



# COLLEGE AUTISM NETWORK

ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

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### **College Inclusion Summit Update: Movin' On(line)!**

The likelihood of continued restrictions on gathering, coupled with reductions in available funds for staff travel, has made it clear that we need to rethink the College Inclusion Summit, which had been scheduled for October 28-30 in Madison, WI. The planning committee is hard at work creating a virtual learning experience for participants, to take place that same week. While we miss out on the opportunity to engage with one another in a three-dimensional way, an online, two-dimensional event will allow many more people to attend. So please keep those dates on your calendar and you'll hear more from us as planning goes forward.



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## **CANVAS is Looking for Research-Oriented Presenters for 2020-21**

College Autism Network Virtual Association of Scholars (CANVAS) welcomes researchers, instructors, practitioners, autistic self-advocates, and other community members to share resources and scholarship with one another via several platforms, including our [Google Group/list-serv](#), as well as monthly CANVAS meetings (each one hour in length). Each CANVAS meeting features a presenter(s) discussing their research or work as it relates to autism/postsecondary education.

As we develop our CANVAS meeting slate for Summer 2020 and beyond, we invite program directors and other personnel associated with college-based autism programs to serve as a few of our speakers. In particular, we are interested in presentations related to college-based autism programs handling any of the following: 1) engaging in unique initiatives or programming; 2) developing effective collaborations on campus with other stakeholders; and/or 3) actively involving autistic students in programmatic changes.

Please contact Brett Nachman ([bnachman@wisc.edu](mailto:bnachman@wisc.edu)), who coordinates CANVAS meetings, to share a little about your program and a potential presentation topic.

We asked staff from some campus-based autism programs to tell us how things are going during this challenging time. We hope their activities and observations are encouraging to our readers.



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## **Kutztown University's My Place Program**

*By McKenzie Hollenbach, Assistant Director, Specialized Programs, Disability Services Office*

Online learning is a new and challenging experience for most students. While many aspects of life and learning have changed due to COVID-19, the My Place Program at Kutztown University (specialized support services for students with ASD) felt that it was important to maintain support services for program members. As of Sunday, March 15 all on-campus support services provided by My Place have migrated to the online platform Zoom. Study halls, recreational activities, social activities and one-on-one meetings are now being conducted online. In addition, program members now have access to a SharePoint folder that includes several informational readings and worksheets. Such readings and worksheets cover a variety of topics, such as relationships, academic responsibilities in college, career development, and social skills. By providing all program services online, My Place is hoping to mitigate any backslide that might occur in the areas of independence and socialization. For this reason, the My Place Program has decided to add two additional social activities to its weekly schedule, for a total of three socialization opportunities per week. Overall, My Place has found that students are willing and able to obtain needed supports through online platforms like Zoom, and that students are happy to be able to continue participating in social opportunities with their peers.

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## **Rutgers University's College Support Program**

***By Courtney Butler, Program Coordinator***

The College Support Program (CSP) is a unit of the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services (RCAAS) that provides assistance to undergraduates with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) through direct support and coordination of university services.



The CSP collaborates with key campus partners to offer support that addresses social competence, academic skills, career preparation, self-care, and executive functioning. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSP is offering the same quality and supportive services to students online. Instead of meeting in-person, students are able to meet with their CSP Coordinator virtually on WebEx. Students were able to set up advising meetings with their advisors and deans as well, to discuss their plans for the upcoming Fall semester. Also, students are able to keep in contact with their Peer Mentor(s) on a weekly basis through text, FaceTime, Skype, or phone call.

Despite the fact that all in-person events have been canceled for the remainder of the semester, the CSP continues to host entertaining virtual social events. Peer Mentors facilitate fun weekly Game Nights with their students every Monday evening. Peer Mentors are also collaborating with the CSP students on “Quarantine Cuisine,” an online cookbook that is a compilation of favorite recipes that can be shared with each other online.

In addition, the RCAAS recently launched *On the Spectrum in Adulthood*, an informative newsletter that is full of helpful resources for adults with ASD. The newsletter promotes engagement for adults on the autism spectrum and their families.

CSP families automatically receive a copy. If you would like to be added to the distribution, simply email [NEWSLETTER@RCAAS.RUTGERS.EDU](mailto:NEWSLETTER@RCAAS.RUTGERS.EDU) to sign up today!

The CSP is continuing to expand its program and has even accepted new students for the upcoming academic year. Even during these times, the CSP strives to continue to support young adult students with ASD.

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## **Marquette University's On Your Marq, Marquette University**

*By Jordan Mason, Graduate Intern*

In a wildly unprecedented and turbulent time, On Your Marq at Marquette University is committed to being a constant form of support and encouragement for our students. To do this, we have been supporting our students using Microsoft Teams, continuing our weekly seminar, and connecting through coaching and peer mentor conversations.



We also have a counselor on staff supporting our students with the abrupt and continuous changes. Our OYM director already monitors student grades and progress, but during this time, she has been more vigilant with her monitoring and is in very frequent conversation with the appropriate faculty and staff. In order to prepare for what might come, we are anticipating utilizing similar approaches in the fall. However, we will be sure to customize our support to each student's needs. For example, one of our students is looking to complete an internship in the fall; though we are unsure of the form this will take, we are reassuring our student that On Your Marq will support and advocate for them through this experience. In addition, because our students now have a multitude of ways they can communicate with their

individualized support team, we are noticing an increase in their engagement. For all our students, OYM is the only piece of their lives that has been consistent throughout the changes, and we will remain unwavering in our commitment to assist our students in navigating this new college landscape.

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## **Autism Education: Meeting an Urgent Need in a Challenging Time**

In an [article](#) that appeared on the Johns Hopkins School of Education's website, Professor Tamara Marder is interviewed about the shortage of professionals choosing special education as a career. Marder is a co-investigator on a new Launchpad Grant from the JHU Alliance for a Healthier World to explore the quality of training among paraprofessionals and aides who work with students with autism.



## **NASPA Offers Virtual Peer Educator Training**

NASPA's peer education team has created a brand new self-paced virtual Certified Peer Educator course for your students! Click the [link](#) to learn more about this great online learning and certification opportunity for student leaders. This is an excellent opportunity to support both students with autism who are interested in a peer leader role as well as neurotypical students who want to develop skills to help them in their campus roles.



For more information about the College Autism Network, please contact  
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