

ASD Info Sheet for Faculty

What is Autism?

- ✦ **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)** are neurodevelopmental disorders characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication.
- ✦ Many individuals with Autism demonstrate Executive Functioning (EF) deficits, which impact organization, time management, task initiation, inhibition, and emotional regulation.
- ✦ Not all students with Autism are the same. They all present with unique strengths and challenges.

Some Things You May Notice...

- ✦ May exhibit awkward eye contact, posture, &/or gestures
- ✦ Difficulty with changes in classroom, seating, & syllabi
- ✦ Sensory sensitivity (lights, sounds, touch, smells)
- ✦ May have delayed verbal or written responses
- ✦ May misunderstand tone of voice, jokes, facial expressions, sarcasm, & other subtle messages
- ✦ May become easily overwhelmed
- ✦ May come across as argumentative, rude, or monopolizing class discussion
- ✦ Displays literal & concrete thinking patterns
- ✦ May use calming or focusing "self-stimming" strategies such as rocking, tapping, or pacing
- ✦ Oddities in vocal pitch, volume intonation
- ✦ May be easily distracted, particularly in long classes
- ✦ Strong, narrow interests

Prevalence

- ✦ Approximately 2% of college students in the United States report as having Autism.
- ✦ During the 2016-17 academic year, 69 students at Purchase College self-identified to the Office of Disability Resources as a student with ASD.
- ✦ Statistics suggest that these rates will continue to rise, which is why it is critical to know how to most effectively work with this population.

Additional Resources

Available at the Purchase College Library:

Zager, D., Alpern, C., McKeon, B., Maxam, S., & Mulvey, J. (2013). *Educating college students with autism spectrum disorders*. Routledge: NY.

Oslund, C. (2014). *Supporting college and university students with invisible disabilities*. Christy Oslund: Philadelphia, PA.

Strengths

- ✦ Above average to superior intellect
- ✦ Passionate commitment to ideas
- ✦ Strong sense of equality & justice
- ✦ Exceptional talents in one specific area
- ✦ Diligent with routine work & excellent memory
- ✦ Strong pursuit of knowledge within areas of interest
- ✦ Good visual & spatial learners
- ✦ Original ways of solving problems

Struggles

- ✦ Initiating/sustaining effort
- ✦ Setting boundaries
- ✦ Working in groups
- ✦ Initiating, planning, organizing, & carrying out tasks
- ✦ Seeing others' points of views
- ✦ Understanding social rules
- ✦ Assessing priorities & performance
- ✦ Asking for clarification or assistance
- ✦ Interpreting vague instructions
- ✦ Abstract concepts & seeing the 'big picture'

Strategies

- ✦ Provide direct feedback, set clear boundaries
- ✦ Allow breaks during class
- ✦ Avoid cold-calling in class
- ✦ Avoid idioms, metaphors, sarcasm
- ✦ Consider assigning group roles
- ✦ Provide visual learning tools and examples when possible (pictures, charts, etc.)
- ✦ Supplement oral instructions with written instructions
- ✦ Explain the purpose of an assignment
- ✦ Utilize syllabus & note any changes as soon as possible

If you have any questions regarding ASD and how to support students, please do not hesitate to reach out to Amy Fisk, Cornerstone Program Coordinator, at 914-251-7983 or amy.fisk@purchase.edu.