

**Subject:** CAN's newsletter! Something to read while you wait around for spring.  
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**From:** College Autism Network  
**To:** brittany@collegeautismnetwork.org



# College Autism Network News and Notes

March 2025

## WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE WANT TO BE



I don't know about you, but I've always been taught that values are, for the most part, immutable; that while one's beliefs might change over time, due to maturity and evidence, values are these internal directional signs that help us figure out where to go when the landscape is unfamiliar. That is why it is so very discouraging to see many institutions of higher education turning their back on values they have espoused for years: diversity, inclusion, fairness. I have worked for five institutions since earning my Ph.D. Every single one named diversity and inclusion as values that undergirded all they did. I suspect many of you can name a few of your own current or former employers. Some--a few-- campus leaders have been brave enough to stand firm and remind the world that an institution's

## Newsletter Highlights

Who We Are and Who We  
Want to Be

College Autism Summit  
Update: Registration and  
Call for Programs

Nominations for CAN  
Awards Now Open

Our New Student  
Organization Database--  
Group Info Needed

March 20 Webinar on Low  
Sensory Campus Spaces

March 21 CANVAS Call on  
Managing Academic Burnout  
Study

Are You Starting a New  
Program? Start at Square  
One!

Useful Employment Service  
Offered by St. Joe's  
University

values are not subject to the whims of politicians, or even a portion of the electorate, but others are stripping their websites of the kind of signpost language that tells the world what they value, and closing down programs that have been the very engines driving those values on campus.

Values come into existence and are sharpened over time by the clear, ethical, and *effective* exercise of them. We *know* that a diverse student body is a smarter, more capable and more prepared student body. We *know* the importance of a level playing field for students and employees to promote learning and productivity. We have *decades* of evidence, of experience, and perhaps most importantly, *settled law*, that tells us so. If the leaders of our institutions of higher education (America's second best idea, after our National Parks) cannot stand up for the values that those same institutions have espoused since at least *Brown v. Board of Ed*, then what's the point--WHAT IS THE POINT--of having any values in the first place? Like many of you, I have taught, led and sat through more workshops on "defining your values" than I can count. I'd like to think my students believed me when I told them that values are the pillars of your actions throughout your whole life. I have sat with countless students who had gotten in trouble and reminded them that the values they claimed to have were incongruent with their behavior--hence, here they were, in the dean's office. I would be appropriately abashed if a student pointed out an inconsistency between a value I claimed and the actions in which I engaged.

Do not yield. Do not turn your back on what you value. We know more than the political opponents of diversity do about educating and supporting students. Support your campus leadership, but only if they show the kind of courage worthy of your support. If they don't, let them know it's not okay. Our students are always watching us and they can sniff out a hypocrite from a mile away. Be a beacon of integrity and consistency for them, because they are running low on those.

Okay--enough preaching. Please read the rest of the newsletter for more upbeat stuff. --Lee

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## COLLEGE AUTISM SUMMIT UPDATE: REGISTRATION AND CALL FOR PROGRAMS

### Landmark College Announces Spring Certificate Schedule

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Now This Sounds Like a  
Cool Event (and CAN Knows  
Cool...sort of.)

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## COLLEGE AUTISM SUMMIT 2025

Are you joining us in Pittsburgh, November 2-5, for our ninth College Autism Summit? Excellent content, amazing networking, interesting exhibitors, great lunches. What's not to love? The Summit is for autism support practitioners and researchers, employers with an interest in neurodiversity, and autistic college students who want to make a difference on their campus and beyond through networking and advocacy efforts. Registration opens March 5, and our Call for Programs will open on March 17 with a *deadline of May 23*. Bookmark our [website](#) and check back often for updates.

Don't take our word for it. [Lonely Planet has recognized Pittsburgh](#) as one of its top ten global cities to visit in the coming year. And we're offering you an excuse to come visit! You're welcome.

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### NOMINATIONS FOR CAN AWARDS NOW OPEN



We love to celebrate the heroes, scholars, practitioners and programs among us. We give out our awards each year at the Summit, and hope you'll nominate a deserving recipient of one of these four awards:

*Outstanding Autism Support Program*

- Given to a campus-based support program or initiative that has demonstrated excellence in implementation of evidence-guided practices.

#### *Outstanding Neurodiversity Workplace Initiative*

- Given to an employer who has established a workplace initiative that recruits and supports autistic and other neurodivergent employees and encourages professional growth and advancement.

#### *Brad E. Cox Outstanding Research on Autism in Higher Education*

- Named for CAN's founder, this award is given to an individual (or research team) who has, in the previous year, produced original scholarship advancing research, policy, and/or practice in ways that facilitate college success for autistic students.

To submit a nomination, please use this link to an easy-to-fill out [Google form](#). Supporting documents can be attached there. *Deadline for nominations is May 1.*

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## **NEW RESOURCE ON CAN WEBSITE: AUTISM STUDENT ORGANIZATION LIST**



As the number of autism- and neurodiversity-focused student organizations grows, we want to make sure we're making it easy to find them. [So here's our latest database](#). Please let us know who else we can add (by using the Contact Us button on the site). This is an important resource for students trying to launch their own groups!

## CREATING A LOW SENSORY SPACE ON CAMPUS: ADVICE AND OPTIONS WEBINAR, MARCH 20



Low-sensory spaces do two things: 1) they offer neurodivergent students a respite from the typical overstimulating campus environment, and 2) they send a message that neurodiversity is a priority for a campus. Are you thinking of creating one on your campus? This webinar, on Thursday, March 20 at 4 pm ET, will feature several autism support professionals (CAN members) who have created low-sensory spaces on their own campuses. Each will share how they did it, what they've learned, and what's next. As a bonus, we'll meet a representative from MeSpace Designs which is creating low-sensory "pods" for campuses and see what they have installed on the Vanderbilt University campus. This is a free webinar for CAN members (\$50 for non-members), but we ask you to register. [Here's the link.](#)

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**MARCH CANVAS CALL: MANAGING ACADEMIC BURNOUT, FRIDAY MARCH 21, 12 PM ET**



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. Presenters are Landmark College’s Adam Lalor, Vice President of Neurodiversity Research and Innovation and Rick Bryck, Senior Director, Institute for Research and Training. To be added to the CANVAS list and receive the link for this session, please contact [Brett Nachman](#).

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## SQUARE ONE: AN EXTENDED WORKSHOP FOR NEW PROGRAMS COMING IN JUNE



Are you in the process of developing a new autism support program? Or do you have a new program and want to supercharge it with proven strategies? Either way, you’ll want to sign up for *Square One*, a two-day (7-hour) virtual instructional series for higher education professionals interested in launching a campus program or initiative to support autistic and other neurodivergent students. Our

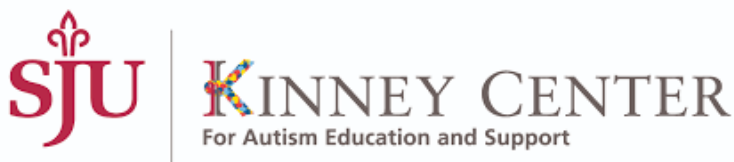


faculty this year are Amy Rutherford of College Autism Spectrum (former director of UT-Chattanooga's Mosaic Program) and Lorraine Wolf, former Director of Disability Services at Boston University and co-author of "Students with Asperger's Syndrome: A Guide for College Personnel" and co-developer of "Strategic Education for the Autism Spectrum," a widely adopted support model for students on the autism spectrum in higher education.

Sessions will be held June 11th from 12 pm to 5 pm ET and June 12th 12 pm to 2 pm ET. To register, [please use this link](#).

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## USEFUL EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT RESOURCE OFFERED



The Kinney Center at Saint Joseph's University is launching an [employment support program](#) to aid college graduates in obtaining and retaining employment. Meetings are individualized to student needs but can encompass interest assessment, job searching, navigating socialization and accommodations in the workplace, and transferable skill-building in all of these domains. Interested parties can learn more by visiting the [website](#), and can schedule an information session using this [link](#). The fee for this 15-week program is \$3000 for weekly sessions and \$6000 for bi-weekly sessions. Please contact Mary Ann Newell ([mnewell@sju.edu](mailto:mnewell@sju.edu)) for more information.

## LANDMARK COLLEGE ANNOUNCES SPRING CERTIFICATE SCHEDULE



Whether you're looking for a single, 8-week professional development course or thinking about starting Landmark College's highly regarded, graduate-level [online certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity](#), there are two upcoming deadlines to put on your calendar:

*March 30 to apply in time for these online courses, each running April 18 - June 15:*

- "Leveraging Universal Design and Learning Technologies for Student Success"
- "Academic Strategies and Executive Function Supports for Students with LD, ADHD, and Autism"

*June 8 to apply for summer courses, including "Understanding and Supporting Diverse Learners", a great place to start if you're planning to pursue the whole certificate.*

The Landmark College certificate program in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity offers specializations in:

- Autism on Campus and Online
- Executive Function
- Postsecondary Disability Services

For details, visit the [certificate website](#) or contact Carol Beninati, Certificate Program Coordinator, at [institute@landmark.edu](mailto:institute@landmark.edu) or 802-387-1662.

**NOW THIS SOUNDS LIKE A COOL EVENT  
(AND CAN KNOWS COOL. SORT OF.)**



We first heard about [Autcon](#) from its hosts at [ScenicView Academy](#) in Utah. Autcon is "a convention for and by adults on the autism spectrum," scheduled for May 15-16



in beautiful Provo, UT. “Society is not built for neurodivergent minds, so our goal was to create an ‘autistic space’ where autistic culture can be celebrated, where we can be our authentic selves, and where we can make friends.”

We suggest 1) sending some students if your budget allows for it (tickets are very reasonably priced) and 2) using it as inspiration to create similar events on your own campus. We particularly recommend their [answer](#) to the question “What do you mean by an autism-friendly environment?” If you’ve ever wondered what an autism-friendly conference might look like, they’ve nailed it.

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*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 2900 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 by the [Frist Center for Autism and Innovation](#) at Vanderbilt University.*

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