Brittney Urquhart is in her second semester at Auburn University as a graduate student studying vocational rehabilitation. She is also the student liaison for Auburn’s Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD). In this role, Brittney works with many different students to ensure they have the right accommodations needed to be successful during their time at Auburn. She also coordinated events for the 2011 Disability Awareness Week, and she assists with any other activities that take place on campus dealing with disability awareness.

Brittney developed idiopathic intracranial hypertension, a condition that affects her vision, at the age of 19. Having this disability enables her to have an understanding of the issues students with disabilities experience in college. Brittney did not let her condition stop her from successfully completing her undergraduate degree, and continues to be successful in her graduate program. She has been an advocate for herself and for others with disabilities.

Brittney would like for more students to know about PSD and the support services they can receive. Accommodations can vary greatly between students. Even temporary services are available; for example, she said “if they have a broken leg a student can get accommodations for being late to class”. When asked one thing students with disabilities should do when they first begin their studies at Auburn, Brittney says apply for services and know your options.

To find out more information about PSD and applying for services, visit [https://fp.auburn.edu/disability/students/prospective.asp](https://fp.auburn.edu/disability/students/prospective.asp).
ATLI host the 21st Annual Alabama Transition Conference
by Courtney Ingalls

The 21st annual Alabama Transition Conference, held at the Marriott at Grand National on March 7th and 8th, brought together many different agencies and stakeholders to further their knowledge in transition updates and techniques used in working with students in transition. It was an exciting time for everyone involved, while also allowing for professional collaboration. With close to 700 people in attendance, this year’s conference was a demonstration of the dedication to the field.

The conference had many well-informed presenters and interesting sessions. Dr. Ginger Blalock, an author and educational consultant from New Mexico, opened on Monday as this year’s keynote presenter. She set the tone for the conference as she spoke about the importance of collaboration and how it improves the transition process. The Director of the Office of Special Educational Programs, Dr. Melody Musgrove, and the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Service Administration, Ms. Lynnae Ruttledge, expounded the issues facing transition in America. They also held a Q & A session after their presentation, which allowed attendees to voice any concerns or comments. Two distinguished transition specialists, Dr. Paul Wehman and Dr. James Patton, presented workshops during the conference. The conference held a total of 34 concurrent sessions.

Young musicians from Spicer’s Garage Band Camp, Chris McPherson, Gideon Weigel, and The String Theory all performed during the conference creating a fun and enjoyable atmosphere. Also returning conference favorite Garret Miles, performed “I Can” during Tuesday’s Transition Update. The members of Young Adults in Transition (YAIT) were actively involved throughout the conference with a Meet and Greet, workshops, presenting, and even leading a “How-To” Session. An information session new to the conference, What’s My Line?, allowed for members from the same background to discuss issues relating to their component of the transition process.

During the conference, the 2nd Annual Local Transition Planning Summit was led by Ginger Blalock. A total of seven teams, welcoming five new teams, Marshall County, Escambia County, Bullock County, Anniston City, and Blount County, participated in the summit. These summit teams collaborated with transition specialists to ascertain needs and initiate new goals and objectives for transition in Alabama. With combined efforts of the Local Transition Planning Summit and the State Interagency Transition Team, these goals are established and met to keep Alabama’s transition programs progressing. The goals include creating an online transition resource guide, ongoing participation with YAIT, and development of transition standards.

“Cascades of Hope and Promise” proved to be a very befitting theme for this year’s conference as attendees left with a positive outlook on the progress being made in transition. The conference could not have been a success without the 70 student volunteers, so we would like to say thank you. We truly appreciate your dedication! Please visit the ATLI’s website for details and handouts from this year’s conference. The 22nd annual Alabama Transition Conference will take place March 12th and 13th, 2012. We hope to see you there!
PROFESSIONAL MEET & GREET
Dan Roth and Alicia Myrick

Dan Roth and Alicia Myrick are Education Specialists for the Alabama State Department of Education. They have 42 years of combined experience in their field. Dan worked in Jefferson County as a special education teacher for 13 years before his move to the state department 7 years ago. Alicia has worked for the Department of Defense schools in many different places, including Germany. She was also the Director of Special Education for Lowndes County for five years, and has been working for the state department for the last five years. These two dedicated educators demonstrate the determination and dedication one needs to be successful in this profession.

As education specialists, Dan and Alicia play multiple roles for the state. They are members of the special education monitoring team for Northeast Alabama. They are also the contact persons for many local education agencies around the state, while working to ensure the Alabama Administrative Code stays current and aligned with the federal guidelines. In addition, each education specialist is accountable for a specific topic area. Dan has the responsibility of being in charge of transition, while Alicia is responsible for the occupational diploma. With their topic areas being so intertwined, they work together often. Both Dan and Alicia also work very closely with YAiT, or Young Adults in Transition, a group designed to help students become self-advocates and teach them how to become active participants in their education program.

When asked why transition is so important, Alicia and Dan both said that the decisions made during the transition process are life-altering. They have seen both good and bad decisions made during the transition process that majorly affected the students’ lives. Preferably they would like to see students become more involved in the transition process, and for the teachers to welcome the students to question and discuss their life plans, instead of treating the transition process as if it were just a piece of paper. Dan relates his own school experience to his passion for transition, because he felt that the education system was only preparing him for his time in school, and not life after school.

The biggest challenge of being an education specialist for Dan and Alicia is effectively communicating on a statewide level. A huge concern is how to train each and every teacher in the transition process throughout the state. Dan and Alicia develop and implement many teacher trainings; however, not every teacher can be at each training session. So, there is a major need to continue creating a cohesive plan and training system for Alabama’s education system. When asked what steps or initiatives are being taken to ensure Alabama continues in the right direction in transition, Dan responded “It’s happening right here,” referring to the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute. ATLI has just introduced the Training in Transition online modules to provide one solution to the communication challenge. Accessing the technology available is a way to ensure everyone stays on the same page with the issues regarding special education. Also, ATLI is involved with the YAiT group which has a huge impact on the participating students. These are all steps leading to a better transition process for everyone involved.

The greatest reward Dan and Alicia have is seeing the accomplishments of the people they help. These accomplishments include students continuing their education by going to college, some on scholarship, or being successful and enjoying the job they earned upon graduation. As Alicia said, “Seeing students be successful, I think that’s why we’re here. It’s all about the kids”. After speaking with Dan and Alicia, it is obvious that Alabama’s transition area of special education is in good hands. Both are passionate about helping the students, and knowledgeable about the issues regarding the process.

Mrs. Alicia Myrick
Education Specialist

Mr. Dan Roth
Education Specialist
My name is Courtney Ingalls, and this is my first semester at Auburn University. I moved to Auburn after earning my undergraduate degree in Collaborative Education (Grades K-6) from UAB. I was blessed to have received a scholarship through the Collaborative Approach to Teaching Transition Specialists (CATTS) program. I was also fortunate to obtain a position as a graduate assistant for the ATLI, working very closely with Dr. Karen Rabren and her amazing colleagues. Being a CATTS scholar while working for the ATLI has been exciting to say the least. With CATTS, I am in a motivating and challenging learning environment. The classes, practicum, and especially professors have exceeded my expectations. My understanding of education in transition has grown exponentially just in this short time I have been here. CATTS scholars were able to volunteer at the 2011 Alabama Transition Conference and gain valuable experiences while meeting with transition stakeholders and facilitating sessions.

ATLI has graciously welcomed me and has helped me grow as a person and as a professional. They have allowed me to discover abilities I would not have discovered on my own. I have doubled, possibly tripled, my vocabulary thanks to George Hall, the research coordinator at the Institute. I have really enjoyed my time spent at ATLI and the university, and I am eager to continue to grow with CATTS and ATLI.

I am so excited to be a part of the Auburn family, and I would like to take this time to say THANK YOU to Dr. Rabren and Dr. Dunn for allowing me to have this experience. I would also like to say THANK YOU to my co-workers at ATLI and the CATTS scholars, Addie Litrell, Callye McNeal, Tiffany Clark, and Stephen Mairtin, for putting up with me this semester! Oh, and War Eagle!

**Important Events**

**JUNE**
13 - State Interagency Transition Team Meeting
5-9 - Troy University’s Youth Leadership Forum

**JULY**
18-22 - Alabama MEGA Conference, Mobile, AL
29 - Classes end at Auburn University

**AUGUST**
15 - State Interagency Transition Team Meeting
8 - Opelika City Schools begins classes
10 - Auburn City Schools begins classes
17 - Auburn University begins classes

**Newsletter Notes**
Do you have an interesting personal story to share about the transition process? Our newsletter staff would like to hear from you! Call 334-844-5927.

Archived issues of ATLI “Directions” are saved at www.auburn.edu/atli (click on “Publications”).