

# 2018-2019 Tarjan Center Lecture Series Summary Report



*Dr. DiStefano presenting on Minimally Verbal Children with ASD at February 2019 lecture*

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## What was the 2018-2019 lecture series like?

The 2018-2019 Tarjan Center lecture series delivered 7 lectures from September 2018 to May 2019. A total of 338 professionals, students, and family members attended, ranging from 36 to 62 attendees per lecture ( $M = 42$ ). The number of evaluations completed ranged from 22 to 40 per lecture, with an overall response rate of 60%. See Table 1.

**Table 1. Attendance and evaluations completed by lecture**

Date	Topic	Number who attended	Number completing evaluations
<b>September 17</b>	Facilitating Optimal Outcomes for Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Focus on Early Screening, Child Characteristics, and Early Intervention	36	24
<b>October 15</b>	Screening for Autism Spectrum Disorder in a Naturalistic Home Environment: Strategies for Improving Early Detection	50	29
<b>January 14</b>	Transitions for Young Adults with ASD What We Know and What We Need	59	26
<b>February 4</b>	Minimally Verbal Children with ASD: Understanding Their Abilities and Development	49	33
<b>March 4</b>	Biological Treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorder and Co-Occurring Conditions: The Commonly Used, The Commonly Tried, and What's Next	41	22
<b>April</b>	Correlations and Controversies: Gender Dysphoria & Autism Spectrum Disorder	62	40
<b>May</b>	Modified Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anxiety in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder	41	29
<b>Total</b>		338	203

This report summarizes feedback received through a paper evaluation given at the end of each lecture.

## What was the representation of attendees?

The Tarjan Center has incorporated an equity lens in all its projects, and revised the lecture evaluation to gather information about the gender, race, and ethnicity of those who attend its lectures in an effort to better identify outreach needs.

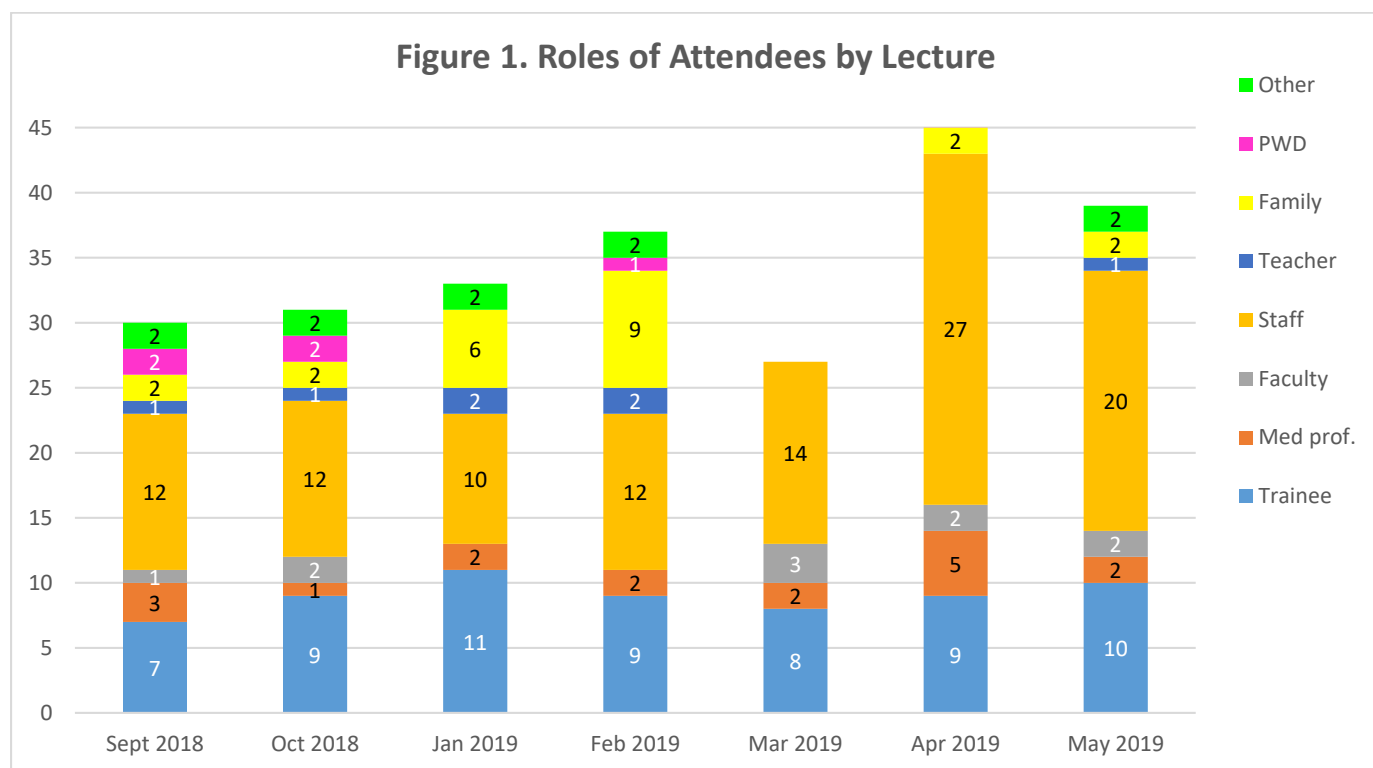
**Table 2. Gender, Race, and Ethnicity of Lecture Attendees (2018-2019)**

	Sept 2018	Oct 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	March 2019	April 2019	May 2019	Total
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	2	4	2	6	1	5	1	<b>21 (10%)</b>
Female	22	23	24	26	21	32	27	<b>175 (86%)</b>
Non-binary						2		<b>2 (0.9%)</b>
Prefer not to answer		2		1		1	1	<b>5 (2%)</b>
								<b>203</b>
<b>Race</b>								
<b>American Indian/ Alaskan Native</b>		1						<b>1 (0.5%)</b>
Asian	6	8	5	8	9	8	6	<b>50 (25%)</b>
Black/African-American		1		3		3		<b>7 (3%)</b>
White	15	13	15	14	8	20	20	<b>105 (52%)</b>
Two or more races	1	2	3	3	4	3	2	<b>18 (9%)</b>
Prefer not to answer		3	3	3	1	2	1	<b>13 (6%)</b>
Other	2	1		2		4		<b>9 (5%)</b>
<b>Hispanic</b>								
Yes	6	8	8	5	2	9	5	<b>43 (21%)</b>
No	18	18	18	25	20	30	23	<b>152 (75%)</b>
Prefer not to answer		3		3		1	1	<b>8 (4%)</b>
								<b>203</b>

Across all 7 lectures we had a 60% ( $n = 203$ ) response rate. Eighty-six percent of attendees were female. Two attendees identified as non-binary and five preferred not to answer. Half of lecture attendants were White (51%) with another 25% (up from 17%) who identified as Asian

and 9% (down from 14%) who identified as from two or more races. Twenty-one percent (up from 16%) identified as of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

Figure 1 displays the roles identified by respondents by lecture topic. Respondents could select more than role. The *Other* category includes those who indicated they were an educator, adult with disabilities/self-advocate. Lectures were primarily attended by UCLA staff and trainees. Tarjan Center trainees indicated their attendance at the February, April, and May 2019 lectures.



### Who were the presenters?

The Tarjan Center lecture series highlighted the work and expertise of several campus and community members including:

- Dr. Charlotte DiStefano** presented, “Minimally Verbal Children with ASD: Understanding Their Abilities and Development.” She is a clinical psychologist with expertise in autism spectrum disorder and related neurodevelopmental disorders. She is a Clinical Instructor in Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences. Clinically, Dr. DiStefano sees patients in the Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental Clinic, and the Developmental Neurogenetics Clinic.

- **Dr. Deana Dow** presented, “Screening for Autism Spectrum Disorder in a Naturalistic Home Environment: Strategies for Improving Early Detection.” She is a Postdoctoral Clinical Psychology Fellow at UCLA with the Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental (CAN) Clinic and the PEERS® Clinic. Dr. Dow has been working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) for 15 years in a variety of clinical and research contexts.
- **Dr. Caroline Grantz**, presented, “Transitions for Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: What We Know and What We Need.” She is a pediatric neuropsychologist with expertise in Autism Spectrum Disorder and related areas of difficulty. Dr. Grantz is part of the team at the CAN Clinic, where she is developing young adult assessment and intervention services to support the transition to adulthood for individuals on the autism spectrum.
- **Dr. Brandon Ito** presented, “Correlations and Controversies: Gender Dysphoria & Autism Spectrum Disorder. He is a supervisor in the Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental Clinic, Behavioral Wellness Center, and the UCLA Gender Health Program.
- **Dr. Emily Moulton**, presented, “Facilitating Optimal Outcomes from Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Focus on Early Screening, Child Characteristics, and Early Intervention,” She is a Postdoctoral Clinical Psychology Fellow with the UCLA PEERS clinic and the Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental (CAN) Clinic.
- **Dr. Patricia Renno** presented, “Modified Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anxiety in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She is a Clinical Psychologist at the UCLA Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental Clinic (CAN) Clinic and a Clinical Instructor in the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Division at UCLA. She is also the Associate Director of the UCLA CAN REACH Training Program which provides free workshops and lectures on autism spectrum disorder for families and community providers.



*Dr. Renno presenting on anxiety and children with ASD (May 2019)*

- **Dr. Benjamin Schneider** presented, “Biological Treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorder and Co-Occurring Conditions: The Commonly Used, The Commonly Tried, and What’s Next.” He serves as the Associate Director of the UCLA Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental Clinic and as Medical Director of the UCLA Achievement, Behavior and Cognition Partial Hospitalization Program.



*Dr. Schneider presenting on biological treatments for individuals with ASD (March 2019)*

Videos of the lectures were archived and are available at <https://www.semel.ucla.edu/tarjan/2018-2019-presentations>.

## What did attendees learn?

“Very helpful to my knowledge bank and skills applications. Big Thank You!  
-September 2018

“Very useful talk. Learned a lot. Will use to better prepare kids on the spectrum.”  
-January 2019

Respondents reported increased knowledge, learning, and understanding related to the lecture topic areas. The following lists the specific types of knowledge gained through the lectures.

Lecture participants strongly agreed they increased their knowledge of:

September 2018

- current ASD prevalence estimates (75%)
- the role of early screening and diagnosis in positive outcomes (79%)
- the role of early intervention and neural mechanisms (67%)



October 2018

- the common barriers to early screening and detection of ASD (61%)
- early symptoms most salient during naturalistic parent-child interactions (75%)
- resources for caregivers and providers to learn about early red flags for autism (68%)

January 2019

- transition planning for individual on the spectrum and who should be involved (77%)
- common pitfalls experienced by individuals with ASD as they transition out of high school (81%)
- key things schools and organizations can do to increase success for individuals with ASD as they transition to post-secondary education or work (76%)

February 2019

- characteristics of minimally verbal children with ASD (82%)
- of why “low functioning” is an inaccurate label for this population (73%)
- the appropriate techniques to improve outcomes for this population (75%)

March 2019

- commonly prescribed medications in the treatment of autism spectrum disorder (91%)
- potential additional benefits to psychotropic medication prescribing (91%)
- pertinent complementary and alternative treatments (91%)

April 2019

- current state of literature on the co-occurrence of autism spectrum disorder and gender dysphoria (75%)
- present theoretical biologic, psychological and social frameworks to characterize ASD and gender dysphoria (68%)
- controversy surrounding published data and implications on clinical management and future research (58%)

May 2019

- co-occurring anxiety disorders in children with ASD (76%)

- cognitive behavioral therapy and its application for treating anxiety in children with ASD (79%)
- specific modifications to traditional CBT for use in children with ASD (79%)

#### What did attendees have to say about the lecture series?

“Amazing! Perfect tone and great knowledge, very inspiring.”

-October 2018 attendee

“Awesome talk! Thank you for addressing the difficulties faced by those with a high IQ and ASD.” – January 2019 lecture attendee

“Very informative and much needed discussion.” –April 2019 attendee

“Love the clinical research talks! Very interesting.” -May 2019 attendee

Attendees across all lecture topics found the information presented useful (strongly agree range 78%-91%). The lecture on biological treatments for ASD and co-occurring conditions and screening for ASD in a naturalistic home environment were found to be particularly useful, 91% and 89% respectively. Attendees across the lectures were satisfied (strongly agree = 75%-91%). The lectures on biological treatments for ASD and co-occurring conditions (91%) and modified cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety in children with ASD (90%) had the strongest satisfaction ratings. The applicability of information to the lecture series attendees' professional or daily activities varied (strongly agreed response range = 58%-80%), with the lecture on transition for young adults with ASD generating the strongest response for application.

#### What are the suggestions for future trainings?

“Excellent talk! Loved seeing the online resources and hearing about research study.

Fantastic training! Like focus on intervention.” – October 2018 attendee

The Tarjan Center lecture series is well attended and well received. Comments from the evaluations provide input into future trainings. In particular, respondents expressed a desire for resources they could take with them such as on a handout, and a stronger emphasis on referrals and resources. Attendees also expressed a desire for resources that were not



California specific. Specific topic recommendations were for: adult services and impact of music on development of individuals with ASD.

As the Tarjan Center moves into the 2019-2020 lecture series, it will use this year's evaluations to determine progress in reaching goals around equity and any changes in its programming.