

CSUF Center for Autism
College of Education
College of Health and Human Development

Self-Study Report 2016

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

<u>Center Name:</u>	Center for Autism
<u>Co-Directors:</u>	Dr. Erica Howell, Associate Professor of Special Education Dr. Rachel Fenning, Assistant Professor of Child & Adolescent Studies Dr. Jason Baker, Assistant Professor of Child & Adolescent Studies
<u>Colleges:</u>	College of Education College of Health and Human Development
<u>Contact info:</u>	Education Core (Education): autismeducation@fullerton.edu ; CP-570 Applied Developmental Core (HHD): 657-278-7891; autismcenterkids@fullerton.edu ; EC-560
<u>Year established:</u>	2013
<u>Year of last review:</u>	n/a (new center)
<u>Date submitted:</u>	April 1, 2016
<u>Websites:</u>	http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/ (Official website) https://www.facebook.com/CsufCenterForAutismKids/ (Social media) https://www.facebook.com/CSUFAutismEducationCore/ (Social media)

II. MISSION & GOALS

The mission of the Center is to improve the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families through research, professional training, advocacy, and community education and service, while promoting CSUF student involvement in diverse activities related to ASD.

1. **Research:** Center faculty conduct research focused on optimizing outcomes for individuals with ASD and their families across the lifespan, with an emphasis on family and peer relationships, community/social support, and the preparation of autism professionals. The Center also supports and organizes ASD-related projects conducted within the University.
2. **Community Education:** The Center works with CSUF teacher candidates and local service agencies to promote empirically-based practices in ASD. The Center serves as a resource for affected families, providing referrals, advocacy, information, and support. The Center offers specific supports to CSUF students with ASD in order to facilitate college success.
3. **Service:** The Center provides services to local individuals with ASD and their families.
4. **Teaching:** The Center provides students with the opportunity to engage in high quality research and service experiences related to ASD, including activities involving assessment, diagnosis, and intervention.

Association with the Mission and Goals of the University

The Center's goals are well aligned with those of the University. *Student success* (Goals 1 and 2) is promoted in numerous ways, including direct engagement of students in high-impact practices involving research, service, and advocacy, as well as through supports designed specifically for CSUF students with ASD. Our Center is also highly focused on *responding to workforce needs* (Goal 1), as reflected in our student training programs focused on meeting community needs for professionals skilled in working with individuals with ASD. *Faculty retention and recruitment* (Goal 3) has been fostered through enhancement of the scholarship and teaching of multiple faculty members across campus, and by the potential resources available for faculty (e.g., the CAS Department recently recruited a faculty member who will be joining our Center in Fall 2016). *Revenue* (Goal 4) has been increased through fundraising and donations, as well as multiple awards of external federal research funding.

III. ACTIVITIES

High-Quality Research:

The Center for Autism has received several intramural and external grants to support our many research endeavors. For example, the *Autism Emotion Study* was supported by a Junior Faculty Grant to Dr. Baker and has resulted in seven national conference presentations, additional student presentations, a journal publication (Baker, Fenning, et al., 2015), a book chapter (Messinger et al., 2014), additional manuscripts under review/in preparation, and supported a successful NICHD R15 AREA award of \$412,000 to Drs. Baker and Fenning. Drs. Howell and Fenning have also received external federal funding to support their projects involving *Cancer Disparities in ASD* and *Oral Health in Children with ASD*, respectively. Dr. Howell's project was a two-year study funding \$100,000 to a joint CSUF/UCI collaboration between Dr. Howell and Dr. Leonard Sender, medical director of CHOC Children's Hyundai Cancer Institute, which equipped oncology medical professionals to utilize evidence-based practices in treating patients with ASD. Dr. Fenning obtained a HRSA grant in collaboration with UCI to fund a four-year multi-site randomized controlled trial of a parent-training intervention designed to improve dental care and oral health for children with ASD.

The Center for Autism has built research collaborations with the University of Miami, CHOC Orange County, UC Irvine, Auburn University, the University of Utah, Northeastern University, and MIT.

Our Center also works to support the research of others at CSUF. We have assisted with research projects involving children with ASD through the Departments of Communication Disorders (Dr. Brock), Psychology (Dr. Peissig), Reading (Dr. Bowers), and Kinesiology (Dr. Rubin), providing consultation, assistance with recruitment, and assessment services. Furthermore, our Center has engaged in collaborative high-impact practice projects with the Center for International Partnerships in Education and the Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center.

See <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/Research/current.htm> for examples of current research studies, and <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/Research/findings.htm> for a list of publications and presentations.

Community and Clinical Programs:

The Center for Autism provides a number of service programs to the CSUF campus and our larger community, including our collaboration with the CSUF Reading Clinic, our Peer Assisted College Support

(PACS) Program, our creative classes for children with disabilities program with the McCoy Rigby Conservatory of the Arts, our CSUF/GAN/UCI/Chapman University socials for adults with ASD, our high school visitations, and our CSUF Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorder. Notably, the Social for Adults with Autism and their Caregivers is a collaborative university and community event held at CSUF during the fall semester and welcomes over 200 attendees including students as volunteers, community members involved with ASD, and university faculty as resources. See <http://ed.fullerton.edu/autism/student-opportunities/> and <http://ed.fullerton.edu/autism/community-services-and-events/> for further examples of some programs.

We have also partnered with several local intervention agencies to create student fieldwork placements designed to increase the number and quality of professionals working with children with ASD in Orange County (see below).

Student Involvement:

Clinical Internships:

Meeting community needs through professional training in evidence-based, best-practice methods for individuals with ASD is a central priority for our Center. Our Center has collaborated with the Department of Child & Adolescent Studies (CAS) and CICE to increase CAS fieldwork placements focused on evidence-based behavioral interventions for children with ASD. We have dramatically increased the number of CICE-registered placements such that CAS is now able to offer a specialized course in behavioral treatments for ASD (CAS 494) led by Drs. Fenning and Baker (over 21 students placed this semester). Many of these students secure jobs with their fieldwork agencies before or at graduation. The Center has published informational materials on working in early intervention. In collaboration with CAS and CICE, we have also established an annual CAS Career Fair focused on behavioral intervention for ASD. The Fair, which we co-host as part of HHD week, will be held for the second time in April 2016. See: <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/Student/fieldwork.htm> for more information on fieldwork placements and Center informational materials.

Clinical internship opportunities are also structured through the College of Education to meet the diverse interests of students and the needs of the ASD community. For example, students participating in the PACS program and providing support to CSUF students with ASD may enroll in SPED 490 or an internship course corresponding with their major for three units course credit. Participants receive training, ongoing support from faculty, and scheduled interaction with CSUF peers with ASD. See: <http://ed.fullerton.edu/autism/student-opportunities/> for more information on the Peer Assisted College Support program. Clinical internships structured with the Center also include working with McCoy Rigby's No Limits Creative Classes for Children with Special Needs program (a Center community partner) and leading social intervention groups for elementary-aged children with ASD under the supervision and mentorship of Drs. Howell and Cote.

Research Assistantships:

The Center for Autism provides opportunities for CSUF students to become involved in research through engagement with ongoing projects and independent scholarship. Our students have won the university award for *Outstanding Scholarly Activity* every year since the award's inception (2013 HSS, 2014 HSS, 2015 HSS, 2016 HHD). Our students have presented at numerous local, regional, and national conferences and have co-authored publications with our faculty (e.g., Baker, Fenning et al., 2015; Pierson, Howell, & Le, 2015). They have been accepted for graduate study in clinical psychology, special education, communicative disorders, and teaching. See <http://ed.fullerton.edu/autism/student-opportunities/> and

<http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/Student/assistantships.htm> for more information.

Advocacy and Service Opportunities:

The Center for Autism has many opportunities for students to engage with programs designed to improve skill development and quality of life in children and adults with ASD (see above programs, including PACS, Reading Clinics, Dance, and Socials). Our students also regularly attend campus and relevant community events. In addition, our Center has co-sponsored student-led CSUF Disability Awareness events for the last two years, and we have engaged in related on-campus outreach (e.g., Autism Awareness night at the Residence Halls). See <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/Events/events.htm> for some examples.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE:

The Center is led primarily by its three Co-Directors, Drs. Howell, Fenning, and Baker. The Center is further organized by two complementary “cores:” The Applied Developmental Core (led by Drs. Fenning and Baker), and the Education Core (led by Drs. Howell and Debra Cote, Associate Professor of Special Education).

The Applied Developmental Core has an Advisory Board, which can be found at: <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/about.htm>. Due to the varied nature of the Board Members, the Board does not meet as a single group, rather members are consulted for their distinct expertise. For example, our Board consists of several established researchers who have helped to steer Center research and have collaborated on grant proposals. The Board also includes local service providers and families of children with ASD. Center Directors have met with each of these individuals separately when discussing research, service, and/or community needs.

V. RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY:

The Center has received revenue through intramural research grants, donations, and external funding.

Drs. Fenning, Baker, and Howell have not received any designated assigned time for Center activities beyond competitive university research awards that they have individually obtained. Students working with the Applied Developmental Core and Education Core do so for course credit (CAS 499 or SPED 490), on a volunteer basis, or through funding from intramural research grants awarded to Center faculty. We have recently been awarded an NICHD grant that will allow for assigned time for Drs. Baker and Fenning for the next three years, as well as several paid student/staff lines. The only specific resource that the Applied Developmental Core has received is an office in the Education-Classroom building (EC-560), provided by the College of HHD, that allows for meetings with families and space for student assistants to work. As stated in the NIH application, some data collection for the new NIH project will also occur in this Center room. The Education Core was also awarded an office in the College Park building (CP-570), provided by the College of Education under the direction of Dean Cavallaro. The office has been instrumental in undergraduate and graduate student research.

During spring 2015, a strategic committee of community members, in collaboration with Center for Autism faculty, held a golf tournament fundraiser. The golf tournament raised \$21,500 in order to support Center partnerships, events, and staffing needs. In addition, small donations from bake sales and individuals in the community have helped boost Center operations.

The Center for Autism has sustained itself quite well over the past three years and our resources will further increase over the next period due to secured NIH funding and increasing interest in terms of donations. Our Co-Directors, staff, and students are highly motivated and will continue to devote their time to our shared mission.

VI. HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Community Impact: Our Center has been featured several times in the OC Register, with articles describing our commitment to research and our impressive student-faculty relationships:

Center launch: <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/autism-509373-students-core.html>

Participation in Events: <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/autism-541014-county-orange.html>

Student-Faculty relationships: <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/center-701064-autism-research.html>

Our Center was also recently selected by HHD to represent the College's community engagement efforts in the upcoming CSUF 2016 Community Engagement Report. This honor is a reflection of our enduring commitment to our students, our campus, and the broader community.

Federal Research Grant Awards. The Center has received funding from several external sources, including HRSA, the NICHD, and NIH's National Cancer Institute (NCI). The HRSA award provides funding in collaboration with UCI for a four-year randomized controlled trial of a parent-training intervention for families of children with ASD. The NICHD award exceeds \$412K and will support our research on the emotional reactivity and regulation of children with ASD for the next three years, including opportunities for increased student involvement in research. The NCI funding concluded after a two-year project award in spring 2015 and trained CHOC Children's Oncology medical professionals to use evidence-based practices in treating patients with ASD.

University Awards. Our students have won the *Outstanding Scholarly Activity* award every year since the award's inception (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), and three of our faculty were recently recognized by the University for excellence in research (see <http://news.fullerton.edu/2016wi/Scholarly-Creative-Activity.aspx>).

VII. PLANNING AND STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

The Center plans to continue its involvement in high-quality research, professional training, student engagement, and advocacy. Recently received NIH and HRSA grants will fund certain Center research for the next three years, promoting high quality research and unprecedented levels of student engagement in research activities. As we did with these projects, we will continue to utilize intramural grants to support applications for external funding. We will also continue to work with CAS, SPED, CICE, and local agencies to improve and expand our fieldwork and training programs. We will maintain our high levels of student involvement through CAS placements, high-impact practices related to the PACS program and community partnerships, and volunteer opportunities.

VIII. VIABILITY:

We remain extremely happy with how our Center has developed and how it will continue to grow. We do not plan to discontinue or significantly modify any activities or operations.