

SOTA Student Leadership Conference

October 8-9, 2020



Presenters:

Keynote Address: *And They Were Roommates: Navigating Inclusive Mentorship in Higher Education.*

Presented By: Kylie Walter and Olivia Baist

Kylie is a recent graduate of Syracuse University's School of Education, now working towards a master's in education at Boston College. She produced and edited, *And They Were Roommates* independently as first-time, female creator, referring to educational practices, other documentaries, and YouTube editing tutorials to guide the creative process. During production, Kylie was a junior at Syracuse University and roommate (and residential mentor for) Olivia. Kylie enjoys running, photography, and has a newfound love for film.

Olivia is now a junior at Syracuse University studying Studio Arts through the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education's InclusiveU program. Olivia co-filmed *And They Were Roommates*, taking the lead for vlog-styled footage. Olivia is a first-time, female cinematographer that identifies as having a disability. During production, she was a first-year student and roommate (residential mentee) of Kylie. Olivia is originally from upstate New York and loves dancing, painting, jewelry-making, and participating in clubs on campus.

Presentation #2: Independence: What Is It and How Do I Get It? (Day 1: 4:00PM- 4:30PM)

Presented By: Elise McDaniel and Michael Nack

Elise is in her third year of the FUTURE program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She is in her second year of living in the dorms on campus as part of an independent living pilot program, paving the way for all FUTURE students to take advantage of this opportunity. A native of Knoxville, Tennessee, Elise is known for being a hard-worker, and has taken college by storm, evidenced by her selection as a student presenter at the 2019 SOTA Student Leadership Conference in Reno, NV. Elise is a world traveler, having been to China, Israel, Europe, Mexico, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. Elise loves Broadway, Hip-Hop dance, and music in general. Elise aspires to have a career and to live independently. Elise is honored to show what someone with Down Syndrome can do.

Mikie is a second-year student of the FUTURE program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. He is presenting with Elise on his experience living independently. Mikie learned how to live independently from his mom and dad. Mikie gives tips on how to spend money wisely and how to do chores around his apartment. Mikie has been living independently since July 2020. Some of Mikie's interests include drawing, coloring, and playing Xbox. Mikie's favorite thing to do independently is to go shopping for food.

Presentation #3: Policy, Advocacy, and YOU! (Day 2: 12:30PM- 1:30PM)

Presented By: Micah Fialka-Feldman and Sara Jo Soldovieri

Micah is a self-advocate, teaching assistant, outreach coordinator, national speaker, and pioneer who fights for disability-pride, justice and inclusion. He is part of the first wave of adults with intellectual disabilities who have attended college and has been fully included in school and community. Micah's disability advocacy has a foundation in the creation of the "Beloved Community" and the notion that "A community that excludes even one of its members is not a community at all." Micah earned a certificate in Disability Studies from the Syracuse University School of Education in 2015. He currently lives in Syracuse, NY where he co-teaches classes in inclusive education and disability studies. He is an outreach coordinator at the Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education. In May of 2014, Micah was appointed by President Obama to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. He is featured in the documentary by Dan Habib, *Intelligent Lives*.

In 2009, Micah won a landmark federal lawsuit, *Fialka-Feldman v. Oakland University Board of Trustees*, to live in the dorms at Oakland University. After Micah had been accepted to live in the dorms in 2007, he received notification from the university that he could not live in the dorms because of “university policy.” The administration argued that he was not considered a “degree-seeking” student. Micah sued Oakland University for violating his civil rights. After two years of advocacy and court proceedings, the Honorable Judge Duggan of the U.S. 6th District Court ruled that Oakland University had denied Micah housing based on “prejudice, stereotypes, and/or unfounded fear of persons with disabilities.” Micah moved into the dorms in January of 2010.

Sara Jo is a first-year doctoral student studying Inclusive Special Education at Syracuse University. She is the former Manager of Inclusive Education Programming for the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) where she has worked for more than three years to drive systems and society toward the full inclusion of children with down syndrome and other disabilities in education. As a former inclusive special education teacher, Sara Jo directly supports students, families, school districts and policy makers by providing advice, professional development training and consultation. Sara Jo has traveled nationally and internationally to speak on the importance of inclusive education for all. When not working with families or school districts, she has advised presidential and congressional campaigns.

Presentation #4: LGBTQ+ Safe Zone Ally Training (Day #2: 3:30PM- 4:00PM)

Presented By: Michael Carbonaro and Sylvia Cusack

Michael is the first openly gay graduate of the AHRC NYC Melissa Riggio Higher Education Program at CUNY-College of Staten Island in Staten Island, NY (Class of 2019). Michael is a proud self-advocate and an advocate for others. He is the recipient of the 2019 ARC NY State Self-Advocate of the Year award. Michael was a speaker at the AHRC Leadership Summit, AHRC 70th Annual Gala, Arts for Autism for Autism Speaks on Broadway at the Gershwin Theater, Volunteers of America, and the Staten Island Early Learning Center Gala. Michael lobbied in Albany, NY and Washington, DC for issues surrounding disability rights. Although this started as a college senior project, Michael has gone on to present his Safe Zone Ally trainings for LGBTQ+ communities. Michael states that credit for his successes go to every person in his village and all of his friends and family (YOU ALL KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND YOU GUYS ROCK). 😊

Sylvia has served mainly autistic and otherwise disabled college students, with a passion for serving autistic and LGBTQ+ college students, since 2015. As an Autistic and transgender adult with a master's degree in social work, and an aspiring social work researcher, Sylvia's research interests include investigating, accessibility for Autistic college students, transgender health, and many other topics. Sylvia has trained future social workers at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College (her alma mater). Her trainings include ways to help disabled clients heal from intimate partner violence and other forms of abuse against disabled people throughout all stages of life. Sylvia's work has been acknowledged by Dr. Lauren Greiner, a leader in the field of clinical work with Autistic adults. Sylvia currently serves CUNY's Autistic students through Project REACH, which serves Autistic students on CUNY campuses. Sylvia is credited with writing the system's official manual on peer mentoring for Autistic college students. Sylvia lives in Westchester, NY with her family and is a big lover of music and a form of self-expression, healing, and connection.

Concurrent Session #1- CHOICE A: Self-Advocacy in Academics and Everyday Life

Presented By: Jessica Otty

Jess is from Las Vegas, NV, but attends school in Logan, Utah. She is in the Aggies Elevated Program at Utah State University. Aggies Elevated is a two-year program where students with intellectual disabilities can get a feel of what college is like and have a college experience. Jess is currently in her second year of the program. She is working toward her certificate, but after the program, she is planning on returning to USU to work toward a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education.

Concurrent Session #1- CHOICE B: Getting Out and About on Campus

Presented By: Jessica Baker and Lara Klein

Jessica is from Cincinnati, OH and recently graduated from the Transition and Access program at the University of Cincinnati. Jessica is currently working at the Early Learning Campus as a student worker where she works with toddlers. Jessica loves working with children and says she is also interested in learning more about American Sign Language and the Deaf culture. Her hobbies include reading, scrapbooking, and hanging out with her family and friends.

Lara is from Villa Hills, KY where she attended Holy Cross High School in Covington, KY. Lara was an avid sports player in high school—playing on a softball team and the cheerleading team. Lara plays several sports for the Special Olympics to include softball,

basketball, swimming, bowling, and horseback riding. Lara enjoys spending time with her family. Lara is currently a senior in the Transition and Access Program at the University of Cincinnati. She indicates that her brother went to the University of Cincinnati and graduated in 2014. Her dad is also an alumnus, so she is thrilled that she is part of the tradition. Lara is interested in the veterinary field and upon graduation from TAP, she plans to return to school to become a veterinary assistant.

Concurrent Session #1- CHOICE C: From Mission Impossible to Mission Possible.

Presented By: Courtney Jorgensen

Courtney is from Grantsville, Utah and is a part of the Aggies Elevated Program at Utah State University. Courtney enjoys swimming, her cats, and camping/vacationing with her family. Courtney loves attending and participating in the performing arts such as theater, ballroom dance, and singing. She has performed in 25 different theatrical productions and is currently working as an assistant teacher for children's theater classes. Courtney works part time as a nanny and also finds time to engage in volunteer work. Courtney volunteers as a Self-Advocate with the URLEND (Utah Regional Leadership in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities) organization. Her goals are to finish her Aggies Elevated program, become a florist or be a professional that works with children. Courtney would like to get married have her own family.

Concurrent Session #1- CHOICE D: Activities, Campus and YOU! Get Involved!

Presented By: Kaine Robinson

Kaine is from Liverpool, NY and is a senior in the InclusiveU program at Syracuse, University. Kaine is very active on campus and in the community and participates with the local Special Olympics team. Kaine says that he loves helping adults with disabilities and he is also learning to be more independent. He would love to live on his own someday, so he is learning all he can about cooking and cleaning.

Concurrent Session #2- CHOICE A: Using Multimodal Communication to Be Successful in College.

Presented By: Maia Chamberlain

Maia is a sophomore at Syracuse University in the InclusiveU program. She lives an hour north of the campus with her family and commutes. Currently, all of her classes are online because of Covid-19. Maia is an individual with Cerebral Palsy and is nonverbal. Typically, Maia travels with her staff interpreter and uses both sign language and SnapCore First on her iPad to communicate.

Concurrent Session #2- CHOICE B: When Teachers and Students Connect

Presented By: Andrew Benbenek and Professor Olivia Stomski

Andrew is from Cicero, NY and is a senior in the InclusiveU program at Syracuse University where he is majoring in Broadcast and Digital Journalism at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication. Currently, he is an intern in the Newhouse Sports Media Center where he works under the direction of Professor Olivia Stomski. Outside of class, Andrew holds many roles, including Social Media Director of Z89- The Juice, associate video producer for Z98- The Juice, production assistant at CitrusTV, a liaison of Ottothon, a member of Camp Kesem, and a peer trainer for InclusiveU. When Andrew is home, he loves to fish and hang out with his friends. Andrew is a 2020 Remembrance Scholar—one of the highest honors at Syracuse University. A Remembrance Scholar honors one of the 35 Syracuse University students who passed away aboard Pan Am flight 103 during a senseless act of terrorism on December 21, 1988. After graduation, Andrew plans to work his way up to become a sports producer and follow his dream.

Olivia is the director of the Newhouse Sports Media Center and a professor of practice in the television, radio, and film department at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication. Professor Stomski is an Emmy award winning sports producer who has worked with some of the biggest athletes in the world. In addition to teaching, Stomski is an executive producer at ProAngle Media in Los Angeles. She oversees, manages, produces, and directs over 100 events a year across the country, leads the production team and works with executives and personnel from several networks and professional collegiate teams. Professor Stomski has also held various editing and producing positions at Fox Sports Net.

Concurrent Session #2- CHOICE C: Building Healthy Social and Peer Relationships.

Presented By: Paige Morgan

Paige is from Roy, Utah. She is currently attending Utah State University as member of their Aggies Elevated program- a 2-year certificate program for young adults with intellectual disabilities. This is Paige's second year in the program, and she is working on her associate degree and hopes to earn it by the end of the spring 2021 semester. When she completes her associate degree, she is interested in returning to school to earn her bachelor's degree. Her major is currently undeclared, but she is interested in communications, psychology, or history.

Concurrent Session #2- CHOICE D: Finding Your People or Tribe: Building Social Capital.

Presented By: Colton Vazquez, Nate Pearson, Alexandra Raymond, Morgan Cargulio, and McKenna Killion

Colton is from Pittsburgh, PA where he is currently a sophomore at Duquesne University in the Compass program. Colton hopes to turn his lifetime love of theater and performance into a career. Last semester, Colton completed a practicum with the Director of Theater Studies and would like to expand his involvement with the Red Masquers Theatre Group. Colton hopes to continue his advocacy work this year and focus on expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Colton is also searching for a condominium in Pittsburgh to move into when he graduates from college!

Nate is from Pittsburgh, PA and is a second year Occupational Therapy student at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. He has lived in Pittsburgh his entire life, growing up about 20 minutes outside of Downtown. Nate has worked for the Compass Program since the fall of 2019. Working for the Compass Program has been the cherry on top of his college experience. Working with Colton and the other students in the program over the past year has been so much fun and has given him so many experiences that he will carry with him into his future career as an occupational therapist.

Alexandra is from Rochester, NY and is currently an occupational therapy doctoral (OTD) student at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. For her doctoral capstone project, Alexandra worked with Duquesne's pilot inclusive post-secondary program (Compass Pilot Program). This program is on campus and enrolls students with

intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Her focus was on doing research and providing education on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to learn more about learning adaptations that can benefit all students. Alexandra has experience working with individuals with IDD throughout her fieldwork and has enjoyed directly supporting students on campus in the Compass Pilot Program.

Morgan is from Ellicott City, MD and is in her fifth year of her occupational therapy doctoral program at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. Morgan has had the opportunity to be part of Duquesne's Compass Program for the past year, and she is excited to be moving forward working with the program as part of her doctoral capstone experience next year. Morgan is very involved on Duquesne's campus. She held a leadership position in Duquesne's chapter of a national service sorority and was a freshman orientation leader for two years. Morgan loves sharing her passion for Duquesne with students in the Compass Program.

McKenna is from Pittsburgh, PA. She is a fourth year Occupational Therapy student at Duquesne University. McKenna is minoring in psychology and has a passion for serving people with mental health disorders and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Besides being a student, McKenna has several other roles including being a peer mentor for the Compass Program, vice president for Duquesne's Pi Theta Epsilon chapter, student coach for the Duquesne Club Swim Team, and member of Best Buddies and Strong Women, Strong Girls.