Project Bridge is the periodic newsletter of the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) within the University of Delaware’s College of Education and Human Development. This issue includes updates from the past few months and a look forward to upcoming events.

Please send news and items for the next issue to Ben Szmidt at bszmidt@udel.edu by August 15.

IN THE NEWS

Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) to be based at CDS

View a CDS-produced video on the DNEA here.

The Center for Disabilities Studies soon will be housing a new autism resource center, thanks to passage of Senate Bill 93, which establishes the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA). The bill provides $500,000 for CDS and Autism Delaware to provide training and technical assistance to providers and organizations that support children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and their families. The bill also establishes the Interagency Committee for Autism, an advisory committee to the network consisting of professionals, family members and self-advocates. Read more about the DNEA in this Delaware 105.9 FM news story.
**CDS will house new LEND program**

The University of Delaware joined a network of 48 other programs nationwide when its new Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program received more than $2.2 million in federal funding at the end of June. LEND programs are committed to fostering policies and practices impacting children with autism and other neurodevelopmental disabilities that are evidence-based, culturally responsive and child- and family-centered.

Delaware’s LEND represents a partnership between UD and Nemours Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children, and interdisciplinary graduate training will include students representing physical therapy, medicine, special education, speech-language pathology, psychology and nutrition, along with families and faculty from a wide array of disciplines. The program combines on-campus training with a variety of experiential learning opportunities.

Through the LEND, CDS will also be able to offer training sessions to the community, including clinicians, family groups, organizations and schools. The program will start this fall.

**Disability Studies most popular minor – again!**

The numbers are in and for the third consecutive year, Disability Studies ranks as the top minor at the University of Delaware. The need in the community for professionals who can support the rising number of people who identify as having a disability and the minor’s flexibility, which allows students to choose courses that match their personal, academic and professional interests, continues to drive its growth. **Steps Ahead: Disability Studies at UD** offers readers a window on the minor, which is administered by CDS and currently enrolls 497 students.
Dental care survey extended

CDS has extended till Aug. 31 its survey that’s designed to help people with disabilities receive the dental care they need. Adults with disabilities and parents of individuals with disabilities who are between the ages of 6 and 49 can take the survey. Adults with visual impairments and mobility limitations who so far are underrepresented in the survey are strongly encouraged to take part.

Information gathered from the survey will be used to develop cultural competency training for dental professionals, enabling them to better understand and meet the needs of people with disabilities.

To take part in the survey, please contact Katie Rosch Hegedus at khegedus@udel.edu. The first 400 participants will receive a $10 Amazon gift card.

PROJECT UPDATES

CLSC’s 2016 graduates all find employment

The eight graduates of the Career and Life Studies Certificate program are the first CLSC cohort in which all have landed jobs immediately after completing their coursework. The two-year certificate program serves individuals with intellectual disabilities by offering them opportunities to participate in classes, internships and campus life activities. As they near graduation, the students work

From left, CDS Associate Director Brian Freedman, CLSC graduates Michael Buono, Brandon Brown, Theresa Haley, Tayair Blake, Alex Slusser and Zach Martin, program manager Debbie Bain, CLSC graduates Steven Edwards and Janell Booker and program manager Wendy Clauser.
with CDS’s Swank Employment Services for job training and assistance with job placement. The 2016 graduates found employment throughout New Castle County, including in retail and the food service industry and with a professional sports organization.

**CDS-connected students receive Autism Delaware scholarships**

Students from both UD’s Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program and the University’s Disability Studies minor have been awarded scholarships from Autism Delaware. CLSC students Gunner Shilling and Spencer Haber are each recipients of the $1,000 Adults with Autism Scholarship for individuals with autism who are pursuing post-secondary education. Four UD students minoring in Disability Studies have received the $1,000 Gray Memorial Scholarship, which is awarded to academically strong candidates who plan to work in Delaware with individuals with autism. The recipients are Rebecca Lusk (a senior majoring in Elementary Education), Natalie Gano (a junior majoring in Elementary Education with a concentration in special education), Rachel Braitman (a sophomore majoring in Cognitive Science) and Tess Hanley (a senior majoring in Cognitive Science). Two UD graduate students from the College of Education and Human Development, Cory Gilden and Nicole Jones, also received Gray scholarships.

**CDS hosts grant writing training**

Family SHADE, a collaborative alliance that operates out of CDS and supports families of children with disabilities and chronic medical conditions, hosted a two-day workshop in June on proposal writing and grant administration. Dr. Paula Shaw, director of the Office of Sponsored Programs at Norfolk State University, discussed the proper pursuit and management of funds. Through interactive panels and mock scenarios, participants also learned the importance of starting as early as possible when applying for grants.

**DE-PBS looks to help more schools**

CDS’s Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS) project held a training for public schools interested in developing a School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) program in June. SW-PBS is the first tier of Positive Behavior Supports, a multi-level approach to developing positive learning environments and preventing problem behaviors. DE-PBS staff and district coaches guided public school educators in crafting and implementing a SW-PBS in their own schools. Representatives from the schools will continue to work with DE-PBS staff throughout the summer to further develop their SW-PBS programs.
Youth Tobacco Study poster wins third place

CDS Program Manager Eileen Sparling and her colleagues from UD’s Center for Drug and Health Studies and the Delaware Division of Public Health were honored for a poster on the Delaware Youth Tobacco Survey project at the ACCEL Community Research Exchange Conference at Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children on May 23. The survey, which is distributed among middle and high school students to measure tobacco use, routinely excludes some students who are enrolled in special education services. In an effort to expand participation for students with disabilities, Sparling and her colleagues are exploring options for providing accommodations and alternative formats for the survey. One of these is the development of an electronic version that features videos employing American Sign Language. Sparling’s team hopes that the increased accessibility will allow the state to collect data that represent all its students.

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) holds open houses

All three DATI Assistive Technology Resource Centers held open houses in June. Through the centers’ short-term equipment loan program, visitors to the centers in New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties were able to take some of the AT they saw at the centers home with them, allowing them to sample the devices before making any purchases. Some UD students with an interest in creating assistive technology also visited the center to learn about current resources.

IEP Summer Institute held in July

CDS’s ACCESS and DE-PBS projects partnered with the Delaware Department of Education to host the third annual IEP Summer Institute at Dover Downs on July 13. The Institute featured 12 sessions on topics including Individual Education Plan (IEP) development and behavioral support strategies. This was also the first Institute to include...
information about the Addressing the Behavioral Concerns (ABCs) of IEPs initiative, which helps educators consider behavior and social skills needs on an IEP. Frances Stetson, a nationally renowned education consultant from Texas, gave the Institute’s keynote address on 23 strategies that could help close the achievement gap between students with disabilities and those without disabilities.

**Deane Blazie visits CDS**

A pioneer in creating assistive technology for individuals who are blind, Deane Blazie toured the New Castle County Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) on June 23. Blazie founded Blazie Engineering – later part of Freedom Scientific – and was instrumental in the development of the first commercially viable portable Braille note taker, the Braille ‘n Speak. Two versions of Blazie’s note takers, the Focus 14 and the Focus 40, are available through the ATRC’s. During his visit, Blazie updated CDS staff about his newest device: He worked with the National Braille Press to create the Android-based Braille note taker called Braille to Go, or B2G.
Graduate student departures

Carly Alfaro will be working in the Appoquinimink School District as a school psychology intern after spending two years with CDS’s School Age unit. Her responsibilities at CDS included working on the Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS) project and the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS). She also updated the PBS website and assisted with professional developments. She is working towards an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

Skye Beckley will be working in the Red Clay Consolidated School District as a school psychologist intern after spending a year as a Life Skills coach and instructor in the Career and Life Studies Certificate Program. Skye worked with students to achieve the goals indicated in their personal student plans and taught a course for the program. He is working towards an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

Brittany Cheadle spent the past year working for the Health & Wellness unit. Her main responsibilities were assembling and organizing survey questions and entering data. Brittany received her Master’s in Applied Statistics and plans to travel through Europe before seeking further employment.

*Top row from left, Carly Alfaro, Skye Beckley, Brittany Cheadle and Marisa Cheng. Bottom row from left, Kristen Fraley, Carly Herring and Ariel Perez.*
Marisa Cheng will be working as a program coordinator in the Clinical Partnerships department at Healthfirst, a non-profit managed care organization in New York City. This past year, she worked in the Health & Wellness unit on the Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities project. Among her many responsibilities, she prepared and promoted materials for core trainings for health care providers. Marisa received her Master of Science in Health Promotion this past May.

Kristen Fraley will be working in the Anne Arundel County Public School District in Maryland as a school psychologist intern after spending a year with CDS’s Communications & Advocacy unit. Kristen coordinated events such as Artfest 2015, Lunchtime Learning sessions and Community Advisory Council meetings. She also helped create publications such as CDS’s Annual Report, delAware, and Project Bridge, and wrote articles for UDaily. She is working towards an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

Carly Herring will be working in North Carolina as a school psychologist intern after spending two years with CDS’s Transition, Education, and Employment Model unit. She predominately worked with the Career and Life Studies Certificate program and her responsibilities included academic coaching, life skills coaching, overseeing campus and academic involvement, and instructing courses. She also worked with the Swank Employment Summer Program, which supports the development of employment skills in high school students with disabilities. Carly is working towards an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

Ariel Perez will be working in a summer head teaching position in an Autism Preschool classroom with plans to work in a full inclusion preschool classroom in the fall. For the past two years, she has worked in CDS’s School Age unit on the Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Access project. Her responsibilities included preparation for professional development seminars and data entry, among others. Ariel graduated with a Master’s of Education in Exceptional Children and Youth, with a concentration in Autism and Severe Disabilities this past May.

Staff arrivals

Weston Garton has joined the Transition, Education and Employment Model unit as the academic coordinator. This summer he is co-instructing an Edge Extension course, “Metacognitive Strategies,” for high school students. He will also facilitate academic coursework for undergraduate students enrolled in the Career and Life Studies Certificate program. Wes is looking forward to working with students and witnessing their growth from enrollment to graduation. He earned his M.S. in Higher Education Counseling & Student Affairs from West Chester University this past May.
**Jen Knapp** has joined the Transition, Education and Employment Model unit as the assistant coordinator of the Edge Extension program. She is working with Wes Garton to admit students, talk to parents, and design and plan the study skills course. She is also the academic coach for each of the students. Jen has completed her second year in the education specialist program for School Psychology and will be interning in Appoquinimink School District this fall.

**Graduate student arrivals**

**Liana DiCredico** has joined CDS’s Communications & Advocacy unit as a graduate assistant. She will work to coordinate events such as Artfest 2016, Lunchtime Learning sessions, and Community Advisory Council meetings. She will also help create publications such as CDS’s Annual Report and Project Bridge. Liana is looking forward to learning more about the disabilities community and the work done at CDS. She earned her B.A. in Psychology at The Johns Hopkins University and is pursuing an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

**John Wambui** has joined CDS’s Health & Wellness unit as a graduate assistant. He hopes his contributions in research and data entry will help close the health disparity gap for people with disabilities and help them gain access to resources. John earned his Master’s in Urban Affairs and Public Policy at UD and is pursuing his doctorate in the program.
Summer Service Learning Scholar working with CLSC

Rebecca Jewell, a Human Services major and Disability Studies minor, is working with CDS’s Transition, Education, & Employment Model unit as a Summer Service Learning Scholar. She’s helping to develop the residential component of the Career and Life Studies Certificate program, which would allow students who participate in the two-year certificate program for individuals with intellectual disabilities to live in campus dorms. As a career, Rebecca hopes to work with adults with disabilities in a postsecondary education setting.

CDS director attends NJC work group

Beth Mineo participated in a National Joint Committee on the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities (NJC) work group in Atlanta on June 27 and June 28. Committee members continued their work on the creation of a free online resource, which will help families and professionals recognize and support emerging communication, and began converting a dense academic article about current assessment and intervention practices into a document that anyone could access and use. Since the NJC only has representatives from major organizations related to individuals with disabilities, members also planned the creation of a broader network for other professionals to join and make contributions. The committee also continued work on a document debunking myths about adults with significant communication disabilities.
CDS director and associate director attend mid-Atlantic meeting

CDS Director Beth Mineo and CDS Associate Director Brian Freedman attended a meeting of the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) and Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Programs in the Mid-Atlantic region on June 29. The groups, consisting of representatives from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey, brainstormed strategies and activities to engage their advisory councils in upcoming strategic planning. They also discussed the current status of the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Network (which consists of UCEDDs, the DD Council, and State Protection and Advocacy organizations) and the Employment First perspective, a framework which operates on the belief that all individuals are capable of participating in meaningful employment, in each of their states. The group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to coordinate regional efforts and learn from one another.

Smith details IEP changes in Dover

Changes to the IEP process and CDS’s Writing Rigorous IEPs to Teach Educational Standards (WRITES) Initiative were the subject of Steve Smith’s presentation at Delaware’s Conference on Public Education in Dover on June 22. Smith highlighted such IEP changes as a new focus on developing data-based goals that are realistic, results-oriented and aim to help students with disabilities access the general curriculum. Smith also gave an update on the progress of the WRITES Initiative, a standards-based IEP program that trains educators about drafting data-driven IEPs that promote access to the Common Core State Standards. The Initiative has trained educators from 46 Delaware schools in the past three years.

CDS associate director presents at Nemours

On July 29, Brian Freedman discussed the needs of the autism community in Delaware before experts from other states who are conducting an external review of the development of the Nemours Autism Program. The reviewers include program directors from the Marcus Autism Center of Atlanta, Texas Children’s Hospital and Boston Children’s Hospital.

Freedman’s presentation, which included the results of a statewide needs assessment conducted by CDS and published in the Blueprint for Collective Action, described areas where Nemours is increasing access to qualified professionals and improved coordination of care. He also spoke about current and future collaborations between Nemours and CDS,
including the creation of the LEND program, the establishment of the DNEA, and future research on care coordination and service delivery.

**CDS director and associate director support ADA event**

CDS Director Beth Mineo and CDS Associate Director Brian Freedman attended *Building on the ABLE Act: An Economic Empowerment Agenda for Americans with Disabilities* in Philadelphia on July 26, the 26th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The event was not only a celebration of the legacy of the ADA, but a call to action for the community to mobilize during this election season to advance the goal of economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. Several individuals who were instrumental in the passage of the ADA spoke, including former U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), former U.S. Rep. Tony Coelho (D-Cal.), and U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.). Other speakers included U.S. Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.), U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.), and Gov. Jack Markell (D-Del.), who was instrumental in advancing the Employment First initiative during his tenure as the chair of the National Governors Association. The event was organized by a nonpartisan group of disability leaders and advocates, including the Association of University Centers on Disabilities and the Pennsylvania UCEDD at Temple University.
ADVOCACY CORNER

This section is dedicated to informing you about advocacy efforts and new or pending legislation or policies that relate to individuals with disabilities.

At CDS’s Inclusion blog in July, Susan Veenema knocked the medical profession in Delaware for practitioners’ insensitive and inadequate treatment of individuals with a disability. “Medical schools … are graduating doctors and nurses who haven’t learned how to interact with, and respect, their patients who have disabilities,” she wrote. Making matters worse, Veenema wrote that in Delaware, “the state licensing board does not require that its doctors and nurses will have taken courses or instruction in how to conduct themselves and communicate with their patients who have disabilities.”

“It’s enough to make you sick,” she declared. “More medical schools need to require instruction in how to properly treat people with disabilities, and more health care centers, clinics and physicians’ offices need to offer similar training opportunities to their staff.”

CDS’s Inclusion blog seeks to engage the disability community, the public and policy makers in a provocative discussion of issues with the potential to bring about positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities. Our bloggers include advocates and experts, people with disabilities and people without disabilities, staff at CDS and writers outside CDS. Visit the blog at http://blog.cds.udel.edu/. And please don’t just read what’s there, comment!
CDS supports Blue-Gold All*Star Football Game

CDS employees and their family members participated in pre-event ceremonies in support of the annual Blue-Gold All*Star Football Game, held June 18 at the Delaware Stadium in Newark. Sponsored by the Delaware Foundation Reaching Citizens with intellectual disABILITIES, the game featured high school football players and their “buddies,” individuals with intellectual disabilities. The buddies and their gridiron pals also bonded for a week before the game in dormitories.

SOCIAL MEDIA

If you’re among the growing number of people who like CDS on Facebook, you learned in June and July that the Delaware State Housing Authority increased its efforts to provide low income families quality housing near schools and employment centers; discovered opportunities for young adults with disabilities to participate in three Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation-sponsored offerings this summer through CDS; and got word of a new Center for American Progress report on how people with disabilities continue to be disproportionately incarcerated 17 years after Olmstead held that segregation of people with disabilities in institutional settings constitutes unlawful discrimination in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If you haven’t yet liked CDS on Facebook, what’s keeping you? Connect with us now!

CDS on Twitter

In June and July, followers of CDS on Twitter heard about the summer games of Special Olympics Delaware; learned about the approval of the Delaware budget that funds housing and care for people with disabilities; and read about how researchers are examining a link between Alzheimer’s and Down Syndrome.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!
Virtual reality app seeks to educate people about autism

Autism TMI VR Experience is an app that allows users to better appreciate the reality of some individuals with autism. The app mimics sensory overload with flashing lights, bright colors and loud sudden noises. Its goal is to allow anyone to understand the sensations some individuals with autism may encounter in daily situations. The UK National Autistic Society-developed app is available at the Apple Store and Google Play.

A screenshot of the app displaying sensory overload.

EVENTS

August 3

Family SHADE Networking Breakfast Representatives from organizations in New Castle County serving children with special healthcare needs, as well as other interested members of the public, are invited to attend Family SHADE’s Networking Breakfast. Each organization that attends will have an opportunity to share information about upcoming activities and new initiatives with the group. Attendees are welcome to bring flyers and brochures to share with colleagues at the breakfast. The breakfast will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at 61 Corporate Circle in Newark. Please contact Annalisa Ekbladh at analisa@udel.edu with questions.

August 28

Connected: Arts for All Art Therapy Express and Zot Artz will present this CDS-sponsored event during which individuals will create a large painted floor mural using adaptive technology for wheelchairs and walkers. It will be hosted at the Delaware Art Museum, 2301 Kentmere Parkway in Wilmington, from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

October 15

Artfest CDS’s annual event in collaboration with Art Therapy Express brings together people with disabilities, UD students and staff, community members and volunteers. Participants and volunteers have the opportunity to create a variety of art projects. Artfest will be held Oct. 15. Registration will open in August.
October 19

Disability Mentoring Day CDS will host job and networking career discovery sites throughout the state for students with disabilities. This statewide effort, co-sponsored by the state departments of Education, Health and Social Services, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, allows the students to explore potential careers by working in various fields.

CONTACT US

The University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies is located at 461 Wyoming Road, Newark, Delaware, 19716. Please call us at 302-831-6974 or 302-831-4689 (TDD), send an email to ud-cds@udel.edu or visit our website at www.udel.edu/cds.

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