



*TRANSITION, TRAINING,
AND INTEGRATION:
FOSTERING INCLUSION AND
INTEGRATION ON CAMPUS*

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Who we are



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The Issue

- Rapid rise in students on the autism spectrum attending the university
- Faculty and staff must be educated on their unique learning and social needs
- Currently, we are complying with federal laws requiring us to make accommodations

Our Task

- Move beyond basic compliance and accommodation towards full integration and inclusivity
- Create an inclusive environment that is already prepared for a diverse population rather than reacting
- Ensure that all students are active and engaged members of the social and academic environment

Our Plan

- Implement a multifaceted approach that examines both the educational and physical environments on campus
 - Transition to College, Training of Faculty and Staff, Social Integration
- Build productive partnerships between ODS and other campus constituencies
 - Residence Life, Student Activities, Faculty and Staff, Mental Health Service
- Utilize current university resources to ensure a cost-efficient, yet thorough, program

Transition: Residence Life

- Goal
 - Increase feeling of structure, safety, and assurance
 - Plan of Action
 - Allow exploration of residence halls before official move-in day
 - Tour future living space, building, and floor
 - Meet student affairs professionals and resident assistants
 - Explain how to access the system of support that is present in residence halls
 - Include the option to have rocking chairs, hammocks, and bean bags in rooms
 - Convert unused space in residence halls (or academic buildings) into sensory rooms to provide therapeutic options for students
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Transition: Student Activities

- Goals
 - Conduct an inclusive orientation to help ease the transition to college
 - Provide non-threatening social interactions
- Plan of Action
 - Offer low sensory options for all activities
 - Program to raise mental health and special needs awareness for all students
 - Include students with autism in program planning
 - Workshops for the campus regarding time-management, college transition, and resources that the campus provides

Transition: Faculty and Staff

- Goals
 - (Re)educate counselors on effective transition preparation for students and families
 - Assist special needs students in adjusting to life after high school
- Plan of Action
 - Increase communication with local high schools
 - Create “College 101” course to share with local high school counselors
 - Obtain transition plans from high school counselors
 - Share with our academic advisors so they can help students accomplish goals

Transition: Mental Health Services

- Goal
 - Collaborate with other offices to promote mental health awareness and help foster disclosure
- Plan of Action
 - Invite mental health services to orientation to provide direct contact to students and families
 - Present information on counseling services, disability services, and accommodations that can be made
 - Position counseling services as an integral part of the support system

Training: Residence Life

- Goals
 - Assure students and families that authority figures are knowledgeable about their needs
 - Create knowledge base of common struggles, patterns, and means of support on-campus
 - Plan of action
 - Train staff on intervention skills using ODS staff
 - Provide support in case of roommate conflicts due to cleanliness, schedules, and communication
 - Teach RAs about common struggles, patterns, and means of support on-campus
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Training: Student Activities

- Goals
 - Plan accommodating programs and activities for student with autism
 - Ensure that students with autism enjoy the social aspect of campus in a non-threatening environment
- Plan of Action
 - Offer Basic Life Skills classes to provide guidance in new social situations
 - Train current Office of Disability Services staff person to become “point person” for students with autism and serve as an academic and social advisor
 - Educate faculty and staff on planning appropriate programs and activities

Training: Faculty and Staff

- Goals
 - Train faculty and advisors how to work with students with autism
 - Implement universal design principles in the classroom
- Plan of Action
 - Teach advisors to be intentional when scheduling students with autism by assigning lighter course loads or longer breaks between classes to regroup
 - Encourage teaching faculty to incorporate multiple means of engagement, expression, and representation in the classroom
 - Train faculty how to identify and reach out to students, where to refer them, and what resources are available

Training: Mental Health Services

- **Goals**
 - Train the Office of Disability Services to distinguish between students on the autism spectrum and those with other mental health issues
 - Implement policies and practices tailored to unique needs of students on the spectrum
- **Plan of Action**
 - Increase the number of allowed counseling sessions for students on the spectrum
 - Prepare proactive techniques to teach time management skills, identify stressors, learning methods
 - Attend the Aspire Training Series sponsored by The Autism Project

Social Integration: Residence Life

- Goal
 - Create environment in the residence halls that is friendly, inclusive, and accessible
- Plan of Action
 - Address and confront existing stigma and prejudice through a survey administered to students living in residence halls
 - Promote friendships in residence halls by organizing inclusive study groups and student organizations

Social Integration: Student Activities

- Goal
 - Destigmatize mental disabilities by creating opportunities for more open dialogue regarding resources on-campus
- Plan of Action
 - Create programs and events on-campus that provide knowledge and open discussion regarding disabilities including Autism Spectrum Disorders
 - Promote social interaction and support by opening a chapter of National Alliance on Mental Illness or Active Minds

Social Integration: Faculty and Staff

- Goal
 - Promote interaction between students of all abilities in the classroom
- Plan of Action
 - Incorporate pictures and examples of people with disabilities in course materials
 - Utilize students and faculty from Psychology, School Counseling, Social Work, and Special Education graduate programs as social skills teachers and helpers
 - Provide opportunities for faculty and students with autism to interact outside of the classroom

Social Integration: Mental Health Services

- Goals
 - Provide low-stress social environments for students to meet new friends and peers on-campus
 - Equip students with social skills designed to promote positive interaction
- Plan of Action
 - Create a peer mentorship program that is supervised by the Office of Disability Services using both undergraduate and graduate students from applicable departments
 - Devise social scripts to prepare students for typical social interactions with prepared conversation starters, responses to typical questions

Resources

- **Transition**
 - Distribute *Navigating College: A Handbook on Self-Advocacy Written for Autistic Adults By Autistic Adults* to schools with autistic students who have expressed interest in attending college
 - **Training**
 - Direct faculty to resources on implementing universal design principles such as the DO-IT program at the University of Washington (www.washington.edu/doiit)
 - **Integration**
 - Becoming an active participant conversations with Active Minds and Autism Speaks organization
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Budget

Functional Area	Cost	Item(s)	Justification
Residence Life	\$650 (initial investment) \$2,000/room	Bean bags, hammocks, rocking chairs for individual residence hall rooms Conversion of unused space to “calming rooms”	Sensory spaces and furniture provide coping mechanisms, coordination skills, and therapeutic activities
Student Activities	\$600 (initial investment)	Establishment of Active Minds chapter	Foster student awareness of mental health advocacy
Office of Disability Services	\$495 \$4,000	Registration for Aspire Training Series Conferences, certifications, online classes for staff	\$99/registration for all 5 staff members Training for “point person” for students with autism

Total Initial Investment: \$7,745

Conclusions

- **Proactive approach is paramount**
 - Create an inclusive and welcoming environment before students come
 - Allow students of all abilities to move seamlessly through campus
- **Synchronize and coordinate services**
 - The Office of Disability Services must collaborate closely with Residence Life, Faculty, Student Activities, and Mental Health Services
- **Provide necessary training**
 - Students on the autism spectrum have unique needs that are distinct from those with mental health disorders
 - Must be able to recognize and distinguish behaviors to take appropriate steps

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