

The Rutgers University Neurodiversity Taskforce

Thursday, June 16, 2022

RUTGERS University Equity and Inclusion





About the Rutgers University Neurodiversity Taskforce:

The Rutgers University Equity and Inclusion Office developed the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Advocacy (IDEA) grant. The mission of this grant is to support projects that enable students, faculty, and staff across Rutgers University to take an active role in building an inclusive community.

Dr. Christopher Manente, Executive Director of the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services (RCAAS), and Courtney Butler, Program Coordinator of the Rutgers College Support Program, submitted a proposal for the IDEA grant for the 2021-2022 academic year. Their grant proposal focused on neurodiversity. Neurodiversity describes how diverse we are from a neurological perspective and suggests that variation of the human brain should be accepted as a spectrum of the human population. Neurodiversity encompasses disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and more.

Rutgers University is home to many neurodiverse students; however, their needs are not always addressed. The goal of this project is to improve climate, and promote access, advocacy and equity by sending a message that Rutgers is an institution that celebrates the neurodiversity of its students, faculty, and staff. At today's event, we will highlight the work of our taskforce members, share the results of our data collection, and promote and celebrate neurodiverse members of our community.



Keynote Speaker:



Dr. Vanessa Bal

Dr. Vanessa H. Bal earned her M.Sc. in neuroscience from the University of Oxford and her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Michigan. She also completed her clinical psychology internship at the University of Michigan and a postdoc in human genetics at the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Bal's research program emphasizes a lifespan perspective to furthering understanding of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in adulthood. She employs a variety of approaches to measure and track outcomes and predictors of outcome at different stages of development.

In addition to expanding knowledge in these areas, Dr. Bal is leading several projects to develop and refine methods to assess and quantify clinical phenotypes. This includes studies evaluating both biological and behavioral approaches that may be useful in screening and diagnosis, tracking of symptoms across development, and evaluating response to treatment. By emphasizing a multidimensional, lifespan perspective, her research aims to delineate relationships between dimensions of social-communication, language, cognition and emotion in the context of neurodevelopmental disorders in order to inform the development of targeted interventions that capitalize on individual strengths in order to promote well-being for individuals with ASD across the lifespan.



Keynote Speaker:

Henry Daheng Zhang, Psy.M



Henry is a Psy.D. student at GSAPP. He previously worked in Early Intervention as an evaluation coordinator and later obtained an M.S.Ed. in School Psychology, completed his internship as a Bilingual Psychologist-in-Training and worked as a school psychologist at a district office for two years. He is bilingually certified in both Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese. During his time as a school psychologist, he developed technology to help clinicians save time on reports and paperwork so they can spend more time with clients. This is something he is passionate about, and it's somewhat related to his dissertation. That became the basis of his tech startup Timehacks, which he used to fund his enormous appetite upon returning to school to complete his doctoral degree. Henry received extensive experience with assessments from his school psychologist days and his previous externships in not just one, but two neuropsychology placements. He also worked as an extern for a year at RCAAS because he realized wanted experience interacting with autistic clients (just like himself). Recently, he left the lab to complete his doctoral internship at Community Assistance Resources and Extended Services Inc.

For over the last decade, Henry has spent much of his "spare time" involved in martial arts from shooting instructional videos for his coaches to competing in submission grappling tournaments and within the last two years, training others to defend themselves, equipping and teaching people to use self-defense tools and joining volunteer groups that watch/help overly vulnerable individuals (e.g., elderly Asian Americans) in subway stations that continue to see a surge in violence. Henry has chronicled his double life in the autobiographical memoir series "Dragons on the Spectrum" with third and most recent story titled "City of Fear" taking place between December 2021 to May 2022.



Taskforce Members

In order to create university wide change, it was imperative to include stakeholders across departments and units of Rutgers. Thus, the Rutgers University Neurodiversity Taskforce was created. 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 worked hard to contribute to this project and commit to creating university wide change.

Milagros Arroyo

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

Cameron Matulewski

RU Student, School of Engineering

Courtney Butler

*Behavior Analyst, RCAAS
Co-Chair of the Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce*

Christopher Manente

*Executive Director, RCAAS
Chair of the Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce*

Joseph Charette

Executive Director, Rutgers Dining Services

Richard Novak

VP for Continuing Studies and Distance Education

Kenneth Cop

Executive Director of Public Safety

Mark Robson

Distinguished Professor of Plant Biology

Mary Beth Daisy

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at RU Camden

Ilene Rosen

Associate Dean, RU School of Engineering

Giulietta Flaherty

*Program Coordinator of the Rutgers
Neurodiversity Taskforce*

Zachary Sanborn

Postal Clerk at Rutgers IPO

Paul Gilmore

Administrative Dean, Honors College

Adam Tropper

RU Student, School of Arts and Sciences

Amy Gravino

Relationship Coach at RCAAS

Henry Velez

VP for Institutional Planning and Operations

Samuel Jones

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

Bill Welsh

*Associate Vice President, RU Access and Disability
Resources*

Jane Matto

RU Student, SAS

Henry Daheng Zhang

GSAPP School Psychology Psy.D. Student



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"> ● Dr. Christopher Manente ● Dr. Anna Branch ● Dr. Francine Conway
10:00 – 10:50 AM	Keynote Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Henry Daheng Zhang, Psy.M ● Dr. Vanessa Bal
10:50 – 11:10 AM	Rutgers Neurodiversity Taskforce Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giulietta Flaherty, Psy.M
11:10 – 11:50 AM	RU Student Panel	<p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Courtney Butler, MS <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jane Matto ● Cameron Matulewski ● Adam Tropper
11:50-12:30	RU Employer/Employee Panel	<p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. James Maraventano <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zachary Sanborn ● Henry Velez ● Alex Scheck ● Michael Kuzniak
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch and Networking	--
1:30 – 2:30 PM	Taskforce Town Hall Discussion	<p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Christopher Manente <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chief Kenneth Cop ● Dr. Mark Robson ● Dr. Rong Di



