



2026 Calendar

Center for Disabilities Studies

2024-2025 Annual Report

Greetings from CDS

This has not been a year for the faint of heart. The devastation, though, has also occasioned powerful demonstrations of patience, grace and courage. *Patience.* The decision to resist reactivity and allow things to unfold so that our responses might be informed and thoughtful. *Grace.* Cutting people—including ourselves—some slack, knowing that it is sometimes hard to muster our best selves when we are tired, threatened, or disappointed. And *courage.* Not the absence of fear, but rather the deliberate decision to forge ahead despite the risk.

For me, the sorrows have been tempered by gratitude. For the glow of light on the horizon before dawn. The cry of seagulls as they ride a sea breeze. Unearthing treasures in seemingly ordinary circumstances. An enormous setting sun or rising moon. The bell-like laughter of my granddaughter. The conviction to persevere when all indicators are flashing “bleak.” Gentle gestures that trumpet “I see you. I appreciate you.” Perhaps most of all, gratitude for people I know, people I’ve only read about, and people I’ll never meet who are living—and leading—with patience, grace and courage, even when getting through the next hour, let alone the next day, depends on reserves that are already depleted.

Scientific evidence tells us that the practice of gratitude is beneficial for our physical and mental health and our relationships. It fosters our resilience and feeds our souls while energizing others. This annual report documents the abundant ways in which individuals have invested their care, energy and resources in making the world more welcoming, responsive and empowering. I am profoundly grateful for all of them.

Beth



Beth Mineo served her 17th year as director of CDS in 2025.

JANUARY

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| <div>DECEMBER 2025</div> <div>S M T W T F S</div> <div>1 2 3 4 5 6</div> <div>7 8 9 10 11 12 13</div> <div>14 15 16 17 18 19 20</div> <div>21 22 23 24 25 26 27</div> <div>28 29 30 31</div> | | | | <div>FEBRUARY 2026</div> <div>S M T W T F S</div> <div>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</div> <div>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</div> <div>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</div> <div>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</div> | | | | <div>1</div> <div>January is National Braille Literacy Month</div> <div>New Year's Day</div> | <div>2</div> <div>UD winter classes begin</div> | <div>3</div> <div>Mahayana Buddhist New Year</div> |
| <div>4</div> <div>World Braille Day</div> | <div>5</div> | <div>6</div> | <div>7</div> | <div>8</div> | <div>9</div> | <div>10</div> | | | | |
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| <div>18</div> | <div>19</div> <div>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</div> | <div>20</div> | <div>21</div> | <div>22</div> | <div>23</div> | <div>24</div> | | | | |
| <div>25</div> | <div>26</div> | <div>27</div> <div>International Holocaust Remembrance Day</div> | <div>28</div> | <div>29</div> | <div>30</div> <div>UD winter classes end</div> | <div>31</div> <div>UD winter final exams</div> | | | | |

Laying a foundation for inclusion

Responding to a growing and diverse student population, the School Programs Team at [Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library](#) partnered with the [Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism \(DNEA\)](#) to better enhance its programming for students with autism and developmental disabilities.

Led by School Programs Manager Tim English, the team of 25 educators has seen dramatic changes since introducing free field trips in 2022, hosting approximately 3,000 students in that first year and 20,000 last year.

“As a result of seeing a lot more kids,” English explains, “we’ve seen a lot more students with autism and other disabilities.”

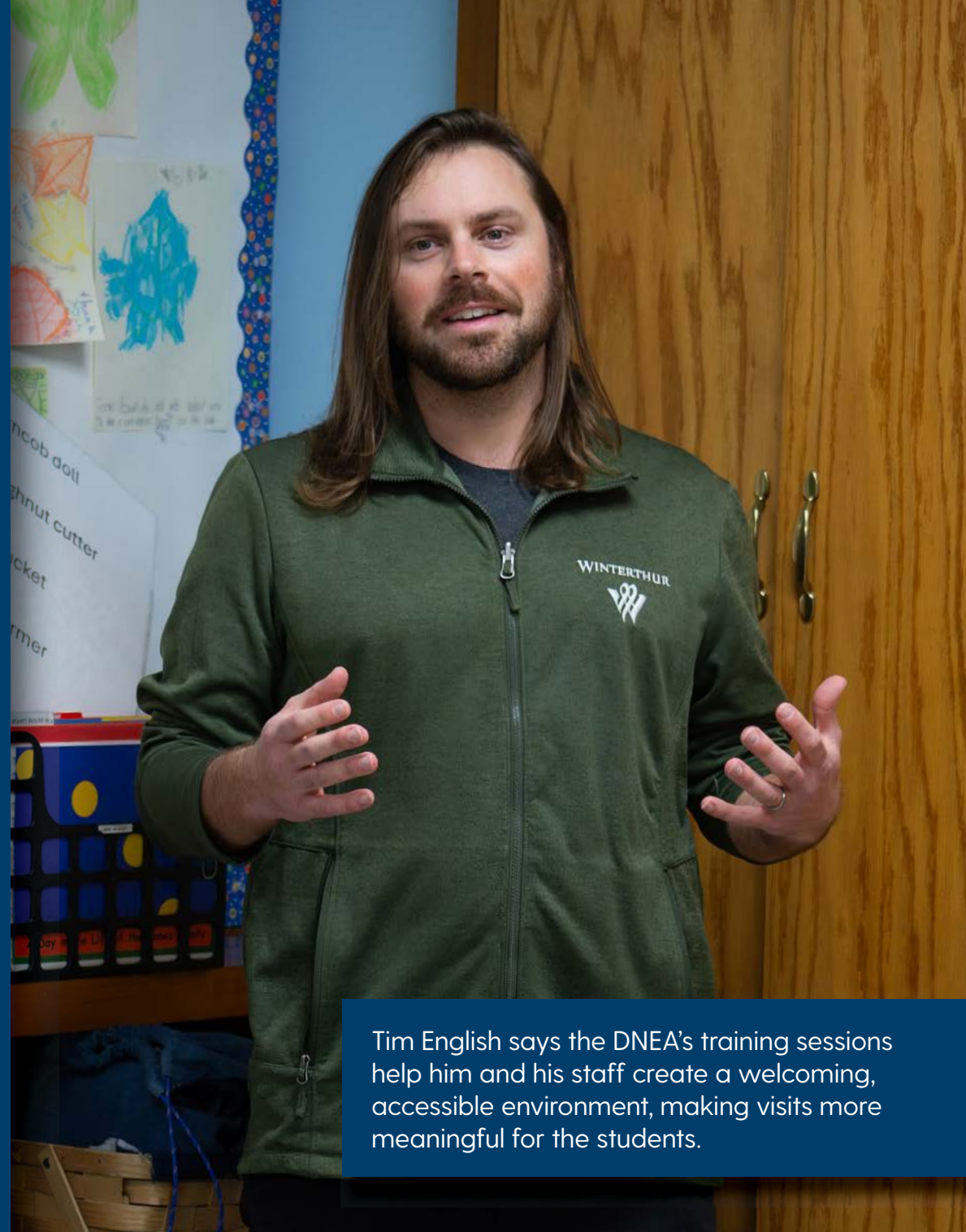
With his staff comprised of retired general education teachers who may not have encountered many autistic students, along with younger instructors who may lack sufficient training, English reached out to the DNEA. The result was a training session focused on understanding autism and offering practical strategies for engaging students on-site.

“Staff developed a deeper knowledge of autism and learned about specific supports to put in place to make Winterthur a more neurodiversity-affirming space,” says [Nicole Ferrara](#), implementation coach for the DNEA.

The biggest achievement may have been suggesting the creation of a “[social narrative](#),” a step-by-step visual guide to the experience that gets sent to teachers in advance of the trip.

Since launching the social narrative, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

“The teachers appreciated having that information ahead of time, so both they and the students can feel more prepared for the field trip experience,” English notes.



Tim English says the DNEA's training sessions help him and his staff create a welcoming, accessible environment, making visits more meaningful for the students.

This work was supported by an award from the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, with funding from the Health Fund Advisory Committee.

FEBRUARY

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| 1 | 2 Groundhog Day UD spring classes begin | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 Valentine's Day |
| 15 | 16 Presidents Day | 17 Lunar New Year Ramadan begins at sundown | 18 Ash Wednesday | 19 | 20 | 21 |
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Making the arts accessible

In a vibrant music room or colorful art studio, creativity knows no bounds, but access sometimes does. For students with disabilities, especially those who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, access to the arts has often been limited. That is why the [Delaware Department of Education \(DOE\)](#) reached out to [CDS](#) to help bridge that gap.

“Delaware’s visual and performing arts educators have requested more opportunities for professional learning around supporting students with disabilities,” says Dr. Lauren Conrad, education associate for visual and performing arts and gifted at the Delaware Department of Education.

For that reason, the professional development session, “Communication as a Right” was tailored specifically for visual and performing arts teachers, including topics on AAC and assistive technology (AT).

Led by [Hannah Mennella](#), AAC specialist, and [Angelia Wilt](#), instructional coach with the [Multi-Tiered System of Support Technical Assistance \(DE-MTSS TA\) Center](#), the training aims to help teachers ensure students aren’t just physically present in the classroom but fully participating.

“The arts themselves can be a form of communication for our students,” says Mennella. “I think the teachers really want them to have the same arts opportunities that their peers do.”

According to Dr. Conrad, many arts educators have had minimal opportunities to engage with the various forms of AT. “Providing an opportunity to learn about AT and also a chance to use it will likely better prepare them to more effectively support their students.”

“Even if related arts teachers do not currently have students who use AAC in their classroom, the number of kids using AAC is going up,” Wilt notes. “We want teachers to be prepared so when these students come to their classrooms, they have the same opportunities as everyone else.”



Dr. Lauren Conrad (right), pictured with AAC Specialist Hannah Mennella, says these trainings will enrich the educational experience for both teacher and student.

This work was supported with funding from the Delaware Department of Education.

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| 15 | 16 | 17 St. Patrick's Day | 18 | 19 Eid al-Fitr begins at sundown | 20 First day of spring UD spring break begins after last scheduled class | 21 World Down Syndrome Day | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 29 | 30 UD classes resume | 31 | <div><div>FEBRUARY 2026</div><table><tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr><tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td></tr><tr><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr></table></div> <div><div>APRIL 2026</div><table><tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr><tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td></tr><tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td></tr><tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table></div> | | | | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | |
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The Ride Ahead

“No one tells you how to be an adult, let alone an adult with a disability.”

This realization motivated 21-year-old Samuel Habib to share his transition into adulthood—with all of its associated hopes, fears and desires—with friends, allies and perfect strangers. The result was [*The Ride Ahead*](#), a powerful documentary about how Samuel embarks on navigating his future with cerebral palsy, epilepsy and speech challenges.

A community event in March 2025, co-sponsored by CDS and the [*Access:Ability Scholars*](#) program, featured the movie and a Q&A session with Samuel and his co-director, his father Dan.

The event aimed to spark conversation about Samuel's journey, as well as the importance of authenticity.

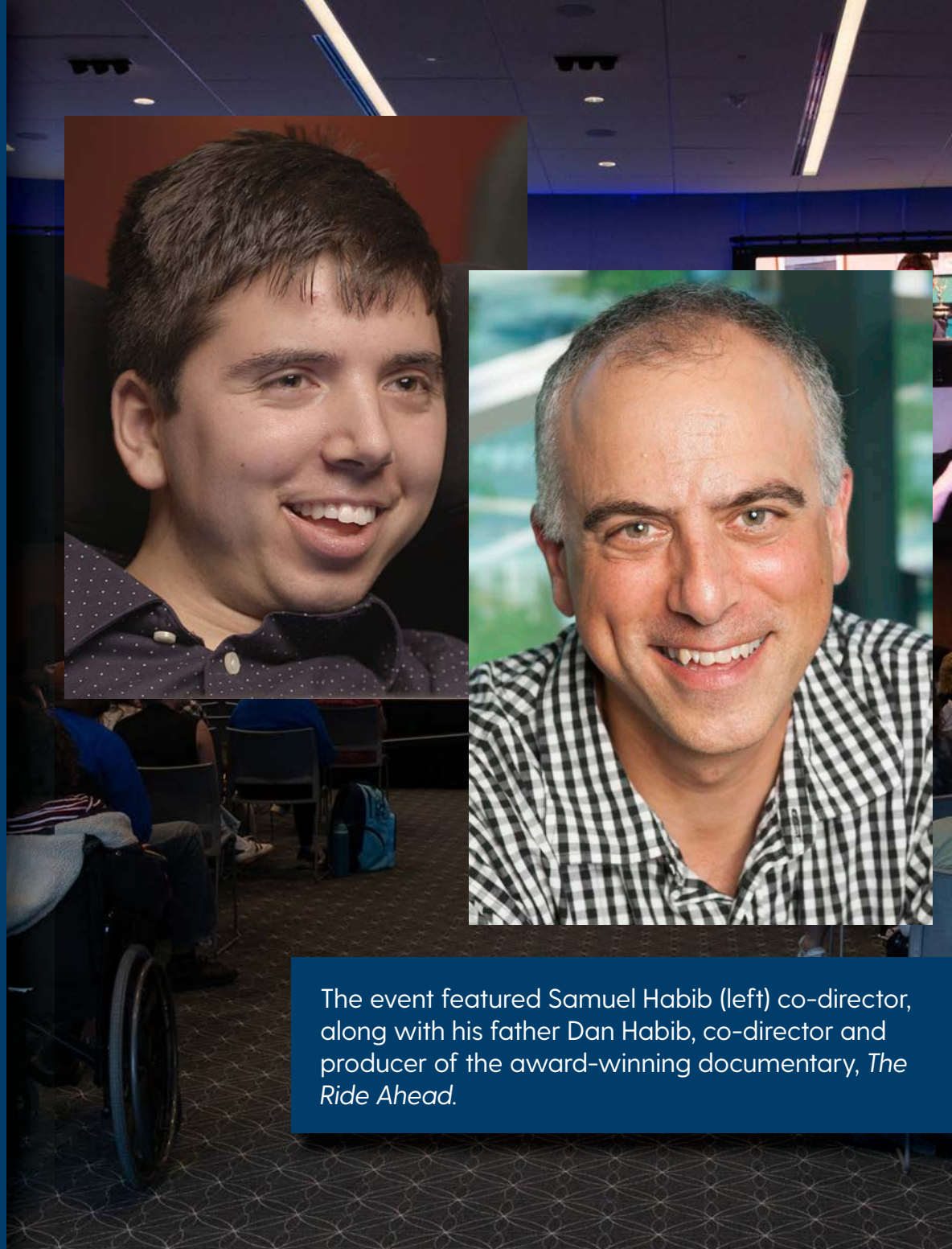
Guided by the principle “Nothing about us without us,” Samuel's first-person account challenged stereotypes, invited empathy and reminded the audience how important honest representation is to understanding disability in a deeper, more person-centered way.

“I want everyone to know that disabled people demand respect and rights,” Samuel says, “and I want other young adults with disabilities to have the same opportunities that I've had.”

Audience members got the message. One called the film “fulfilling,” while another attendee remarked, “The film was truly a masterpiece, and I hope many people get to see it because it'll open their eyes to so many issues that most people don't think about.”

Samuel was encouraged by the feedback.

“I hope those who watch this film will commit to include disabled students alongside their non-disabled peers. That has made a big impact on my education and led to my life now as a filmmaker.”



The event featured Samuel Habib (left) co-director, along with his father Dan Habib, co-director and producer of the award-winning documentary, *The Ride Ahead*.

This event was supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living.

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| <div>5</div> <div>Easter</div> | <div>6</div> | <div>7</div> <div>World Health Day</div> | <div>8</div> | <div>9</div> | <div>10</div> | <div>11</div> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Building belonging: Celebrating IPSE

As the only [Inclusive Postsecondary Education \(IPSE\)](#) program in Delaware, UD's [Career & Life Studies Certificate \(CLSC\)](#) program is where access meets opportunity.

With approximately 330 of 5,300 U.S. colleges offering inclusive postsecondary opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities (ID), and just 2% of students with ID attending college, CLSC helps people reach places they never thought they could.

To acknowledge the program's value and success, CLSC hosted UD's first IPSE Day celebration in May, joining colleges and universities around the country in the observance.

"This was our chance to engage our partners and show appreciation for those who support our program," says [Rebecca Jewell](#), assistant program director for CLSC.

"I think the event was a great opportunity for our students, parents and our partners to come together, learn more about one another and meet others supporting IPSE," says [Marilyn Luster](#), CLSC career counselor.

Support also came from CLSC program alumni who joined staff to help make the day a success.

"It was a 'thank you' and a way to repay the CLSC program for all it did for me," says Jonah Reed, a graduate of CLSC who worked on the event. "As a student, it was easy to relate to our peer coaches because they were going through the same college things we were. I want to help today's students have the same experience."

Jonah's gratitude, combined with his desire to help others, means he plans to take part in the second annual [IPSE Day](#) in May 2026.

"Absolutely! I'll be there."



Members of the inaugural IPSE Day Planning Committee included: (front row, left) CLSC Ambassador Lizzy Phillips, CLSC Career Counselor Marilyn Luster, CLSC Ambassador Calley Robichaud, (back row, left) CLSC Assistant Program Director Rebecca Jewell, CLSC Ambassador Jonah Reed, CLSC Program Director Jay Sellers.

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Mother's Day

UD spring classes end

UD spring final exams begin

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UD spring final exams end

Global Accessibility Awareness Day

UD Commencement

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Memorial Day

Eid al-Adha begins at sundown

World Multiple Sclerosis Day

Advancing leadership in special education

The [Special Education Administrative Leadership \(SEAL\)](#) program transforms how schools support students with disabilities by empowering the leaders who guide that work.

Shaping student opportunity is something Sharon Horrocks and Dr. Stan Spoor, both from the [New Castle County Vocational Technical School District](#), know firsthand. Spoor, director of student services and district programs, is currently enrolled in SEAL while Horrocks, supervisor of special services, graduated in the previous cohort.

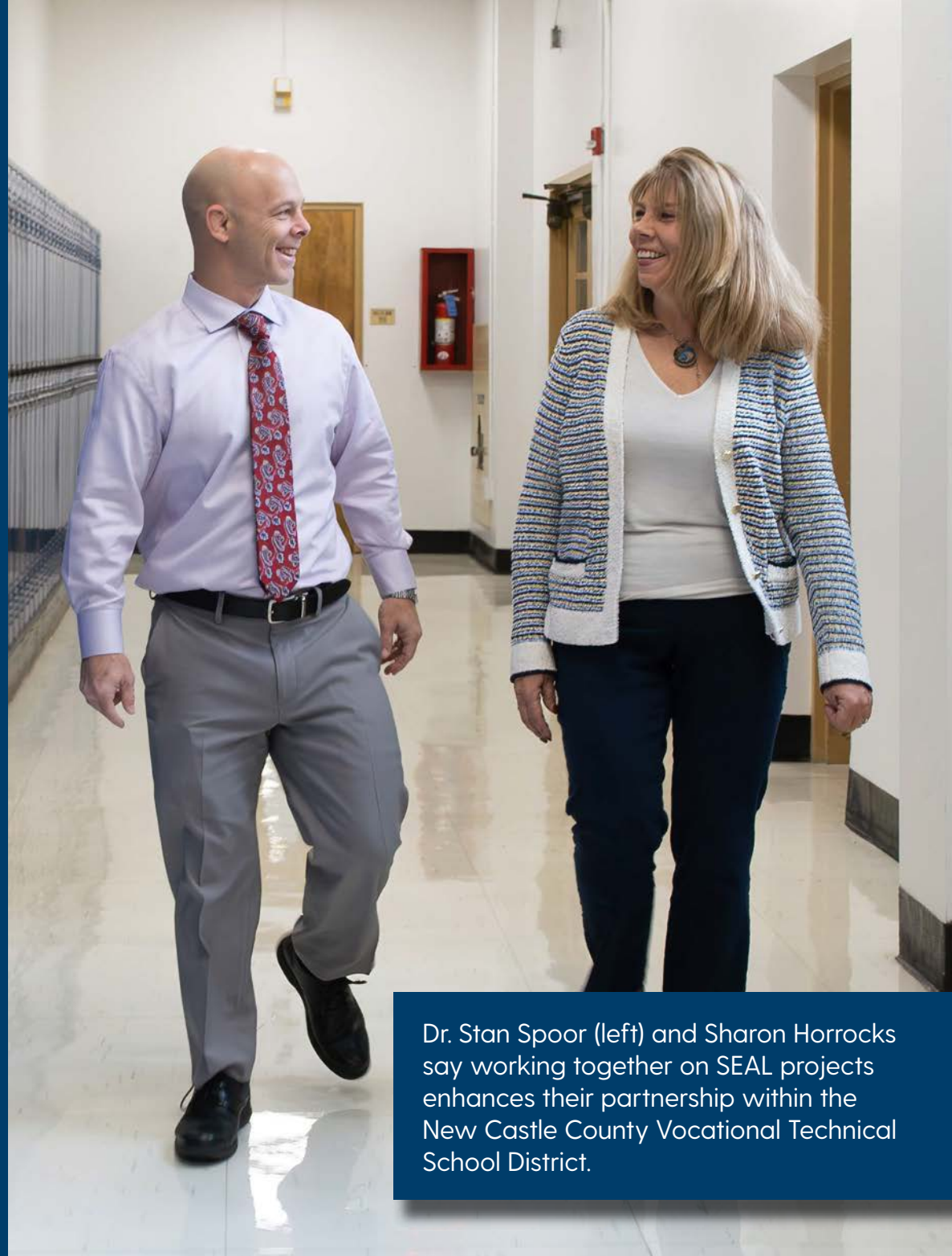
“I worked in special education for many years and had accepted a new position in our district when I started the SEAL program,” Sharon says. “I had the special education background, but not any advanced leadership experience.”

Sharon’s SEAL action research project focused on optimizing master scheduling for special education. By addressing constraints that limited teaching effectiveness, Sharon developed a system that led to a more supportive environment for educators and students.

“Stan was really beneficial in brainstorming that, but also seeing where it could go from there,” Sharon says. “Now he’s building upon it through his project.”

Spoor was Horrocks’s district mentor during SEAL, and she now serves as his program mentor, modeling the complementary and collaborative nature of special education leadership.

“Sharon looked at the master schedule overall,” Stan explains. “I’m focusing on one specific aspect of our schedule—how we support students with disabilities in their career and technical programs of study, which is, of course, our primary mission here in the Vo-Tech district.”



Dr. Stan Spoor (left) and Sharon Horrocks say working together on SEAL projects enhances their partnership within the New Castle County Vocational Technical School District.

This work was supported in part with funding from the Delaware Department of Education.

JUNE

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

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Saturday

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| 14 <div>Flag Day</div> | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 <div>Autistic Pride Day</div> | 19 <div>Juneteenth</div> | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 <div>Father's Day First day of summer</div> | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Out of the mouths of parents

Julia McCarthy became a [Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities \(LEND\)](#) trainee already knowing she wanted to make a difference in the world of communication as a speech-language pathologist (SLP). But the idea for her LEND leadership project grew from a conversation with a classmate whose autistic brother had only recently begun using an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system due to his mother's hesitation.

"There is a big misconception for parents that a device will eclipse their child's spoken language," Julia notes.

Julia abandoned her idea of creating an informational handout and decided to produce a [video](#) featuring parents who once shared those same doubts.

Marnely Rodriguez had been there with her son, Devante.

"The minute he sees that that thing can talk for him, he is not going to want to communicate," Marnely remembers thinking, but soon realized she was wrong. "Before he had his device, he would only repeat the word mama, now he uses that word meaningfully to call me."

In the video, Shelvia Neely recounts the moment things changed for her.

"Do you want to be the only one who understands your son, or do you want the world to understand him?" That's the question Shelvia heard from an SLP after Shelvia rejected the suggestion that her son get a device.

The video quickly gained attention. At Julia's clinical placement at the [Brennen School](#) (serving students with autism spectrum disorder), staff found the video inspiring and will use it in training for educators and parents.

Shelvia understands why. "There's no handbook for parents," she says. "This is an important learning tool."



Julia McCarthy's LEND leadership project video will serve as an educational tool for staff and parents of students in the Delaware Autism Program.

This work was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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UD second summer
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ADA 36th anniversary

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The AT Solutions program opens doors to possibility

Heather spent years effectively navigating the insurance system to secure medically necessary items for her grandson, Angelo, who has cerebral palsy, but he still missed out on opportunities for independence. When Angelo's [Highmark Health Options](#) care coordinator referred them to the [Assistive Technology Solutions](#) program, things changed.

"We were able to try several items to see what best fit his needs," Heather says. "These were items not covered by insurance, yet they made such a meaningful difference in his life."

The program helps people with disabilities of all ages access assistive technology. Families borrow the equipment and, if it meets their needs, the program will purchase a brand new one that becomes theirs to keep.

Angelo received a small, wheeled scooter that let him explore the house on his own, but his favorite item is a switch-activated bubble machine.

"This program allows us to provide something that improves the quality of life," says Pattie Wright, director of community development and member experience at Highmark Health Options.

"An older person with tremors might be embarrassed to go out to eat and then become isolated, depressed and possibly stop eating as a result, when a simple weighted utensil could solve the problem," Wright says.

The program has helped over 110 Highmark Health Options members, providing equipment totaling over \$66,000, a statistic proving to be life-changing for Heather and Angelo.

"Without this program, many of these tools would have been out of reach for us."



"The first time he pressed the switch and bubbles began to fill the room, his face completely lit up," Heather remembers. "Using the switch not only helped him practice important motor skills but gave him so much joy to be able to make the bubbles appear on his own."

This work was supported by the Highmark Health Options Health Equity Fund.

AUGUST

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Building a more inclusive future

For Mia Zambrano, inclusion isn't just a concept; it's a mission. From her first days on campus, Mia sought not only academic growth but also community. Diagnosed with Tourette syndrome, she longed to find people who understood her lived experience.

While volunteering as a peer mentor with [Spectrum Scholars](#), Mia learned about [UDiscover](#), a two-week summer program supporting high school students with disabilities preparing for life after graduation.

"It was the best experience," Mia remembers. "It was a wonderful opportunity to not just understand the barriers to transition, but also what could make transition more accessible."

As a coach and teaching assistant with the [Career and Life Studies Certificate \(CLSC\)](#) program, Mia supports some of the same students she met at UDiscover—now first-year CLSC students.

"I'm meeting these students on their level," Mia explains. "They've helped me realize there's no reason to pretend to be somebody I'm not. I admire how unabashedly themselves they are."

Mia enhances that relatability through her lived experience.

"I think it's been really powerful for Mia to not just connect to students but to provide them with a role model with a positive disability identity," says [Rebecca Jewell](#), CLSC assistant program manager.

Those at UD aren't the only ones benefiting from Mia's commitment and values, thanks to her work with [Mid-Atlantic Alliance for Inclusive Higher Education](#).

"As she is learning and contributing to the bigger picture, her vision is now being shared across the region," Jewell says.



Mia Zambrano, a psychology major with minors in human development and disability studies, dreams of a future where inclusion is the norm, not the exception.

SEPTEMBER

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Krishna Janmashtami

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World Alzheimer's Day

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Empowering through choice

For families in Delaware whose children are approaching adulthood, the legal landscape can feel overwhelming. Many professionals and family members think guardianship is the only option when planning their child's future. Therefore, the Center for Disabilities Studies' (CDS) [Health and Wellness](#) unit created a set of [plain language guides](#) to offer clear, accessible information about all of Delaware's legal support options.

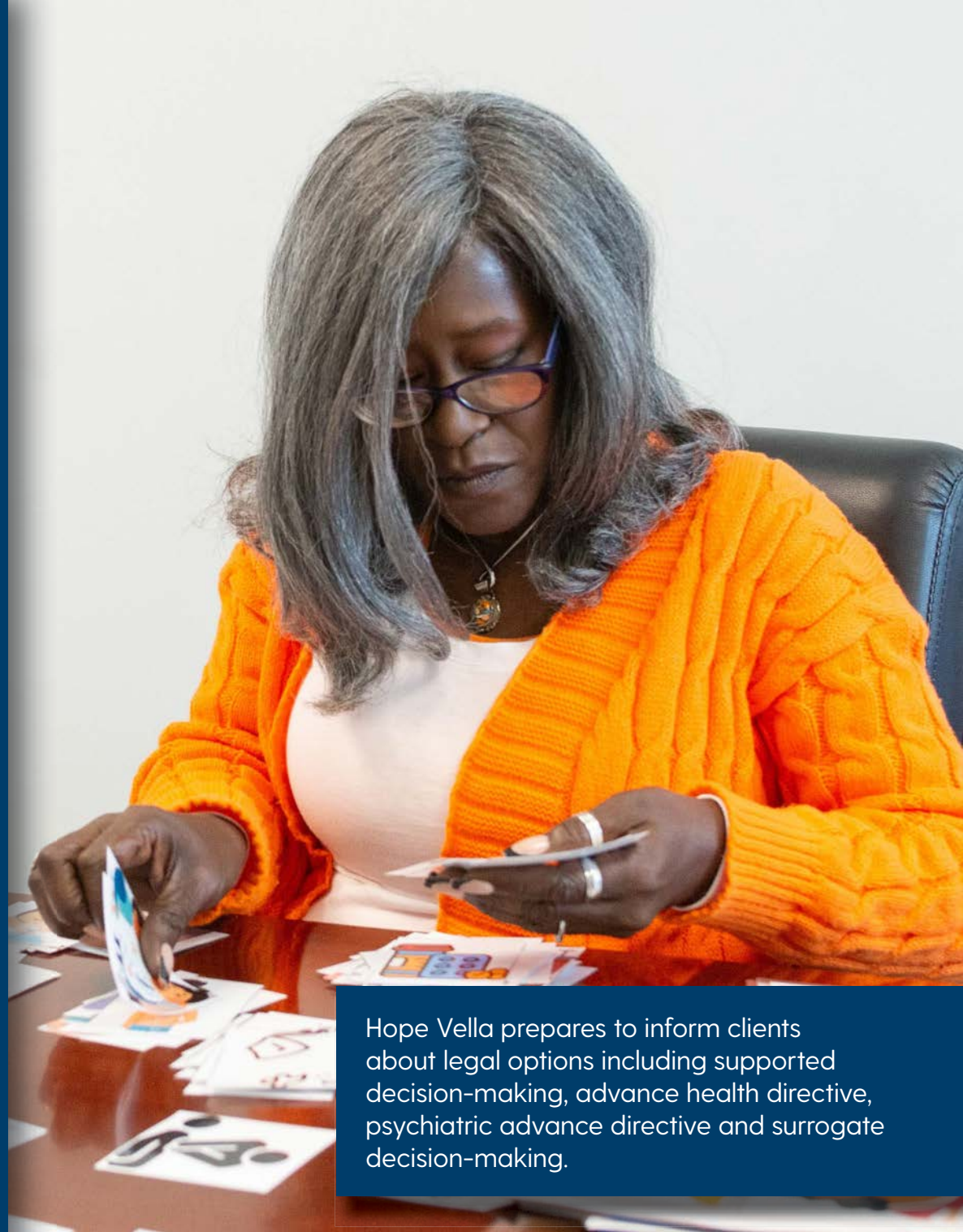
"They've been intentionally designed not to offer legal advice," says [Dr. Sarah Mallory](#), director of the Health and Wellness unit, "but rather to offer a very transparent explanation of how each of the different options will impact a person with a disability."

"These resources have been invaluable for helping our clients understand and explain the legal documents we are creating for them," says Hope Vella, decision-making advocate with [Disability Rights Delaware](#). "I believe the efforts of the CDS staff increase the likelihood for the population I serve to enjoy dignified, self-determined lives."

Health care advocates agree.

"Before the guides, we didn't have anything tangible to provide to young adults navigating health care transitions," says Lauren Gillespie, transition social work coordinator at [Nemours Children's Health](#). "The guides include pictures and symbols that help level the playing field for everyone and make complicated concepts more understandable."

[Ashley Clark](#), CDS health promotion implementation coach, says people have different support needs so there shouldn't be a "one-size-fits-all" approach when it comes to legal support. "We see this as an educational tool so that when it comes time for families to make this really critical life decision, they have access to all the information they need."



Hope Vella prepares to inform clients about legal options including supported decision-making, advance health directive, psychiatric advance directive and surrogate decision-making.

This work was supported by the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration.

OCTOBER

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| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 World Mental Health Day | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 Disability Mentoring Day | 22 | 23 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Expanding influence and impact

More than four dozen faculty and staff members work at CDS, but our team isn't complete without our graduate assistants.

"We've had some of the best over the years," says [Dr. Beth Mineo](#), director of CDS. "In addition to having an impact on our work, they develop skills they'll use in their careers."

Rebecca Vitelli never imagined how being a graduate assistant would help shape her future. Her experience in the [Communications and Advocacy](#) unit strengthened her writing and taught her the power of using her voice.

"It helped build my confidence," Rebecca says. "When I became Teacher of the Year, I had a voice and a platform to advocate."

Today, as part of Kansas State University's [Infant-Toddler Specialist Network](#), Rebecca believes her time at CDS helped her see the bigger picture.

"I learned so much, not just in my little college bubble, but in what was going on all around. That stayed with me in my own classroom and then on a larger scale."

Michael Lewis, a school psychologist in the [Cape Henlopen School District](#), says supporting the statewide Positive Behavior Support project at CDS helped hone his ability to collaborate with teachers, administrators and specialists.

"It made me a more effective partner and advocate for best practices in supporting students' social, emotional and behavioral success at school, at home and in the community," Michael says.

Michael remembers being considered an equal thought partner, not "just a grad assistant." "I felt like my work truly mattered and made a difference for schools across the state."



Michael Lewis (left) and Rebecca Vitelli both credit their time at CDS for helping prepare them for the workforce.

NOVEMBER

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------|
| 1 November is National Alzheimer's Disease & Diabetes Month Daylight Saving Time ends | 2 | 3 Election Day | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Diwali | 9 | 10 | 11 Veterans Day | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 World Diabetes Day | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 UD Thanksgiving break begins after last scheduled class | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 Thanksgiving | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 UD classes resume | <div> OCTOBER 2026 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div> <div> DECEMBER 2026 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div> | | | | |

Mentor to many, champion of all

For almost three decades, critical thinking about disability issues at the University of Delaware was influenced by [Dr. Laura Eisenman](#)'s leadership of the [Disability Studies](#) minor and [Access:Ability Scholars](#) program. Dr. Eisenman retired at the end of the Fall 2025 semester.

"Laura was the chief architect in the design of what has become UD's largest minor," says [Dr. Beth Mineo](#), director of CDS. "She's facilitated its phenomenal growth without sacrificing the deeply personal learning experiences the minor affords."

"Dr. Eisenman was integral in my educational journey at UD," says Dr. Sarah Celestin, senior director of student services and special education for the [Red Clay Consolidated School District](#), who credits Eisenman's mentorship as both her master's advisor and doctoral dissertation chair. "I would not be in my current position without her support and guidance."

[Dr. Sarah Curtiss](#), assistant professor of special education who now leads the minor, calls Eisenman's legacy "impossible to overstate." As the driving force behind the minor and the Scholars program, Eisenman has transformed how students and faculty approach disability, emphasizing rights, access and community.

"Hundreds of students across nearly 40 majors study disability from this perspective," Dr. Curtiss notes. "Because of her mentorship, I think differently about my own instruction and how to foster collaboration and inclusion."

"I am thrilled that we've helped thousands of undergraduates, with and without disabilities, make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities and their families," Dr. Eisenman says. "I love when students tell me that they credit their time in our programs with opening their minds and motivating them to take action on campus and in their home communities."



Dr. Laura Eisenman believes that the Disability Studies minor equips students with a broader, person-centered understanding of disability to complement their discipline-specific majors.

DECEMBER

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International Day of
People with Disabilities

Hanukkah begins at
sundown

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Bodhi Day
UD fall classes end

UD fall final exams
begin

13

14

UD fall final exams
end

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16

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First day of winter

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Christmas

Kwanzaa begins

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New Year's Eve

JANUARY 2027
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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

FUNDING AND FINANCIALS

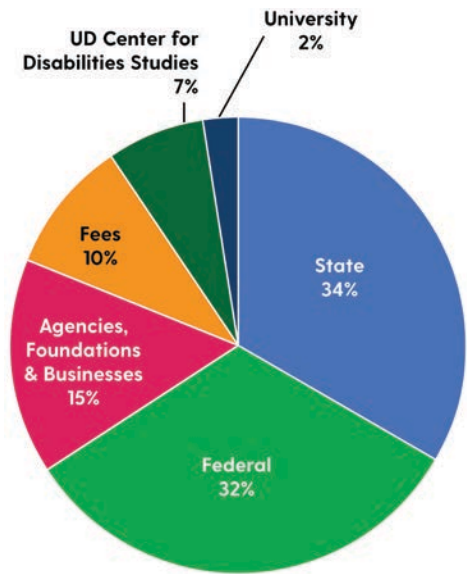
The Center for Disabilities Studies had an operating budget of \$6,066,386 from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

More than 96 percent of CDS funding is realized through grants and contracts from federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, foundations, businesses and individuals. Included in the federal portion is \$620,675 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living for our core funding as a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. This U.S. government organization is responsible for implementation of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. CDS also benefits from gifts made by individuals and organizations.

FUNDING BY SOURCE | FY2025

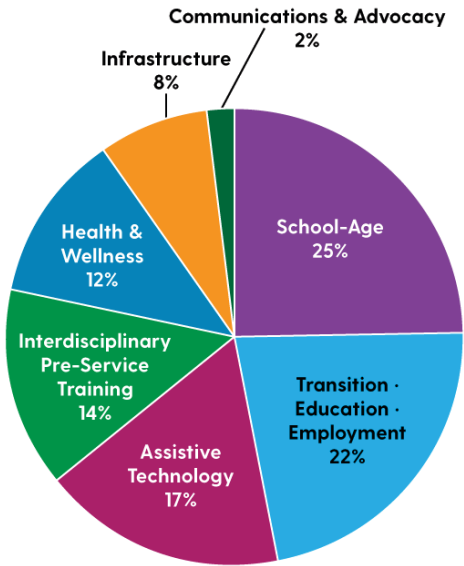
| Source | Amount |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| State | \$ 2,038,499 |
| Federal | 1,961,320 |
| Agencies, Foundations & Businesses | 926,588 |
| Fees | 569,772 |
| UD Center for Disabilities Studies | 430,129 |
| University | 139,323 |
| Gifts* | 755 |
| Grand Total | \$ 6,066,386 |



*This amount indicates what was spent from gift funds. New gifts to CDS in the 2024-2025 reporting year totaled \$6,764.

PROJECT-SPECIFIC FUNDING BY DOMAIN

This chart shows the proportion of the budget expended in support of each of the Center's programmatic domains. The infrastructure domain includes those funds that support overall Center operations rather than domain-specific activities.



FUNDING BY DOMAIN | FY2025

| Domain | Amount |
|--|---------------------|
| School-Age | \$ 1,503,559 |
| TEEM | 1,348,598 |
| Assistive Technology | 1,052,647 |
| Interdisciplinary Pre-Service Training | 858,387 |
| Health & Wellness | 730,183 |
| Infrastructure | 463,611 |
| Communications & Advocacy | 109,401 |
| Grand Total | \$ 6,066,386 |

FUNDERS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

- Federal Communications Commission
- U.S. Department of Education
 - Office of Special Education Programs
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Administration for Community Living
 - Health Resources and Services Administration

STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

- Delaware Department of Education
- Delaware Department of Health and Social Services
 - Division of Developmental Disabilities Services
 - Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance
 - Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities
 - Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
- Delaware Department of Labor
 - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security
 - Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council
 - Delaware Emergency Management Agency
- Statewide Independent Living Council

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, SCHOOLS, FOUNDATIONS AND BUSINESSES

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- Cape Henlopen School District
- Education Health & Research International, Inc.
- Freedom Center for Independent Living
- Highmark Health Options
- Independent Resources, Inc.
- JPMorgan Chase & Co.
- Lake Forest School District
- TransCen, Inc.
- University of Delaware

DONORS

We would like to give special THANKS to those listed here for their generous support through gifts received from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

CDS GENERAL FUND

Heidi L. Beck '99M
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Beth A. Mineo and Gary H. Heckert '72 '76
Richard E. Lytton
Lynn A. and Donald L. Peters
Michele F. Sands
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CLSC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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Michael and Martha B. Sturtevant

THE W.E. TOBIN FUND FOR VISUAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Beth A. Mineo and Gary H. Heckert '72 '76
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UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ENRICHMENT FUND

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Sandra L. Walls
William M. Ward '73

To donate to CDS, please visit cds.udel.edu/support

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Our mission is to enhance the lives of individuals and families through education, advocacy, service and research related to disabilities. We promote empowerment and opportunity, accessibility and inclusiveness, so all may fully participate in—and enrich—their communities.

The Center for Disabilities Studies is:

- One of 68 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service nationwide, with core funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Disabilities.
- The administrative home to the interdisciplinary Disability Studies minor, the largest minor on campus for 11 consecutive years, with enrollment this past year reaching 356 students from 40 majors across 6 colleges at the University of Delaware.

In 2024–2025, CDS staff and faculty cultivated student learning by...

- Teaching or co-teaching 66 courses/course sections and independent studies, reaching a total of 333 graduate and 839 undergraduate students at the University of Delaware and 2 other institutions of higher education.

- Delivering 17 guest lectures to 207 graduate students and 150 undergraduate students at UD.
- Providing assistantships/traineeships to eight graduate students from the School of Education and the College of Health Sciences.
- Engaging 76 undergraduate students in the work of the Center.

In 2024–2025, CDS staff and faculty fostered the development of new knowledge—and the translation of existing knowledge—by...

- Developing 26 project proposals internally and with external partners.
- Offering 29 conference presentations and publishing 11 journal articles, book chapters and other reports.
- Providing editorial support for 14 journals and serving as proposal reviewers for 3 funding competitions and 1 conference.

In 2024–2025, CDS staff and faculty engaged with national, state and local communities by...

- Serving on 33 boards, committees and task forces external to the university (21% of these at the national level).
- Collaborating with 31 state and local agencies, 10 national and international agencies and organizations, 57 other units at UD, 83 community-based organizations and 6 other institutions of higher education.
- Contributing to media coverage about disability issues and the work of the Center in 19 online/print articles.



Top: Steve Kramark, associate director of Esports & WVUD at UD, shares his experience as an internship site partner during Disability Mentoring Week.

Middle: Sandy Hanebrink (left) and Charlotte Walder at the Caravan for Disability Freedom and Justice event at STAR campus.

Bottom: Giselle Jimenez, LEND trainee



At top: SEAL Scholar Andrea Cofield presents her action research project at the SEAL Symposium.

At bottom: Amy Lane, administrative specialist, participates in a Lunchtime Learning session on accessible voting for Delawareans with disabilities.

STAFF AND FACULTY

Tracy Beird
Allison Berdoulay
Blake Bossert
Deborah Boyer
Valerie Brown
Eryn Cahoon
Ashley Clark
Jordyn Clifton
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Maya Schwartz
Erika Shein
Jenna Tabor
Rachel Tartal
Ava Trauger
Kara Turner
Mia Zambrano

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Abigail Casalvera
Esther Curtis
Eve Doyle

Nikki Fitchett
Essence Forbes
Laura Greene
Michael Harris
Elisa Holtzman
Giselle Jimenez
Nitaya Khanijou
Jennifer Klepfer
Alex Krumenacker
Katherine Lohr
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Leigh Runyan
Byron Searle
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Olga Goncharova-Zapata

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Dana Holz
Jennifer Horney
Emmanuel Jenkins
Sarah Mallory
Anthony Middlebrooks
Beth Mineo
Ohiro Oni-Eseleh
Brittany Perry
Jillian Trabulsi

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Joyce Denman
Susan Dutton
Dana Farrior
Lauren Irwin
Tracy Long
Mary Ann Mieczkowski
Mary Norris

INDIVIDUALS WHOSE SERVICE CONCLUDED DURING THE PAST YEAR

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Nicole Garrity
Rebecca Lloyd
Ron Sibert
Melanie Sipko

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Angellia Brennehan
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Vini Dattani
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Dulcine Stephens
Violet Strawderman
Isabel Villagomez
Charlotte Walder
Kalise Williams

Maxwell Wolfe
Catalina Woolard

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

OUR 2024-2025 COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Members of the Community Advisory Council partner with the Center for Disabilities Studies to advance its mission. The council includes individuals with developmental and related disabilities who serve as self-advocates; parents and family members of individuals with developmental disabilities; representatives from disability-related training, service and advocacy organizations; state agency representatives; and others who advocate on behalf of people with disabilities.



KAREN DONEKER



DANIESE MCMULLIN-POWELL



KARL BOOKSH



PAM WEIR

CAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Alyssa Cowin**, self-advocate
- Susannah Eaton-Ryan**, The Arc of Delaware
- Terri Hancharick**, Endless Possibilities in the Community, parent
- Nancy Lemus**, parent
- Cory Nourie**, advocate

CAC MEMBERS

- Marissa Band**, Disabilities Law Program
- Karl Booksh**, University of Delaware, self-advocate
- Charles Bryant**, parent
- Joe Bryant**, Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities
- Selina Butcher**, The Freedom Center, self-advocate
- Karen Doneker**, parent
- Deborah Dunlap**, parent
- Brigitte Hancharick**, self-advocate

- Kristin Harvey**, Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council
- Elisha Jenkins**, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Jane Luke**, parent
- Dale Matusevich**, Department of Education
- Daniese McMullin-Powell**, self-advocate

- John McNeal**, State Council for Persons with Disabilities, self-advocate
- Jody Roberts**, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services
- Meedra Surratte**, Parent Information Center of Delaware
- Debbie Talley Beane**, Division for the Visually Impaired
- Pam Weir**, Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens

MEMBERS WHOSE SERVICE CONCLUDED DURING THE PAST YEAR:

- Melissa Smith**, Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities

2027

JANUARY

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DECEMBER

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UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**EDUCATION &
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

FRONT COVER: Sam Kitts, better known to his radio audience as “DJ Sam,” turned his Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) internship into a twice weekly radio show on “The Basement,” UD’s exclusive radio station.

BACK COVER: Composite photos accompanying stories featured in the 2024-2025 annual report.



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