

# BRIDGES – An Inclusive College Program for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



## Our Mission

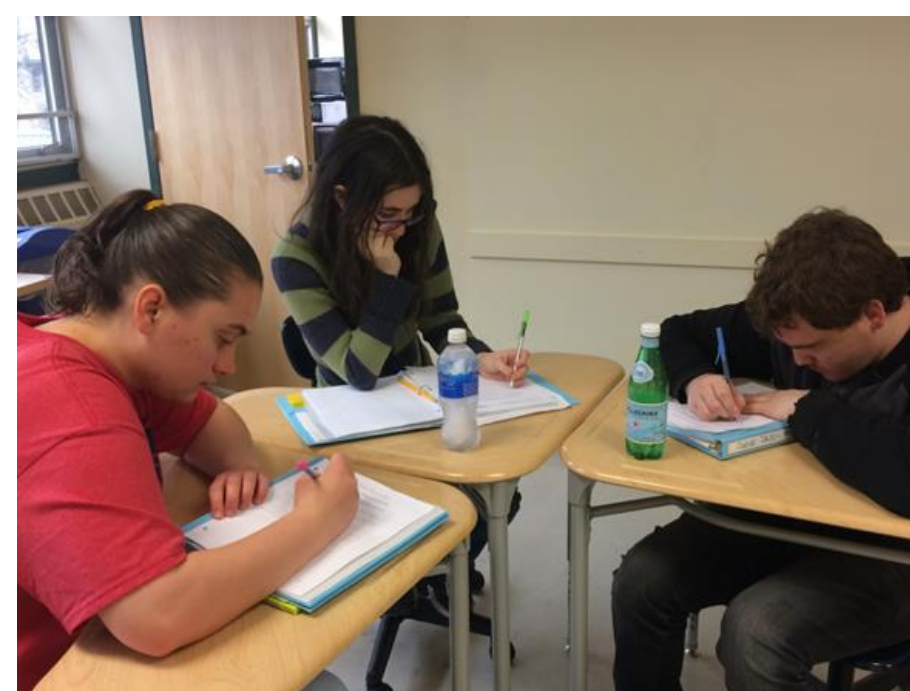
The mission of BRIDGES at SUNY Orange is to help students identify their strengths, overcome challenges and lead independent lives.

## BRIDGES at SUNY Orange

A post secondary college experience for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The BRIDGES Program is person-centered and highly individualized. Developing social/communication skills, vocational preparation/training and independent living skills are the cornerstone of the BRIDGES program.

## Collaboration between Disciplines

The BRIDGES faculty is comprised of professionals from diverse backgrounds: law, nursing, business, neuropsychology, psychology, occupational therapy and special education, each bring a different perspective to the students and the program. At its core, the program is a collaboration between all of these professionals who work together to enable learning in a way that embraces each student's distinctive learning style and preference.



## Audit College Classes

Each semester students have the opportunity to audit 1-2 college classes of their choosing. Over the last several years, students have audited a wide range of classes that appeal to their interests or possible vocational goals. Examples of some of the classes students have taken are: Creative Writing, History of Rock Music, Movement Science Classes, Computer Science, History of Russia, and Introduction to Media Production.



Lisa M. Currao RN; MS – Special Education

## Inclusive Opportunities

### Student Body Activities

BRIDGES students are encouraged to participate in all on-campus and off-campus student body activities.

BRIDGES students are also encouraged to join Student Clubs and Organizations.

Our program also has its own club on campus – “BRIDGES Club” - where students get the opportunity to hold an office position, organize fundraisers, and plan campus activities.

BRIDGES students have contributed to campus-wide events such as:

- Kindness Initiative
- Earth Day
- Day of the Dead Celebration



## Vocational Development

### Year 1: Vocational Exploration:

Different career pathways/clusters are explored and personal strengths, interests, values and goals related to the world of work are identified.

### Year 2: Introduction to Employment:

An emphasis on the “soft skills” that are necessary when entering the workforce such as communication, the importance of enthusiasm and positive attitude, and the development of a growth mindset are all taught.

### Year 3: Career Seminar and Internships:

Each student participates in a year long internship in the community that closely aligns with their identified area of vocational interest.

Examples of Internships:

LEGOLAND

Montefiore – St. Luke’s Cornwall Hospital

New York State Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther’s Office

SUNY Orange Dental Hygiene Program

SUNY Orange Devitt Greenhouse

## Social Skills Development

Key topics that are covered throughout the social skill curriculum are: Self Regulation, Self Advocacy, Social Communication, Social Relationships and Adult Independent Living Skills. Each student is paired with a Peer Mentor who reinforces learned social skills in the natural environment as opportunities present themselves on the college campus. It is a major component to the success of the BRIDGES program



## Professional Staff

- Michael Gawronski Ph.D, OTR, AVP Health Professions
- Patricia Basse JD COTA/L, Director – BRIDGES Program
- Tarah Miller B.A.COTA/L, Assistant Director – BRIDGES Program
- Sara Mesic M.S. Ed, Academic Coordinator – BRIDGES Program
- Michelle Dunn Ph.D, Director of Montefiore Center for Communicative Disorders
- Michael Kochler – Vocational Consultant
- Lisa Currao RN, M.S. SpEd,
- Suzanne Martino B.A. COTA/L
- Teresa Mandrin MPS
- Christina Bertocchi B.A. RBT
- Deidra Molfese COTA/L