TARJAN CENTER AT UCLA

a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service

2015 REPORT
Tarjan Center is spurring new thinking, changing conversations, and harnessing collective wisdom to address complex social problems & strengthen communities.

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Cover photo: Camp Leg Power participants who became fast friends along with their UCLA Undergraduate Program Counselors (see p. 11)
THIS YEAR, WE CELEBRATED THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN’S WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA25), the most important piece of civil rights legislation with four key goals: equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. We are proud of the impact of Tarjan Center’s programs that advance the goals of the ADA, whether it be in the arts, higher education, employment, community service, or health care. In this two-year report, we share highlights of our recent work where expertise is met with innovation, as can be seen in Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson’s PEERS® program and Dr. Eileen Fowler’s Camp Leg Power, our growing use of technology and social media, and our role in creating intentional change in our local communities, state, and nation.

I was honored to be invited to attend the July 2015 White House celebration of ADA25, where government officials and disability leaders celebrated the accomplishments of the ADA and identified opportunities for the future. It was an incredible experience! Still, there is more to be done to create truly welcoming, inclusive communities, and the Tarjan Center will continue to contribute to that change. Over the next year, we will be developing our next five-year strategic plan, which gives us the opportunity to take a fresh look at the impacts of our center, assess community needs, and deepen our collaboration with existing partners.

On a final note, I want to thank the many individuals with disabilities, family members, and professionals with whom we collaborate. We look forward to continuing our work with you who share the fundamental values of equality and inclusion that made the ADA an enduring exemplar of civil rights inclusion.
Faculty & Staff

**Eileen Fowler, PhD**  
**Cerebral Palsy and Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy**  
Director of Research and Education for the Center for Cerebral Palsy at UCLA and the Kameron Gait and Motion Analysis Laboratory. President of the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine.

**Eric Latham, MPA**  
**Postsecondary Education**  
Executive and Founding Director of Pathway at UCLA Extension. Program Director for Postsecondary Programs at UCLA Extension’s Education Department.

**Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD**  
**Autism Spectrum Disorder**  
Tarjan Center Director of Training. Director of the UCLA PEERS® Clinic and of The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance.

**Mary O’Connor, PhD**  
**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders**  
Program Director, UCLA Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Clinic, and the ABC Partial Hospital Program. Appointee to the National Task Force on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect. Inducted into the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Hall of Fame in 2014.

**Olivia Raynor, PhD**  
**Arts, Employment, and Postsecondary Education**  
Tarjan Center Director. Board President of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities.

**Andrew Russell, MD**  
**Psychiatric Disorders and Developmental Disabilities**  
Professor Emeritus of Clinical Psychiatry. Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

**Erma Acebo**  
Administrative Coordinator

**Rachel Flores**  
Communications and Program Manager

**Wilbert Francis, MBA**  
Postsecondary Education Director

**Katharine Hayward, PhD**  
Research and Evaluation Director

**Beth Stoffmacher**  
Data and Technical Assistance Coordinator

**Kecia Weller**  
Self-Advocacy and Community Liaison
Strengthening self-determination, quality of life, inclusion, and choice for people with disabilities

Services include:

- Undergraduate and pre-professional training in developmental disabilities.
- Community training and education on many topics related to evidence-based treatments, public policy, and inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Serving as a local, state, national, and international resource on disabilities through consultation, training, program evaluation, and technical assistance.
- Conducting applied, clinical, policy, and new research to inform public policy and practice.
- Sharing and supporting the utilization of research findings, exemplary policies, and effective practices by professionals, community providers, individuals with disabilities and their families.

Tarjan Center Fast Facts (Years 2014-2015):

- **277,394** information distributed through publications, materials, and websites.
- **33,633** people with disabilities, families, professionals, students, and community members trained or who received technical assistance.
- **1,201** people who received clinical services or specialized consultation.
In 2014-15, Tarjan Center programs saw success in reaching goals in advancing strategies to serve people with disabilities. Achievements include:

ARTS
Our National Arts & Disability Center (NADC), saw an increase—from 5,044 to 6,043—in the number of artists with disabilities and arts organizations who received technical assistance to further their work to make arts more accessible.
• In February 2014, NADC wrapped the Statewide Forums on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities, an 11-year project that demonstrated how state arts agencies and their partners created opportunities to enhance the artistic skills, business understanding, and employment of artists with disabilities. • NADC’s new “Featured Artist Page” highlights the work of artists who have received professional development under the California Arts Council’s Arts and Accessibility Technical Assistance Program. Examples of how grant funding was used included:
  • Artist Kurt Weston prepared 34 of his photographs for an exhibit at John Wayne Airport (Orange County, CA), resulting in exposure to thousands of travelers.
  • Crowded Fire Theater provided an audio described performance at the premiere of She Rode Horses Like the Stock Exchange, which features two legally blind actors.
  • Fred C. Heidrick Museum created an audio tour for visitors with disabilities.
COMMUNITY SERVICE
Through a grant from the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, Tarjan partnered with Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE) and awarded seed funding to 10 school-based programs to launch inclusive, socially responsible student-run businesses including a coffee shop, a soup restaurant, a recycling service, and a bike repair shop. Educational materials and stories of success were posted on our website to inspire replication.

EDUCATION
Through Open the Doors to College, over 200 professionals from 86 of the 113 California community colleges experienced trainings to stay abreast of new thinking and skills to support the participation of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities in college as a preparatory step to employment. • Findings from program evaluation of the College to Career (C2C) program showed that C2C students are gaining greater access to college classes and employment. Over 3 years, 254 have enrolled in 1,504 courses, and 71 have had their first experience with employment. • In Summer 2015, 21 students graduated from Pathway at UCLA Extension, totaling 114 students with intellectual disabilities who have graduated from UCLA since Pathway began in 2006.

EMPLOYMENT
The California Employment Consortium for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CECY) continues to model how interagency collaboration can advance policy change and practice at both state and local levels. • CECY members, led by Dr. Olivia Raynor, completed two policy briefs, making recommendations for policy and practice changes in the Developmental Disabilities Services System as well as education and transition. CECY launched California’s Data Dashboard on the State Council on Developmental Disabilities website as the go-to place for data on the state’s employment of people with disabilities. • On a local level, CECY influenced implementation of Employment First policies at Orange County and Bay Area regional centers.

HEALTH SERVICES
87 health-related trainings were given to 8,914 professionals, families, and people with disabilities. • Dr. Eileen Fowler’s research dispelled previous concerns about strength training for children with cerebral palsy (CP), and found that strengthening exercise is beneficial for their physical health. Her PEDALS program introduced adapted tricycles as a means for children with spastic CP to have valuable exercise. She oversaw Camp Leg Power, which engages children with spastic CP in specialized physical therapy set in a camp-like setting. • Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson’s PEERS® social skills training program for youth with autism spectrum disorder launched a mobile app, published manuals, and reached international audiences and implementation. • Dr. Mary O’Connor served as advisor to the Global Partnership for AIDS Behavioral Research: South Africa and U.S. where she brought her expertise in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders to advise on the risks associated with alcohol consumption as it relates to HIV/AIDS.

(More on PEERS® and Camp Leg Power on pp. 10-11.)
Community Voices

ARTS
“Several years ago as a fledging artist, I contacted [the] NADC.... After finding new resources and venues through your organization, my work has now been exhibited in Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Louisville, Minneapolis, and Madison. Recently, public television filmed an episode of my work for the series Wisconsin Life.... Thanks to NADC, I am now defined as an artist for what I can do rather than what I cannot.” (D.S. Sully, Forum participant)

“At the Forum, I not only met other artists in a similar situation to mine, but I also sold two of my drawings, which boosted my confidence.... I learned a lot from other artists and the sponsors I met.... Most importantly was making connections with people I met, just to know there are others out there who are like me.” (J. Cole, Forum participant)

EDUCATION
“Saying a person has an intellectual disability does not mean that they don’t have intellectual curiosity. C2C gives students a chance to explore classes that they might not otherwise have tried.” (Disabled Student Programs and Services counselor)

“I have learned a lot in C2C, and I was also taught how to interview, what employers are looking for, and how to look good to an employer even if I have a disability.” (Patrick, C2C Program participant)

EMPLOYMENT
“As an employer, we focus on ability, not disability, because everyone has abilities. Our workplace is enhanced because we have people in the right position.” (Nancy O’Malley, Alameda County’s District Attorney’s Office, CECY Community Conversation)

“I have hired thousands of people in all sorts of industries ... the one true thing about a good employee and building a good organization is that you have to have workers that are passionate about what they do, dedicated about what they do, and enjoy coming to work. .....those are a few of the intangibles that I can say clients from The Arc [of California] bring to our organization.” (Aaron Rothman, Twitter, Recruiting Manager, CECY Community Conversation)

HEALTH
“As a young adult with Asperger’s syndrome, PEERS® has been of great assistance to me. I took the class when I was in high school. Today, I’m a senior at a four-year university, and I feel very well-adjusted to it all. It’s easy for me to make friends in my classes, and I feel at ease doing the same things everyone else is doing: inviting friends over, going out with them for lunch or dinner, and so on. The PEERS® program taught me what I need to know for those kinds of situations to feel natural and enjoyable, and gave me the confidence to pursue them.” (Cory, PEERS® student)
Young people with disabilities at work (clockwise from top L): Anna celebrating 15 years of employment at Gap’s flagship store in San Francisco; Jose preparing daily samples of local cheese, artisanal breads, and other fresh local food at Orland’s The Rustic Wagon; Eryn, a Health Clerk working for the Health Partnership Project within Oakland Unified School District; “DJ Willie,” who in addition to a full-time job at Albertsons Market in Orange County, has a microenterprise to DJ parties and events; Martina working in sales at The Rustic Wagon in Orland, CA.
While social skills training has become an increasingly popular method for helping youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) adapt to their social environment, few trainings are based in evidence-based research or produce socially important, long-term or generalized changes in social competence among people with ASD.

Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson’s Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®) seeks to rectify existing treatment and research gaps. PEERS® is a parent-assisted group treatment manual aimed at improving social skills among teens and young adults with ASD.

The PEERS® curriculum teaches social skills through the identification of concrete rules and steps of social etiquette, demonstrating these social behaviors through role-playing examples, and providing behavioral rehearsal exercises with performance feedback.

What makes PEERS® unique is that the program also incorporates parents, caregivers, and teachers in the intervention. Unlike most social skills trainings, PEERS® has been shown to be effective in improving social skills in youth with ASD over several research trials.

In 2014-15, the program reached audiences in the U.S. as well as Canada, United Kingdom, Finland, Iceland, Netherlands, India, Australia, and Hong Kong. It has also resulted in two published treatment manuals, a parent book, and a mobile app. (See page 12.)

“PEERS® teaches ‘ecologically valid’ social skills. We’re not teaching what we think teens and young adults should do in social situations, but we’re teaching what we actually know works through research.”

-- Elizabeth Laugeson
Each day, the kids at Camp Leg Power start their day with a spirited group chant, followed by an energetic UCLA fight song. The chant, which is done with corresponding hand and leg motions, is actually a therapeutic activity in disguise, the first in a three-hour session that converts therapy for children with cerebral palsy into summertime fun. Camp Leg Power is a UCLA Center for Cerebral Palsy program directed by Eileen Fowler.

The “camp,” that launched summer 2014, is actually a pilot study to identify changes in the brain in response to therapy for the lower limbs of children with spastic cerebral palsy. All 20 children participating in the UCLA study, of which Fowler is the principal investigator, have impairments in voluntary movement caused by damage to specific motor tracts in the brain. Research focuses on measuring and improving skilled movement patterns and identifying resulting changes in the brain.

Unbeknownst to the youngsters, the camp activities were specifically developed to focus on isolated leg and foot movements that may enhance muscle function, and even neuronal activity in the brain. “I don’t think he even realizes that this is therapy,” commented a mentor working with a youth who played a video game controlled by his ankles, “which, of course, is the whole point.”

“Most kids with cerebral palsy have individual physical therapy, and that can get tedious. Having a summer program that lets campers participate in creative therapeutic activities with their peers builds skills and confidence. And we make sure it is fun.”

-- Eileen Fowler

(Article courtesy of Simi Singer, UCLA Newsroom.)
Reaching the people we serve

In 2014-15, the Tarjan Center expanded methods to bring resources and possibilities to the lives on people with disabilities.

PEERS® FRIENDMAKER APP

Seeing the value of a mobile tool that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) could turn to when experiencing in-the-moment challenges of communication with their peers, FriendMaker App was created based on PEERS® program trainings (see page 10). It breaks down the process of making friends into easy, concrete steps, from choosing friends and improving conversational skills to online etiquette and handling teasing. It includes role-play videos that demonstrate social skills into action. FriendMaker’s ability to provide on-the-spot guidance to children is distinct and unprecedented, and the response has been wonderful. As one user noted, “This app breaks down the skills that many of us take for granted. It really helps kids to know what the steps are for the conversations and friendships.” It has been downloaded over 4,500 times since becoming available in October 2013.

NADC FACEBOOK COMMUNITY

The NADC Facebook community offers both artists and arts organizations a place to feature their personal stories, exhibits, funding opportunities, calls for art, articles, publications and other relevant information about art and disability. To date, 5,310 people are a part of this online community.
CECY’S COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The California Employment Consortium for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CECY)—a Project of National Significance in Employment Systems Change—launched a series of ‘Community Conversations’ in spring 2014 to help local communities throughout the state begin a dialogue about the value of increasing competitive integrated employment for youth with disabilities in their communities. Participants from business, government, education, nonprofits, young adults and parents, among others, came together to identify and develop solutions. Each meeting ended with a list of next steps and a community action plan.

Perhaps most importantly, the conversations provided an opportunity for open dialogue with local businesses and employers, who candidly shared what they needed to better understand and have in place to hire people with disabilities. Most indicative of the impact that the events had on employers was their expressed interest to stay involved and their enthusiasm they expressed for their newfound knowledge about the possibilities of bringing people with disabilities into their workforce. As one Orange County employer shared, “I’m going to go back and change my online application process right away!”

CECY held seven Community Conversations between March 2014 and February 2015 in Alameda, Anaheim, Whittier, Orland, San Francisco, San Diego, and Taft, California. Over 394 people collectively participated. Approximately 75% completed surveys, and the vast majority agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new about their communities, that they believed their community had the ability to get more people with disabilities jobs, and that they now have knowledge of what they personally can do to keep things moving forward.

Community Conversations in action (top L to R): dynamic small group discussions and tabletop notes from group discussions in Irvine, Whittier, and San Francisco. Below: scenes from Taft, California.
Growing Leaders

Our faculty and staff train students who engage in a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary training experiences such as:

- **Child clinical psychology interns** participate in rotations and are offered seminars and clinics in behavioral genetics, autism spectrum disorder, infant and preschool assessment, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, pediatric consultation liaison, and parent social skills training.
- **PEERS®** has pre-doctoral psychology interns engaged in clinical training and research.
- **Undergraduate students** work with faculty on conducting research through externships and practica. Students also earn university credit in training positions that include presentations and writing research papers on topics of their choice.
- **Graduate biomedical engineering doctoral students** work with physical therapists, learning movement assessments, newer treatments, and research at the Center for Cerebral Palsy at UCLA.
- **Medical students** develop their own summer research program and prepare a presentation for a national research meeting.
- **Disabilities Studies minor students** gain internship experience at Pathway at UCLA Extension working with college students with intellectual disabilities.

Where are they now?

A sampling of where our students have landed after leaving their Tarjan Center training:

- **NICOLE CAVENAGH, PHD, (2008)** Director, Pediatric Neuropsychologist, Touro University Nevada, Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities
Lecture Series

In November 2014, we launched the Tarjan Center Lecture Series to share the center’s and UCLA partners’ excellent work and resources with others on the campus and in the local community. Tarjan Center faculty and guest scholars brought the latest developments related to autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome, cerebral palsy, and advancements for people with developmental disabilities, among other center topic areas.

The 2014-15 series was comprised of eight presentations that ran through May 2015, with a total of 330 professionals, trainees, and family members of people with disabilities attending. Out of the 271 participants surveyed, 96.6% were highly satisfied or satisfied with the presentation they attended. Feedback such as, “Fascinating, great research. Hope to learn more in the future,” doesn’t get any better in response to what we are aiming to bring to the community through the series.

The Tarjan Center Lecture Series began its second year in October 2015.

Accessibility Guidelines

The Tarjan Center is increasingly using a variety of electronic and new media including websites, Facebook, and YouTube to streamline access to our programs, services, and resources. In 2014-15, center staff collaborated in developing Accessibility Guidelines to further the ways we make information accessible to a wide range of audiences. The guidelines were created to give guidance to Tarjan Center faculty, staff, and others beyond the center, when creating print and electronic documents that can be overlooked in consideration of accessibility, such as:

- outreach and marketing materials
- reports, briefs, and resource lists
- newsletters and periodic publications
- tables and spreadsheets
- presentations and handouts
- emails and listserv announcements
- lecture and conference presentations

The guidelines are seen as a living document that will be periodically revised based on developments and user feedback.
Our Advisory Board

The Tarjan Center relies on feedback from our Advisory Board to help inform our work, and thank them for their ongoing support and guidance:

- Tony Anderson, Executive Director, The Arc of California
- Anastasia Bacigalupo, Executive Director, Westside Center for Independent Living
- Linda Butler, Self-Advocate and Consumer Coordinator, Westside Regional Center
- Connie Huang Chu, Attorney, Disability Rights California
- Wayne Cook, Manager, Arts in Education Program; ADA 504 Coordinator for California Arts Council
- Lisette Duarte, Senior Coordinator of Field Operations, Autism Speaks
- Fran Goldfarb, Director of Family Support, USC UCEDD; faculty member, USC LEND program
- Esther Kelsey, Self-Advocate, Westside Regional Center
- Steve Ruder, UC Davis MIND Institute CEDD
- Debbie Sarmento, Manager, Family Resource Center’s Network of California
- Patti Schetter, UC Davis MIND Institute CEDD
- Vanda Yung, Vice President, Chinese Parents Association
- In Memoriam: Rachel Chen, President, Chinese Parents Association

Our Federal Partners

- California State Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Disability Rights California
- UC Davis MIND Institute Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (CEDD)
- USC University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

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For more information, please visit us at:
tarjancenter.org

The Tarjan Center is a federally designed University Center for Excellence in Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). It is one of 67 centers that comprise the UCEDD network across the country and U.S. territories. UCEDDs receive core funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). We are also supported by federal and state contracts and grants, as well as private foundations and donations.