

## **CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 2.18.22**

### **People in Attendance**

- Amber Meyers (Tarrant County College)
- Annette Kendall (University of Missouri)
- Asha Nigh
- Ava Gurba (Stony Brook University)
- Beth Felsen (Spectrum Transition Counseling)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (College Autism Network | NC State University)
- Christopher Esposito
- Claire Baek
- Courtney Butler (Rutgers University)
- Dave Caudel (Frist Center for Autism and Innovation, Vanderbilt University)
- Denise Davidson (Loyola University Chicago)
- Eric Endlich (Top College Consultants)
- Fernette Eide (Dyslexic Advantage)
- Florencia Ardon (Cornell University)
- Jeff Edelstein (University of Massachusetts-Amherst)
- Jennifer Grelak (University of Delaware)
- Julie Humbel-Courtney (Ohio State University)
- Joseph Madaus (University of Connecticut)
- June Shin
- Kathryn Szechy (Wayne State University)
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Kirstie Pickles (University of Nottingham, UK)
- Laurie Ackles (Rochester Institute of Technology)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Lindsay Hill (Michigan State University)
- Lisa Pennisi
- Madison Overbey (University of Colorado-Denver)
- Marie-Eve Lefebvre (University of Montreal)
- Matthew Joffe
- Michele Marjason (Letourneau University)
- Nicholas Gelbar (University of Connecticut)
- Nick Top (Utah Valley University)
- Sally Reis (University of Connecticut)
- Silvia Velasquez Casado
- Susan White (University of Alabama)
- Susanne Bruyere
- Taylor Shelton (Clayton State University)
- TC Waisman
- Wes Garton (University of Delaware)

## Meeting Plan

### CANVAS Updates

- Join our CANVAS list-serv - Our primary means of connecting, sharing info
  1. Click [here to join](#)
  2. Send email to the list  
<https://groups.google.com/a/collegeautismnetwork.org/forum/#!forum/can-canvas/join> by emailing [can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org](mailto:can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org)
  3. [CAN Membership Details](#) We appreciate the support your membership provides to help us offer CANVAS and other opportunities.
- **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!
  1. Ava mentioned this new article: Dwyer, P., Mineo, E., Mifsud, K., Lindholm, C., Gurba, A., & Waisman, T.C. (*accepted*). Building Neurodiversity-Inclusive Postsecondary Campuses: Recommendations for Leaders in Higher Education. *Autism in Adulthood*. <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/aut.2021.0042>

## Research Presentation

- **Presenters:** **Dr. Sally Reis** (Letitia Neag Morgan Chair in Educational Psychology, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor), **Dr. Joseph Madaus** (Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Director, Collaborative on Postsecondary Education and Disability), and **Dr. Nicholas W. Gelbar** (Associate Research Professor); all at the University of Connecticut
- **Presentation Title:** Understanding the Academic Success of Academically Talented Students with ASD
- **Description:** In this session, the team will present an overview of new research about students who are academically talented with ASD (2e/ASD). The focus of this research was interviews with 40 2e/ASD college students attending or recently graduated from highly competitive universities or colleges and the strategies and experiences that supported their academic success in both high school and college. Specific research results will be shared about what we learned and how educators can support the academic strengths and interests of this group of students to help them realize their academic potential.
- **Recent publication:** <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10803-021-05290-4>

### Presentation Notes

- The team offered background on the factors that define academically-talented individuals and noted that twice-exceptional (2e) students sometimes lack supports that leverage their success.
- One objective of the study was a needs assessment: determine 2E-ASD students' behaviors and characteristics that support their high school and college success.
- The first study entailed a survey of postsecondary service providers. Among the 147 participants, most ASD students experienced anxiety, social isolation, loneliness and/or

depression. Roughly half indicated that ASD students were academically prepared for college.

- A second study involved interviews with postsecondary service providers, and common factors that supported ASD university students' success entailed self-determination and self-advocacy skills, "touch points" with campus mentors or advocates, social organizational involvement, executive functioning, and social interactions.
- Their recent *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* piece focused on 40 2e-ASD college students; some were conducted face-to-face, others via telephone or over the web.
- Two-thirds identified as male, one-quarter as female, and 10% as non-binary or transgender.
- The vast majority of students engaged in at least one high school extracurricular activity, with half having engaged in a residential experience of some form, which is quite notable.
- One objective was to take the strengths-based findings to support a summer transition program. UConn offers a Pre-College Summer Experience; in concert with that, the team created a three-week virtual summer program for 2e-ASD high school students. 22/25 students completed the program. 20 completed pre- and post-test measures. This was all held virtually due to the pandemic.
- Strength-based, talent-focused approaches work to create educational experiences that match with students' strengths, interests, and talents.
- Programmatic components entailed biweekly peer mentoring, multiple workshops each week, and courses centered on a variety of topics including marine biology, digital animation, and biomedical engineering.
- The team drew on the Transition to University Questionnaire (TUQ); lower scores suggest lower rates of concern or anxiety. They also used the College Going Self Efficacy Scale; scores are hoped to be higher.
- Dr. Gelbar indicated that many students view college as akin to "high school 2.0," though once embedded in that space, recognize the salient differences.
- Time management, course deadline management, and group work participation were especially concerning for students who participated.
- The vast majority of students recommended the program.
- While self-efficacy went down slightly, Dr. Gelbar supposed that more obtained a reality of college once in that space. Peer mentoring was helpful in addressing some of the skills.
- The team recently followed up with student participants.
- Limitations entailed the predominantly white, male sample; difficulty in helping students increase self-efficacy in a short period, and the fatigue and social differences in virtual platforms.
- The team is developing free, short modules regarding topics that students prioritized.

### Questions:

- Lee: "What do 2e/ASD students think about often being grouped with a broader group of ASD students, including those who are intellectually average or even below--when grouping is based solely on ASD diagnosis?"

- Students did not enjoy as much in being in spaces where peers were not college-bound. They seek to be with other bright, college-based individuals, and special education opportunities may be limiting, Dr. Reis said. Dr. Gelbar said that many students were diagnosed later. Dr. Madaus said the team also engaged with a segment of students' parents. It was also helpful for students to engage with like-minded peers based on particular interests.
- Ava: "Are you concerned about your wording around the term "gifted" and dividing individuals based on academic performance? Do you think this would help those who are not academically-talented? I know there's a lot of work in this area to be done before this maybe can be answered fully, but it's important to me to not be exclusionary."
  - The University of Connecticut team values talent development, and generally use verbiage like "talents," as opposed to "gifted."
- Beth: "You said many of the students were in private schools. Can you remind us what % of students were in public school?"
  - About 40%.
- Beth: "As you follow up with these students, do you plan to ask about school-based college transition services?"
  - Yes
- Asha: "What sort of response have you had from DEI specialists in both high school and college?"
  - Dr. Madaus mentioned that disability is often not often focused by DEI folks at the college level.
- Denise: "Per your comment, Sally, have you considered adding a camouflaging measure as you follow up with the students?"
  - Students often used their interests as mechanisms for social avenues; Dr. Gelbar is wondering how students choose to what extent they camouflage their identities.
- Brett: How were program courses identified?
  - Students' interests were across the board. The team purposefully asked about these particular courses. They had choice in what they wanted to pursue, which was very powerful.

The team has conducted interviews with special education coordinators and teachers, and often there's a lot of reinventing the wheel, not necessarily knowing how to support students. They seek more effective strategies.

### **Upcoming CANVAS Meetings**

#### **Fri, March 18 at 12pm ET**

- **Dr. Jill Underhill** (Associate Professor, Communication Studies & Director, Writing Across the Curriculum, Marshall University)
- **Presentation Title:** Autistic Student Success in Public Speaking Courses
- **Description:** Most colleges require students to take oral communication courses within general education requirements. Presentations are also frequently required within disciplines. These requirements can pose unique challenges for students on the autism spectrum. In this presentation, Dr. Underhill will discuss her research on how peers can support students on the autism spectrum within public speaking classrooms. Dr.

Underhill will also discuss practical strategies for success within oral communication contexts.

**Fri, April 29 at 2pm ET**

- **Dr. Brittany L. Jackson** (Online Learning Manager, Hiram College)
- **Presentation Title:** Postsecondary Social Support Programs for Students with ASD as Described by Students, Directors, and Staff
- **Description:** In this presentation, Dr. Jackson will present her recent study, which surveyed students, directors, and staff at 2-year and 4-year postsecondary institutions known to have a social support program (SSP) for students with ASD. The study sought to learn how students, directors, and staff described why students decided to attend their institution and the SSP. It also examined the advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and areas of improvement that those surveyed felt described their SSP. Dr. Jackson will discuss the survey responses and the insight the responses provided about SSPs from this study, which will be relevant for institutions that currently have SSPs and institutions that are considering implementing SSPs on their campus.

**Fri, May 20 at 1pm ET**

- **Kayden Stockwell** (PhD Student, Department of Psychology, University of Virginia)
- **Presentation Title:** Understanding the Experiences of Autistic Undergraduates at the University of Virginia
- **Description:** Using a mixed-methods approach, we are interested in understanding what it's like to be an autistic undergraduate at UVA. The experiences students share with us will be used to provide feedback to the university on where support has been working and recommendations on how it could be improved.