

29 November 2012

**TESTIMONY** by: **Bradley McGarry, M.A.** | Coordinator Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM) program - Mercyhurst University, Erie, Pennsylvania

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee and discuss the rise in Autism Spectrum Disorders; its impact on post-secondary education; and address the allocation of government resources for ASD. This testimony covers a discussion of the statistics of this disorder; the needs of this population and their ability to become productive citizens; and a vision for the critical next steps.

### STATISTICS

As you know, the CDC now indicates that 1 of every 88 births in America results in a child diagnosed and living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. As these numbers are staggering, students diagnosed with ASD are now of age where they are applying to higher education institutions across the United States in the same record numbers. It is estimated that within the next two years, approximately one of every 100 college applicants will have an ASD diagnosis and this is just the beginning of the wave that has been characterized as “epidemic.”

Since 1984, The Learning Differences Program at Mercyhurst University has educated and assisted nearly 1,000 students with disabilities to succeed in college; earn a degree and go on to make a difference in the world. Students with learning, sensory, and physical disabilities experience intellectual and personal development as they work toward graduation with the help of our award-winning programs, recognized by K&W Guide and Peterson's Guide to Exemplary Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities. Our newest program (and only one-of-its-kind in Pennsylvania) is called AIM--the Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst for students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst, (AIM) focuses on building a foundation of self-advocacy, social skills, and sound academic progress. Students interact with faculty and a qualified staff of professionals all over campus and receive a full complement of educational and social services. In 2008, Mercyhurst introduced the AIM Program to meet the unique needs of the growing population of college students diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome (AS) and (ASD). Our goal is to prepare all our graduates for a productive life and remove barriers to their ability to be successful in a college or vocational environment.

Thanks to an Appropriations grant in 2009, supported by then Pennsylvania Congresswoman Dahlkemper and Senators Casey and Specter we received \$100,000 from the US Department of Education and were able to launch the AIM program. In 2011 Best Colleges Online ranked the

Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst #3 in the nation on their list of Impressive Special College Programs for Students with Autism.

Mercyhurst President, Tom Gamble emphasizes that Mercyhurst believes that capable students, if given the environment and opportunity to succeed, will do just that. Dr. Gamble has committed Mercyhurst to continuing the development of the Asperger Program.

### VOID

No other college in northwestern Pennsylvania and very few across the entire Commonwealth and United States offer a program of collegiate support like AIM for this cohort of students. Many colleges and universities teach teachers how to become Special Education teachers and educate students on the spectrum. Too few are equipped to educate college and post secondary students diagnosed with ASD.

### VISION

We have found that AIM students are able to excel academically but most have great need for internships and job coaching. Few have ever held a part-time job or understand the nuances of the work place. The Department of Labor and Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has been helpful in providing support for our AIM students but is limited to only supporting "students" or "employees" and neither internships or job coaching are covered under current OVR restrictions.

We met with members of the US Department of Education, Research to Practice Division OSEP less than a year ago and have hit a brick wall as far as finding funding to advance our AIM program. Two-follow up teleconferences were held – the first with the Director of Research, Training and Education at the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of HHS – where the Combating Autism Act is administered. We learned that although the Act was reauthorized and extended existing appropriations for 3-more years. No NEW programs have been invited. (Senator Casey sponsored this bill in the Senate.) Our second teleconference was with the manager of Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Disabilities at the Department of Education. Again we learned there are no NEW funding appropriations available for new programs.

Jane Thierfeld Brown, Ed.D. cautions in her book *Students with Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for College Personnel*

“The 1-in-88 number of incidence cited by the CDC will begin to be realized when overeducated and under- or unemployed adults with AS are brought into the welfare and social service systems. Individuals without jobs will pose a burden on their families, on insurance companies and on federal and state social services. This is not only

unnecessary but also critically unfair to a large group of people in our society. To prevent this scenario, changes... must begin now. ”

Mercyhurst is dedicated to educating and preparing ALL our graduates for productive careers. We have developed partnerships with the Verizon Foundation, PNC Bank Foundation, Conquer the Canyon, and private donors. The next step for the AIM program is to fund and launch an Internship program for our seniors and provide job coaches as needed to prepare them for the workplace.

Mercyhurst plans to share our best practices, the Four Domains, applicant rating form, three-tier stratification of services, faculty training programs and peer mentorships in a white paper and professional development session this coming April during Autism Awareness Month. We have invited the 16-member colleges and universities in the Conference of Mercy Higher Education as well as all post-secondary institutions in the tri-state area of northwestern Pennsylvania, western New York and eastern Ohio.

Some of the innovative components of the AIM Program include the following. The AIM Program has identified and developed four domains that are essential for students on the spectrum to be successful in higher education and vocational endeavors.

- The first is **Academic Social Progress (ASP)**. In this domain we track class participation, appropriate social engagement within the classroom, and preparation for course materials.
- Second, **Independence** tracks things such as living independently, organization, preparation and selection of meals and managing money.
- Third is **Social**. Here we monitor the social interaction within the program, on-campus, and in the community.
- **The last domain is Emotional where we monitor student’s ability to adjust to the rigors of college life.**

We track these domains and program participation and have developed an **AIM GPA** that assists us in evaluating student progress and compare students of a given cohort.

Students who participate in the AIM program gain access to numerous services to assist them in being successful on campus.

- Some students choose to live in specialized AIM housing where a Hall Director trained in ASD, lives in a communal environment with the students. The students live with another person, yet have their own bedroom, which is an uncommon luxury at Mercyhurst.

- The Peer Mentoring Program consists of students meeting with a Peer Mentor Volunteer at a minimum of 2 to 4 hours per month. AIM Students also have a separate opportunity to be mentors themselves to adults with more severe disabilities at a local agency in Erie.
- Social Skills Training.
- Individualized Course Planning
- Weekly meetings with Program Academic Counselors
- Peer and graduate-level tutors
- Notetakers
- Testing accommodations
- Availability of assistive technology (i.e. Kurzweil readers and iPads)
- Priority registration
- Social group outings
  - Washington, DC
  - Grand Canyon National Park “Conquer the Canyon”
  - Niagara Falls National Park
  - Other local and campus outings

The AIM Program has been cited as a model program and has implemented a majority of these components with limited resources and opportunities beyond of the commitment of the university. It is our hope that a strong consideration is made for allocation of government resources to fund programs like the Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst that assists students not only in receiving a college education, but also in helping them become productive citizens in our society.

Thank you again for your time and this opportunity.

**The Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst (A.I.M.)**

AIM in the news

<http://www.mercyhurst.edu/learning-differences/asperger-support/in-the-news/>

Brad McGarry and AIM Program featured in Chronicle of Higher Education (p.43)

[http://www.saabnational.org/docs/convergence2012.SAAB\\_Feature.pdf](http://www.saabnational.org/docs/convergence2012.SAAB_Feature.pdf)

Mercyhurst joins global initiative to shine blue light on autism

[http://www.mercyhurst.edu/news/news-releases/article/?article\\_id=2591](http://www.mercyhurst.edu/news/news-releases/article/?article_id=2591)

AIM #3 Ranking

<http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/2011/05/25/10-impressive-special-college-programs-for-students-with-autism/>

The Conquer the Canyon with AIM News Release

[http://www.mercyhurst.edu/news/news-releases/article/?article\\_id=2764](http://www.mercyhurst.edu/news/news-releases/article/?article_id=2764)

Information page for Conquer the Grand Canyon with AIM

<http://www.conquerthecanyon.com/mercyhurst/AIM>

YouTube link for Conquer the Canyon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14Wcl38TXU8&feature=youtu.be>

Demand surges for Mercyhurst's autism summer program

<http://foundations2011.blogspot.com/2011/07/mercyhurst-featured-article.html>

Asperger Initiative Continues to Grow

<http://merciad.mercyhurst.edu/content/aspergers-initiative-continues-grow>

Washington Watch Grant for the AIM Program

[http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/ED\\_69730.html](http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/ED_69730.html)

Story about AIM profiling one of our recent graduates

<http://www.pottsmmerc.com/article/20120202/NEWS/120209888/-1/LIFE/pa-university-program-helps-autistic-students?mobredirect=true>

Mercyhurst AIM Program Ranked Nationally

[http://www.mercyhighered.org/news\\_mercyhurst.html](http://www.mercyhighered.org/news_mercyhurst.html)

**Brad McGarry, M.A. Coordinator of the Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM)**

Brad McGarry is a native of Erie, Pennsylvania and is currently the AIM Coordinator in the Learning Differences Department at Mercyhurst University. In this position Brad participates in the White House Disability Group and has been featured in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; and *Diverse Issues In Higher Education* and has presented at Pennsylvania's Inaugural Conference on Post-Secondary Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

McGarry received his Masters degree in 1999 in Community Counseling and in 2012 completed a Masters Certificate program in Special Education with a concentration in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA). He has been invited to share his experiences as a keynote speaker throughout the country and is an advocate for his oldest son, Connor, who is living with Angelman Syndrome, which is classified on the Autism Spectrum and is coupled with another rare genetic disorder.

McGarry, an adjunct faculty member of the Psychology Department at Mercyhurst University for eight-years, developed and authored a curriculum for Family Group Decision Making for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that is now being used statewide. This has made Pennsylvania one of the only states in the nation to be self sufficient in training the internationally known practice of *Family Group Decision Making*. He also assisted in developing and was director of an intensive day treatment program for children diagnosed with ADHD and other disruptive behavior disorders. McGarry is a trained outpatient therapist and received advanced training in innovative, researched based models of therapy. In 2008, McGarry was recognized by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Northwest Pennsylvania Division for his involvement at a trainer in the *Parents As Teachers Initiative*, which was nominated as Program of the Year.

McGarry has been involved in numerous community collaborations, as well as, state and local initiatives. He served on the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Parent Advisory Council; he served as chair of the Pennsylvania FGDM State Implementation Team – Western Region; and as secretary of the Erie County Policy and Planning Council; the Autism in our Community Planning Committee, Union City Pride, Inc.; and Centaur Stride Therapeutic Riding Center.

McGarry is a single parent of three wonderful boys, Connor (9), Braydan (7) and Mason (4). He enjoys fly fishing, hiking, camping, skiing and spending time with his family and friends.

# Bradley L. McGarry

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## Professional Objective

To secure a challenging position with an organization that requires a motivated, dedicated, above-average person, where individual performance and achievement are recognized, thereby allowing opportunities for growth and development.

## Education

Mercyhurst University, Master Certificate, 2012 (Special Education with ABA Concentration)  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, M.A., 1999 (Community Counseling)  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, B.S., 1997 (Major: Psychology, Minor: Sociology)

## Work Experience

- Oct 2011 – Present      **Mercyhurst University**      **Erie, PA**  
***Coordinator, Asperger Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM)***
- Help develop, supervise and direct all aspects of AIM and the Summer Foundations Program. Select potential students, hire staff, develop and assess programming for this college level program for students living with Asperger and Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Nov 2005 – Present      **Mercyhurst University**      **Erie, PA**  
***Adjunct Faculty***
- Prepare and lecture psychology courses such as Introduction to Psychology and Human Growth and Development. Developed course content into PowerPoint presentation and created all quizzes, assignments and exams for the course.
- Sept 2007 – Sept 2011      **Union City Family Support Center**      **Union City, PA**  
***Executive Director***
- Chief Executive Officer for a family center in rural Erie County. Supervised all programming including PAT and FGDM, organizational structure and procedures. Responsible for all programming, staff, income, expenditures, employment, interpretation of policy and long range planning.
- May 2006 - Dec 2011      **PA Child Welfare Training Program (CWTP)**      **Mechanicsburg, PA**  
**University of Pittsburgh**  
***State Trainer***
- Developed and trained Family Group Decision Making Part I and Part II training for PA CWTP. This training is required for any individuals that plans to participate in this practice in the state of PA. This training is used to train almost every county across the Commonwealth. I authored and developed this training back in 2007 for the PA CWTP.
- May 2003 – Sept 2007      **Family Services of Northwest Pennsylvania**      **Erie, PA**  
***Family Group Decision Making Coordinator***
- Helped develop and establish Erie County Family Group Decision Making. Coordinated all aspects of the family conference. Involved in various state and local trainings on the practice. Participated as a member of the Erie County Implementation Team, as well as, the PA State Implementation Team, PA State Training Subcommittee, Co-Chair of the PA Western Regional State Committee. Developed curriculum for the practice in the state of Pennsylvania.

## Bradley L. McGarry

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- Oct 2002 – Dec 2005     **Stairways Behavioral Health**     **Erie, PA**  
**Mobile Therapist**  
Provided in home and community counseling to adolescents and their families. Developed treatment plans and supervised therapeutic support staff (TSS).
- Sept 2002 – Jan 2004     **Family Services of Northwest Pennsylvania**     **Erie, PA**  
**Family Preservation Family Therapist**  
Provided in home mental health services for Erie County Office of Children and Youth. Worked with child welfare staff and treatment teams to benefit families and provided therapy, behavior modification and parenting skills.
- Oct 2000 – Aug 2002     **Mercyhurst University / Achievement Center**     **Erie, PA**  
**Summer Treatment Program Director / Treatment Coordinator**  
Helped develop, establish and supervise the Erie County Site of the Summer Treatment Program. Assisted in program development and fund raising. Supervised all treatment aspects and daily operations of this highly structured, recreationally-based program. Supervised (16) undergraduate counselors, (4) teachers, (1) graduate student, data entry staff and (40) children. Also coordinated and instructed seven week parenting skills program.
- Oct 2000 – Aug 2002     **Achievement Center**     **Erie, PA**  
**Therapeutic Foster Care Team Leader / Outpatient Therapist**  
Supervised all treatment aspects of the program including supervision and training of foster homes, foster parents and children in placement. Supervised daily operations, financial reimbursements and vouchers. Performed all case management, 24 hour on call and crisis services for the entire program.
- Jan 2000 - Aug 2000     **Mental Health Cooperative, Inc.**     **Nashville, TN**  
**Child and Adolescent Team Supervisor**  
Assisted in developing the Child and Adolescent Program by marketing and developing different components of the program. Supervised (4) Case Managers, (1) assessment worker, (1) discharge planner, (1) team nurse and approximately (120) children, adolescents and their families.
- Aug 1999 - Aug 2000     **Mental Health Cooperative, Inc.**     **Nashville, TN**  
**Case Manager - Vanderbilt Satellite**  
Assisted persons with serious mental illness to gain access to quality resources while helping them mold and achieve personal goals. Worked with adolescents and adults in their home environment, the academic setting and community. Also worked closely with psychiatric staff at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital.
- May 1997 - Aug 1999     **Indiana County Guidance Center**     **Indiana, PA**  
**Summer Treatment Program Lead Counselor / Clinical Supervisor**  
Provided intensive summer day treatment to children with attention deficit, Oppositional Defiant and other related disorders. Supervised (2) core staff, (6) interns, and (25) children. Also coordinated and instructed parenting skills program.
- Family Based In Home Therapist**  
Provided family therapy in an intensive team delivered home based service.

# Bradley L. McGarry

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## **Training / Certifications**

- PA Child Welfare Training Program State Trainer
- 64 hours FGDM Facilitator Training
- Completed Grantsmanship Training Workshop
- Parents as Presenters Workshop (PA Training and Technical Assistance Network)
- 100 hours Dr. Pelham Summer Treatment Program Training
- 43 hours Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training
- 24 hours Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic Family Therapist Training
- Act 33 and Act 34 Clearances

## **Conferences, Keynote Presentations, Publications and Programs**

- Featured in The Chronicle of Higher Education
- Presented at the 2012 Pennsylvania's Inaugural Conference on Post-Secondary Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Presented at the 2011 Annual American Humane Society International Conference on FGDM
- Presented at the 2006 Annual American Humane Society International Conference on FGDM
- Presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Pennsylvania State CASSP Conference
- Presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSCA) Conference
- Developed copyrighted 2007 FGDM Curriculum for the Child Welfare Training Program for the state of Pennsylvania
- Numerous Key Note and Motivational Speaking Engagements (Schools, Churches, Kiwanis, Rotary, Support Groups)
- Developed and presented STAMP (Self Taught Anger Management Program) for adolescents
- Developed and presented Communication and Listening Skills Program for Family, Child and Adolescent Program at The Mental Health Cooperative, Inc
- Developed, presented and trained (Positive Help for Disruptive Behaviors) PHD Parenting Program

## **Present and Past Professional Organizations / Committees / Boards / Initiatives**

- The White House Disability Group
- American Counseling Association
- Parent Advisory Board for the Pennsylvania (OCDEL) Office of Child Development and Early Learning
- Autism in our Community Planning Committee
- PA FGDM State Implementation Team – Western Chair
- PA State FGDM Training Committee
- Erie County Policy and Planning Council Executive Committee, Secretary
- Erie County Policy and Planning Council
- Erie County FGDM Implementation Team
- Member National Angelman Syndrome Foundation
- Member Grand Canyon Association
- American Humane Association – Child Division Member
- Board Member Union City Pride, Inc.
- Erie County Parents As Presenters - Awarded 2008 Program of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Northwest PA Division.
- Erie County Healthy Youth Development
- Union City Healthy Youth Development
- Board Member of CHADD. Erie Chapter Co-Chair, Treasurer and Child Chair
- Board Member of Centaur Stride Therapeutic Riding Center

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement – “Truth in Testimony”  
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)**

Name: **MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY, Erie, Pennsylvania**

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2010. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

| Project Name   | Funder                         | FY 2010-11 Carryover<br>in Process | 2011-12<br>Awards<br>Received | FY 2011-12 Carryover<br>in Process | 2012-13<br>Awards<br>Received |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Learning Differences Program - AIM*                      | US Department of Education     | \$ 93,394                          | \$ 6,606                      | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| HIDTA Office of National Drug                            | Office of Nat'l Drug Control   | \$ 1,998,369                       | \$ 1,585,790                  | \$ 1,142,045                       | \$ 380,721                    |
| Vehicle Technologies                                     | DOD                            | \$ (1,188)                         | \$ 299,410                    | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| Russian Studies  | DOD                            | \$ (902)                           | \$ 237,984                    | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| USAF OpenSource  | USAF-DOD                       | \$ 9,376                           | \$ 183,237                    | \$ -                               | \$ 24,586                     |
| NOAA - 2011  | NOAA                           | \$ -                               | \$ 125,000                    | \$ 173,623                         | \$ 18,819                     |
| Presque Isle Beaches                                     | EPA                            | \$ -                               | \$ 79,648                     | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| Anasanzi Basket  | NAGPRA                         | \$ -                               | \$ 30,000                     | \$ 9,656                           | \$ 7,965                      |
| NASA Volcanic Processes                                  | NASA                           | \$ 19,657                          | \$ 23,538                     | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| FBI Graduate Certificate                                 | Federal                        | \$ 23,873                          | \$ 17,533                     | \$ 6,194                           | \$ -                          |
| CAP Program - RCWE (East)                                | WIB-Regional Ctr for Workforce | \$ 2,637                           | \$ 1,393                      | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| ID DEV Investigative Info                                | US State Dept                  | \$ 798,090                         | \$ -                          | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| Ft. Hood Analysis and Report                             | Dept of Treasury               | \$ 25,402                          | \$ -                          | \$ -                               | \$ -                          |
| NASA - VENUS   | NASA - Fed                     | \$ -                               | \$ -                          | \$ -                               | \$ 26,225                     |
| DOD Patents  | DOD                            | \$ -                               | \$ -                          | \$ 140,395                         | \$ 90,483                     |
| Online Course Dev.                                       | Dept of Labor                  | \$ -                               | \$ -                          | \$ -                               | \$ 200,000                    |
|  | <b>TOTALS</b>                  | <b>\$ 2,968,707</b>                | <b>\$ 2,590,140</b>           | <b>\$ 1,471,913</b>                | <b>\$ 748,799</b>             |
| <i>*Federal Appropriations (Earmark) awarded in 2009</i> |                                |                                    |                               |                                    |                               |

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

[Not applicable]

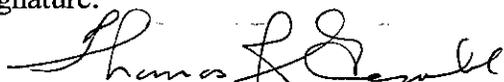
3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2010, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

[Not applicable]

*I certify that the above information is true and correct.*

Signature:

Date: 28 November 2012



11-28-12

*Thomas J. Gamble, Ph.D., President Mercyhurst University*