

**ABSTRACT:** (One paragraph describing your FEO project in a way that can be understood by colleagues outside your discipline, alumni, and educated members of the general public.)

The Department of Pediatrics has recently approved the creation of a multidisciplinary Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment. This center will house a variety of programs for the evaluation and treatment of autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. One division of the Center is the Autism Program. **We envision the Autism Program as being the regional home for excellence in clinical care and innovative research for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).** As the director of the Autism Program I seek guidance in developing a successful, family-centered, multidisciplinary clinical-research center that will provide excellent care for patients and their families, while providing a environment to foster leading research endeavors in the field of autism. To this end, I am requesting funds to visit established, regional centers of excellence in autism in order to gain knowledge of successful, sustainable programs in order to guide the development of this new program here at UF.

LIST ORIGINAL GOALS AND TO WHAT EXTENT YOU ACHIEVED THEM:

**Goal 1: Visit Regional Centers of Excellence in Autism**

I sought the FEO funding to consult with experts in the area of multidisciplinary clinical-research in autism in order to guide the development of our center here at UF. I was able to accomplish this by visiting three nationally-recognized centers of excellence in autism. Further, I have consulted another center via email, phone, and Skype that was recommended to me during one of my center visits. Each of these programs are longstanding and provide clinical care while also maintaining successful NIH funding.

- October 23-25, 2013 visit to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore, MD

<http://www.kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/patient-care-centers/center-autism-and-related-disorders>

I traveled to Baltimore, MD to visit the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the Kennedy Krieger Institute/Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions. I met with eight separate staff members of the center to discuss areas, such as triage, diagnostic assessment, division of activities, therapeutic approaches, and their preschool clinical program. Additionally, I was able to coordinate my trip with the CARD 13th Annual Autism Conference. This provided additional training opportunities on clinical services delivery and research. Additionally, I was able to meet with the keynote speaker Robert Schultz, PhD, Director of the Center for Autism Research at the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania.

- November 14-15, 2013 visit to the Marcus Autism Center, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA

<http://www.marcus.org/>

In November I visited the Marcus Autism Center an affiliate of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. The Marcus Autism Center is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to provide information, services and programs to children with autism and related disorders, their families and those who live and work with them. They offer integrated research opportunities, advanced clinical, behavioral, educational and family support services.

Marcus Autism Center had its beginnings as The Marcus Developmental Resource Center at Emory University in 1991 thanks to a generous donation by Billi and Bernie Marcus, founder of *Home Depot*. Marcus Autism Center has become a nationally recognized center for excellence for the provision of coordinated and comprehensive services for children and adolescents with developmental disabilities and has provided services to more than 37,000 individuals, conducted ground breaking research, and provided education and training programs.

I met with nine faculty and staff to discuss conceptual and programmatic issues at the center. Some areas of interest were there intensive day treatment programs in self-injurious behavior and feeding issues. With concerted bundle billing procedures these programs have become quite profitable. Of particular interest was the center's approach to fundraising. Despite a very generous donor, they have a concerted effort towards multiple annual fundraisers.

- New York-Presbyterian Center for Autism and the Developing Brain, Weill Cornell Medical Center, White Plains, NY

<http://nyp.org/autism/>

Through my research into centers of excellence I found out that one of the top autism researchers in the world, Dr. Catherine Lord, recently moved to White Plains, NY to open a new multidisciplinary center for autism and neurodevelopment. This was a particularly helpful trip, as the center opened its clinic doors six months ago

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and, thus, they are still navigating the issues related to opening a new center. I was able to meet with seven providers who gave extensive information about their triage and diagnosis process. They also made recommendations about providing clinical care in a new center, such as focusing on one or two types of intervention initially. Further, based on our center's needs and interests, they suggested that I contact Christina Corsello, PhD at UC San Diego and the Rady Children's Hospital, who recently developed a center similar to the one proposed here at UF.

### **Goal 2: Connect with other providers at the annual International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR)**

The annual IMFAR meeting is the preeminent meeting for autism research in the world each year. Attending this meeting allowed me to interact with, and learn from, an expanded array of experts in autism clinical-research endeavors.

On May 2-5, 2013 I attended the annual International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR). The International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) is an annual scientific meeting, convened each spring, to exchange and disseminate new scientific progress among ASD scientists and their trainees from around the world. The first and primary aim of the meeting is to promote exchange and dissemination of the latest scientific findings and to stimulate research progress in understanding the nature, causes, and treatments for ASD. Research on ASD involves sophisticated behavioral and biological approaches. ASD affects people's functioning in virtually every domain, requiring interdisciplinary research collaboration to gain comprehensive knowledge of the disorder. A second aim of the meeting is to foster dialogue among ASD scientists across disciplines and across methods.

I attended IMFAR for educational and networking opportunities. In addition to attending the scientific program, I was able to meet formally and informally with providers at several autism centers, including Kennedy Krieger Institute, Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania (CHOP), the National Institutes of Health, and Florida State University. I discussed with them our goal of creating a multidisciplinary clinical-research center for autism. Additionally, I also attended a specialty meeting of the Autism Sensory Motor Interest Group, where I was able to present my own research examining sensorimotor findings in children with ASD, and to discuss research plans for me area and how these can be incorporated in a clinical setting that serves children with autism using services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and dance/movement therapy.

### **Goal 3: Prepare report on comparator analysis and business plan to UF practitioners**

Upon completion of my visits and meetings, I have compiled a comparator analysis that defines current practices at regional centers of excellence in order to guide the team development here at UF. I partnered with Ted Astleford and the GatorNest Experiential Learning Laboratory in the College of Business to complete a comparison analysis, with an initial business plan for the UF Pediatrics Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment.

A meeting of stakeholders and interested parties regarding the center development is scheduled for Friday March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014. I have prepared a Power Point presentation that summarizes my visits to the three national centers of excellence and other information gathered through these connections. I have utilized textbooks and materials from courses on entrepreneurship and venture planning to guide the ongoing development of the center.

**OUTCOMES OF FEO:**

- A. List intended benefits of this FEO related to your own professional growth and development, and indicate if achieved.

My goal is to make the University of Florida Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment the home for compassionate care and cutting edge, translational research on autism and related disorders.

The activities through this FEO award have provided me the time and experience to learn about current practice models of nationally-recognized centers of autism. This has allowed me to begin to develop a model of service delivery that works for both patients and providers. Information I gathered from the centers has helped provide a model for how to schedule and coordinate evaluations, how many providers are on the team, how leadership roles are managed across disciplines, and how patient care is managed. I now better understand current billing practices and other methods of financial stability. The culmination of this information has provided me with a set of knowledge and skills to be an effective leader in the Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment. Further, I have now developed relationships with leaders in the field of autism that have the potential towards ongoing collaboration in clinical endeavors and research opportunities.

- B. List intended benefits of this FEO to your department, college and/or the university and indicate if achieved.

The information gathered through these FEO activities has moved forward the development of the UF Center of Excellence for Autism and Neurodevelopment. Up until recently, services at UF Health/Shands have been scattered throughout several departments in multiple locations. We have begun to consolidate our efforts in order to streamline screening and diagnosis. We have now begun using co-located space at the Children's Medical Services building on 16<sup>th</sup> AVE to provide care by Developmental Pediatrics and Clinical & Health Psychology. I have also been meeting with the UF Health Shands Rehabilitation at Magnolia Parke administration and the interim Chair of the UF Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences department to work towards getting services for Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Therapy to join the team at the CMS building. In addition, we have begun the application to the IRB to create an integrated research database for all approved clinical services and assessment. This database will maintain diagnostic records in order to improve subject recruitment for a variety of protocols.

As a result of my FEO activities, we will sponsor an inaugural conference on autism for March 16-17, 2014 and I have invited the Director of the Marcus Autism Center to be our keynote speaker, thanks to the relationship building that my trip up there began. This conference is planned to be held annually, and will create a venue to present our program as the regional center of excellence in autism.

I have also met with the UF Early Childhood Collaborative, which is an innovative partnership of the UF Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, UF Baby Gator Child Development and Research Centers, the colleges of Education, Medicine, and Public Health and Health Professions and the Institute for Child Health Policy. This multidisciplinary team is working towards the creation of the Early Childhood Collaborative at Innovation Square. I have been invited to be on the Planning Committee for this program, designed to be a unique, first-of-its-kind, national model for the support of children and families through collaborative childcare, education, training, and research. The addition of the Center of Excellence for Autism and Neurodevelopment to this program will be an excellent addition to this program and provide for translational research into the causes, phenomenology, and treatment of ASD and the translation of research to applied childcare settings. This heightened profile will attract established researchers to UF and propel young investigators, facilitating collaboration and increased research funding.