



COLLEGE AUTISM NETWORK

ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

Updates on the College Autism Summit*

Our planning committee is hard at work on our first virtual Summit, which will take place the week of October 26. Registration and our call for programs will open on July 1 and close on August 15 with notification around September 1. Watch for a special email announcement. This year we hope to add content for a wider audience. While previous Summits have focused on administrators, educators and researchers, this year we invite high school educators and counselors

**Yep: a new name! We want to be certain all potential attendees know that our focus is on college students with autism and the staff, faculty, peers and families that support them.*

CANVAS (CAN Virtual Association of Scholars): Past and Future Presentations

By Brett Ranon Nachman, College Autism Network

This spring semester we featured five CANVAS presentations, covering a number of topics. Here were our main speakers:



- January: Dr. Brad Cox (Florida State University) discussed autism, STEM and GPA in college
- February: Amy Radochonski (College Living Experience) discussed independent autism programs working in cooperation with colleges
- March: Dr. Jodi Duke, Dr. Grace Francis, and Alex Raines (George Mason University) discussed mental health and wellness
- April: Dr. Sean LaRoque and Dr. Erin Shoulberg (Mansfield Hall) discussed their Pathway to Independence Inventory
- May: Dr. Ryan Miller (University of North Carolina-Charlotte) discussed [his new journal article](#) on autism/LGBTQ college students

Some of our meetings have been video-recorded, and can be accessed in this [folder](#). All CANVAS presentations (in PDF form) can be accessed in this [folder](#).

We invite folks to join us for our forthcoming meetings:

- **Thursday, July 16** at 1pm EST: **Dr. Alexandra Sturm**(Loyola Marymount University) discusses her recently-published journal article: "Academic and Psychosocial Characteristics of Incoming College Freshmen with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Role of Comorbidity and Gender"
- **Thursday, Aug 13** at 11am EST: **Dr. Eilidh Cage** (University of Stirling) and **Jack Howes** (Autistic Writer and Fundraiser) discuss "Dropping out: Understanding the university experiences of autistic students who could not complete their studies."

Sign up for the [CANVAS list-serv](#) to receive updates of future meetings and info on how to join in! Email Brett Nachman (bnachman@wisc.edu) if you have any questions.

Tech Tools and Tips for CAN Members

By Brittany Jackson, College Autism Network (and Online Learning Manager, Hiram College)

With COVID-19 in our midst, we have all had to adapt quickly to find new ways of instruction and have had to learn to be creative on the fly. While we are fortunate to have technology so we might continue instruction, it still has its limits. Here are a few tips that I have found helpful when navigating this new remote instruction transition:



1. Keep your class meeting times to no more than a ½ hour or so and supplement the rest of the time with additional activities through your learning management system or other means.
2. If you need to go longer than a ½ hour, try using breakout rooms to facilitate an activity or conversation among smaller groups of students. This will provide a change of pace for both you and your students.
3. Make your assignments as clear as possible. Being explicit about how you will grade and what students need to do to complete assignments, will help students complete them correctly the first time. Even if it feels like overkill or that you are over-explaining, do it, because the more detailed explanation you give up front, the easier it will be on you in the long run!
4. This one is a big one: **always, always be thinking about accessibility.** If you make your course materials accessible up front, all students will have access to them and will not require additional accommodations to access

them, which right now may be even more crucial than normal for those students.

So, what do I mean by making your course materials accessible?

1. Make sure any videos you use, including those that you create yourself, are captioned appropriately. YouTube has come a long way, but you may still need to go in and edit the transcript a bit to ensure it is captured appropriately. If you can find videos with captions already created, especially descriptive closed captions, all the better! To learn about the difference between subtitles and descriptive closed captioning, visit [here](#).
2. Use headers in your documents and tables. This will make it easier for a screen reader to read. This [link from Microsoft for Word](#) specifically is helpful in thinking through what you need to do to make your document accessible.
3. Use ALT text that clearly describes any image in your documents, regardless of what program you use (like PowerPoint or Word). This will allow a screen reader to describe it to your students. Again the [link from Microsoft Word](#) is useful.
4. If you use links in your documents, use descriptive text to explain what the link is and then hyperlink that text. This will prevent screen readers from having to read a long link like this: H T T P S Colon Slash Slash W W W dot organization dot org. It will still indicate to the student that there is a hyperlink available to them, but it will also explain what that hyperlink will take them to!
5. If you use PDF documents, make sure they were not scanned in to create a PDF, as scanners make the text on the page into an image. If you originally scanned in the material, you will need to OCR (optical character recognition) the file to make it readable by a screen reader. There are free ones that you can access, though you will want to double check that it captured it appropriately. Sometimes they are off. I have found Adobe Pro to be the most consistent and correct.

If you are ever wondering if your document is accessible or if you need assistance, do not hesitate to reach out! You can directly reach me at brittany@collegeautismnetwork.org.

We Recommend: The Conversation Publishes Recent Research on Facial Expressions

Recommended by John Sheehan, friend of CAN and Accommodations Specialist at Purdue University Fort Wayne

“Autism researchers are starting to think that autistic and non-autistic faces may ‘speak a different language’ when conveying emotion. This could mean the ‘social difficulties’ often associated with autism may, at least partly, result from differences in the facial expressions produced by autistic and non-autistic people. It means we may need to re-think the idea that autistic people have difficulties with expressing their emotions and instead consider that non-autistic people may have trouble reading them.”

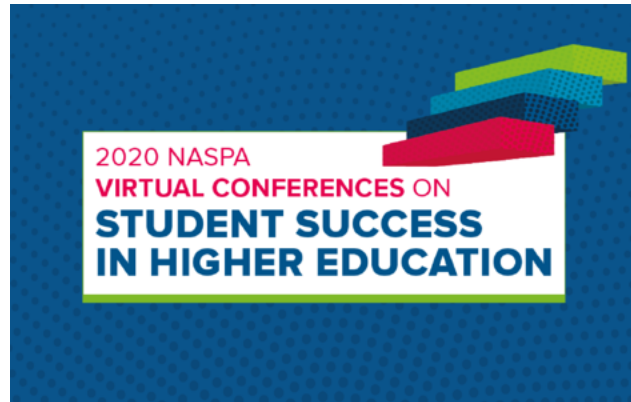


[**Read the Rest**](#)

NASPA Virtual Conferences on Student Success in Higher Education

June 29 - July 1, 2020 | Virtual

Registration is open for the [**NASPA Virtual Conferences on Student Success in Higher Education**](#) taking place from **June 29 - July 1, 2020** with pre-conference workshops on June 28. We're excited for this year's featured speakers:



- **Kevin Kruger**, *President, NASPA*
- **Mary C. Daly**, *President and CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco*
- **Dhanfu Elston**, *Chief of staff and Senior Vice President for Strategy, Complete College America*

- **Elissa Nadworny**, *Reporter and Editor, NPR*
- **Rashné Jehangir**, *Associate Professor, University of Minnesota*
- **DeRionne Pollard**, *President, Montgomery College*

[**View Full Schedule and Register**](#)

The College Autism Network (CAN) is a division of [NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education](#). If you have questions about CAN, the College Autism Summit, or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact [Lee Burdette Williams](#).

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