

AUTISM
SUPPORT CENTER
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY





Cole Nellesen as a young child and a member of his army, Bree Fowles, who unlocked his world for many of us.

Dear Friends,

Thousands of Utah Valley children have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum. These are OUR children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and neighbors. Utah, and Utah Valley in particular, has the highest per capita rate of autism (1 in 54) in the United States.

Many people have asked me what is autism? I really don't know what it is but I know what it does. Autism causes a child to retreat into a world of their own and without help at very early age the doors to that world are locked and sealed. The child is virtually in a world all by themselves confused and frightened. But it doesn't have to be that way. There is hope and that hope requires people who are trained to unlock those doors while the child is young so families can become a part of their child's world. But with so many kids in need, we need an army to reach them all. And where can you find such an army? At a university.

A lot of groups in the valley are working on autism, but they're not coordinating their efforts. At Utah Valley University, researchers approaching the puzzle from different perspectives can share their ideas and find the best solutions. As President Holland has said, UVU is probably not going to be the university that cracks the genetic code for autism, but it can and should be the university that cracks the code for providing the best services to individuals on the autism spectrum.

Melisa and I made the initial gift to start the building of an Autism Support Center at UVU because we believe there is no greater need for the children of Utah. If professionals come out of UVU with a greater awareness of the challenges of autism and with the skills to unlock the doors we can help literally thousands of families.

Think about the math for a moment (1 in 54) and consider how long it will be until someone in your family is diagnosed with autism. When math catches up to you I promise that the Autism Support Center at UVU will be a beacon of hope for you and your family. Please join us in helping to build this center for all of our children and families.

Sincerely,

Keith Nellesen



ARTIST'S RENDERING

SOUTH VIEW

As an inclusive institution that engages with the community, Utah Valley University is developing programs and support structures to serve those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Utah County. Utah has one of the highest rates of autism in the nation, and the community must find ways to help meet the educational and professional needs of this growing population. Focusing on education and services rather than the genetics of ASD, UVU's new Autism Support Center will bring together national best practices, innovative educational research on autism and insights gained from our community partners to provide a place where students and families affected by autism can find the support they need.

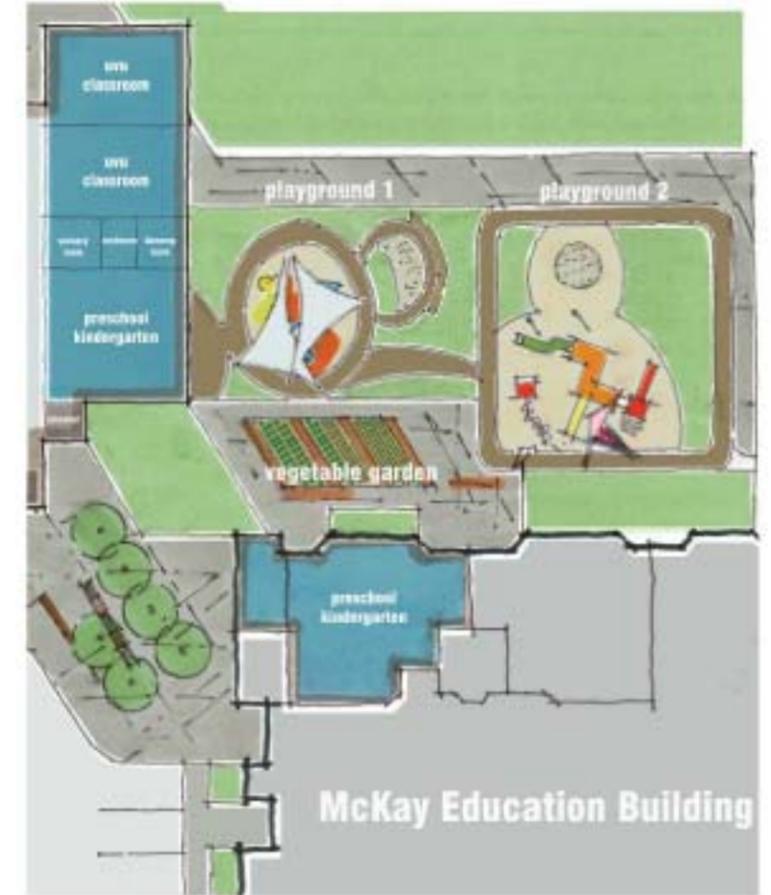
The new Autism Center will be housed in the Cole Nellesen Annex adjacent to the McKay education building on the north side of UVU's main campus. To provide on-site practicum training opportunities for UVU students, the Annex will house a preschool and an elementary classroom. Autism studies students will participate in therapeutic interventions and diagnostic sessions in our designated therapy rooms. Programmatic research on student preparedness, skill acquisition, and student training will be ongoing.

UVU's Passages program provides young adults with autism the opportunity to enroll in non-credit college-level classes designed to fit their distinctive needs and skills. The University is developing partnerships with local businesses and nonprofit organizations to develop classroom-to-work programs that match employer needs with student skill sets. These transitional programs allow the community to support an underutilized population with extraordinary skills. The center will also provide a central location where Passages students will have access to accessibility services, specialized testing support, a place to study, and a space to socialize.



ARTIST'S RENDERING

EAST VIEW

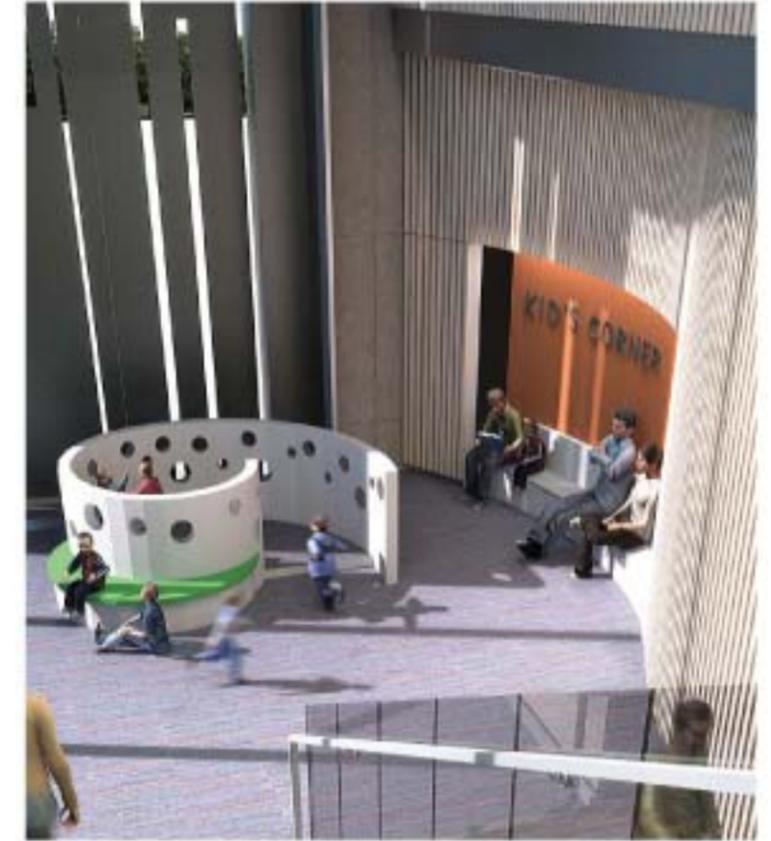


Two adjoining, shaded playgrounds will allow pre-K and 1st through 3rd graders to enhance motor skills and engage in science exploration while they learn to interact socially with their peers. The playspace will feature a learning garden and water table.



ARTIST'S RENDERING

LOBBY



In addition to an open and welcoming lobby (left), staffed by a receptionist, the Kids Corner (above) offers children receiving services a unique waiting area with private space where distractions are kept to a minimum. Parents and children will find the calming experience a great way to begin their experience at the Annex.



ARTIST'S RENDERING

UVU CLASSROOM



MAIN LEVEL FLOOR DIAGRAM

UVU students pursuing autism studies or special education will attend classes in the Annex within the three dedicated UVU classrooms. In 2015, UVU will begin offering Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA). Students will learn assessment and treatment strategies in the classroom and then put them into practice in the laboratory classrooms. Each UVU classroom will feature flexible learning paces, white boards, and computer resources.



ARTIST'S RENDERING

PRE-SCHOOL CLASSROOM



Preschool Laboratory Classroom (left) – For young learners with autism, the laboratory preschool classroom will provide small group spaces, clear boundaries, limited distractions, and sensory supports in an ideal learning environment. A second laboratory classroom will host 1st through 3rd graders. Therapy rooms (above) will be available for a variety of services including counseling, diagnostics, social skills groups, and family support.



ARTIST'S RENDERING

MEETING SPACE



UPPER LEVEL FLOOR DIAGRAM

The second floor features a flexible space for training and community engagement. Sensitivity training for educators, first responders and community members will familiarize participants with the challenges faced by individuals living with ASD. Business leaders and management personnel will learn helpful workplace practices that enhance the performance and interaction experiences of those with ASD.

The Center will connect with organizations delivering autism support in our region. By engaging and hosting these organizations at the Annex, the Center will create innovative new strategies for autism support and education that blend the best of UVU's research with insights gleaned by partners.



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