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 Conners | Registry Director
**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

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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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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 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!

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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!

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Want to participate in any of our studies?
Email: idlab@ua.edu
Call: (205) 348-4253
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!
Get to know the Lab!

**Lab and Registry Director – Dr. Fran Conners**

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 4th 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 27th - 29th, 2021
https://convention.thearc.org

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

Upcoming Conferences

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

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

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
June 13th – 16th, 2022 Jacksonville FL
https://www.aaidd.org/education/annual-conference

National Down Syndrome Congress
June 23rd – 26th, 2022 New Orleans LA
https://www.ndsccenter.org/annual-convention/about-the-convention/

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

This could be YOU here!
Please email idlab@ua.edu
if you or your loved is interested in being featured in our next newsletter!

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!

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Box 870348 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0348

Phone: (205) 348-4253
Fax: (205) 348-8648
Email: idlab@ua.edu
Website: www.uaidpr.ua.edu

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!