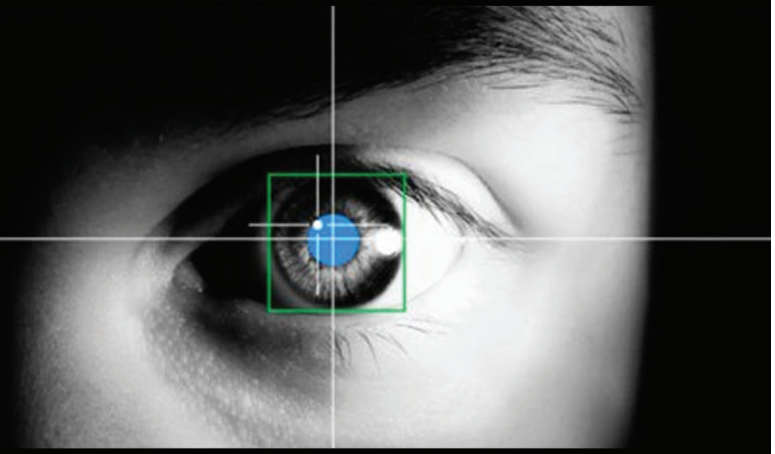
THE FRIST CENTER FOR Autism AND INNOVATION



Engineering technologies and transforming the workplace — inspired by neurodiversity.

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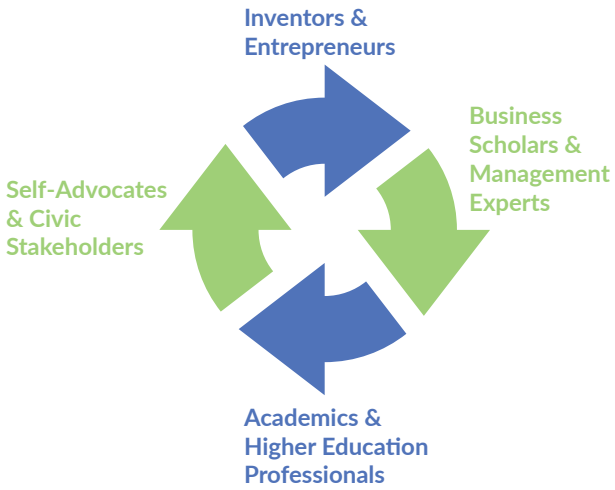
THE FRIST CENTER FOR AUTISM AND INNOVATION

at Vanderbilt University School of Engineering

Engineering technologies and transforming the workplace — inspired by neurodiversity.

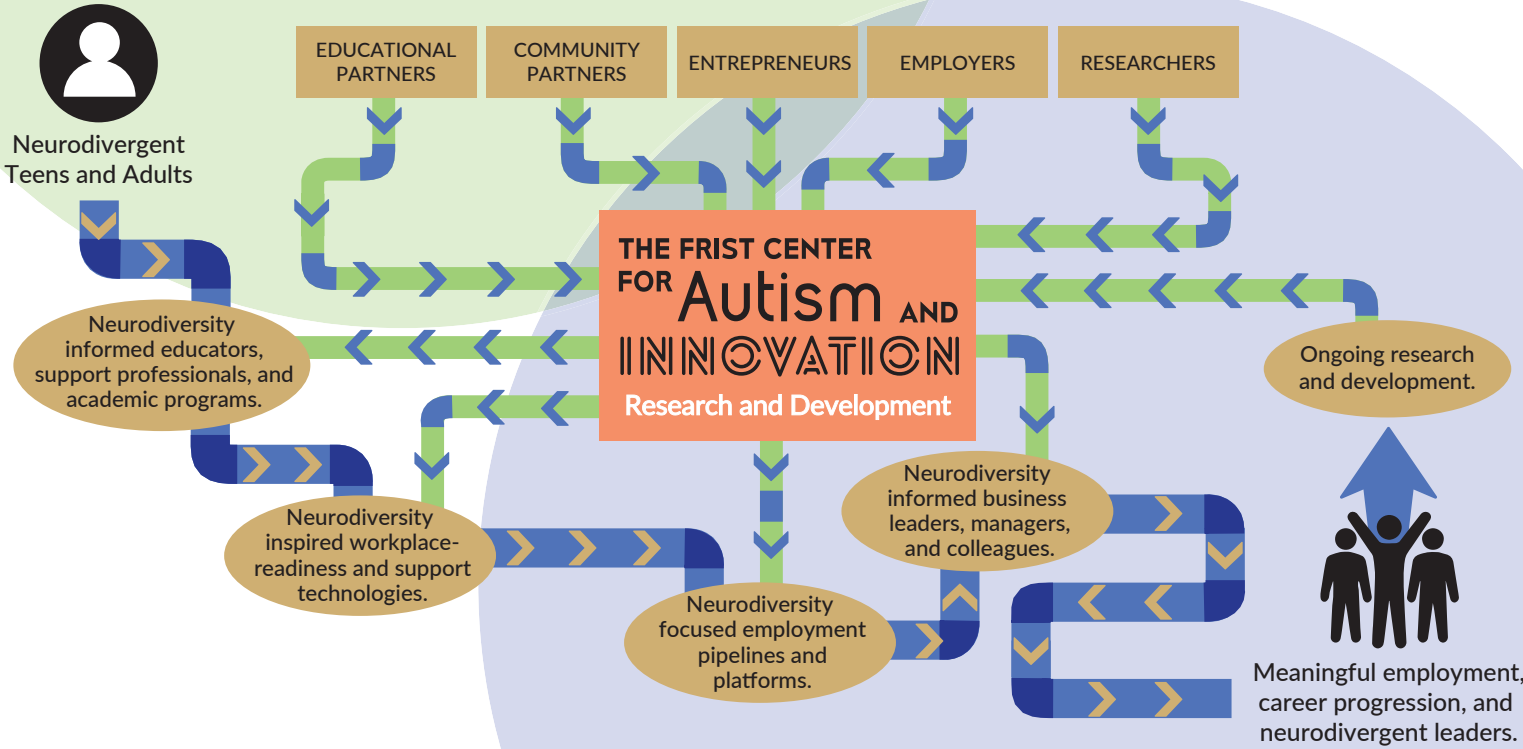
With the goal to simultaneously enhance quality of life for neurodiverse people and improve business and societal outcomes, the Frist Center enables, promotes, and supports cutting-edge ...

- **inventors and entrepreneurs** to develop and commercialize new technologies, algorithms, and systems that enable neurodiverse people to gain employment, succeed at work, and achieve their full potential;
- **business scholars and management experts** to develop and deploy workplace practices, tools, and trainings that foster neuro-inclusive organizational cultures, which enhance organizational outcomes and dramatically increase neurodiverse talent in the workforce, ensure neurodiverse thriving at work, and advance neurodiversity in leadership;
- **academicians and other professionals in higher education** to develop and prepare the next generation of engineers, business leaders, educational and clinical practitioners, and students across all other relevant domains to bring a "neurodiversity paradigm" to all whose lives they will touch and everything they will invent, create and do;
- **self-advocates and other civic stakeholders** to ensure that everything undertaken by the Frist Center is done with the engagement—the centering—of neurodiverse people, voices, lived experiences, and perspectives.



OUR MISSION

The Frist Center for Autism and Innovation at the Vanderbilt University School of Engineering brings together leading engineers, entrepreneurs, experts in educational and clinical practice, and academic researchers, in partnership with self-advocates and other civic stakeholders, to understand and create the conditions to maximize neurodiverse talent in the workforce. From a strengths-based understanding of neurodiversity, we focus on needs-based innovations in technology, talent and leadership development, and workplace practices.



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The Frist Center uses as its guiding framework a conceptual model through which we envision an orchestrated, community-based effort that enables autistic individuals to achieve meaningful employment. This conceptual model includes multiple academic and community stakeholders, linking multiple research and development efforts, and a commitment to both academic rigor and compassionate human impact. This vision will require a sustained effort over many years on the part of many individuals and organizations working together. The Frist Center seeks to provide a stable platform of support to enable such a sustained effort toward realization of this vision.

ACADEMICS & HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

For the study and support of recruitment, retention, and success of neurodivergent students, and the professionals who support them, in higher education.

FACULTY FELLOWS AND AFFILIATES

Fellows are Vanderbilt faculty and staff, and affiliates are neurodiversity self-advocates from around the world who have been invited to advise the Frist Center and have access to advocacy platforms and resources as a result of their fellowship. We highlight their successes in our Salon Series.

NEURODIVERSITY INSPIRED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FELLOW SUCCESS STORIES

Sara Frederick is a NISE postdoctoral fellow who now teaches the NISE curriculum.

Amber Crabtree is a NISE graduate and entrepreneur.

Myranda Shirk is a NISE Ph.D. graduate who is now at the Vanderbilt Data Science Institute and the instructor for Aspie Bootcamp: Python.

Hari Srinivasan is a NISE fellow in neuroscience and a Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow with multiple op-eds published in *Fortune*, *Time*, and *Psychology Today*.

INVENTORS & ENTREPRENEURS

For the creation and commercialization of innovative work-readiness and support technologies to enable career success for neurodivergent individuals.

OUR APPROACH TO SUPPORTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

1. Robotics and virtual reality for social skills development in individuals with ASD.
2. Tools for characterization of individual affinities and capabilities, and for mapping these to STEM workforce needs.
3. Artificial intelligence and visual cognition tools for human interaction with data.
4. Technologies to accommodate individual needs in the STEM workplace.

COMMERCIALIZATION

One of the most significant barriers to neurodivergent individuals entering the workforce is their ability to commute. Thanks to a $1 million grant from the NSF Civic Innovation Challenge and the center's new entrepreneur in residence, we are rapidly bringing technologies from affiliated labs to market. For example, the driving simulator technology from the Sarkar Lab allows neurodivergent individuals to safely practice driving before getting on the road.

Creating virtual reality environments to teach driving and other skills for independence and employment

TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS

Mentra

Mentra is a neurodivergent-friendly talent platform that intelligently matches neurodiverse individuals with employers that value their strengths.

floreo

Floreo leverages the power of virtual reality to deliver a supplementary method of teaching social and communication skills for individuals with autism.

BUSINESS SCHOLARS & MANAGEMENT EXPERTS

For the preparation of current and future business leaders and the development of models, platforms, and pipelines to meaningful employment for neurodivergent individuals.

OUR SIBLING CENTERS

We work with our sibling centers to broaden our reach and inspire others. We use our collective knowledge to innovate and grow our programs. FCAI supports the growth and success of sibling academic centers by supporting their visionary leaders.

FCAI RESOURCES

1. Database of employers currently hiring
2. Assessment and employment referral
3. End-to-end employment pipeline model
4. Neurodiversity employment database
5. Training programs

EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS

TPI
Bridging the Disability Employment Divide

The Precisionists Inc. is a national company focused on creating 10,000 jobs for people with disabilities by the year 2025 by providing industry best practices for delivering administrative and technology services performed through teams that include individuals with disabilities.

Potentia
Think Differently

Potentia's team has decades of experience in workforce optimization, recruitment, and neurodiversity, giving them the unique ability to optimize work environments to improve engagement, productivity, and retention.

JOBS FOR HUMANITY

The Jobs for Humanity platform connects job-seekers to well-matched employment opportunities and "paves the way to a fairer future for all by connecting historically underrepresented talent to welcoming employers."

SELF-ADVOCATES & CIVIC STAKEHOLDERS

For representation of the neurodivergent community, ensuring all innovations are neurodiversity-centered.

PROGRAMS

Autism Summer Internship
Through this internship, successful applicants work on a STEM project with a faculty mentor and with the support of Frist Center life and job coaches.

Aspie Bootcamp: Python
This online course was created by and for autistic and neurodivergent people who want to learn the basics of writing code in Python. Our course recognizes how autistic and neurodivergent learning differs from standard ways of instruction.

Autism Summer Internship students for 2024 visit Nashville Zoo.

SELF-ADVOCATE STAFF

Dave Caudel is the center's associate director and a self-advocate who has spoken on neurodiversity in forums such as the United Nations. He is also a physicist, having earned his Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University.

Jessica Schonhut-Stasik is an astrophysicist at Vanderbilt University and the center's program and communications coordinator. She is also the founder and president of The Neuroverse Initiative, a nonprofit that works at the intersection of space science and neurodiversity.

OTHER PROGRAMS

WRaP
Workforce Readiness and Preparation

Workforce Readiness and Preparation

The WRaP program is a monthlong training experience for young adults to learn about their strengths and interests related to careers. Participants also learn practical aspects of working as part of a team, communicating with co-workers, and advocating for their needs. A free, online, self-paced curriculum and guide are available for teachers and others to learn how to deliver the WRaP program.

College Autism Network
ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

College Autism Network

CAN represents more than 100 colleges and universities with programs to support students as they transition into college, through degree completion, and into the workforce. An annual summit brings together hundreds of practitioners, scholars, employers, and self-advocates. A free online database helps prospective students and families find institutions matched to their goals and support needs.

AUTISM CAREER EMPOWERMENT

Autism Career Empowerment

ACE, a free, comprehensive set of online training modules, equips campus-based professionals with the tools to support autistic students in their career preparation and job search. Whether in a career services office, a disability resource center, or an autism-specific campus program, the practical benefits of the ACE curriculum enhance the ability of support professionals to guide students in higher education settings.

NEURODIVERSITY INSPIRED SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
NISE
FCAI

Neurodiversity Inspired Science and Engineering

Sponsored by a National Science Foundation Research Traineeship grant, the NISE interdisciplinary Ph.D. program takes a novel approach to the training of engineers and scientists engaged in advancing the future of work at the human-technology frontier, which is one of NSF's 10 Big Ideas. NISE engages students across STEM disciplines in developing, deploying, and commercializing FW-HTF approaches and devices that support neurodivergent individuals and those inspired by their abilities. The NISE program has awarded more Ph.D.'s to autistic individuals than any other STEM program.

VANDERBILT
School *of* Engineering
The Frist Center for Autism and Innovation

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