

Subject: CAN Summer Fun and Fascinating Facts
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College Autism Network News and Notes

July 2025

WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?



College Autism Network
ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

We are living in a time when people routinely and loudly make their political views known via hats, signs, shirts and posts. Sometimes they reverse course, and sometimes they stick to their (figurative, or occasionally real) guns. Those political views have their origins in a wide range of human experiences--family, faith, education, personal experience. What about us? What do we do, what do we believe, what do we seek? We have views, of course, with origins in this simple idea: our name. College Autism Network. Three words, each of them essential to our mission.

“College” tells you that our focus is on postsecondary education, primarily of a matriculating/degree-seeking type. We care about making sure autistic high school students and their families have the information they need to make smart decisions about 1) whether or not college is the right choice and 2) where an autistic student should go to college in order to get the support that leads to success.

Newsletter Highlights

What Do We Stand For?

Summit Keynote Speaker Announced

Parent Series, Parts 3 and 4 in July, August

Summer Research Discussions on Attrition and Dropout

CAN's New Research Repository Launches

Forbes 100 Features Friends of CAN

Newly Published Article Features PEACES Study

Membership Option for CAN Community Members in Need



“*Autism*” tells you that our primary focus is students with a diagnosis of *autism*. Usually that diagnosis is proffered by a credentialed professional. Sometimes it’s a self-diagnosis. While the former is more accepted, we recognize that not everyone has access to the kind of evaluation that leads to a formal diagnosis. If a thoughtful person, upon examining themselves and the ways in which they think, behave and interact, determines that they are autistic, we are ready to assist them through our resources for college-bound students and their families. Similarly, while we respect the wide contours of neurodiversity, our focus is narrower: autism, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 5th Edition.

“*Network*” is our strategy to make “College” and “Autism” connect. Our network is made up of practitioners, scholars, employers, family members and, of course, autistic students and recent graduates. We take an “open source” approach to our work, using the experience and expertise of our members to support one another, rather than seeing ourselves as the sole source of that expertise. One of our tenets: all of us are smarter than any one of us.

What do we believe? That information and experiences lead to learning and personal growth, and for that reason we support political and policy decisions that engender that information and those experiences. We support political and policy decisions that increase *access* by autistic individuals who want to go to college and *evidence-guided practices* by the institutions that welcome them. We support political and policy decisions that take into account the inequities encountered by autistic individuals, their families, and the many professionals who work hard to support them, decisions designed to remove those inequities. We’re grateful for the passion, and compassion, of our network’s members. We may not have a hat or t-shirt that says all of that (because it would be in a tiny font that no one could read), but we thought it would be good to share with you all. -- Lee

SUMMIT KEYNOTE SPEAKER ANNOUNCED



We are excited that Dr. Jess Monahan will open our 2025 [College Autism Summit](#) on Monday, November 3 with her talk, “Rooted in Community: The Power of Connection.” Jess is a well-respected neurodivergent researcher, advocate and educator, and has long been involved with CAN, which makes it even more special that she is our keynote speaker. You can get an idea of why we are so happy to have Jess in this important role if you take a look at her [TEDx talk](#). Jess is the Research Manager for the University of Delaware’s Spectrum Scholars program. She is a well-published author of research related to mental health and neurodiversity and teaches courses on curriculum, disability and transition. Before returning to graduate school for her Ph.D. (at the University of Connecticut), Jess was a public school teacher for five years. In that role, she established a transition program for students with disabilities. Join Jess and the rest of us for a great kick-off to the Summit!

SUMMIT PRECONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES- -REGISTER SOON!



With over 50 proposals for sessions and posters accepted, you can be pretty sure this year’s [College Autism Summit](#)

will offer a rich and diverse program.

We'll be building that program over the next few weeks, but we can share a few things we already know about:

- **Program Leaders' Collaborative preconference:** a chance to network, learn from and encourage one another;
- **Employers Connection Series:** a collection of sessions, conversations and networking opportunities for those who have neuroinclusive employment initiatives and those who want to have them;
- **Summit Student Experience:** a learning and networking opportunity for autistic undergraduates who want to become leaders and scholars in this field; scholarships are available--see the website;
- Research presentations and posters by some of the best scholars in the field;
- Way too much more fun, learning and thought-provoking conversation to list here.

Join us in Pittsburgh, November 2-5, for an outstanding professional development opportunity. [Register now](#) to get our early rates and a reasonably-priced Heavenly Bed™ at the Westin. Thanks go out to our Diamond Sponsor, Landmark College.



LANDMARK
C O L L E G E

**PARENT WEBINAR SERIES CONTINUES IN
JULY AND AUGUST--REGISTER NOW!**



The college search landscape can be confusing, especially for a family whose student is autistic and may need extra support to succeed academically. What can be asked for? What's reasonable? How do you know if a student is ready for college?

Our summer series, [Autistic Students: College Readiness and Reasonable Expectations](#), is designed to answer some of the most common questions families have--a win-win for families and for the campus and other support staff who work with autistic and other neurodivergent students who want the best transition to college possible. We've done two of our four sessions. You can register for the next two (career support on July 10 and transitional program options on August 7). You can also register for the whole series and get the recordings of the first two sessions (housing and mental health)

Each webinar features four professionals with hands-on experience supporting autistic college students. If you're a parent--[please sign up!](#) If you're a program leader, please [share this resource](#) with families exploring your services.

SUMMER RESEARCH DISCUSSIONS ON ATTRITION AND DROPOUT



Join the CANVAS community for a collaborative two-part discussion on attrition and dropout in autism research.

[Session #1](#) (July 15 at noon ET) will provide a brief overview of the topic and related research followed by a discussion on barriers related to or experiences with dropout/attrition.

[Session #2](#) (July 29, noon ET) will focus on potential strategies to mitigate barriers and create more accessible research processes.

Sam Brandsen and Brett Nachman, both autistic autism researchers, will facilitate these discussions. No cost, but please register by July 11 to get the links.

CAN'S NEW RESEARCH REPOSITORY LAUNCHES



After much development and public interest, the College Autism Network is pleased to publicly share our new

Autism in Higher Education Research Database. Developed and refined by a group of consultants, including Val Erwin, Dr. Sam Brandsen, as well as the CAN leadership team, this [research repository](#) features filters for longtime and emergent researchers to find journal articles and dissertations on autism/postsecondary education scholarship. The database is not exhaustive and indeed iterative; feel free to insert recommendations of pieces that should be added via [filling out this form](#). We hope that our community finds the database to be a helpful tool in locating and sorting through relevant pieces in their scholarly pursuits!

FORBES 100 FEATURES FRIENDS OF CAN



Forbes magazine has announced its first-ever [Accessibility 100](#) highlighting significant innovators and impact-makers in the field of accessibility for people with disabilities. Not surprisingly, there are some organizations and names familiar to the CAN family, and we salute these organizations for their leadership. Microsoft is a long-time sponsor of the Summit, including this year where they will be a Gold Sponsor. Rangam is a past sponsor. Specialisterne has been part of our employment webinars. Everway (formerly TextHelp) is a new Summit sponsor, but an experienced contributor to the universe of software and apps that aid instruction and executive function challenges. And Docs With Disabilities is an amazing organization helping people with disabilities (including neurodiversity) fulfill their goal to enter a health profession--nursing, OT, PT, PA, and, of course, "docs."

Three cheers to Forbes for highlighting this important work, and even more cheers to Microsoft, Rangam, Specialisterne, Everway and Docs with Disabilities for being bright lights in a sometimes-dark world.

NEWLY PUBLISHED ARTICLE FEATURES PEACES STUDY



The PEACES team studying autistic college student success has a new article that just debuted in The Journal of Higher Education on the topic of friendship development.

[Learn more](#) about what they discovered on how 43 autistic college students foster social connectedness: engaging in autistic spaces, practicing autistic authenticity, and bonding over shared interests. This article is open access for all to enjoy!

MEMBERSHIP OPTION FOR CAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN NEED



If you have lost your position or your program has lost its funding due to the current political climate, we've got you covered. You can join or renew your CAN membership for just \$25 for the coming year. We want to keep you connected to the CAN community!

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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