

CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 3-22-24

Participants in Attendance:

- Adero C E Allison (Arizona State University)
- Amy Accardo (Rowan University)
- Alanna Carrasco Drummon (UT Dallas)
- Alex Newson (Oregon State University)
- Andrea Haas
- Anita Rehberg (Harper College)
- Ava Gurba (Drexel University)
- Beth Felsen (Spectrum Transition Coaching LLC)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (University of Arkansas | College Autism Network)
- Casey Woodfield (Rowan University)
- Chiara Latimer (Rowan University)
- Christina Aichele (Marquette University)
- Clarissa Barnes (Defiance College)
- Denise Davidson (Loyola University Chicago)
- Destiny Turner
- Elinor Lim (University of Portsmouth)
- Emine Gurbuz (University of Portsmouth)
- Gina Hoagland (UMBC)
- Hannah Morton (Oregon Health & Science University)
- Harley Crisp (The Ohio State University)
- Irene Sullivan (University of Toronto)
- Jan Smith (The Cottage School)
- Julia Gorman (Boise State University)
- Kathryn Szechy (University of Windsor)
- Katie McDermott
- Laura Dean (University of Sheffield)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Lincoln Tate Ripley
- Margot Margarones (UMaine Machias)
- Mark Tapia
- Matthew Zajic (Columbia University)
- Michelle Rigler (UT – Chattanooga)
- Nina Schiarizzi-Tobin (University of Rhode Island)
- Ryan Palm (Mercyhurst University)
- Sabrina Paglia (University of Toronto)
- Shao Yu(Dora) Tseng (University of Massachusetts Amherst)
- Siva priya Santhanam (Bowling Green State University)
- Summer West (Universität Kassel)
- Taite Lehov (University of Toronto)
- TC Waisman (Autism Training Academy)
- Tom Beeson (Clemson University)

- Trayle Kulshan (UMGC)
- Yvette Doss (University of California Santa Barbara)

Meeting Plan

I. 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
- [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!

- Casey mentioned that Rowan University's funded PhD program in Education with a Special Education concentration offers full funding (including tuition and a stipend). They have a disability studies and neurodiversity foci, too. They are accepting applications. This is a collaboration through Rowan, Syracuse University, and the University of New Mexico. The cohort will consist of 14 students. For more information on Project IMMERSE, check out.
<https://education.rowan.edu/initiatives/immerse.html>
- Mark mentioned having attended the Autism Speaks Advocacy Forum in Washington, DC.
- TC asked if anyone was attending INSAR in Melbourne.
- Siva Priya mentioned their master's student (Sherilyn Drexler) just defended her thesis on autistic students' experiences with group work in college.
- Matthew shared that Neurodivergent@CU is hosting its second Neurodiversity Awareness Day in late April. Individuals can sign up at
www.neurodivergentatcolumbia.com/neurodiversity-day-2024
- Lee mentioned that CAN's Halfway to the Summit event is forthcoming: March 28 and April 4. For more details, check out <https://can.joynconference.com/v2/>
- This year's College Autism Summit (Oct 13-16) is in Columbus. More details can be found at <https://collegeautismnetwork.joynconference.com/v2/>

Presentation Details

Presenters: Chiara Latimer (Co-Director Center for Neurodiversity, PATH Program Coordinator, Rowan University); Dr. Amy Accardo (Co-Chair and Associate Professor, WISE Department, Rowan University); and Dr. Casey Woodfield (Assistant Professor, WISE Department; Faculty Fellow, Center for Neurodiversity, Rowan University)

Presentation Title: Affirming Neurodiversity Culture on Campus: Priorities of Neurodivergent Students, Faculty and Staff

Presentation Notes:

- Chiara posed the question to the community about how they uniquely engage in neurodiversity-affirming practices.
- Since 2011, Rowan has engaged in intentional programming to support autistic individuals; first with middle and high school students who came in via camps and later for college students on their campus. Over recent years, a variety of student groups started up, the Autism Path program debuted, and a Neuro-inclusive Workplace Certificate launched.
- The Center for Neurodiversity serves as a cultural center within the institution's DEI division. The Center possesses many key tenets around neurodiversity as a strength that benefits society, valuing perspectives from neurodivergent people, and prioritizing neurodiversity culture, among others.
- The team's Scorecard study involved assembling a neurodiversity taskforce to both participate in a non-experimental neurodiversity survey and follow-up focus groups and interviews. There were 254 neurodivergent participants, including 103 faculty and staff and 151 students.
- The research questions focused on neurodivergent campus stakeholders' perspectives around neurodiversity, how the university values and supports neurodivergent campus stakeholders, and what ideas they had on opportunities for improving neurodiversity efforts.
- Participants could choose from a variety of modalities to engage in focus groups and interviews, including in person, Zoom, video off, and individually or with other participants.
- Interview and focus group questions stemmed from themes from the survey data, such as disclosure and identity, mental health, existing neurodiversity affirming supports, needed neurodiversity affirming supports, and ideas and insights to foster neurodiversity culture.
- Students, faculty, and staff were generally familiar with neurodiversity and defined it with a strength-based perspective.
- Only 38% of faculty and staff had a comfort level in sharing their neurodiversity. 35% were satisfied with campus supports.
- Roughly half of students were both neurodivergent and disabled. Among those, 30% had a mental health condition and 26% obtained formal accommodations.
- One survey question asked if participants felt neurodivergent students were recognized and respected as a cultural group. Faculty (63.1%) agreed with that statement, compared to students (45%). High proportions of participants also noted experiencing or witnessing inequities toward neurodivergent people on campus: 57.2% of faculty and 60.3% of students.
- Neurodivergent students noted issues around mental health, noting that the temporality of therapy was often difficult in repeating their life story.
- That the Rowan campus offers a variety of existing supports for neurodiversity represented a major benefit. Students and faculty complimented the availability of resources, clubs, and culture around neurodiversity on campus.

- Opportunities for action varied based on the stakeholder group. Whereas faculty and staff mentioned elevating Universal Design for Learning and providing context on the types of available accommodations, students mentioned the desire for more robust mental health supports and additional quiet spaces, among other tools.
- The team has crafted a new paper that connects back to the areas of actionable recommendations presented on one slide. They emphasize the vitality of centering neurodiversity in DEI initiatives, expanding neurodiversity-specific supports, tailoring mental health and wellness supports, and increasing professional development around neurodiversity.
- Casey shared about the Center for Neurodiversity Professional Development Certificate programs.
- The Inclusive Pedagogy & Practices Certificate and Creating a Neuro-Inclusive Workplace Certificate each have five modules and asynchronous activities, as well as five synchronous sessions. Neurodivergent staff, faculty, and students contributed perspectives on content. To complete the certificate, participants must identify a barrier and an inclusive solution. The Creating a Neuro-Inclusive Workplace Certificate is often geared for individuals outside the university, whereas Inclusive Pedagogy & Practices Certificate is more for people at Rowan.
- Both certificates focus on embedding disability within a DEI culture.
- The Inclusive Pedagogy and Practices Certificate has each a pedagogy and practice track, in which the pedagogy one focuses on frameworks and strategies for the inclusive classroom as a unique component, whereas the practices track emphasizes the inclusive campus and neurodiversity in the workplace.
- Casey shared how interviews were completed with 13 participants, nine from the IP&P certificate and three from NIW. They hold a variety of professional roles. Many identified as neurodivergent themselves.
- They engaged in interpretive qualitative methods to model neuro-inclusive and multimodal communication. Data collection consisted of virtual (a)synchronous interviews and work samples that prioritized choice and multimodality.
- Participants shared how they valued the cohort model and they wanted to engage in an action-oriented approach. The final project afforded the opportunity for participants to employ pragmatic efforts.
- Three kinds of barriers surfaced. One was just getting into the certificate program. Another related to the time commitment and group dynamics. From an implementation standpoint, participants felt the UDL component was overwhelming and, often, they felt they lacked sufficient resources to support their work out of the certificate program.
- Participants centered on identifying an inclusive need, making a plan, enacting it, sharing evidence, and reflecting in their community of practice.
- Students took their projects from the certificate program and are employing them in a variety of ways, such as developing instructor guides, providing trainings, delivering conference presentations, and modeling inclusive leadership.
- Participants' goals for growth were also varied, such as expanding their projects and accounting for how to tailor their content.

Q&A:

- Denise: “Did the college students give specific reasons why they felt somewhat dissatisfied with the supports for them on campus? Also, did faculty elaborate on why they felt uncomfortable with disclosing their neurodivergent diagnosis/profile? Thank you for an excellent presentation and extensive work at your university!”
 - Answer: “Patterns of student responses turn to them being most satisfied with individualized supports (e.g. meet with same counselor weekly) and less satisfied with general supports (e.g. alternate testing space). The importance of relationship-building emerged.”
- Lee: “Are you concerned that your location in DEI makes you vulnerable, given the criticism being directed at everything DEI-related? Several of our CAN members are in states where this is happening.”
 - Answer: The campus is aiming to make sense of how political standings impact DEI standing. The Center for Neurodiversity exists within the DEI division, and also has connections to the Division of Student Affairs. It has been helpful to familiarize the campus with the Center for Neurodiversity; they obtained much buy-in from campus members. The campus also has a DEI certificate program. Thankfully their structure is connected to both DEI. Neurodiversity-affirming work is very present in their college. They are working on making more interconnections so that neurodiversity is seen as a tenet of DEI.
- TC: Have you included an intersectionality focus in either certificate programs?
 - Answer: “Yes! An intersectionality approach is core to our work (and our DEI space as well).”

Upcoming Meetings

Date: Fri, April 26 at 1pm EST

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5235660844?omn=87668949888>

Presenter: Dr. Mark Tapia, Ph.D. (Researcher)

Presentation Title: Self-Advocacy at the University Level: Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Advocate for Their Needs

Presentation Description: Research provides some evidence to support self-advocacy skills, but little has occurred to explore how best to teach these skills at the postsecondary level. To that end, there is a positive model that emphasizes the unique needs of persons with autism, and it is the video model. Video modeling has a solid evidence base; however, studies involving video modeling for undergraduate students to advocate on college campuses are non-existent. The current study sought to explore how the use of video modeling, paired with a task analysis and role-play, impacted the ability of undergraduate students with ASD to use self-determination and self-advocacy skills in a university setting successfully

Date: Tues, May 7 at 2pm EST

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5235660844?omn=82847969742>

Presenters: Dr. Cindi May (Professor of Psychology, College of Charleston) and Dr. Christopher E. Whelpley (Assistant Professor of Management, Virginia Commonwealth University)

Presentation Title: Biases in the Hiring Process for Job Candidates with Autism...and Solutions That Might Help Level the Playing Field

Short Description: Our research demonstrates a clear bias against prospective employees with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the job interview process. This bias stems from differences in social style and interaction rather than the perceived competence or qualifications of candidates with ASD. We consider different approaches to addressing this bias, and recommend two steps for leveling the playing field for candidates with ASD. Our approach emphasizes educating employers rather than masking employees' autistic traits.