

CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 2025-03-21

People in Attendance

- Adam Lalor (Landmark College)
- AJ Richard (University of Idaho)
- Alfred Bobek (UMass Amherst)
- Andrea Haas
- Andrew Buck (The Ohio State University)
- Annette Kendall (University of Missouri)
- Audrey Scaer (Eastern Michigan University)
- Bailey Batty (UMass Amherst)
- Beth Felsen (Spectrum Transition Coaching LLC)
- Bethany Bradley (RIT)
- Brad Cox (Michigan State University)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (University of Pittsburgh | College Autism Network)
- Christina Mitsotakis (University of South Florida)
- Christine Fiorey (Arizona State University)
- Florencia Ardon (Cornell University)
- George Wolford
- Gina Hoagland (UMBC)
- Hilary Meyer
- Jackie Deiana
- Jennifer Williamson (University of Calgary)
- Karen Krainz Edison (The Ohio State University)
- Katie McDermott
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Laura Graham Holmes (Hunter College)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Williams)
- Lisa Yates (Moreno Valley College)
- Lori Wischnewsky (Texas State University)
- Maddy Pereira (UMass Amherst)
- Mario Crown (Boston University)
- Mark Tapia
- Meera Rastogi
- Rick Bryck (Landmark College)
- Shao Yu (Dora) Tseng
- Steven Kapp (University of Portsmouth)
- Val Erwin (Bowling Green State University)

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
 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!**
 - **Routine Success** is an iPhone app that provides executive function support for students.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X44mNmyRJM&list=WL&index=11&t=9s>
 - **PEACES data public availability**
 1. Wave 1 (Fall 2022) Available Data: list of [available variables](#)
 2. Use of data requires [Data Use Agreement](#)
 3. Proposal Submission: [Qualtrics form](#) to submit a data request proposal, including...
 - a. A brief summary (no more than 200 words) of the purpose of the study
 - b. An overview of the project feasibility (no more than 200 words)
 - c. Indications of dissemination plans
 - d. Variables of interest (based on our list provided above)
 - Audrey: “My friend Chris and I have [a book coming out this summer](#) focused on neuro-affirming clinical care for autistic clients from the perspective of autistic clinicians. So that’s exciting!”
 - Steven: [New paper out today](#) led by my former master's student on AFAB's experiences of puberty and adolescence

Presentation Details

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)

Meeting Notes:

- Dr. Lalor’s background is as an educational psychologist who has expertise in postsecondary transition and college success. He identifies as neurodivergent and disabled by society. Adam is now the chair of CAN’s Board of Directors.

- Dr. Bryck's training is as a cognitive psychologist with expertise in executive function.
- Landmark College is the first college in the world to solely enroll learning disabled, ADHD, and autistic students; it is an academic and a cultural community. The college has evolved over its 40 years to more greatly emphasize social justice, identity, and belongingness, among other important topics.
- As Landmark is a unique place in its neurodiversity emphasis, many students enjoy engaging in research as both participants and co-researchers. It's an opportunity for them to give back to the community. Research is initiated, led, and with neurodivergent undergraduate students. They boast the Landmark College Institute for Research & Training (LCIRT)
- To the maximum intent possible and desired, they work to authentically engage neurodivergent students in the research process in a variety of roles (e.g., presenting the work, advocating for new scholarship).
- The project illustrated today was led by students through their LCIRT Research Mentorship Program, which lasts two semesters and involves them developing projects from scratch (from the literature review and IRB in Semester 1, to data collection and analysis in Semester 2). They earn academic credit through this process, too.
- This study focuses on neurodivergence, burnout, and coping strategies. Students identified this as a topic they wanted to learn more about and figure out how to help themselves and their peers. Rick and Adam presented this work on behalf of fellow student team members Will Donohue and Alex Larson.
- Existent literature focuses on how academic burnout manifests uniquely for neurodivergent learners based on their unique experiences. Traditional definitions of academic burnout focus on long-term stressors and not necessarily daily experiences that students face that compound over time. Much work prioritizes neurotypical perspectives.
- The research questions guiding this study entailed how neurodivergent college students experience and cope with academic burnout?
- Students completed a qualitative, open-ended survey with questions on academic burnout.
- All Landmark College students could participate in the study. They were recruited via email, fliers, and verbal invitations, such as in classes.
- Among students' demographic information, ADHD was most common (n=29), followed by mental health disabilities (n=23) and autism (n=19).
- Most participants identify as white and male. These demographics mirror Landmark's demographics. Dr. Lalor recognize there is a growing base of individuals identifying as LGBTQ+, which they see as increasing at Landmark more generally, too.
- The team engaged in thematic analysis to become familiarized with the data, generate initial codes, and search for themes.
- The team felt that some themes were more direct than others (e.g., social supports, study strategies), whereas others were more indirect (e.g., changing environment, exercising, finding creative outlets).
- Rest was the most commonly-named item of dealing with academic burnout (34% of responses), followed by creative outlets (20%) and emotional release (15%).
- They were pleasantly surprised to see a wide variety of strategies that neurodivergent students employed, though recognize that not all may be effective for everyone.

- The highest percentage of participants note the value of direct-social support (39%), as in utilizing services like advising and counseling.
- They emphasize the importance of students figuring out strategies for burnout that can be used while engaging in tasks during high burnout periods.
- Among the limitations and cautions include the single institution, co-occurring neurodivergent profiles, and predominantly white sample.
- Future research may consider surveying students at other institutions, disentangling based on demographic differences, figuring the efficacy of strategies in reducing burnout, and interventions that teach the use of effective strategies.
- Landmark College is hiring positions for research scholars and grants administrators. They offer certificate programs for educators that center on Learning Differences and Neurodiversity.

Questions:

- Beth: “More about the process than the content, but I'm wondering if you tried using any AI tools to come up with the themes. Even just to compare what you find with what AI identified.”
 - Answer: not perfect alignment, but helpful and pretty good
- Val: “What are you defining as rest” (regarding one of the coping strategies)
 - Answer: Rick shared a few exemplars about retreating.
- Mark: “Would you be interested in extending this research to include neurodivergent graduate students as well? As someone who went through a doctoral program, burnout was almost a guarantee at times for me.”
 - Answer: Absolutely. A colleague of theirs at Landmark is examining graduate student experiences in their research; perhaps this topic may be of interest to them.
- Bailey: “With the indirect strategy of engaging in creative outlets - were there themes that came up in the students' descriptions of burnout (or elsewhere in responses) about the inability to engage in creative outlets when burned out? And the frustration of that or alternatives when that specific coping strategy is unavailable?”
 - Answer: They do not remember it being brought up. It's not uncommon for students in their classes to engaging in other activities (e.g., knitting, fidgeting) while in courses.
- Mario: “Did you use an interview guide with more concrete questions to hit certain topic areas or an open ended guide that was more driven by the student participants?”
 - Answer: This study was conducted as a survey.

Future Meetings

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.