



# SJCCC

Social Justice in College Counseling Conference

## SJCCC 2024 Session Schedule

***\*All sessions will be recorded unless otherwise noted – watching recorded sessions after the conference will NOT result in additional CEU's***

### Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>

#### 8:15 AM Main Meeting Room Open

#### 8:30 – 8:50 AM

SJCCC Welcome & Conference Overview

#### 9:00 – 10:30 AM

***Presentation: Understanding and Supporting Autistic Adults in Higher Education: Historical Contexts, Contemporary Challenges, and Clinical Intervention in University Counseling Centers (1.5 CEUs)***

- Michael Huttar, Ph.D. – University of Houston - Clear Lake Counseling & Mental Health Center
- Crystal Lundmark, B.A. – University of North Dakota, Doctoral Student

**Abstract:** Given the rising prevalence rates of autism spectrum disorders among adults, it is unsurprising that institutions of higher education are witnessing an increased utilization of accessibility services and college counseling support. However, a significant number of professionals may lack specialized training in addressing the distinctive needs and identity-specific concerns associated with this population.

This presentation offers an exploration of the autism diagnosis, including a historical contextualization of the disorder's development and treatment history. The discussion will also encompass specific concerns and presentations of autism among adults within the therapeutic context and address the relationship and interpersonal challenges commonly experienced by autistic adults. Special evidence will be placed on how these concerns impact students and how professional counselors and psychologists within UCC settings can effectively address these unique needs with their clients.

#### 10:30 - 10:45 BREAK & Complete Session Evaluation

#### 10:45 – 12:15 PM

***Workshop: "How Are You Doing?" - Spectrum in Aggieland (1.5 CEUs)***

- Leslie Casarez, LCSW – Texas A&M University Disability Resources
- Joshua Page, B.A. – Texas A&M University Disability Resources



Texas A&M  
University Health Services



**Abstract:** This presentation will be structured around 3 components. It will begin with a 30-minute didactic presentation on the Spectrum In Aggieland program and the presenters' experiences working with autistic college students. A 15-minute Q&A with student members of the Spectrum In Aggieland program will follow. Finally, there will be a 45-minute workshop in which attendees will join breakout groups and discuss case studies in communication. The program will conclude with a group discussion of the case studies and material presented during the presentation.

**12:15 – 1:15 PM LUNCH BREAK & Complete Session Evaluation**

**12:30 – 1:00 PM – Main Meeting Room Open for Connecting/Networking**

**1:15 – 2:45 PM**

*Presentation:* **The Intersectionality of Neurodiversity and Gender Diversity (1.5 CEUs)**

- Kelli Wierzbicki, Ph.D. – University of Cincinnati Counseling and Psychological Services
- Samantha Cook, Psy.D. – University of Cincinnati Counseling and Psychological Services

**Abstract:** Emerging literature supports elevated rates of the cooccurrence between neurodiversity and gender diversity. Development of identity is a fundamental experience among college students. In previous research, the intersectionality of transgender and gender diverse identities with neurodiversity in the college population is shown to result in increased minority stress. The intersectionality has also shown a clinically observed increased risk for anxiety and depression, among other diagnoses. These are conditions for which individuals with autism are also at higher risk. Yet, providers report lack of knowledge and experience working with adults with autism, which is exacerbated for individuals who also hold additional intersecting identities. The presentation will discuss research, as well as incorporate examples from clinical work in college counseling, to address the clinical implications and introduce participants to strategies and resources that will assist in working with the population.

**2:45 – 3:00 PM BREAK & Complete Session Evaluation**

**3:00 – 4:30 PM**

*Roundtable:* **Forging a Neuro-Affirming Community Through Cross-Campus Collaboration (1.5 CEUs; not recorded)**

- Chris Truong, Psy.D. – Towson University Counseling Center
- Stephen Willems, M.S. - Towson University Accessibility and Disability Services

**Abstract:** There is an emerging call for college campuses to innovate and think creatively about how to best support the steadily growing population of neurodivergent students in higher education. With this shifting landscape, inter-departmental collaborations and partnerships across impactful touchpoints on campus can serve as the cornerstone for increasing the capacity and reach of neurodiversity-affirming services. This roundtable will host critical discussions from multiple campus perspectives, propose a framework for program development and evaluation, and create a space to discuss the benefits and barriers faced when collaborating to cultivate a neuro-affirming campus.

**4:30 PM Complete Session Evaluation**



**Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>**

**8:30 – 10:00 AM**

*Presentation:* **Recognition, Screening, and Assessment of Autism in University and College Counseling Center Intake Appointments (1.5 CEUs)**

- Chris Dabbs, Ph.D., LMHC – Valporaiso University, Assistant Professor
- Audrey Scaer, M.S. – Grand Valley State University University Counseling Center, Doctoral Psychology Intern

**Abstract:** University and college counseling center (UCCC) clinicians lack training and knowledge on assessing and recognizing autism. Likewise, autistic individuals experience negative first perceptions from allistic (non-autistics) people and stigma from practitioners. Given the majority of late diagnosed autistic individuals have had previous contact with mental health professionals and many individuals have their first counseling experience at a UCCC, UCCC clinicians may be uniquely positioned to help undiagnosed individuals begin to connect to their autistic identity. This presentation hopes to help UCCC clinicians: a) identify signs of undiagnosed autism at intake, b) utilize screening questions and assessment tools to further their observations, c) distinguish autism from commonly occurring misdiagnoses, and d) facilitate discussions with clients for referral to neuro-affirming assessment.

**10:00 – 10:15 AM BREAK & Complete Session Evaluation**

**10:15 – 11:45 AM**

*Presentation:* **How to Develop a Support Group for Autistic Students (No CEUs)**

- Aspen Alterkun, LICSW – University of Massachusetts Amherst Center for Counseling and Psychological Health

**Abstract:** Is your college or university interested in developing a support space for autistic students? This presentation will go through the steps undertaken at the University of Massachusetts Amherst that have led to a successful and well attended weekly drop-in therapeutic group that is co-facilitated by the Center for Counseling & Psychological Services and Disability Services. The steps that took place to identify this as a campus need, why we chose a drop in support group format, why we decided it could go through the counseling center and how to de-pathologize this, how we determined the name for the group (College Living on the Spectrum), how we developed the format of the group itself, topics and themes the group discusses, skills that facilitators use, intergroup dialogue that is used in the space to hold differences of opinion, and how we have been able to retain and increase group membership. The presentation will end with breakout groups in which members can utilize what was learned to brainstorm how to do this on their own campus.

**11:45 - 12:45 PM LUNCH BREAK & Complete Session Evaluation**

**12:00 – 12:30 PM – Main Meeting Room Open for Connecting/Networking**



## 12:45 - 4:00 PM Three Hour Presentation (w/ BREAK from 2:15 – 2:30 PM)

### *Presentation:* **Helping Neurodiverse Students Build Community with Tabletop Role Playing Games (3 CEUs)**

- Joseph LeConte, M.Ed., LCDC, LPC-Associate – Texas Christian University Substance Use and Recovery Services, Counseling and Mental Health Center

**Abstract:** Learn about how Texas Christian University's counseling center has successfully created a peer support community for neurodiverse students and socially isolated students who self-identify as nerds. As part of the TCU Collaborative Care Model, the Supportive Gaming Community helps students dealing with loneliness, isolation and anxiety by using tabletop role playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons, Avatar Legends and Pathfinder.

## 12:45 – 2:15 PM

### *Presentation:* **Dungeons & Dragons & Therapy (1.5 CEUs)**

- Rachel Gilmore, M.A., LMHC – University of South Florida Counseling Center

**Abstract:** There is increasing research to support utilizing a process group that integrates Table-Top Role-Playing Games (TTRPGs) to promote growth of individual, social, and cognitive skill proficiency. The intended goal of this type of group is to utilize a table-top roleplaying game, Critical Core, which based on Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), as a therapeutic modality for individuals. Critical Core is a table-top role-playing game (TTRPG), meaning that players create and take on fictional characters that implement their actions in a fantasy world. The group combines Critical Core game play with identity growth. This group is intended for members that are wanting to develop and expand their identity. This may include new exploration of identity related to gender, age, sexual orientation, culture, and etc., as well as building upon aspects of identity that already exist, but are not fully developed. Participants utilize their characters and team building to explore identity growth and development. The tool Critical Core is used to facilitate the gaming world. Critical Core is a D&D modeled therapeutic intervention developed by Game to Grow.

## 2:15 – 2:30 PM BREAK & Complete 12:45 - 2:15 PM Session Evaluation

## 2:30 – 4:00 PM

### *Roundtable:* **Neuro- and Gender Diversity in College Counseling: Discussing Practices for Affirming Care at the Intersection of Identities (1.5 CEUs)**

- Dani Soltis, Ph.D. – University of Pittsburgh Counseling Center
- Amy Boyles, LCSW, ADHD-CCSP – University of Pittsburgh Counseling Center

**Abstract:** Estimates suggest that the overlap between having a transgender or otherwise gender-diverse identity and also begin diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is much more likely than cisgender peers, with co-occurrence rates ranging between 6-26% and 15-16%, respectively (Becerra-Culqui, et al, 2018; Goetz & Adams, 2024; Thrower, et al., 2020). However, research into etiology and contributing factors into this



intersection remain sparse and articles aimed at intervention are often geared toward school-aged youth (Rivera, 2022; Strang, et al., 2018; Strang, et al., 2023). The key objective of our proposed roundtable is to collaborate and generate wisdom around clients seeking affirming care in counseling centers at the intersection of gender and neurodiverse identities. Notably, college aged students are primed to navigate unique challenges compared to younger peers, often related to separation-individuation, adjustment to new routines and environments, and increased self-led management of their physical and mental healthcare. For those pursuing gender affirming care, we aim to discuss challenges in identity exploration, affirming-care-related decision making, and concealment/disclosure conversations. This roundtable will be co-facilitated by colleagues from a large counseling center in the Northeast who specialize in care for those with ADHD and gender affirming care, respectively. Our intent is to gather fellow providers who have experience working at this intersection or are wondering how best to provide care for those with neuro/gender diverse identities to co-generate clinical wisdom by discussing wins, setbacks, and insights into this important work.

**4:05 PM Complete Session Evaluations & Brief Conference Wrap-Up (Main Meeting Room)**