

Testing captions

SPEAKER:

So sorry everyone for the delay, there were some technical difficulties here.

SPEAKER:

No worries, can you turn on my videos?

SPEAKER:

That would be helpful wouldn't it, I will turn mine off and then let you run with it! Before you let in the attendees...

SPEAKER:

Oh I'm sorry I had to already let everybody and that's the only way.

SPEAKER:

Oh sorry about that everyone, if you want to go ahead and start the recording we can go ahead and get started.

SPEAKER:

Hello everyone my name is Matt aligned Haley and I want to welcome you all for the AIRP, because of the number of participants or audio will be muted throughout the call but if you have any questions you can use the checkbox on your console or in the Q and a section. The entire webinar is being recorded and will be of way available on the AI RP website which I will put in the chat right now.

There will also be a short evaluation survey at the close of the webinar which we invite you to complete, provide feedback on this webinar and also suggestions for future webinar topics and speakers. In the interest of time, let's go ahead and get started! We first want to acknowledge the health services and knowledge the funding source for the eight IRP. I want to introduce our speaker today I am not sure how to pronounce her last name.

BRETT RANON NACHMAN:

That is fine!

SPEAKER:

Please join me in welcoming our guest speaker for today!

BRETT RANON NACHMAN:

Welcome and thank you for joining wherever you are coming from and I'm joining you from Raleigh

North Carolina although it is beautiful to be chilly. Today we're going to talk about bolstering artistic college students' mental health and success. We will be focusing on a wide variety of things in the time that we have together.

I would love to learn a little bit more about each of you joining in, if in the chat box you could tell me where you are joining from today as well as your connection to the Autism community so I have a sense of who is joining us in the virtual room. I welcome you to do that as we begin. I will just mention some examples as they come into the chat. We have folks joining us from Kentucky, Austin Texas, Alberta Canada, Saipan, Boston Massachusetts, Memphis, Columbus Ohio, UC Davis, Ohio State, Los Angeles and a wide variety of different places. So glad you could all be here today.

I will provide you all with a bit of an outline with what today will encompass and I do want to acknowledge that my email address and my Twitter handle are listed on each slide in case you would like to follow up with me following today's conversation. We will have time for Q and A at the end and I think we have about 15 minutes allocated for that. But I welcome this as a continued dialogue.

I will be talking about my personal professional journey as an autistic Autism higher Ed researcher. I will talk about some literature and from there I will talk about my dissertation work which will be the epicenter of our conversation today and how a component of that does focus on autistic college students and mental health. From there we will shift over to practical implications. I will be pretty swift in discussing these sort of things and if you have any questions or comments feel free to put those in the chat and I can attend to those throughout the portion later but if questions do emerge that you do want to allocate for that time, I do believe there is a Q and A icon on your toolbar for you to enter those as we proceed.

When I talk about my journey, I always start with talking about my community college experience because this was very formative for me in developing the person I am today. For just a little bit of context, I was diagnosed with at the time, Asperger's, 21 years ago. I am a member of the Autism community, I have a number of strengths growing up, very detail oriented, organized, ethical and had a lot of strong interests that have served me in different aspects of my life. There were also challenges on many of them related to nonverbal communication, picking up social cues etc.

When I started community college I had actually been homeschooled for my middle and high school years. It was very intimidating to be starting a new institution, a new avenue to pursue my education. I felt like community college would be a really good vehicle for me and it really paid in dividends.

I continually challenge myself and put myself in situations where I did not necessarily anticipate. I took on leadership roles, often with no preparation. I ran our campus newspaper and honor Society and an environmental organization. A lot through different circumstances but through these roles and

opportunities that I really gained an investment in learning how to support college students success.

At the time I was pursuing a journalism career and I was starting to question it because of some challenges that I had faced. I kept my Autism identity relatively private. A defining moment was when I graduated and was selected as outward student commencement speaker. I use that as a coming-out speech of sorts, talking about my journey to that point as an autistic individual. Challenges I had but also the strengths I was able to capitalize on and that's when I really tried to make it very transferable talking about all of the different paths that all of us as community college graduates, had gone on to reach that point. So I looked very fondly on that experience and how it really allowed me to pursue subsequent goals.

I do share all of this context because it is very informative to the work that I will talk to you about in just a few moments. When I transferred to Arizona State, I entered their journalism school. I was taking on new leadership roles, some of which I had struggles with, often reflective of finding team situations to be difficult at times. If people were not pulling their own weight, but I was also gaining a lot of great opportunities including attending the Clinton Global initiative University to talk about transfer students pathways. I was starting to determine that what I like most about my work, my studies really, was not just necessarily the notion of the journalism pathway but rather the notion of supporting students across a variety of settings. I was a writing tutor, a teaching assistant, holding different leadership roles and I realize that higher education as a field of study not just as an institution. I went " Oh my gosh!" This could be an exciting pathway for me, the notion of channeling, the investment of storytelling and supporting students in a totally different light.

Consequently I moved to Madison Wisconsin for my doctoral studies, heading straight there from undergrad and it was intimidating to move across the country and live solo for the first time. I was at the right point in my life to take on that challenge. While I entered a higher education program to focus on community college students and their transfer pathways, it immediately became clear that to honor myself and my interests, I need to fully invest all of my identities into my work. I actually started focusing on artistic college students experiences in the community college lens I will discuss.

This was also a time when I started new endeavors from scratch which was really exciting and I didn't put a visual here but I joined a great organization called the college Autism network, I've been able to play very active role in developing monthly webinar series similar to what you are are a part of today through a IRP. As well as listserv and other avenues that we put on and an annual conference.

Clearly my research became Me-search. I was looking at many minority ties to aspects of my life and how to best support students and honor all of who they are but not just in the classroom but in other spaces as well. My journey is continued more recently as a post-doctorate at here in Raleigh. Soon, I will be shifting gears a little bit and I will be entering a tenure-track assistant professor role at the

University of Arkansas which I am beyond thrilled about! That is the visual on the upper right-hand corner of your screen.

Having recently obtained my doctorate, it is been a real whirlwind of a year, but ultimately very exciting. All these spaces are allowing me to build my expertise and investment in artistic college students, and community college students and often the intersection of those as well.

I would like to give a little bit of context to Autism and mental health and I will say that this will seem very cursory. I invite you to engage with these studies further beyond our conversation today. This will transition to some of the work that I've done specifically. What I want to recognize is there is often a strong cooccurrence with anxiety and depression with Autism. Often times individuals diagnosis may come at different times, the presentations of this also vary but ultimately what is important to know is that college, a lot of my work is college specific, is an unpredictable space. Whether it be events that happened, the notion for some students who live on campus and navigating that independence for the first time, having to take on more roles and responsibilities on their own. That can exacerbate a lot of the stressors that are hard for anybody and certainly for some of us in the Autism community, would certainly not want to conflate and generalize but for many folks, this only makes it more challenging to deal with task initiation and organization.

It is important to look at this holistically and anxiety and depression and more information points to the discourse broadly but when we talk about Autism it is often inherently tied. Loneliness impacts college students broadly at times and it can be heightened for autistic individuals particularly if there is a sense of being in it alone. Ultimately through finding the right resources and getting connected with individuals, as well as engaging with personal and professional development, there can be a paradigm shift.

There is a notion in college that there is a societal norm to continually be socializing with others and doing all the things. I want to also interrupt that narrative insight not everybody has to follow a certain path that is perhaps envisioned in college brochures and videos. But, we do have to recognize loneliness whether people are continually engaging with others or more of a solo journey, is prevalent.

Needless to say, entering this new stage individuals are often questioning if they disclose their autistic disability to faculty members, disability services, to a friend? There's a lot of selective disclosure going on and arguably for the right reasons for each individual. What this does, is it often provides or presents complications for individuals in terms of figuring out the right space to share more of themselves and ultimately, are there even resources to be able to support them and capitalize on their strengths?

Myself included, in my college years I did not communicate.. Let me rephrase that, the landscape has

changed drastically in the past decade in terms of Autism salience in society. Nonetheless, it is still an individual journey. I do want to recognize that some research is turned into some practices that work and certainly through offering alternative assignments and providing extensions as a few examples. Educators have opportunities to make different tasks and course content less stressful.

Psychoeducational courses that help students manage anxiety are useful and should be employed more broadly.

Certainly as you've already heard me articulate, enabling students to focus on their strengths and coursework is fantastic and so important. Engaging students in coping mechanisms when anxious can be really effective. It is all about being proactive in trying to identify ways of reconciling stressors that are overcoming.

This led me to the research question for my dissertation which was how do artistic community college students enrolled in a college-Autism transition program, navigate higher education? I will tell you more about this over the coming slides. First I want to let you know that my work was noticing a lot of gaps and missed opportunities in the literature. Sometimes by situation but sometimes by what authors chose to and not to study.

I've seen a lot of studies where there is low engagement, participant bias at times, particularly those who communicate about Autism in self favorable ways to make themselves look better than providing a holistic picture. Certainly in my work I try to look at disability and Autism broadly as it's very contextual. There are certainly strengths, challenges and things that are very much based on the situation at hand. It was important to me that I really provide a lot of candor and honesty when looking at all different sides of a situation.

Certainly a lot of existing studies do not have measures or they are problematic. There's often a lack of artistic agency. We are seeing more participatory action research and more workwear artistic students perspectives are being highlighted more salient lay. Certainly there is been a lack of community college specific work, that is been a huge space for me to try to engage in.

Deficit framing which is why try to be intentional with my wording and when I mess up I tried to be very candid about that. Hence why it is so important to really honor individuals specific language and I try to look at the entire picture. There's also been an absence of theory.

My work was grounded in social constructivism where I as well as my participants were to co-create knowledge essentially. We all approach situations with different lenses and we are all making sense differently depending on the lives that we have led. I am honoring that multiple realities exist.

I framed my work as a case study to focus on the why and how of the phenomenon and this case the notion of navigating college as an artistic person and community college. I was looking at a number of

different units of analysis, each student's experiences unit, the Autism program is a much broader unit and then looking at the college entirely. Lots of different levels going on here.

I situated my work at a college study in the western United States that are referred to as Bluemoon community college. Serves the highest number of transfer students and considered a baccalaureate or Associates college. Essentially they are referring a number of bachelor degrees each year.

The program I was looking at was the Captains of Autism in Community College which is nearly a decade old serving neuro-divergent students. Serves approximately hundred and 40 autistic students, very big and very substantial. It features credit bearing courses where students learn about everything from operationalizing self advocacy, communication skills, workplace preparation, a wide variety of courses. Take one each term.

Students also meet with peer mentors on a weekly basis to go through handling tasks on their own and communicating for themselves in different situations. It is really fantastic!

Participants from my study encompass several different groups, 13 autistic students, for people who were staff members of this program, nine staff at the college broadly and nine people who students nominated as important to them in their lives. This is just a quick demographic snapshot of students. You will see that I tried to use terminology that reflected how they described their connection to the Autism community.

Even in the title of the presentation today attend use identity first language but eight certainly recognize everyone has their preferences. I too, honor the individuality of folks experiences. You will see some students identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community and most students were traditional college age of 18 to 22 but there were a few exceptions. Many students as you can see, identified as also having anxiety and depression, and/or other disabilities as well. I just want to recognize this in many ways is illustrative of the students broadly. This is a good cross-section of members of the Autism community in this program and certainly I want to interrupt the comment narratives that Autism resembles a specific picture. Indeed everyone's diagnosis age varies in terms of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, race, origin in all of these are important to honor and recognize.

My study provided a number of methodological approaches and you will have to appreciate the gifts here. So the past this along to students at the college and I learned more about their identities and experiences, their educational backgrounds and their career goals. 15 of them filled it out and said that they would like to engage in the study further. I engaged in two sets of interviews with each student.

A few of them did not follow through with the second one but most did which was great. I interviewed people students nominated, most were parents. A few college staff members who were nominated,

staff members I interviewed multiple times and the college administration as well. 52 total interviews, 34 unique participants and you can tell this was pretty much a qualitative study at its richest. This was probably about 75+ hours of interviews. A lot to code!

I also want to honor students' comfort, this all took place right before the pandemic started in the latter interviews unfolded shortly after the shutdown. So when we were still in person, students did have the option if they preferred in person or virtual interviews. Give them the questions to review in bands and that's an important inclusive practice students can process in advance and sometimes come up with notes. That is really important.

I do like my cat gifs so I do hope you will like this one. Students were able to share more context about the themes in the interviews that were discussed and what's really good is that it enables students to have additional time to process. To frame things that are different than if they were to engage in an interview. One of the dimensions of this is where they could talk about their mental health further.

I also conducted observations where I could see few students' interactions with a variety of stakeholders. Primarily peer mentors, that is where most students elected to engage in those.

Documentation was the last main phase. Although this really actually unfolded at all stages of the process. They were internal, I gathered some internal documents, 10 of them actually! So I could learn about the program's evolution and of course offerings as well as publicly accessible information. All of these different approaches allowed me to get a well-rounded picture of the program.

You can see some of the main processes and tenants associated with the Captains of Autism in Community College. A universal design, was certainly held and grounded in their coursework. They used a lot of collaborative problem-solving to help students come up with solutions to issues they may be facing. Very strengths-in-nature which I appreciated. And there were some challenges of the program itself had to navigate in terms of gaining funding and legitimacy, tracking students' trajectories. In many ways I was trying to understand the program and how it operates in tandem with each individual student's experience and how all of this meshes together. There were a lot of flares I was accounted for here.

I will share with you several of the main themes that became very salient and I will explain in what ways the mental health piece is also quite threaded throughout this. One component of students' experiences is just the gnosis — notion of processing identity. This is very much connected back to when they were diagnosed and who they were engaging with, how Autism was described in those spaces. I created this able-ism cycle to illustrate that in many ways society perpetuates a bias. Autism is still described unfortunately in ways that are very medicalized in ways that are describing functionality and seemed to present a scale of what is functional or what is more functional than

others. Certainly I recognize that everybody's entry points are different and work is grounded in different spaces. But I really want to interrupt this notion of functionality.

The presentations of Autism often differ for each individual. What unfolds at times is that parents processes able-ism and describe their children and dislikes. So and, very well intended, described her daughter Julia as "Pretty normal". That is establishing some idea of what is normal versus what is not. Consequently autistic people may internalize this able-ism and not view themselves as normal whatever normal may be. You can also see the quote from John in terms of the idea, in my regular in certain ways? Or am I not working in ways that are socially acceptable?

In tandem, the Autism program talking about able-ism and teaching students how to disrupt these notions and had to reframe their own thinking but because this is a process, autistic individuals are often making sense of this and changing their practices. Maybe even identifying their own able is some, but at times they are also viewing others' traits associated with Autism in a negative light. This illustrates the complexity associated with these ideas that are just so rooted in rituals.

Consequently, this is all related to what ways people feel comfortable disclosing about their Autism and they may feel sense of anxiety and trying to conceal traits or conceal their diagnosis.

There are academic challenges that are inherent with every college student. The notion of finding time to study, missing two dates, finding online classes to be hard. But I want to illustrate is that for autistic students in the study, in my study at least, these were also very much the case but they were also connected to some foundational elements. So task initiation which students talked a lot about and sometimes feeling anxious and just getting started with an assignment because of not knowing where to start. If directions were not the most clear or not knowing what resources to consult, and lacking the clarity for some, one student in particular was dropping out of classes and taking a break from college. A few others were thinking about that just by virtue of some of the stressors they found in this type of environment.

Some general college experiences that were really encouraging included the fact that students were leveraging their interests, such as marine biology and theater, computer science, and gauging and campus life at the time, one of the students worked at the residence hall on campus. But, there were challenges including weighing parental dependence which we know is a big theme in the Autism community in terms of when students are, when there called students and no more autistic children. The anxiety that emerges of having to do certain things for themselves without getting enough guidance or at times having too much handholding. What I want to recognizes what the program is really effective in, was helping students gain agency while still recognizing the important roles of their parents played. But trying to help students feel more at Genentech in their decisions.

In navigating, students associate a positive and negative with negotiating friendship and community and spaces around other autistic individuals. Some of them for the very first time. Some of them are really finding joy in finding those connections and shared interests.

Thrawn, that is a Star Wars book character, he made friends almost instantly when talking with his peers. He felt like he had found his place. There were many experiences that illustrated this and almost, I went to use the word normalize, but it almost made it more familiar for students to hear from their peers. And think " Oh yeah, that resonates with me, that is my experience and you get anxious and these unfamiliar social settings? So do I."

There were others who do not share the same sense of kinship or pride in their artistic identities and Charles was really interesting. He with duct nose much later in life, I think in his late 30s if I'm not mistaken. He was really self-aware and expressed how if I expect neuro- typical people to be patient with me because of my Autism, what does it say if I'm not patient with other autistic people?". So there is a sense that we should all give each other grace regardless of our identities of Autism or not but this notion of being patient with one another.

There was the notion of judgment at times and how traits with people with Autism's were more salience in themselves which illustrates the complexity of this. And it further enhances the notion that the need to really interrogate the role of mental health in concert with Autism because of how some anxiety really stems from the notion of how do I fit within the Autism community? And being in a very intentional space.

Needless to say major theme of my work was how are students managing their health and how are they making sense of their emotions? I use the term battling anxiety and depression because that was in many ways how students were describing it. Many different situations could be triggering. The course syllabi, the assignments could be instigating past trauma and students were explicit about that. Many found college to be rather overwhelming. Even though the community college was a bit more smaller in scale, it did not change the fact that they were having to handle a lot more on their own. It is not as prescriptive as high school. Some of them had task initiation challenges pushing assignments off until they were due because of feeling very anxious and wanting to do things a certain way. Not always getting clarity from the instructors.

Charles had made reference that body language was difficult for him to interpret which could create social anxiety. This was just very much threaded in most of these students experiences in terms of a lot of different situations causing unease. In college, that is the space for them right now and how they are trying to process it all.

Many were managing the highs and lows of emotional regulation. Many expressed pervasive

frustration, sometimes broadly but also with specific individuals. Some expressed frustration with their faculty members if they were not always clear, if they do not know how to manage online courses. For students, it was perhaps more straightforward, sometimes the feedback from instructors was not helpful and that could enhance frustration.

George made reference to that, that his frustration can really be explosive. What I do want to illustrate is what was so important and beautiful about hearing the student stories and them being very candid with me, is there was a lot of self-awareness and a lot of recognition of when these emotions, strong emotions can sometimes be a bit harsher. In terms if you are expressing a lot of frustrating, they were very self-aware and trying to figure ways to self mitigate the intensity. That is for the program is working with them through collaborative problem-solving on how to best handle that.

As I said, there are so many situations would prompt a lot of anxiety even if certain course experiences were becoming more familiar it did not change the fact that this is a new class, this is a new instructor, this is a new group of people.

At time students were experiencing discontent with the program in many talk very favorably about CACC but I also want to recognize that in terms of students feeling very anxious, part of that stemmed from day were around peers who were perhaps more disruptive at times. And to release that frustration in not always the healthiest ways. Some students were much more familiar with Autism and certain terminology in public some of the content was service-level in nature and wanted to dig a bit deeper. That is a challenge with any program in trying to account for all of the students perspectives and levels of knowledge.

Charles made reference to appear to have had a meltdown because someone did not want to create a linked in profile. These were all scenarios the staff members were experiencing. I see there is a comment in the chat what is CACC? That is the acronym for the program that I was exploring. A pseudonym, but the captains of Autism in community college will stop students were finding a lot of joy and personal development in this program but they also found opportunities to improve it as well.

At this point I will share some implications and then we will ship to questions because I want to honor everyone's time. This was all very foundational, this dissertation was about 400 pages long! There was certainly a lot more that I did not cover today and a lot that I shared on a very general level. What is really important in the work that I engage in is that hopefully it starts a conversation. But also that it prompts change. I will share some slides with you of how this work may be informative to a variety of different stakeholders.

For faculty members, what are their roles and reducing stress and anxiety not only for members of the Autism community but students broadly? Assigning roles to students work can be very helpful gives a

sense of direction and clarity for everybody. I recognize that not everybody likes group work, I remember myself feeling the same way, I think enabling solo work opportunities may also be helpful for everybody.

Again, it is the tight rope walk will stop as an instructor you want to build those opportunities for individuals to work collaboratively but also under that sometimes individuals are most effective when they are working solo. Trying to create that structure and be as precise as possible is going to benefit everybody. Offering routine with each cross-session, that is brilliant and that benefits everybody. Providing more student driven opportunities and often the work is going to be much richer when there are those avenues.

For folks who are called staff members, may be advisors or residence hall directors or people working in student life. There are a number of different avenues to reduce stress and anxiety and one is trying to create some avenues for students to release their frustration. Certainly, all of us get frustrated at times and stressed, anxious and for many individuals it is a clinical diagnosis and it is much more embedded in every aspect of their lives.

What we need to think about collectively are different avenues to channel that which are not only communicating about it, and healthy discussions, but releasing it in appropriate avenues. Cycling for instance, joining a campus cycling club, boxing I do not want to encourage violence but that punching a boxing bag when you're feeling very tense.

Employing collaborative problem-solving strategies and I saw a lot of those play out in this program. I noticed that you are trying to figure out how to complete this assignment on time so let's work backwards, what are some of the milestones?

Building alliances across various campus units and we know very many campuses are sideload and how do we reduce that? I know it sounds very simple to start a conversation, reach out to a colleague in a different department or office, but you know what? That can make a big difference in terms of having a common understanding of what our values are, what we are seeing amongst our students and the list goes on.

We also lead parents to integrate what their roles are and to work more collaboratively and maintaining boundaries. In the CACC, Captains of Autism in Community College, it was really important to share with parents what are ways which you can engage versus which ways do we need to have the student take more agency? I think that is really important for everybody to consider.

Autism community or not, college is a time for growth and it is also a time for recognizing that everybody needs support. It is okay to ask for help, we just have to make sure that we are finding

ways to be advocating for ourselves and others in very effective ways.

Institutional leaders, college leaders what can they do? They can develop smoother pathways for transitions from high school and is often leads from events from your college for current high school students. Creating campus tours and engaging that outreach. Going to orientation sessions and they must be more inclusive. What does that look like? Maybe you have smaller spaces, I think the pandemic has allowed many folks to re-envision what that might look like. But trying to make it not as overwhelming for members of the Autism community and Autism more broadly.

Establishing mentorship programs for incoming students is very helpful because it gives them someone to tap into, someone to ask questions of. And prioritizing mental health discussions in the first year helps in terms of establishing it is okay to have these conversations. It is more familiar, it should not be a taboo topic anymore certainly. But to really establish there are a variety of avenues that exist in a college institution to help students make sense of certain challenges that they are having on that front. To know that they are not alone.

Finally, for autistic students in terms of how they can make sense of mental health, I want to be mindful that perhaps manage may not be always the right word, it depends on the lens that you come with. In terms of recognizing that anxiety and depression in a number of different issues and topics related to mental health, can be very salient in one's life. It is important to find those trust supports for you can express those feelings to. Finding relaxation outlets when overwhelmed.

For instance, myself I work long hours and to be most productive I have to build in walking breaks or talking with a loved one on the phone. It often takes time to figure out what are those outlets that work for the individual. But, trying to create those conversations early on can be very beneficial.

The same with finding hobbies that provide distractions. We need to recognize that everyone experiences stress that it does manifest differently with each person especially if there is a clinical diagnosis as well. We need to really honor and recognize the person.

A few final slides, implications for researchers and directions for research. We need to incorporate theory and I did not talk about theory and how it grounded in my study because I wanted to focus my brief amount of time we had together. We really need to prioritize more autistic driven neuro- divergent driven theories and perspectives in our work. We need to reframe wording so looking at situations holistically and not in a deficit-based manner. That we utilize alternative methods for data collection. Using personal reflections as an example. We expand the topical reach so we look at other topics within the world of Autism and higher education. Certainly time did not allow me to focus on some of the other avenues that I covered but I would argue as well, there should be so much more work done on topics like student engagement in extracurricular activities and how that influences their interactions

with peers.

As I said avoiding the deficit-based language and we have to avoid reinforcing negative approaches about mental health. That is where wording matters, the right tools matter and ultimately really valuing input from the Autism community as I did in developing the origins of this work.

I end with four key from Toy Story 4, if you have what's a Disney plus series, he often has questions. At this point, I welcome any or all of your questions, I think you for your time and I think we have about 10 minutes remaining. If you have not already, thank you and this would be a good time to put your questions in the chat or the Q and A box.

Great question from Patric as far as why the program cannot be identified, do they not want to advertise themselves? This is an intentional choice that I did as a researcher to try to really be mindful of confidentiality and the role of keeping that information quiet. Certainly, if you do any digging based on some of the basic terms or detail that I provide you can probably pinpoint the program. This is just some of the spaces that I occupy will meet focus on a singular program and where it is very easy to identify participants or individuals experiences, I really try to be very mindful of that.

With that said, what was really important for me in terms of their relationship with the program that I have, the insights that I have claimed from my work that I presented a report to them at the calm elation at the end of my dissertation report to provide recommendations to them based on what participants in the study had shared on how to enhance the program, capitalize on certain strengths.

Gosh, there are more than 80 or 90 of these college Autism programs here in the United States at least, and certainly many in Canada and the UK and in other spaces. These programs are growing in abundance and certainly being very intentional and supporting all aspects of autistic students of experiences.

Thank you for that question Patrick. What else is coming to mind for folks? The chat box and Q and A are going to be the best avenues, you are also welcome to follow-up with me via email or twitter if you would like if you prefer that avenue.

SPEAKER:

Patric also raised his hand can I go ahead and let him speak?

BRETT RANON NACHMAN:

I didn't realize he did yes go ahead!

SPEAKER:

It looks like your hand is up but that is okay!

BRETT RANON NACHMAN:

No worries. I see a question from (name) in the chat of which colleges are supportive in San Diego? There are several, at least one or two college Autism programs in the San Diego area. I cannot think of them off the top of my head but I believe there is one that is connected with several colleges in the area. I am happy to follow-up with you on that. I just do not remember right at this moment.

I will say California tends to be a really good state in terms of having not only greater Autism representation in terms of the scholars who are producing work on this front, Patric concluded, but also in terms of programs that are attending to cystic college students in particular.

Lisa is asking about what the demographics, did you have any participants in the study who had other disabilities in addition to their Autism? I sure did Lisa, let me go back to that slide and I will zoom back so everybody can see this a little bit more.

Certainly anxiety and depression were among the more common ones listed. I do want to say there was a list of categories for students to pick from but also they could fill in the blank if there was a disability that was not listed and applicable to them. So anxiety and depression for many, several with OCD, ADD, ADHD.

Ava is asking was their inclusion of nonspeaking autistic individuals? The study was open to anyone enrolled in the program. To my knowledge, the program at the time did not feature any student or did not have any students who were nonspeaking although they were very welcoming of that. I think it was more reflective of their enrollment at the time. So no, for this study they were not part of the sample. But, certainly I think that is really important to consider. We will hopefully see over the coming years, more nonspeaking autistic college students. I think that is still a space that has been relatively unexplored in the literature but also in practice many colleges are just beginning to have those conversations.

In relation to the question, how might a family identify if a college has such a program? What would it be called? As I mentioned there are couple of programs listed and I know that (name) put in the chat think college and that is great to focuses on students with intellectual disabilities broadly. I'm going to see if I can put in the chat, try to do a few things at once. I'm going to point you all to the organization that I am affiliated with which is called Autism at work. If you go on the website, on the main page there is an image that refers to Autism specific college programs. This is database that my colleagues and I developed and it showcases all of them around the US at least. And it is very exciting to be demonstrating that there are a ton that are serving students in a variety of different spaces and have a variety of different tools.

Thanks for dropping that in Michelle, very helpful. Yes, we are definitely seeing more of those programs and this is a snapshot of one of them and one of the more robust ones here in the United States.

I am just going to scroll back to the end of the PowerPoint in case we want to wrap up. I know we are right about at the hour mark so I guess I will turn it over to you metal line but thank you again for your time, your participation and please do feel free to engage with me further. And have a good rest of your day.

SPEAKER:

Thank you so much, so it looks like somebody else raised a hand but I also do not know if this is unintentional. (name) if you want to type the question in the chat before I give you the unmute just so I don't put the spotlight on you. In the meantime, I can go ahead and send the link to the survey which we invite you to complete to provide the feedback. Our social medias are on this page and they are also on the slides that I provided in the link.

For our February webinar, should be on the next slide, I know this is a lot of information. This is the information for next month's webinar, it is about understanding the neuro- diversity movement to develop so socially valid supports for autistic individuals. Dr. Kristin Gillespie Lynch as well as Patric Dwyer are also going to present on some doctoral students. The link to register is the QR code and I will put that in the chat as well.

Looks like there was a question, and she asked how do you help students with Autism to choose a career for a great grades nonspeaking student?

BRETT RANON NACHMAN:

There certainly needs to be more salient conversations about career development in high school and trying to fund those bridges between high school and whatever higher education institution that the student pursues. Perhaps they do not want to go to college and they want to enter a specific career training program. I think what is really important is trying to find what are the strengths, what are the things that get someone going? Get someone very excited and can ultimately translate those skills to serve different groups or communities.

I know that sounds like a very general answer but having those conversations as early as possible and recognizing career intentions may change with new experiences. Trying to be flexible and open to that is really essential. I was very stubborn and rigid and just wanted to pursue journalism because that's what I told myself since I was 11 or 12 years old. It was through some of the formable experiences in college and the transferable that would ultimately undergird what I would be doing now.

SPEAKER:

I know we are after the hour, I think we can go ahead and wrap it up. Thank you so much again this was a wonderful presentation and thank you everyone for attending. Please go ahead and complete the survey and register for our February webinar. We will go ahead and see you next month! Have a great rest of your day.

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