

Subject: CAN's April Newsletter: Your Umbrella During the Rainy Season

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College Autism Network News and Notes

April 2025

FINDING SHELTER IN THIS STORM



Each day brings us two things: examples of courage and examples of cowardice. The stark distinction between these is something of a gift, isn't it? This isn't a game of three-card monte where you have to carefully watch the sleight of hand by the dealer. We can easily tap the winning card because the cards are pretty much all right-side up. The courage card? Rachel Cohen, who resigned from the law firm Skadden, Arps when it declined to resist the White House's Executive Order attacking another big law firm, Paul Weiss. Princeton University president Christopher Eisgruber who said, "I think all of us need to

Newsletter Highlights

Finding Shelter in this Storm

Summit Call for Proposals is Now Open

CAN Welcomes Our Inaugural Board of Directors

CAN Awards Nominations Sought--deadline May 1

Opening a New Autism Program? Start at Square One!

CANVAS Call on April 15 Discusses Well-Being and Support Services

Database Reminder--Please Help Us Update Your Info

Interesting Stuff from Around the Internet



speaking up for the fundamental principles that define our universities and that define our missions...It's in the interest of the American people and a government that wants to make America a world leader and to preserve our eminence in scientific research." Texas representative Sylvia Garcia, who wrote, "Let's be clear: The Department of Education exists because states wouldn't fund poor schools, wouldn't protect kids with disabilities, wouldn't follow civil rights law."

I won't bother to list the daily examples of cowardice. We know who they are. But what about you, and me, and our many colleagues and comrades in this work? Who are we, and what can we do? A favorite writer of mine is Barbara Kingsolver, and I have found myself thinking of a line from her novel "Animal Dreams." "Wars and elections are both too big and too small to matter in the long run. The daily work--that goes on, it adds up. It goes into the ground, into the crops, into children's bellies and their bright eyes. Good things don't get lost."

So I think that's our work. The daily work goes on, and every day we each have an opportunity to be courageous or cowardly. Courage has a cost--for sure. So does cowardice. It would be great if those costs aligned neatly with right and wrong, but that's a game of three-card monte where the cards are face down. So we do our best and we trust the values deep within us (see last month's newsletter for that topic), and we do the daily work. I recently had a conversation with someone who works in this field, in the U.S., but is Irish by birth and current residence. She said, "The work you're doing is good work. You just have to keep doing it and believe it will make a difference, it will win out." That is a message not meant just for me, but for all of us in this Network, and in the education profession. And echoed in her words, I heard another line from Kingsolver's novel: "The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof. What I want is so simple I almost can't say it: elementary kindness."

Always remember that you have colleagues out there who know the quality and the challenges of your work, and who will be alongside you when you act with courage and kindness. Live under that roof for now, and let's hope for better weather soon.

--Lee

BUILD A BRIDGE BY PRESENTING AT THE 2025 COLLEGE AUTISM SUMMIT



We are hard at work planning our ninth [College Autism Summit](#) (Nov 2-5 in Pittsburgh), and this week begins our favorite part of the planning (aside from picking out the swag): Our Call for Proposals is now open! We seek proposals for both general (60-minute) sessions and posters. Please consider submitting a proposal on a topic related to:

- Innovative practices on campus
- Pre-college preparation
- Wellness and mental health
- Advocacy for autism and neurodiversity
- Workforce and post-college preparation and transition
- Creating neuroinclusive employment environments
- Research and scholarship addressing autism and neurodiversity in college settings and beyond

And if you have a program in mind that doesn't fit neatly into one of those categories, that's totally fine. We are not a neatly-fitting conference. We love questions, answers, and the two-way journey between them.

Panels are great, single presenters are awesome, including students is amazing. Our program reviewers look for thoughtful, innovative, challenging content. If you're thoughtful, innovative and like a good challenge, we're looking at you. Never presented before? The Summit audience is the most supportive audience in all the world, so please take the risk to submit.

The deadline for proposals is May 23. We hope to notify proposers of acceptance around June 30. For more information and to submit a proposal, please visit our [website](#).

[The Summit](#) is hosted by the College Autism Network with support from our generous sponsors, including our Presenting Partner, [Landmark College](#).

CAN NAMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS



We are growing as an organization, and every good organization needs a board. We're happy to introduce you to the inaugural members of CAN's Board of Directors. You can learn more about them on our [website](#), but here's the short version:

Executive Committee:

Adam Lalor, Ph.D., Chair (Vice President, Neurodiversity Research and Innovation at Landmark College)

Kelly Sears Smith, Ph.D., Vice Chair (Technical Research Writer and Doctoral Student, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

Amanda Marino, MA, Secretary and Communications Chair (Vice President of Client Services, Integrate Autism Employment Advisors)

Mark J. Milligan, CAE, CPSP, Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer, Academy of Managed Care Pharmacies)

Board Members:

Jane Thierfeld Brown, Ed.D. (Director, College Autism Spectrum)

John Caldora, M.Ed. (Assistant Director for Accessibility, Geisel School of Medicine, Dartmouth College)

Eric Endlich, Ph.D. (Educational Consultant, Top College Consultants)

Alex Morris-Wood, Ed.D. (Head of School, Franklin Academy)

Helen Rottier, Ph.D. (Program Coordinator, Disability Cultural Center, University of Wisconsin Madison)

Keivan Stassun, Ph.D. (Director, Frist Center for Autism and Innovation, Vanderbilt University)

Stephen J. Stunder, Ed.D. (Executive Director, Life Skills Through Career Program, Neurodiversity Initiatives, Chestnut Hill College)

John Szabo, Ed.D. (Senior Program Director SRE and Cloud

Operations, WiPro)

Welcome to our new Board members, and thanks for making the commitment to help CAN become the best organization it can be.

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 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.*

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? 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](#). Register soon. Space is limited.

UPCOMING CANVAS CALL TO DISCUSS ND STUDENTS, WELL-BEING AND CAMPUS SERVICES



Join the CANVAS community for its monthly research presentation on Tuesday, April 15 at 1 pm. Lauren Mathews, M.S., CCC-SLP, Clinical Professor in the Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology at the University of North Texas will present “Neurodivergent Students’ Perceptions of Their Social-Emotional Well-Being and Related University Support Services” based on a qualitative pilot study.

Meeting Agenda: [Sign up to attend here!](#)

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5235660844?omn=87437752652>

OUR PROGRAM DATABASE MIGHT NEED YOUR ATTENTION



Are you one of the 150 autism support programs in our Autism-Specific College Support Program database? This is one of the most visited pages on our website. But the information about your program is only as good as what you provide. Don't ignore emails from Katie McDermott (katie@collegeautismnetwork.org)! She is trying to keep the database up-to-date. Contact Katie to update links, information and contacts.

If you're one of the programs listed that is not currently a member of CAN, please consider joining. Though we do not charge you to be in the database (unlike some sites), nor do we charge anyone to view it (ditto), we would appreciate your support of our work via an individual or organizational membership. [Visit our website to join.](#)

VANDERBILT HOSTS SUMMER BOOTCAMP FOR CODERS



The Frist Center for Autism and Innovation will once again be hosting its Aspie Bootcamp: Python, a free, virtual, summer coding camp. It's a great way to become eligible for future internships and jobs with employers who seek candidates who can code. No experience is necessary! The bootcamp will run from May 27th till August 1. For more information and to apply, please visit the [FCAI website](#).

INTERESTING STUFF FROM AROUND THE INTERNET



[This is a great story](#) about a professor at PennWest University who learned he was autistic in 2020, and reflects on how an earlier diagnosis might have helped his teachers and others support his learning.



[In this op-ed](#), Frist Center for Autism and Innovation director Keivan Stassun and board chair Jon Perlin make a case for supporting neurodivergent talent, especially at a time when some companies might back away from diversity goals. They do a great job summarizing the types of approaches to ND employment that companies have tried, and run the numbers on the economic benefits we all experience when talented candidates get jobs. It's a great example of local activism that takes a national view.

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 3000 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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