

## **CANVAS Meeting Minutes 2025-02-25**

### **People in Attendance**

- Andrew Buck (The Ohio State University)
- Anirudh Subramaniam (The Ohio State University)
- Alyssa Hernandez (University of Michigan-Ann Arbor)
- Amber Davis (Johns Hopkins University)
- Andrew Haas
- Ariel Cascio (Michigan State University)
- Bethany Bradley (Rochester Institute of Technology)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (College Autism Network | University of Pittsburgh)
- Christine Fiorey
- Colleen Grillo
- Connie Sung (University of Michigan)
- Dave Caudel (Frist Center for Autism and Innovation at Vanderbilt)
- Deborah A. Novak (Bowling Green State University)
- Devin Johannis (University of Michigan)
- Emil Majetich Jr
- Eric Endlich (Top College Consultants)
- Gary Burdette (Leavenworth High School)
- George Wolford (Appalachian State University)
- Ginny Boss (University of Georgia)
- Hilary Meyer (Triton College)
- Jennifer Williamson (University of Calgary)
- Jessica Applestone
- Jodi Duke (George Mason University)
- Julia Gorman (Boise State University)
- Kelly Coons (College Autism Network)
- Kimberly Douglass (Douglass Consulting Group)
- Lisa Pennisi (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
- Lisa Yates (Moreno Valley College)
- Lori Wischnewsky (Texas State University)
- Mario Crown (Boston University)
- Mark Tapia
- Melina
- Michael Canale (University of Maryland Baltimore County)
- Morgan Jameson (University of Memphis)
- Neolle Merchant (University of Massachusetts, Boston)
- Sasha Zeedyk (California State University, Fullerton)
- Shalyse McKnight (University of Utah)
- Sierra Hicks
- Stacy Said (University of Denver)

### **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.
  4. College Autism Summit: Nov 2-5 in Pittsburgh, PA
- **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!
  - Andrew: "Forwarding an opportunity for autistic adults and parents of an autistic person to participate in research:  
Researchers at The Ohio State University want to learn more about your thoughts or experiences with different types of autism research. They will be holding online focus groups (group interviews with people who have similar experiences) to find out more about this topic. During these groups, they will provide you with information about different types of autism research studies and ask questions about what you see as the benefits (good things that come from research) and risks (bad things that come from research) of those studies. They will ask all these questions in a small-group discussion format. These discussions will be led by a member of the research team. The audio and/or text of these conversations will be recorded by the research team. These groups will involve a variety of people to get multiple perspectives—including autistic adults, parents, and researchers. To participate in the study, you need to be:
    - Age 18 or over
    - Identify with one or more of the following groups: (i) Autistic person; (ii) Parent of an autistic person
    - Be able to participate in an online group via video chat Video focus groups will last about 1.5 to 2 hours.If you think you might be interested in participating or want to learn more about this research study, please contact Manisha Khatiwada at Ohio State University by e-mail [manisha.khatiwada@osumc.edu](mailto:manisha.khatiwada@osumc.edu) or phone 614-366-3828."

## Presentation Details

**Presenters:** Anirudh Subramaniam (Student, The Ohio State University) and Andrew Buck, PhD (Research Scientist, Nisonger Center at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center)

**Presentation Title:** Integrating Neuroinclusive Pedagogy into Practice

## Presentation Notes:

- The slides for the presentation [can be viewed here](#).
- The team has worked to deconstruct and reshape cultures to elevate accessibility for neurodivergent learners.
- The National Center for Education Statistics shows that one-fifth of undergraduate students have a disability, yet only about one-third of students with disabilities inform their institution. Fears of discrimination and lack of self-advocacy may very well contribute to reduced disclosure.
- The duo has been involved in multiple projects to understand students' needs and address them via trainings.
- The first study centered on attitudes toward neurodiversity in college environments with an emphasis on faculty and staff perspectives.
- The sample included 30 participants that largely consisted of white and female professors. 77% were faculty and 53% were in STEM fields.
- The survey featured examples of positive statements in describing neurodivergent students versus the entire class (i.e., a higher neurotypical skew), asking participants to rate them. The findings show greater favorability toward the entire class.
- Participants were also more likely to associate negative statements (e.g., "I believe my students have a hard time in this class") with neurodivergent students, which suggests an inherent bias against them.
- The survey included written responses and Likert-scale questions.
- Respondents were less likely to agree that neurodivergent students are truly succeeding in their class, understanding and applying concepts, and communicating easily with them. The team tries to break down stigmas and help educators create more neuro-inclusive classrooms.
- Second study discussed: Through their Alliance of Students with Disabilities for Inclusion, Networking, and Transition Opportunities in STEM (TAPDINTO-STEM), they are working to increase the quantity of students with disabilities completing STEM degrees, facilitate transition of students into STEM graduate programs and the workforce, and enhance communication and collaboration across many stakeholders.
- Six regional hubs and more than 30 schools are connected to TAPDINTO-STEM.
- The Bridge Mentorship Model aims to dismantle traditional power hierarchies associated with mentoring, which often involve a wise person bestowing knowledge to more junior folks. On the other hand, this model recognizes how mentees have as much to offer as mentors. It creates a more reciprocal relationship where there is peer-to-peer mentorship, weekly student meetings, and cluster groups, thus more horizontal in manner. In tandem, there is the traditional vertical mentorship approach where more experienced individuals or those higher up in roles provide mentorship to more junior individuals.
- Their Ohio State hub is focused on addressing the question around what services used by Autistic STEM students promote their academic, employment, and social success.
- This study featured 10 participants who were interviewed; it was largely male (6) and white (5). A range of STEM majors were represented across the sample.
- A key finding that they have discovered is the co-occurrence of additional disabilities like anxiety and ADHD.

- Five of the ten students in their sample aspired to continue with their education beyond their undergraduate career.
- Many barriers to success exist, including lack of tailored support for neurodivergent students, rigid teaching methods, social isolation and difficulty with peer interaction (thus the need to elevate belongingness in spaces like student organizations), career transition challenges, and executive functioning difficulties.
- On the other hand, many facets facilitate student success, including academic support, social support and mentorship, career and employment support, and hands-on experience and research opportunities.
- It's vital to refer students to available resources and encourage them to self-advocate.
- Training educators to elevate flexibility in their teaching would be useful.
- Educators must also support students' executive functioning and encourage personalization of strategies.
- The team also recommends the implementation of additional mentorship and career guidance. Often this may be rather unstructured in their execution, so they encourage using manuals (like theirs) that help on that front.
- Students do not need to disclose their diagnoses to proactively share their needs, making it incumbent on additional campus stakeholders to create a more welcoming environment.
- Dr. Buck shared examples of student quotes where they demonstrated what they needed to feel more comfortable, including having more receptive faculty to how they individually learned and processed information. Gamifying the learning experience is also helpful.
- Interdisciplinary teamwork, including bringing in health professionals, can help students
- They call for listening to autistic students' needs, ensuring they know what services exist, actualizing viable college-to-career partnerships, recognizing and valuing communication preferences, and creating networking opportunities.
- The Neurodiversity and Faculty Initiative (NAFI) is meant to be an open-source, self-paced training to familiarize faculty with how to support neurodivergent students.
- In the first phase, or alpha phase, they initially developed the educator training. Modules focused on describing neurodiversity more foundationally, discussing learning and processing differences, and drawing on student recommendations.
- In the beta phase, they have piloted the training. They have defined neurodiversity, identified neurodivergent learning needs, and created accessible educational tools. The training is available for the general public to use as well.
- Contact Dr. Buck ([Andrew.buck@osumc.edu](mailto:Andrew.buck@osumc.edu)) or Anirudh ([Subramaniam.55@buckeyemail.osu.edu](mailto:Subramaniam.55@buckeyemail.osu.edu)) with any questions.

#### Q&A:

- Jodi: "Wondering if there has been any opportunity for you all to engage with the larger OSU community to share your ATNICE survey results or begin to impact change on faculty and staff's perspectives on ND students?"
  - Answer: The team has been aiming to work with the student organization and NAFI. They will present initial findings at a forthcoming conference.
- Melina: "How can we keep up to date with the updated versions as they are developed?"

- Answer: Anirudh will be uploading more content on his [ResearchGate account](#). The second version of the training will be disseminated.
- Kelly: “What are some ways instructors can check for engagement? In a way that is more inclusive? In a way that is less easy to game? (e.g: students using AI in between-class discussion posts). For instance, some students would use some of these tools during class breaks. Not always can students fully form their responses in a comfortable banner. Kelly asked if there are ways to create asynchronous discussion environments that welcome students’ ideas.
  - Answer: There are some questions that promote student learning versus just asking them to recall knowledge. It’s important to ask questions that welcome their perspectives and encouraging them to explain it in their own way.
- Melina: “Tips to encourage institutions and faculty to embrace this kind of learning/adaptation when there is not unified leadership... having a ready made curriculum is very helpful.. will institutions be allowed to use this for free ?”
  - Answer: Anirudh helps run the Autistic Students Union at Ohio State, and they work toward making collaborative decisions.
  - The training is completely open source
- Brett: What have you learned about yourself engaging in very meta research?
  - Answer: Anirudh shared he has always learned to be independent. In prior research situations, he was stigmatized for being autistic. He left the lab. Students who are in neuro-inclusive environments in classrooms will expect to be in more inclusive research experiences.
- Kelly: “What are some ways to help support and protect staff and faculty who are experimenting with UDL in the absence of institution-wide initiatives about UDL?”
  - Answer: Anirudh recommends to go for it, assuming there are no fears of retaliation. Institute Universal Design for Learning (UDL) whenever possible. Andrew added that UDL is meant to increase learner agency and support students’ skill development.

## **Future Meetings**

**Date:** Fri, March 21 at 12pm EST

**Presentation Title:** Managing Academic Burnout: A Qualitative Study of Neurodivergent College Students

**Presenters:** Adam Lalor, Ph.D. (Vice President of Neurodiversity Research and Innovation, Landmark College) and Rick Bryck, Ph.D. (Senior Director, Institute for Research and Training, Landmark College)

**Presentation Description:** This webinar will describe both the process used to mentor a student led research project—undertaken by neurodivergent college students—and the methods, results, and implications of the study results. Previous research highlights that academic burnout significantly affects college students' academic performance (Madigan & Curran, 2021) and that neurodivergent students encounter unique challenges in higher education compared to their neurotypical peers (Shmulsky et al., 2021). Yet, there is a lack of research addressing the coping

mechanisms utilized by neurodivergent students to manage academic burnout. Responses were obtained from 37 college students, with one or more neurodivergent profiles, via open-ended survey questions. Responses were analyzed using thematic analysis and focused on student reported methods for coping with burnout. Results fell into two broad themes, comprised of several sub-themes, of reported support strategies. Implications of the findings for educators and practitioners working with neurodivergent students will be discussed, along with insights into co-creating a research study with students.

**Date:** Tues, April 15 at 1pm EST

**Presenter:**

Lauren Mathews M.S., CCC-SLP (Clinical Professor, Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, University of North Texas)

**Presentation Title:** Neurodivergent Students' Perceptions of Their Social-Emotional Well-Being and Related University Support Services

**Presentation Description:** This presentation provides the results of a qualitative pilot study examining four neurodivergent college students' perceptions regarding their social-emotional well-being and university supports. Their descriptors and perceptions of their lived experiences provide real-life examples of their social-emotional strengths/challenges experienced while attending a 4-year university located in the north Texas area. The gained insight into their experiences and support preferences/deterrents can facilitate informed decision making on what should be in place to best support all facets of their well-being.

**Date:** Wed, May 7 at 12pm EST

**Presenters:** Dr. Sam Brandsen (Research Analyst, Duke University), Shealtiel Weekes (Doctoral Student, Howard University), Liza Tomczuk (Doctoral Student, Drexel University)

**Presentation Title:** Understanding the Experiences of BIPOC Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education

**Presentation Description:** Our study aims to understand the experiences of autistic and neurodivergent people of color at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and community colleges to determine what resources or supports are most needed, challenges encountered, and sources of joy for students in higher education. We are excited to share the results of our interviews with neurodivergent students of color as well as interviews with educators at HBCUs and community college. Our presentation will also discuss lessons we have learned throughout the study about how future, similar studies could be designed in a more inclusive and equitable way, as well as insights into the recruitment process.