comPASS
personal, academic & social success

INITIATIVE

Central Michigan University

M.A. in Higher Education Administration

Amanda Buzard, Zach Evans, Hannah Long, Charles Mahone II

Overview

- Introduction to comPASS Initiative
- Mission and Vision
- Population and Need Assessment
- Benchmark Institutions
- comPASS Programs
- Goals
- Theoretical and Professional Framework
- Levels of Initiative
- Funding structure
- Assessment

comPASS Initiative

- An ongoing support initiative created by Disability Services to provide support in personal, academic, and social success for students attending our institution who report being on the Autism Spectrum.

- Ongoing engagement and support through peer-to-peer mentorship through first year in college, with optional pre-orientation.
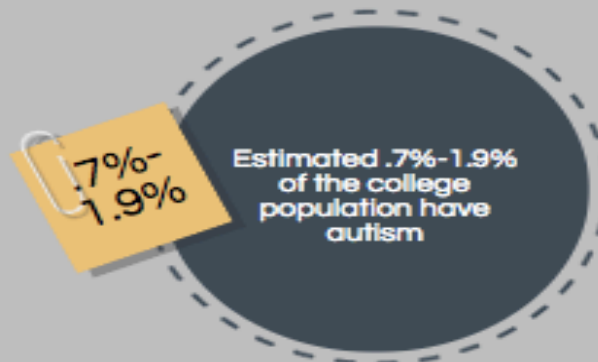
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Mission & Vision

Such an initiative connects with our mission and vision of inclusivity, diversity and student success.

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Population & Needs Assessment

⭐ Despite students having adequate cognitive ability for academic success in college, many individuals on the Autism Spectrum face new struggles in college.

⭐ Students go unnoticed by their professors, residence hall assistants, and peers.

⭐ Sensory, social, learning styles, and organizational challenges combine with the stress and fatigue of college lead to unsuccessful students.

⭐ No clear statistic due to students not revealing that information to the university

80% 80% of students on the Autism Spectrum will not complete college.

.7%-1.9% Estimated .7%-1.9% of the college population have autism

THE AUTISM SPECTRUM
Facts for Student Affairs Professionals

WHAT IS IT?
The Autism Spectrum is a group of complex neurological disorders. Diagnoses can be unique and not all individuals will display the same characteristics, thus the "spectrum."

SOCIAL SKILLS
One common sign of ASD is social impairment and communication difficulties. This includes: avoiding eye contact and interacting with others to achieve specific goals.

REPETITION
Another sign of ASD is repetitive and characteristic behaviors. A person on the Autism Spectrum may favor routines and patterns and can become obsessively interested in a certain topic.

COMMUNICATION
A challenge for people on the Autism Spectrum can be communication, including understanding how to engage with others and trouble with verbal cues, body language and voice tone.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
People on the Autism Spectrum can have related symptoms of anxiety, depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder which should also be considered when developing support programs.

(Adapted from NINDS, 2015)

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Institutional Benchmarking

There are many different programs that take a myriad of approaches to how they assist their students. Below are a few institutions of varying size and some of their best practices and programs they have in place for their students with Autism.

Purchase College

The Autism Spectrum Disorders program is ran through their office of Disability Resources and has a focus on preparation for life after graduation.
Their program highlights six specific services aimed at improving a student's time at their university such as a social skills support group, career planning, and a peer mentoring program.

Bellevue College

Offers a program known as Autism Spectrum Navigators, in this program they focus on the four areas of: Executive Functioning, Self-Advocacy, Self-Regulation and Social Interaction.
Students in this program take specialized classes, alongside those for their major, that focus on improvement in these areas with no charge for the program besides a 2 credit course taken with other students in the program.

California State, East Bay

Offers a tier-based support program predicated on what level of support the student desires with fees ranging from $2000 at the lowest level to $5880 at the highest.
All levels of support cover many basics such as social activities and weekly meetings, however, higher levels offer more academic shadowing throughout their coursework.

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comPASS Initiative Programs

Optional Pre-Orientation & Academic Program

Students that identify with Autism Spectrum Disorder may choose to pick an optional pre-orientation and academic program. This is a supplemental program to support students on the Spectrum.
This combines social, personal, and academic skill building with personalized connections to students, administrative staff, and faculty.

Peer-to-Peer Mentorships

Peer-to-peer mentorships established with comPASS mentors for duration of first year within residential housing.
Support transition to college and social development, as well as connecting students to appropriate resources.

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Learning Outcomes

This is an optional pre-orientation supplemental program that is aimed at providing additional support to students who have reported being on the Spectrum.

As a result of this program, students will be able to:

List academic support services across campus aimed at increasing their persistence throughout their matriculation

List important campus landmarks as well as the buildings their courses are housed in

Identify areas and offices on campus specially aimed, and trained for assisting students on the Spectrum

Demonstrate comfortability and familiarity with the course registration system through use

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Pre-Orientation Timeline/Example Content

- **<u>Welcome and Introduction to Campus</u>**

- This will explain traditions and campus culture as well as what makes campus unique

- **<u>Campus Tour</u>**

- When touring housing options, students will be informed that as part of this program they can move in early for a less stimulating experience if desired

- **<u>Introduction to Academic Program Directors and Faculty</u>**

- Faculty will give a description of the academic programs of interest to the students and inform them of general accommodations that have and can be made for students

- **<u>Student Disability Services Presentation</u>**

- Introduction to the office and professional services they offer for students

- Although students will be informed of general accommodations from the faculty, they will be assured that the individual student will always be taken into account in deciding what will be used to assist

- The Peer Mentors also be present so the students could meet and start to build rapport with them

- Student Disability Services (SDS) staff will work with academic advisors to instruct on how to utilize the course registration system, as well as pick their first semester's courses

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comPASS Mentorship

Students connect with a peer mentor for ongoing meetings throughout first year implementing learning partnership model

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Focus on transition to college, including associated stressors
- Determine personal goals

ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

- Pair with Disability Services to determine appropriate academic accommodations
- Utilize campus resources, including faculty office hours and other support services

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

HEAVIEST FOCUS
- Focus on transition to college, including associated stressors
- Encourage involvement in clubs, activities and events outside of class
- Assist in the continued development of appropriate social interactions
- How to live with roommates, etc.

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comPASS Mentorship Curriculum

- Students on the Autism Spectrum often face social barriers and communication difficulties such as,
- Avoiding eye contact
- Interacting with others to achieve specific goals
- Understanding how to engage others
- Difficulty to understanding how to talk about feelings
- Trouble with non-verbal cues, body language and voice tone
- Students on the Autism Spectrum often favor repetitive behaviors, routines, and patterns
- Compass will engage students in the program by setting up an individualized schedule for each participant.
- There will specific times and dates that students will be challenged to work on a certain social barrier or communication difficulty unique to them.

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Theoretical Frame Work

Learning Partnerships Model
(Baxter-Magolda, 2010)

Supportive Functions

- Respect student thoughts and feelings, thus affirming the value of their voices.
- Help students view their experiences as opportunities for learning and growth.
- Collaborating with students to analyze their own problems, engaging in mutual learning with them.

Challenge Functions

- Drawing students' attention to the complexity of their work and life decisions, and discouraging simplistic solutions.
- Encourage students to develop their personal authority by listening to their own voices in determining how to live their lives.
- Encourage students to share authority and expertise, and work interdependently with others to solve mutual problems.

It is essential to look at the students as "students with autism" opposed to "autistic students."
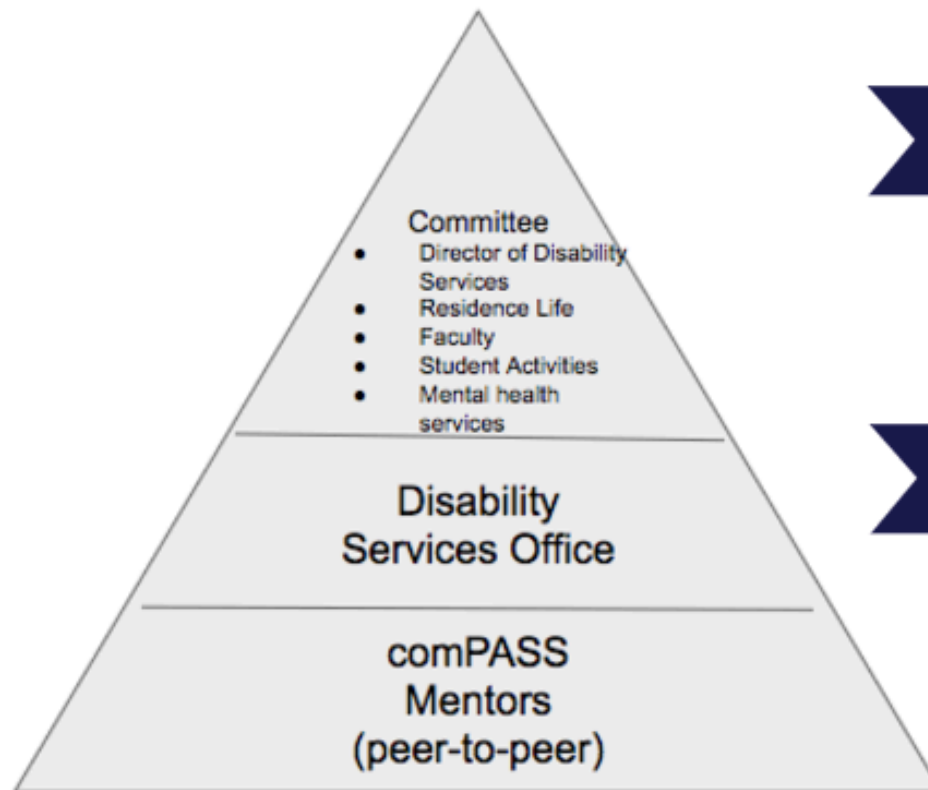
Professional Framework

Advising & Supporting (ACPA/NASPA, 2015) guides the work of the comPASS initiative through…

⭐ Working to support the needs of each individual

⭐ Emphasizing self-efficacy

⭐ Holistic support

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Levels of Initiative

Committee
- Director of Disability Services
- Residence Life
- Faculty
- Student Activities
- Mental health services

Disability Services Office

comPASS Mentors (peer-to-peer)

Committee Responsibilites

- Determine adequate training and best-practice for comPASS mentors.
- Develop processes for referrals to each respective office by comPASS mentors and methods of partnership.
- Oversee Residence Life partnership with comPASS advisors and budget for initiative.

Disability Services Office Responsibilities

- Develop training materials and content to be used by comPASS mentors.
- Assist in campus orientation effort to run optional pre-orientation program with assistance of comPASS peer mentors.
- Supervise and oversee comPASS mentors (along with Residence Life staff).
- Develop and run assessment of initiative.

comPASS Mentor Responsibilites

- Develop training materials and content to be used by comPASS mentors.
- Assist in campus orientation effort to run optional pre-orientation program with assistance of comPASS peer mentors.
- Supervise and oversee comPASS mentors (along with Residence Life staff).
- Develop and run assessment of initiative.

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Funding Structure

- The goal of our program is to pull all of the available resources and appropriate professionals best suited to assist our students to the table. The reality is that the population of students that will be in the program will likely not be large enough to justify base funding from the university so having intentional budgeting is a must.

- What is most intentional about this program is that in a time when many institutions of higher education are receiving less funding and budgets are being slashed, this program does not require adding pieces to the university that would not already be present. This program simply requires a reorganization of student and academic support services with guidance by SDS. The utilization of Peer Mentors also allows the program to be more parsimonious and keep costs affordable. This approach keeps costs low and efficiency of service high.

- **Examples of Campus Partner Coordination:**

- The program would coordinate with Residence Life staff to offer early move in and ensure that Resident Assistants and Multicultural Advisors have guidance from SDS on working with this population

- Coordination with Residence Life also will include ensuring Peer Mentors are placed next to students in the program

- The yearly support training offered by SDS would be highly recommended for the faculty of any program in which we are aware students with ASD will be participating

- SDS would train the faculty working at the supplemental orientation and work with the academic advisors during the supplemental orientation when the students are being instructed on the use of the course registration system

Funding Structure

- Although the goal is to consolidate available resources into one area for our students, the program would require the the hiring of a full time professional to work with the Peer Mentors as well as the students in the program in a counselor and ongoing support role. Peer Mentors would also receive subsidized housing for their work in the program and living next door to the students within the program.

- **<u>Program Funding</u>**

- To stay competitive and pull in the best talent, starting salary for a professional in New York would sit at ~$70,000 - $105,000 depending on the experience of the candidate

- Subsidized housing in New York for 10 mentors would cost $125,900 at the current rate

- Budget for compensation and housing would be obtained through grant based funding

- A perfect example would be the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service grant awarded through the federal government

- This 5-year grant that comes in at $547,000 would be able to provide funding for the position, and as the grant dictates, help to improve, expand, and continue the services offered by the SDS department for all the students that it serves

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Assessment Tools

In line with ACPA/NASPA professional competencies, this program would be subject to a yearly accountability cycle as means of understanding student learning as well as inform best practice.

Summative Measures

- Structured interviews conducted at the end of each semester with the participants.

Summative & Secondary Measures

- Electronic survey sent to relevant stakeholders such as professors, parents, and administrators at the end of every semester.

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Assessment Schedule

- Learning outcomes defined at the beginning of the year
- Activities aligned with outcomes
- Surveys and interviews conducted at the end of the semester
- Data is coded and analyzed
- Findings are implemented into curriculum
- At the end of the year, assessment tools are reviewed
- Cycle restarts

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