

# UAIDPR Newsletter

Fall 2021

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**

College of  
**Arts & Sciences**  
Intellectual Disabilities Participant Registry

**What is the Registry?** The University of Alabama's Intellectual Disability Participant Registry (AKA "The Registry") is a database of families and individuals with intellectual disability (ID) who are interested in participating in behavioral research studies.

## Letter from the Registry Director

Dear Families and Friends,

A hearty "hello!" I hope you are staying well in these uncertain times. I am so excited to introduce you to our new Registry Coordinator, Ms. Chelsea Chen! Chelsea has been learning the ropes since June, when she moved to Tuscaloosa from Connecticut to join our lab. Please give her a warm welcome when you hear from her. Read more about Chelsea later in this newsletter.

After a year of little progress due to Covid-19, our research has finally begun to pick up. We have started two online studies - one on spatial skills and one on numerical skills. We hope to resume in-person studies very soon. Safety, of course, is our greatest concern. There are two in-person studies on our priority list – one on cognitive change in late adolescence/early adulthood and one on reading and language skills in school-age children/teens. All of the online and in-person studies are described in more detail later in this newsletter. As always, if you are interested in any of them, please contact the registry.

Did you know that all of our registry newsletters are available online? See <http://www.uaidpr.ua.edu> and hover over the About tab at the top to find Newsletters. Over the years, we have featured some of our registry folks in our newsletters. If you would like your family or child to be featured, let us know! Also, we welcome ideas for the newsletter from our families. What would be especially helpful? Let us know! Finally, do not hesitate to send a newsletter to anyone you think might find it interesting – it actually helps a lot if families spread the word! Or let us know about someone and we can send the newsletter directly to them.

Roll Tide!

Fran Connors | Registry Director



### Quick Facts about Chelsea

~ I lived in Hoover, AL  
when I was 2 years old



~ I grew up in a large  
town in Connecticut



~ I played in an  
international soccer  
tournament in Sweden  
when I was in high  
school



~ I have a chubby  
ragdoll cat named Appa  
and I'm trying to teach  
him how to walk on a  
leash



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## ★ ★ ★ Meet the Registry Coordinator ★ ★ ★

### **Tell us about yourself!**

I graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2020 with my B.S. in Physiology and Neurobiology! I'm hoping to expand my research experience in order to enter the clinical psychology field.

### **What is your current role at The University of Alabama?**

I am currently working as the Registry Coordinator and as a Research Assistant for the Cognitive Changes Study. If you choose to participate in that project you will most likely see me during your session! I hope to see some of you soon!

### **What do you like to do for fun?**

During my senior year at college, I was the women's captain of the club racquetball team! So you might see me at the UA Rec Center trying to pick up my racquet skills again.

I also enjoy making coffee and finding new ingredients to use to recreate name brand coffee drinks at home!

### **Favorite Quote?**

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." – Winston Churchill

## **Staff Spotlight!** ★ ★ ★

We are saying goodbye to Nadia Dahimene, our registry assistant and a research assistant on one of Dr. Conners' projects! We wish you the best and hope you love New York!



## Study Spotlights

### Cognitive Changes



This is funded by the  
National Institute of Health!

### Spatial Skills



This is funded by the  
National Institute of Health!

### Cognitive Change in Teens and Young Adults

This study is by Dr. Conners at UA and Dr. Abbeduto at UC Davis. It seems that people with intellectual disabilities (ID), especially Down syndrome (DS), may experience age-related decline earlier than others.

*This study will look at patterns of change over time and aims to identify early signs of cognitive aging in memory, language, and everyday skills.*

Who? Recruiting individuals with DS or ID ages 15-25 years old and their parents/guardians

When? We are **ACTIVELY** recruiting for this study

Where? At our lab at UA or a location of your choice

What to expect? Participants will complete cognitive tasks using picture books and iPads over 2-3 sessions. Caregivers will complete an interview and measures using an iPad. As a thank you, participants will get a gift card!

### Improving Spatial Skills of Young People

This study is by Dr. Merrill at UA and Dr. Yang at Montclair State (NJ). Spatial abilities are important, including for navigating your environment.

*This study looks at whether practice with spatial games like puzzles and Legos can improve spatial abilities.*

Who? Recruiting individuals with DS ages 10-25 years old AND typically developing kids ages 4-9 years old

When? We are **ACTIVELY** recruiting for this study

Where? At your home and over Zoom! This study is completely online!

What to expect? Participants will spend time playing games designed to train spatial skills on a Fire tablet. They will complete cognitive tasks over Zoom with an experiment to determine if this training worked. As a thank you, participants may either keep the tablet or choose a gift card!



Want to participate in any of our studies?

Email: [idlab@ua.edu](mailto:idlab@ua.edu)

Call: (205) 348-4253



## Study Spotlights

### Reading Skills



This is funded by the  
National Institute of Health!

### Numerical Skills



This is Kristina Baggett's  
Master's Thesis!

#### Reading Skills in Children and Teens

This study is by Dr. Loveall at the University of Nebraska and Dr. Conners at UA. Often, youth with Down syndrome (DS) or intellectual disability (ID) do well with word reading but struggle with reading comprehension.

*This study aims to better understand why youth with DS or ID sometimes struggle with reading comprehension.*

Who? Recruiting individuals with DS or ID ages 10-15 years old and typically developing kids ages 6-10 years old

When? Planning to start in Fall 2021

Where? At our lab at UA or a location of your choice

What to expect? Participants will complete cognitive tasks using pictures, books and iPads in two interactive testing sessions. Participants will receive a gift card as a thank you!

#### Numerical Skills in Children and Teens

Research is starting to show that youth with Down Syndrome (DS) may be stronger in non-symbolic numerical skills (e.g., represented with dots) compared to symbolic numerical skills (e.g., digits).

*This study will examine different types of numerical skills in kids and teens with and without Down syndrome.*

Who? Recruiting individuals with DS ages 6-15 years old AND typically developing kids ages 3-7 years old

When? Planning to start Fall 2021

Where? Over ZOOM! This study is completely online!

What to expect? Participants will complete computer tasks and a vocabulary test in 2 testing sessions that will usually take about an hour to complete. Participants will receive a surprise in the mail as a thank you!

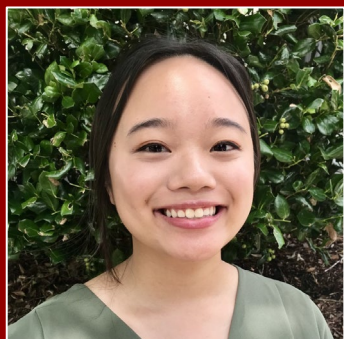


Want to participate in any of our studies?  
Email: [idlab@ua.edu](mailto:idlab@ua.edu)  
Call: (205) 348-4253





## Get to know the Lab!



### Lab and Registry Director – *Dr. Fran Connors*

- Q. How long have you been a professor at UA?  
A. 30 years
- Q. Where did you get your PhD from?  
A. Case Western Reserve University
- Q. What is your favorite Olympic sport to watch?  
A. Gymnastics
- Q. If you had to eat 100 lbs of something what would it be?  
A. Ice Cream!



### Registry Coordinator – *Chelsea Chen*

- Q. How long have you been working at UA?  
A. Only about 3 months
- Q. Where did you get your B.S. from?  
A. The University of Connecticut, Storrs Campus
- Q. What is your favorite Olympic sport to watch?  
A. I enjoy watching Volleyball. It's a very fast paced sport!
- Q. If you had to eat 100 lbs of something what would it be?  
A. Although it wouldn't be healthy, sour gummy worms!



### Post- Doctoral Researcher and Registry Staff – *Dr. Gayle Faught*

- Q. How long have you been working at UA?  
A. I've been in a role of some sort at UA for the past 10 of 12 years. I've spent 2 years as a full-time employee - 1 as instructor and now 1 as postdoc.
- Q. Where did you get your PhD from?  
A. University of Alabama
- Q. What is your favorite Olympic sport to watch?  
A. Gymnastics
- Q. If you had to eat 100 lbs of something what would it be?  
A. Probably sandwiches



### Graduate Student and Registry Staff– *Kristina Baggett*

- Q. How long have you been studying at UA?  
A. I am in my 4<sup>th</sup> year at UA
- Q. Where did you get your B.A. from?  
A. I received my B.A. in Mathematics and Psychology at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas
- Q. What is your favorite Olympic sport to watch?  
A. Swimming! Because I was a collegiate swimmer
- Q. If you had to eat 100 lbs of something what would it be?  
A. Ice cream



## Upcoming Events and News

### *Check out these Virtual Conferences!*

The Arc National Convention  
September 27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
<https://convention.thearc.org>

National Association for the Dually  
Diagnosed  
December 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021  
<http://thenadd.org/conferences/>

### *Upcoming Conferences*

Alabama Autism Conference  
February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Tuscaloosa AL  
<https://training.ua.edu/autism/>

Rett Syndrome National Summit  
April 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Nashville TN  
<https://www.rettssyndrome.org/arsns2022/>

American Association on Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities  
June 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Jacksonville FL  
[https://www.aaidd.org/education/annual-  
conference](https://www.aaidd.org/education/annual-conference)

National Down Syndrome Congress  
June 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 New Orleans LA  
[https://www.ndsccenter.org/annual-  
convention/about-the-convention/](https://www.ndsccenter.org/annual-convention/about-the-convention/)



*This could be YOU here!  
Please email [ideab@ua.edu](mailto:ideab@ua.edu)  
if you or your loved is  
interested in being featured in  
our next newsletter!*

## *October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month!*

Take part in your local Down  
syndrome support group's buddy walk  
and help spread awareness!

## HAPPY 2021 – 2022 FOOTBALL SEASON



## ROLL TIDE

*Like our Facebook  
Page!*



Facebook.com/UAIDPR

***Thank you!***

To all our supporters and registry participants – we appreciate your help in promoting our registry and research on intellectual disability.

***Get in Touch!***

**University of Alabama Intellectual  
Disabilities Participant Registry**

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***Get Involved!***

Do you know someone who wants to join the registry or participate in our research projects?

Would you like your group or group's event to be listed in a future newsletter?

***Let us know!***

Call or email to get in touch!

The University of Alabama  
Intellectual Disabilities Participant Registry  
Box 870348  
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***University of Alabama Intellectual Disabilities  
Participant Registry***

**Promoting Research on Intellectual Disability**



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