

Subject: Need some spring break reading? The CAN Newsletter is here!
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College Autism Network News and Notes

March 2026

HOT TOPICS IN AUTISM SERIES COMING THIS SPRING



There are a lot of controversies, a lot of debate, a lot of political and social chaos swirling around our work. CAN members should be as up-to-date as possible, bringing to our everyday work a thoughtful understanding of critical topics. *That* is how we lead our campuses and organizations through this difficult time. During 2026, the College Autism Network will be offering several webinars on critical issues in postsecondary autism practice. Please stay tuned as we announce dates, topics and speakers, and try to fit these into your busy schedules.

Newsletter Highlights

Hot Topics in Autism Series
Coming This Spring

CAN Transitions to a New
Membership System

This Month's CANVAS Call
Focuses on COVID-19
Experiences

In the Works: The Tenth
College Autism Summit

New Open-Access Article on
Contributing Factors to
Autistic Student Success

AbleVu Introduces a New AI
Bot to Help People with
Disabilities Navigate

Neuro-affirming Suicide
Prevention Toolkit Now
Available

Mental Health Studies in
the UK Offer Sobering
Reality

We will offer these webinars for free to CAN members. If you're not currently a member, we have a big ask: *please [renew your membership or join for the first time](#)*. We offer inexpensive individual rates (discounted for students) and very reasonable organization memberships that can include two, five or up to ten colleagues FYI: We will have a slight dues increase in April.

Your CAN dues helps us cover the cost of services and resources like these webinars, consultations and online databases. We know funds are in short supply these days but hope you'll be able to fit CAN into your budget. Thank you!

CAN TRANSITIONS TO A NEW MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM



Speaking of which, one of our biggest expenses is the cost of an association membership system. Our AMS includes our website, where you find all of our resources, and our membership data. The annual cost of a good platform (one that is easy to use and serves members well) is upwards of \$10,000. In April, we will transition to NoviAMS, an excellent membership system that will help us keep better track of everyone, make it easier to register for events like webinars and the Summit, and provide easy access to the online resources you've come to expect. There may be a few bumps in the road as we make this switch. Please be patient! We're learning it too.

THIS MONTH'S CANVAS CALL FOCUSES ON COVID-19 EXPERIENCES





Join us on Thursday, March 19 at 12 pm ET for “Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Experiences of Autistic University Students: Informing the Future of Higher Education”

Meeting Agenda: [Sign up to attend the presentation here](#) No need to register.

Meeting Link: <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/9380222514>

Presenters this month are Dr. Karen R. Johnson (Associate Professor, University of North Texas) and Dr. Barbara Pazez (Associate Professor, University of North Texas).

What’s it about? “The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed how universities delivered courses and support services, creating challenges for autistic students who rely heavily on structure and predictability. This presentation shares findings from a qualitative narrative study of four autistic university students, highlighting how changes in access, communication, and support affected their academic experiences. Practical recommendations are offered for higher education administrators and disability service providers to improve accessibility, maintain consistent supports, and better meet the needs of autistic and the broader neurodivergent student population as learning environments continue to evolve.”

IN THE WORKS: THE TENTH COLLEGE AUTISM SUMMIT



They call Baltimore “Charm City,” but that’s probably not what Maryland’s famous blue crabs call it. They probably call it “Place with People Armed with Wooden Mallets.” You’ll want to see (and eat) for yourself. We’ll be opening both registration and the Call for Proposals in early April, and will announce it here in the April newsletter. For now, your to-do list should include two items: One, mark your calendar for November 8-11 in Baltimore, and two, start thinking of topics for your proposal.

This year our schedule will allow for both 30-minute and 50-minute sessions as well as paired sessions. We’ll be looking for innovative ideas, strategy and discussion sessions, and research presentations (both posters and breakout sessions).

NEW OPEN-ACCESS ARTICLE ON CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO AUTISTIC STUDENT SUCCESS



The PEACES research team, led by Dr. Bradley E. Cox (CAN's founder) and Dr. Brett Ranon Nachman (CAN's Director of Research), has a new open-access journal article just published in *The Review of Higher Education*. It draws on 930 surveys from students across around 400

postsecondary education institutions in the United States. Based on the first two years of the longitudinal study, this paper focuses on the contributing factors that support autistic college students' success. [Read more here.](#)

ABLEVU INTRODUCES A NEW AI BOT TO HELP PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES NAVIGATE



“Ask. Find. Go. Meet AbleBot™” This invitation is from AbleVu, introducing its new AI chatbot, AbleBot. If you’re planning a trip or local spots, AbleBot gives you instant answers about accessibility. Among its many areas of focus (wheelchair accessibility, for example), AbleBot can identify low-sensory spaces and activities. Like all AI bots, AbleBot will get better the more it is used, so give it a try. You can find it at [AbleVu.com](https://www.ablevu.com). AbleVu was started by CAN supporter Meegan Winters who has worked with autistic individuals for 20 years. We’re excited to see how AI can improve life for neurodivergent people.

NEURO-AFFIRMING SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLKIT NOW AVAILABLE



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

One in three Autistic people experience suicidal thoughts, and Autistic people are significantly more likely to die by

suicide than the general population - among the highest rate of any priority group. Dr Claire Brown, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at La Trobe's [Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre](#), who led the project to develop the [Suicide Prevention for Autism Neuro-affirming Toolkit](#), said Autistic adults in distress were often overlooked in healthcare settings.

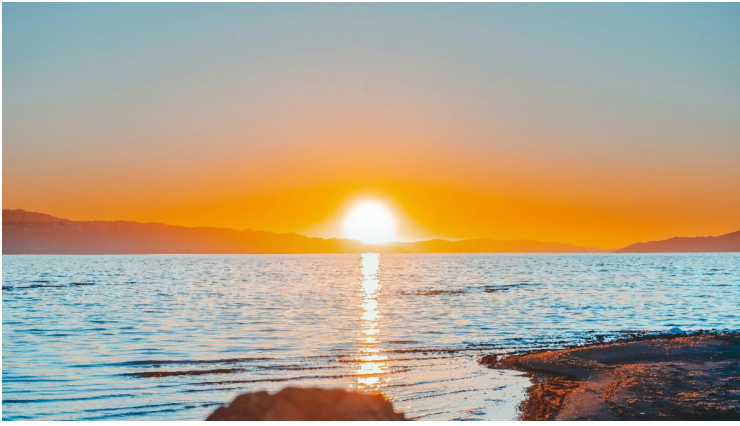
“Autistic adults often face unrecognised mental health pressures and barriers to accessing timely and effective, autism-informed care,” Dr Brown said. The toolkit includes educational and training videos, easy-to-read fact sheets, autism-adapted suicide screening and assessment instruments and safety plans. Training takes around two hours and screening a patient can take as little as 10 minutes.

MENTAL HEALTH STUDIES IN THE UK OFFER SOBERING REALITY



The mental health and well-being of autistic individuals is always top of mind for CAN members. [This article](#) from the journal NPJ: Mental Health describes a review of 37 studies in seven countries that looked at interventions and strategies aimed at improving the mental health and well-being of neurodivergent college students. Their conclusion: “The narrative synthesis demonstrates little evidence of strength-based approaches and found that neurodivergent students were rarely involved in designing the interventions.” (Cue that WHAH-whah trombone sound, because this is pretty discouraging).

THE AUTISTIC VOICE FROM AMERICA'S HEARTLAND



On a happier note, and darn it, we are going to end on a happy note, we really love to read first-person narratives written by autistic people whose day-to-day experiences have so much to teach us. Nolan Adler is the co-sports editor of his student newspaper at UW-Oshkosh, and this is a [great description of his day-to-day life and the challenges he faces as an autistic student](#). His concluding thought? “My main message with this is believe me, I know what it feels like when you feel like you’re alone. But trust me you are not alone, there are people out there who do care about you.” Words to live by, Nolan, especially for the network of professionals reading this newsletter.

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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