

Subject: CAN's newsletter is here to distract you from the million things you have to do in April.

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College Autism Network News and Notes

April 2024

**COLLEGE AUTISM SUMMIT CALL FOR PROGRAMS
OPENS APRIL 1**



Join us in Columbus, OH, October 13-16 for the 8th [College Autism Summit](#). The Call for Programs is now open. This year's theme is "To Know and Be Known: The Promise of Neurodiversity." The work we do together is, at its heart, a dialogue. Practitioners must always be talking with researchers. Employers need to converse regularly with campus professionals. Neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals should strive to find ways to engage with one another. Everyone doing this work has something to teach, and something to learn, and both of those acts happen through dialogue. To know others, and be known by others: *these are necessary conditions for an inclusive community.*

We know you have choices when it comes to professional development. Why present at the Summit? Ask Matt Segall of Emory University: "I present at the Summit because it's my new professional home; there's always an engaged, warm, knowledgeable audience in an authentically

Newsletter Highlights

Come to Columbus! College Autism Summit Call for Programs is Open

UConn to Offer Summer ND Teaching Workshop for STEM Faculty

Identity or Disability? The Stakes are Getting Higher

Upcoming CANVAS Call Addresses Self-Advocacy

Autism-focused Film Expands Outreach with New Toolkit

University of Kentucky's Program Makes the News

Suicide Rate of Autistic Adults Spurs Concerns

Scholarship for ND Students in Intelligence and National Security



inclusive and accessible environment.” Or Jodi Duke from George Mason University: “Each year, I leave the Summit with new ideas and connections which impact my work tremendously.”

Please consider submitting a program proposal that addresses a topic related to the following:

- Innovative practices on campus
- Pre-college preparation
- Wellness and mental health
- Advocacy for autism and neurodiversity
- Family connections
- Workforce and post-college preparation and transition
- Creating neuroinclusive employment environments
- Research and scholarship addressing autism and neurodiversity in college settings and beyond
- Other topics you believe need to be explored

Think about the audience you most want to engage with: neurodivergent students, autism support professionals, researchers, employers. We are planning a conference full of provocative ideas, engaging dialogue, challenging scholarship and friend-making. **Deadline for proposals is June 7.**

[The Summit](#) is the premier higher education autism event, thanks to the creative energy of our many presenters and the generosity of our sponsors, all of whom come to the Summit to share the excellent work going on across the country and beyond. We hope to see you there!

UCONN TO OFFER SUMMER ND TEACHING WORKSHOP



Have you ever dreamed of spending a little summer stretch in beautiful Storrs, CT? The UConn INCLUDES Project announces the launch of its first Summer Institute for Neuroinclusive Teaching. This 1.5-day in person workshop (May 22 and 23) will prepare faculty across STEM disciplines to support and empower neurodiverse students in the classroom, sharing best practices and insights learned from the NSF INCLUDES project. Information and registration can be found at [this link](#).

IDENTITY OR DISABILITY? THE STAKES ARE GETTING HIGHER



An ongoing and important discussion in our field, indeed, in the neurodiversity community, revolves around the question of autism and related forms of neurodivergence: Are these disabilities to be accommodated or essential parts of a person's identity? An easy answer might be "both." But this debate is playing out on our campuses in some interesting, and perhaps unnerving ways. On some campuses, neurodiversity programs and centers are housed within the institution's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) structures. On other campuses, they are housed in student affairs, academic support services, disability/accessibility services, or a combination of these. The diversity in organizational charts reflects the fluid conversation about neurodiversity, neurodivergence, disability, identity, and social justice, and warrants thoughtful conversation about what it means to be neurodivergent on a college campus (or anywhere).

But as anyone who follows the news knows, DEI initiatives on college campuses are under attack. Some fairly misinformed individuals have equated DEI efforts with scholarly pursuits such as Critical Race Theory, or with legislatively-supported initiatives such as Affirmative Action. More knowledgeable people recognize the value in DEI work in creating level playing fields for all students (and faculty and staff) so that it's talent and hard work that determine a person's success.

Nonetheless, DEI offices and initiatives are being dismantled across the country, their value called into

question by people of varying political stripes. The relevant question for the CAN community might be this: Where is the most effective home on campus for neurodiversity efforts? Where do neurodivergent students (and faculty and staff) turn when their autism or other neurodivergent traits impede their success? Is it better to make one's home in a disability/accessibility services office, which (at least for now) are not under attack or constantly used as political chum to roil the waters on our campuses? Or is the better path to continue to insist on neurodiversity as a valid and useful feature of a campus? What if the latter path puts neurodivergent students and their supporters on a collision course with those who believe there is no place in higher education for DEI work?

We hope to provide space for this important discussion within CAN. If you'd like to facilitate a virtual discussion, please let [Lee](#) know. You don't need to have the answers, just a willingness to ask the hard questions. In the meantime, [this report](#) was published recently by a group of scholars and some might find it an interesting lens through which to view the DEI/ND debate.

RESEARCH ALERT! UPCOMING APRIL CANVAS CALL



This month's CANVAS call is scheduled for April 26 at 1 pm

ET.

Presenter: Mark Tapia, Ph.D. (independent researcher)

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

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

Meeting Agenda: [Sign up to indicate your anticipated attendance here!](#)

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

AUTISM-FOCUSED FILM EXPANDS OUTREACH WITH NEW TOOLKIT



The producers of the acclaimed documentary IN A DIFFERENT KEY have just released the "In A Different Key Documentary Toolkit for Autism Understanding." Designed to be both affordable and flexible, in order to reach more groups, the package builds on the film's success in telling the story of the first child diagnosed with autism -- and

around that, stories about the challenges autistic people so often face from a general public that still has so much to learn. Delivered as an online experience, the Toolkit includes a range of assets: the original film, a set of 13 video vignettes derived from the film, discussion notes and guides to best practices and ongoing resources. Already adopted by multiple teaching institutions, the Toolkit for Autism Understanding can be sampled by going to inadifferentkeythemovie.com, and following the links.

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY'S PROGRAM MAKES THE NEWS



We love to share the love our member programs get at home. This is a [nice piece](#) about UK's services to autistic students and features NESI, led by CAN and Summit volunteer John Caldora. Yay John!

SUICIDE RATE OF AUTISTIC ADULTS SPURS CONCERNS



Here's a [thoughtful and challenging piece](#) from Psychology Today about a topic that is both difficult and crucial to discuss, "Why Suicide is All Too Common Among Autistic Adults." The author says "that surviving as an autistic adult in a neurotypical society is a Herculean task."

SCHOLARSHIP FOR ND STUDENTS IN INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY



Attention neurodiverse undergrads: Your abilities in pattern recognition, information processing, and attention to detail are in high demand! Apply now for the INSA Foundation's Reinventing Geospatial Intelligence, Inc. (RGi) Scholarship, offering \$15,000 for an undergraduate student pursuing studies in intelligence or national security.

The application deadline is Friday, May 31st. This scholarship is one of eight available to both undergraduates and master's students.

Ready to take the next step in your academic journey? Visit

www.insaonline.org/foundation/scholarships for more information and to submit your application.

This newsletter is published monthly by the [College Autism Network](#), an independent 501(c)3 organization supporting the success of autistic college students and the professionals who work with them. Want to share an article? Feature an upcoming event? Post a job opportunity in autism support services? Our monthly newsletter reaches over 2000 self-advocates and professionals. Send it [to Lee](#) and we'll share it.

Was someone nice enough to forward this newsletter to you? We're happy to add you to our mailing list to receive it directly. [Send us a note](#).

If you appreciate our work, please consider [joining CAN](#) to receive additional information and discounts on some of our resources and to support our work. Individual and organizational memberships are available.

The [College Autism Network](#) is supported in large part by the [Frist Center for Autism and Innovation](#) at Vanderbilt University.

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