with a focus on leadership, policies, and practices.
- Entering the project, TC was aware of increased numbers of autistic students recorded at university, more individuals are diagnosed later (much like TC), and more person-centered accommodations are needed.
- The conceptual framework situated autistic students at the center, accounting for factors including inclusion and access, teaching and learning, policies and practices, and leadership. Extended from the circles within circles model are a variety of factors. For example, TC accounted for constructivism, academic development, and Universal Design for Learning within the focus on teaching and learning.
- The study entailed participants completing questionnaires within three months, plus engaging in interviews. Data was collected within a six-month period.
- As TC was new to the autism community space, she was focused on consulting with other autistic individuals, having recently been diagnosed at the time, and wanted to ensure that everything was accessible online.
- The study followed a mixed-methods design featuring questionnaires, interviews, and much iterative coding.
- 30 autistic individual participants at university (two were also faculty), mostly in the 20-60 range; they lived all across Canada. Their educational experiences varied considerably, ranging from being in their first year in university to having completed their doctorate.
- 23 participants were deans and also illustrated much geographic and role diversity.
- 16 faculty members participated in the study, with almost all having six or more years of experience.
- 10 staff participants (e.g., student accessibility office staff) engaged in the research.
- Findings entailed many areas, covered below.
- Leadership represented one theme, centered on the importance of inclusive practices.
- Autistic perspectives are vital; TC did not find any autistic engagement in policy development.
- Person-centered policies must account for autistic individuals.
- Key educational strategies may entail UDL.
- Campus-wide education must be led or informed by autistic individuals. TC pushes for consistent, year-long engagement.

- Having autistic students in learning environments is additive for everyone's learning, providing new ways of thinking or doing.
- Common barriers to completion of university degrees entail not having enough supports, being tasked to engage in autism education, seeking cost-effective or free autism diagnoses, etc.
- Faculty members generally wanted to do the right thing, though may lack the knowledge. While all recognized the importance of accommodations for autistic students, they may not know how students can access them or what accommodations exist. Some faculty felt unsupported in their programs to support autistic students.
- Staff felt that autism-specific policies are needed and there must be broader education. Some viewed the value of transition programs for autistic students.
- All leaders felt they need to support autistic students; only 28% felt sufficiently educated about autism. There is often a discrepancy between wanting to support students and actually knowing how to engage in offering such supports.
- The Waisman Model of Best Practices recognizes the waterfallofing of practices stemming from leadership. They can engage in policy and implementation, provide empowerment, and offer teaching and learning practices; these are also priorities of autistic students. TC sees the value of a mediation panel (e.g., if students do not receive their supports, a panel can be called, allowing for various leaders and experts to gather together in support of students' needs).
- Leaders are influenced by increases in autistic students, legal alignment, and aiming to determine best practices, though they must have an ethic of care that values UDL, inclusive pedagogies, autism education, and many other priorities.
- Advice that leaders offered to fellow campus personnel: embrace autistic students; provide fellow autism policy education; be open-minded and flexible; and be person-centered in approaches.

Q&A

- Swahkee: "I am curious about how you got buy-in from your stakeholders for this research - many of us will not speak with just anyone due to this."
 - TC: Demonstrating a willingness to be candid and patient.
- Flor: "How much do you think the buy-in depended on you being autistic?"
 - TC: Many autistic participants never felt like they could share their perspectives, and definitely more comfortable.
- Nick: "I love the data you presented! are you aware of students or stake holders perceptions of providing mental health services to help students deal with anxiety/depressive or other psychological difficulties?"
 - TC: Informal conversations were had, though not part of the research study directly. She encouraged other individuals to join in.
 - Jess mentioned a survey on their campus regarding mental health providers on campus often not being equipped to work with autistic students.
 - Lisa shared that many autistic individuals are shunned from mental health professionals once they mention their autism identities, and how hard it is to find someone who has experience on this front.

- Jill: “I really appreciate your research! I am working with a Center for Teaching and Learning on our campus. If I could bring one suggestion to start with and not overwhelm them, what do you believe should be the priority for faculty professional development?”
 - TC: Appreciates more grassroots efforts and communicating with leaders, helping them understand autism.
 - Patrick chimed in about his experiences in building autism acceptance at UC-Davis and elsewhere.
- Sasha: “Thank you for a great presentation, TC. Can you talk a bit more about the mediation panel. Is this something that you will be implementing/testing on your campus? This sounds like something that would be difficult to get buy-in unless it was more broad, like a mediation panel to address different issues of diversity.”
 - TC: Hoping to implement this at some point. Waterfall down: starting with leaders who act in accordance with an inclusive leadership value system. These leaders can effect changes to Autistic students’ outcomes by supporting UDL, autism education, Instructor-to-Instructor resource sharing, and accessibility staff-instructor support and resource sharing. Grassroots up: allowing Autistic individuals to have a voice in policies, education, and campaigns on campus that include mentorship etc. In short, small actions can include educating leaders who have influence (bring in an Autistic expert) and including Autistic voices in policy re/creation and decision-making.

Upcoming CANVAS Meetings

- Friday, October 15 at 11 a.m. ET – **Dr. Hyejung Kim (Binghamton University): “College matriculation at the intersection of autism, language, and race”**
- Friday, November 19 at 1 p.m. ET – **Dr. Mary Baker-Ericzén (San Diego State University): “College SUCCESS: Supported, Comprehensive Cognitive Enhancement & Social Skills Intervention to increase academic soft skills.”**