

# The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rutgers University Neurodiversity Summit

Thursday, June 15, 2023

**RUTGERS** University Equity and Inclusion



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Center for Adult Autism Services



# About the Rutgers University Neurodiversity Taskforce:

The term “Neurodiversity” describes the variety of different human minds or brains, which interact and experience the world in many different ways and is often used to refer to the range of minds represented by autistic people or those with ADHD, Dyslexia, and more. The concept of Neurodiversity has its roots in the social model of disability, which considers disability to be a civil rights issue. The social model rejects the notion that an individual must be “normal” to engage and be successful in society, arguing that individual differences should not constitute a barrier to inclusion or access. The model focuses on addressing society’s response to individuals with disabilities and the social attitudes, institutional norms and physical environments that promote inclusion/exclusion and lead to positive or negative outcomes.

Rutgers University is home to many neurodiverse students, staff, and faculty; however, their perspectives are not always heard, and their needs are not always addressed. The mission of the Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce is to improve organizational climate, and promote access, advocacy, and equity by sending a message that Rutgers is an institution that celebrates the neurodiversity of its beloved community. At today’s event, we will highlight the ongoing work of our Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce members, share the results of our data collection related to the existing landscape of accessibility for neurodiverse people at Rutgers, and celebrate the neurodiverse members of our community.



## *Keynote Presentation:*



**Dr. Kristen Gillespie-Lynch**

Kristen Gillespie-Lynch received her PhD in Developmental Psychology from UCLA. She is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the College of Staten Island and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Guided by collaborations with autistic people, she co-constructs and evaluates interventions to empower autistic adolescents and adults and reduce stigma. She directs a participatory mentorship program for autistic college students at CUNY, Building Bridges Project REACH, and leads a participatory NSF-funded study that aims to help autistic youth learn employment-related skills by helping educators learn from their students how to better engage them in informal, technology-focused learning opportunities. Given that many of the challenges autistic people face arise from misconceptions about autism, she and her collaborators develop and evaluate autism training internationally. She is honored to be an advisor to INSAR's Autistic Researchers Committee.



**Daniel Batkin**

Daniel Batkin is an autistic PhD student at CUNY, studying developmental psychology under Dr. Kristen Gillespie-Lynch. Previously, Daniel received his bachelor's degree in psychology from Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY. His current research is a 3-part study about the relationship between stimming and special interests. Currently, Daniel is developing the methodology for the second part, which will be a survey about stimming and special interests administered to forty-four autistic high school and college students who will be participating in Kristen's game design and employment workshop. Being autistic has highly influenced Daniel's work, as it affords him insider knowledge and lived experience of autism and its many traits.





***Cultivating Compassion Project***  
**Dr. Stephanie Lyon, Rutgers GSAPP**

Dr. Stephanie Lyon is an assistant professor of clinical practice at GSAPP working primarily in the ADHD and child behavioral disorders specialty training clinic, investigating mentalization-based treatment for children. Dr. Lyon earned her doctorate in clinical psychology from the Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University and completed her pre-doctoral internship at NYU-Bellevue Hospital Center. Prior to entering the field of psychology, Dr. Lyon taught elementary and middle school students and earned a master's in education from New York University. She is licensed as a clinical psychologist in New Jersey and New York and maintains a private practice in South Orange, New Jersey, where she treats children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families.



***Artist Spotlight***  
**Elizabeth Dicker**

Elizabeth is an autistic consultant and self-advocate. She has spoken on panels for the Byrne Seminars here at Rutgers and is a part of the advisory board at the Lifespan Lab. Elizabeth is a certified special education teacher who holds a master's degree in applied Behavior Analysis. She has a strong interest in curriculum development, assessment tools, and research. Elizabeth is grateful to be a part of the Lifespan Lab to further research to expand knowledge and opportunities for autistic adults. She enjoys drawing portraits and spending time at Felicity House.



***Accessible Dance Presentation & Performance***  
**Dr. Natalie Schultz-Kahwaty, Rutgers MGSA**

Dr. Natalie Schultz-Kahwaty has been working with colleges and universities for the past 14 years to advocate for more programs for children and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) on a volunteer basis before coming to Rutgers. She is now compensated for her time and travel to offer dance classes to adults with ASD at Rutgers.





***Overview of Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce Survey Findings***  
**Genta Kukaj, GSAPP LifeSPAN Lab Research Assistant**  
**Jane Matto, Rutgers SSW Graduate Student**

Genta is a Research Assistant with the GSAPP LifeSPAN Lab. She is also a graduate of Rutgers University with a bachelor's degree in psychology. As an undergraduate student she was a mentor for the RCAAS College Support Program.



Jane is a graduate student at the Rutgers School of Social Work who has been involved with the College Support Program since 2018. As an undergraduate, she frequently spoke about her experiences to audiences in various settings, and helped educate faculty, staff, and students at Rutgers about autism. Jane has recently had the opportunity to work for the Child Study Team at Hightstown High School as a part of her graduate program.



***Rutgers Neurodiverse Student & Faculty Panel***  
**Moderator: Amy Gravino, RCAAS Relationship Coach**

Amy works as a Relationship Coach at the RCAAS. In addition, she is the president of A.S.C.O.T Consulting, which offers autism consulting, college coaching, and mentoring services for organizations, schools, individuals on the autism spectrum, and their families. Amy is an active autism advocate and has given many presentations worldwide to audiences on a variety of topics related to autism, with a special focus on research and education related to autism and sexuality.

***Faculty Panelist***



**Dr. Mark Robson**

Mark is a Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor and Distinguished Professor of Plant Biology. He has struggled his entire life with ADHD and hopes that his own experience will allow him to be an informed and supportive teacher and mentor to neurodiverse students.



***Student Panelists***

**Josh Garfinkel**

Josh is a rising sophomore at Rutgers University who has actively participated in the College Support Program since his freshman year. He is determined to major in communications and pursue a career in the field of social work in the future.



**Tanvi Shrivastava**

Tanvi is an undergraduate student who is majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering. She has been with the College Support Program from 2021 to 2023. As a student she has received services like coordinator meetings, peer mentors, study sessions, and academic coaching



## Neurodiversity Taskforce Members

To create university wide change, it was imperative to include leaders and stakeholders across departments and units of Rutgers. The taskforce is comprised of Rutgers students, faculty, and staff in positions of leadership. The development of these strategic partnerships allows the taskforce to represent neurodiversity at all levels of campus life. Taskforce members have engaged in ongoing work to contribute to creating university wide change.

### **Veronica Armour**

*Associate Director for the Innovation, Design, & Entrepreneurship Academy*

### **Milagros Arroyo**

*Assistant Dean and Director for SAS, Reenrollment, International and Nontraditional Students*

### **Vanessa Bal**

*Karmazin-Lillard Endowed Chair of Adult Autism and Director, LifeSPAN LAB- GSAPP, Director, RCAAS Psychological Services Clinic, Tri-Chair of the Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce*

### **Ian Bober**

*Senior Program Coordinator, RCAAS College Support Program*

### **Zachary Brown**

*Learning Specialist/Coordinator, Office of Disability Services, Rutgers-NB*

### **Joseph Charette**

*Executive Director, Rutgers Dining Services*

### **Kenneth Cop**

*Executive Director of Public Safety, Chief of University Police*

### **Mary Beth Daisy**

*Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Rutgers Camden*

### **Amy Gravino**

*Relationship Coach, RCAAS*

### **Samuel Jones**

*Assistant Dean of PTL at RU School of Social Work*

### **Joshua Langberg**

*Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Youth Social Emotional Wellness- GSAPP, Tri-Chair of Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce*

### **Erin Leuthold**

*Director, Office of Disability Services, Rutgers University – Camden*

### **Christopher Manente**

*Clinical Associate Professor- GSAPP, Executive Director, RCAAS  
Tri-Chair of the Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce*

### **Jane Matto**

*Graduate Student, Rutgers SSW*

### **Cameron Matulewski**

*Undergraduate Student, Rutgers SOE*

### **Richard Novak**

*Vice President, Rutgers Continuing Studies and Distance Education*

### **Daniel Rice**

*Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Rutgers GSAPP*

### **Adrienne Robertiello**

*Specialized Health Care Educator, Children's Specialized Hospital*

### **Mark Robson**

*Distinguished Professor of Plant Biology, Rutgers SEBS*



(Taskforce Members Continued)

**Ilene Rosen**

*Associate Dean, Rutgers SOE*

**Zachary Sanborn**

*Postal Clerk at Rutgers IPO*

**Natalie Schultz-Kahwaty**

*Director, Rutgers MGSA*

**Adam Tropper**

*Undergraduate Student, Rutgers SAS*

**Henry Velez**

*Vice President, Rutgers Institutional Planning and Operations*

**Bill Welsh**

*Associate Vice President, Rutgers Access, and Disability Resources*

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# Schedule of Events

Time	Event	Presenters
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Welcome and Continental Breakfast	--
9:30 – 10:00 AM	Opening Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Christopher Manente</li> <li>• Dr. Anna Branch</li> <li>• Dr. Francine Conway</li> </ul>
10:00 – 11:00 AM	Keynote Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Kristen Gillespie-Lynch</li> <li>• Daniel Batkin</li> </ul>
11:10 – 12:00 PM	Cultivating Compassion Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Stephanie Lyon</li> </ul>
12:00 – 12:30 PM	Artist Spotlight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elizabeth Dicker</li> </ul>
12:30 – 1:15 PM	Lunch and Networking	--
1:15 – 1:45 PM	Accessible Dance Presentation & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Natalie Schultz-Kahwaty</li> </ul>
1:45 – 2:05 PM	Overview of Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jane Matto</li> <li>• Genta Kukaj</li> </ul>
2:15 – 3:00 PM	Rutgers Faculty & Student Panel	Moderator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amy Gravino</li> </ul> Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Mark Robson</li> <li>• Josh Garfinkel</li> <li>• Tanvi Shrivastava</li> </ul>
3:00 – 4:00 PM	Cocktail Hour & Networking	--

