MAY NEWSLETTER
THE CAROLINA AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTER

DISCOVER USC 2024

Over 50 undergraduate students in CAN-affiliated labs presented their research at Discover USC 2024! Check out the 25 award-winners on pg. 7.

SAVE THE DATE

MAY 2
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM
CAN End-of-Semester Social
Join us at the Graduate Hotel to celebrate the end of the semester!

JUNE 11-12
12 - 5 PM
Summer Strategic Planning
Help the CAN Research Center plan the upcoming year at the Alumni Center!

AUGUST 14
9 AM - 5 PM
Fall Retreat
Join us at the annual Fall Retreat, which will feature talks, networking opportunities, and discussions about upcoming plans. Breakfast and lunch provided!

SEPTEMBER 5
Visiting Scientist Series
Dr. Jeremy Veenstra-VanderWeele, child and adolescent psychiatrist at Columbia University, will visit USC and host a seminar, small group meetings, and a trainee lunch.

IN THE COMMUNITY

In celebration of Autism Acceptance Month, the CAN Research Center hosted Autism’s Got Talent, a virtual talent show for autistic kids and teens (learn more pg. 8)!
The CAN Research Center also sponsored and participated in AutismConnect 2024, a large conference for families, providers, and anyone with a connection to autism. Check out pg. 10 to see all the places we went!

Learn about a research lab!
Learn about the Communication in Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CANDi) Lab, directed by Dr. Abigail Hogan, pg. 6

We value your feedback!
All CAN members are invited to share feedback to help plan next year! CAN End-of-Year Reflections
Happy May!

Congratulations for finishing another excellent academic year! It was lovely to see so many folks at our Research Roundup and hear cross-cutting questions. Looking forward to thinking more about socially anxious zebrafish! Here are some highlights we featured at the Roundup:

**New and upcoming faculty hires:**

Dr. Qun Lu (Chemistry), Drs. Yuexuan Wu, Shanghon Xie, Will Consagra (Statistics), and 4 new Presidential lines opening: PPN, Biology, Education, Psychology

**Research Accomplishments:**

- 63 publications with average impact factor of 6.1
- 19 new grants awarded for a total of ~$6.7M -- includes training grants to Rachel Hantman (Jane Roberts) and Tessa Djiko (Jessie Bradshaw)
- 30 grants under review currently for ~$31M
- 50 DiscoverUSC posters were presented by CAN Trainees!

**CAN Science meetings:**

- ~15-20 people joined each of our 16 morning virtual science meetings, representing 14 labs within CAN and 2 new collaborators
- Dr. Susan White visited to share her work on social skills interventions
- Over 70 CAN members joined our annual retreat and the SCAND meeting in Charleston

**Community activities:**

- We formed a Community Advisory Board with 8 community members
- CAN played a big part in several large-scale events: Disability Advocacy Day, Brain Bee, Neurodiversity Among Us, AutismConnect
Dr. Jeremy Veenstra-VanderWeele, child and adolescent psychiatrist at Columbia University, will visit USC to give a seminar and meet with faculty and students.

Enhance USC’s research capacity in ASD/NDDs
- 4 faculty hires (PPN, Psych, Education, Biology)
- Continue CAN Science – change time?
- Barrier – Physical space, distributed across campus
- Increase opportunities for trainees

Enhance multi-disciplinary approaches and cultivate innovative collaborations
- Continue to bring in visiting scholars
- Large-scale / ongoing funding; T32 in June 2024; Consider program project grants (FXS?)
- Increase efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Summer 2024: Translational white paper?

Rooster Tales
Theater Camp
See pg. 9

Writing Workshops
Writing workshop opportunities will be available starting in June. More details will come by email soon.
END-OF-SEMESTER
CAN SOCIAL

The Graduate Hotel
1619 Pendleton St, Columbia, SC 29201

THURSDAY, MAY 2
4:30 - 6:30 PM

All CAN members are invited to celebrate the end of the semester!
Our annual CAN Research Roundup featured flash talks from 12 labs and over 30 attendees!

All faculty, students, postdoctoral researchers, and staff are invited to provide feedback for future opportunities and sign up for committees and our summer strategic planning meeting.

End-of-Year CAN Reflections Form

Dr. Kristy Welshhans

Dr. Jeff Twiss

Dr. Michelle Brown, Anna Leah Davis, Ella DuBard (STARR Lab)

Dr. Christian O’Reilly
To gain a better understanding of how, when, and why anxiety develops in young autistic children and FMR1-associated conditions (e.g., fragile X syndrome), and how that anxiety impacts broader abilities like communication to help inform the development of future treatments that address anxiety symptoms and communication skills more holistically as opposed to treating one or the other.

Our Goal

RESEARCH

Childhood Anxiety in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Fragile X Syndrome

Recruiting children ages 7-11 with:
- Fragile X syndrome
- Autism
- No developmental concerns

Families receive developmental and behavioral feedback and $200 for completing behavioral assessments, parent-report questionnaires, and interviews.

COMMUNITY

This April, the CANDi lab engaged with hundreds of families and providers at AutismConnect 2024 and the SC Philharmonic Sensory Friendly Family Concert!

CONFERENCES

Upcoming Conferences

- International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)
  (May 15th - May 18th)

- National Fragile X Foundation
  (July 25th - July 28th)
Discover USC 2024

undergraduate students in CAN-affiliated labs presented research at Discover USC 2024!

Congratulations to Award winners!

PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE

1st Place
Natalie Deal (Bradshaw)
Jaelyn Souza (Bradshaw)
Jiya Desai (Hollis)
Alaina Mullaly (Hollis)
Emma Mason (Twiss)
Charles Grant (Pocivavsek)
Rebecca Bork (Wilson)
Taylor Childress (Wood)

2nd Place
Evelyn Leary (Roberts)
Rebecca Carden, Madeline Lucas (Foster)
Dillon Burr, Pranav Malladi (Foster)
Ashlan Cheever, Janae Hersey (Hudac)
Rijul Bhardwaj (Bradshaw)
Jack Otterson (Smith)
Hannah Brennen (Hollis)
Gabrielle Wood (Hollis)
Archana Ramesh (Hollis)

BIOLOGY AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

1st Place
Ashley Loomis (Twiss)
Josephine Gardiner (Welshhans)

2nd Place
Riya Machimada (Twiss)
Marie-Claire Honoree (Twiss)
Ashutosh Arora, Liz Iglesias (Twiss)

HEALTH SCIENCES

2nd Place
Tanvi Giridhar (Hogan)

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Courtney Wright, Biomedical Science (Pocivavsek)
Kareem Chambers, Biological Sciences (Welshhans)
AUTISM’S GOT TALENT!

The CAN Research Center and the Early Social Development (ESD) Lab hosted the 3rd annual Autism’s Got Talent, a virtual talent show for autistic kids, teens, and young adults!

Featuring 35 performers!
Congratulations to Peter Duffy, Caitlin Hudac, and Sarah Edmunds for receiving a SC Arts Commission Grant!

In addition, CAN will be co-sponsoring this event to make sure it is a free opportunity for autistic students!

Rooster Tales
A summer theater camp for autistic kids & teens!

For Rooster Tale Theater Camp Students
June 10-14, 2024 | 9 AM -12 PM
10-15 students
Inclusive of accommodation needs
Geared for students aged 10-14 years

FREE TUITION - SPONSORED BY CAN

Sign up here: https://tinyurl.com/3pz8hmm5

For CAN Trainees
Opportunities to volunteer!
Contact Caitlin Hudac.
Clinical graduate students have an opportunity for consultation and intervention hours (Contact Sarah Edmunds).
This April, the CAN Research Center tabled at:

- Neurodiversity Among Us, a family event hosted by Akoma Cares
- AutismConnect 2024, a large conference for providers, families, and anyone with a connection to autism
- Sensory Safe Sunday Fireflies baseball game
- SC Philharmonic Family Sensory Concert: A Work of Heart