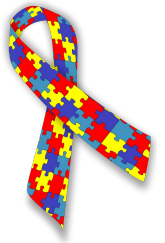# Autism Spectrum Disorder Program

Hill Valley University
Board of Trustees Committee Meeting on Growth and Development
February 2017

Krista McBrien, Team Leader
Samantha Aldrich
Katherine Fletcher
Malin Hilmersson
Sam Houston State University

ASD Program Committee Members

- Malin Hilmersson, Director of Disability Services
- Krista McBrien, Associate Director of Residence Life
- Dr. Ric Montelongo, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, College of Education
- Samantha Aldrich, Director of the Office of Student Activities
- Katherine Fletcher, Counselor, Mental Health Services

Committee formed by Dr. Stuart Brown, Dean of Students

Autism Spectrum Disorder
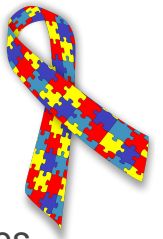
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a grouping of several developmental disorders that causes social, communication, and behavioral challenges on a wide spectrum.
- 1 in 68 children has been identified with ASD according to the CDC.
  - ASD is 4.5 times more common among boys (1 in 42) than among girls (1 in 189)
- Characteristics include:
  - 44% of children diagnosed with ASD have average to above average intellectual ability (CDC)
  - Difficulty communicating and interacting with others
  - Repetitive behaviors
  - Difficulty relating to others feelings
  - Have trouble adapting to changes in routines
- 42-80% of individuals with ASD have clinical or subclinical levels of anxiety (Shmulsky & Gobbo, 2013).
  - Data suggests anxiety increases with IQ
- The Autism Society's Autism Awareness Ribbon was adopted in 1999 as the universal sign of autism awareness. The puzzle pattern reflects the complexity of the autism spectrum. The different colors and shapes represent the diversity of the people and families living with the condition.

Autism Spectrum Disorder & College Students

- HEATH Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center estimates that:
  - 0.7-1.9% of the nationwide college population has been diagnosed with ASD.
  - National incompletion rate among ASD students is as high as 80%.
- Challenges ASD students face:
  - Information processing difficulties
  - Poor ability to understand or apply abstract concepts
  - Short concentration span
  - Weak organizational skills
  - Difficulty understanding subtle cues or body language
  - Poor time management
  - Hypersensitivity to particular sounds, smells, and lighting
  - Self-regulation problems
  - Difficulty understanding reasons for other people's actions

Enrollment Trends at Hill Valley University
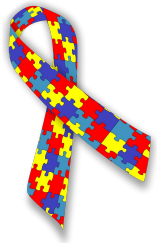
- 0.5% of Hill Valley University's population is registered with the Office of Disability Services as a student with ASD - **100 students in Fall 2016**
  - Rate increased from 0.35% the year before - an additional 30 students with ASD enrolled this year at Hill Valley University
  - Nationwide 0.7-1.9% of college population has ASD
  - ASD may be underdiagnosed in the general population, especially in women
  - **Campus administrators projects the enrollment of students with ASD will increase**
- Our lower enrollment rate could be due to students with ASD attending institutions (e.g., Rutgers University in NJ and Adelphi University in NY) that provide more services. **If we improve the services we provide, we may attract more students with ASD in the future, which will improve our enrollment numbers and tuition revenue.**
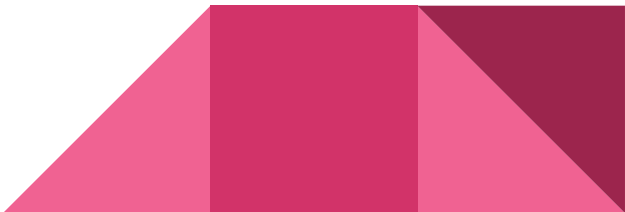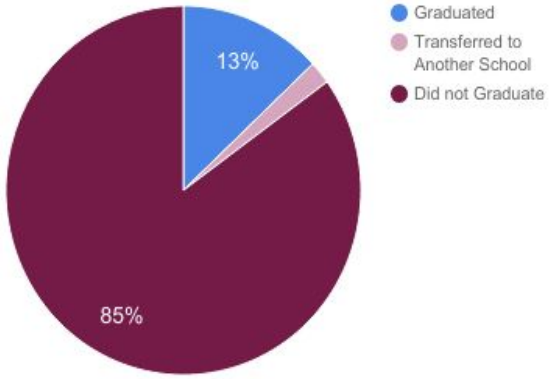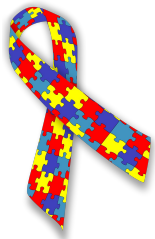
Number of Students with ASD
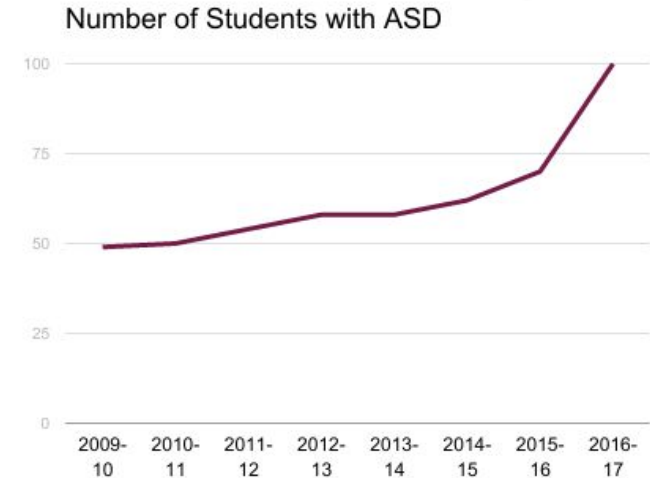
Enrollment Trends at Hill Valley University

- 57% of Hill Valley University's ASD students transferred from a local community colleges
- Only 13% of our ASD students graduate
  - 88% of them transferred from a 2-year institution
- ASD students majoring within the STEM fields are graduating at a higher rate

Completion Rate of Students with ASD 2015-2016

13%

85%

- Graduated
- Transferred to Another School
- Did not Graduate

Climate Assessment

- November 2016: committee conducted a climate assessment to identify the needs of current and potential students with ASD
- Gathered data on physical, attitudinal, and resource barriers for students with ASD through:
  - Survey to all students with ASD registered with Disability Services
  - Focus group of 6 students with ASD
  - Disability Services staff observations
- Results guided the proposed services for the Autism Spectrum Disorder Program
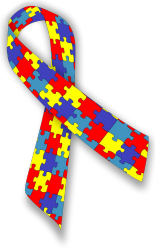- Follow up climate assessments planned for each year of program operation

Results of Climate Assessment

Office/Department	Current Services	Services to Add
Disability Services	- Accommodations - Tutoring - Advocacy	- Peer Mentors with ASD - Outreach Programs
Mental Health Services	Individual Counseling	- ASD-specific Support Groups - Specialized Training for Counselors
Residence Life	Housing, no unique services	- Mentoring - Improve physical dorms - Social Activities
Academic Affairs	Adhering to accommodations recommended by Disability Services	- Workshops for faculty - Improve the physical classroom environment
Student Activities	No current services/accommodations	- ASD student specific events - ASD accommodations for current events
Orientation	No current services/accommodations	- ASD educational session - ASD student room accommodations

# Proposed Services through the Autism Spectrum Disorder Program

Accommodations

- Provided by **Disability Services** and **Academic Affairs**
- Adaptive software that reads and takes notes
- Extended time for tests and assignments
- Allow tests to be taken in the quiet testing room at Disability Services
- Provide the instructor's lecture notes or a note taker
- Provide study guides for tests

Accommodations (continued)
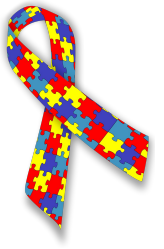
- Allow for more time for students to respond to oral questions
- Priority when selecting a seat in classroom
- Allow for short breaks to leave the classroom and/or a sensory object for situations when anxiety levels are high
- Allow a computer for class work, tests, and assignments

Tutoring & Mentoring

- Provided by **Disability Services,** with the support of **Academic Affairs** and **Student Activities**
- Tutors and mentors can be
    - Peer - upperclassmen with ASD, Education majors (preferably in the field of Special Education)
    - Professional - faculty and community members
- Tutors and mentors will help students understand:
    - course content
    - study skills
    - classroom procedures
    - responses to social situations
    - adjusting to life in college
    - preparing for transition out of college (after graduation)
- Tutor and mentor training on ASD provided by Disability Services

Outreach Programs & Advocacy
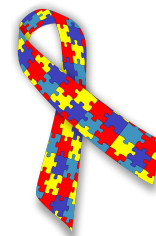
- Provided by **Disability Services** and **Mental Health Services,** with support of **ASD Program Committee**
- Outreach Program Objectives:
  - Help reduce (with the goal of eventually eliminating) the stigma surrounding ASD
  - Increase the inclusion of students with ASD with their typical peers
  - Provide information on ASD
  - Support individuals who believe they may have ASD, offer referrals to providers for screening and possible diagnosis
- Advocate for issues related to students with ASD with campus faculty, staff, and administration, community members, and local and national elected officials

Counseling Services
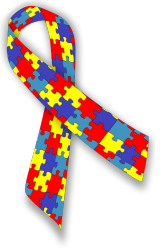
- Provided by **Mental Health Services**
- Individual Counseling
- Support Groups: place for social learning facilitated by a counselor with session topics selected based on student needs
- Trained, licensed counselors can help students learn to navigate and address:
  - relationships (platonic, romantic, and professional)
  - depression and anxiety
  - life-skills
  - communication skills
  - adjusting to the college environment
  - student development into young adulthood
  - preparing to transition out of college after graduation

The Classroom Environment

- Provided by **Academic Affairs,** with the support of **ASD Program Committee and Facility Management**
- Complete an environmental analysis of all classrooms to make the sensory environment more ASD-friendly
  - Install incandescent or natural lighting
  - Install carpet in all classrooms when possible
  - Priorities replacement of flickering lights in classrooms
  - Limit background noises
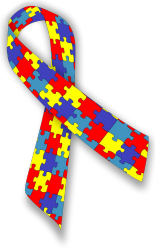
Residence Hall Environments
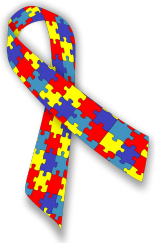
- Provided by **Residence Life,** with support of **Facility Management**
- Complete an environmental analysis of all classrooms to make the sensory environment more ASD-friendly
  - Install incandescent or natural lighting
  - Install carpet in all classrooms when possible
  - Limit background noises by assigning Autism rooms in section of dorm hall

Autism Living Community
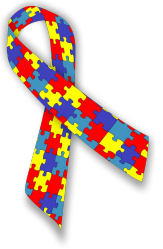
- Provided by **Residence Life** with support of **Disability Services**
- Employ staff dedicated to teaching independent living skills
- Weekly group activities for students to engage socially
- Monthly mentor meetings
  - Groups led by campus staff through a partnership with the Office of disabilities
- Purpose:
  - Provide students living with autism a support group with peers in the same situations
  - Teach students with autism social skills
  - Provide opportunities for students to work through college together with a support group

Faculty Workshops

- Provided by **Academic Affairs** and **Disability Services**
- Workshop offered twice a semester to inform faculty about ASD students needs and how they can improve the academic experience.
  - Provide practical strategies for adapting instructional styles and class activities
  - Implementation of technology
    - Course structure in Blackboard
  - Promote social engagement in the classroom

Student Activities
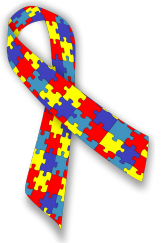
- Provided by the **Office of Student Activities,** with support of **Disability Services**
- Inclusion workshop for Student Activities professional and student staff
  - Brainstorm ways to make current activities more accessible
  - Brainstorm programming that will help students with ASD achieve success in college by:
    - Becoming more self aware
    - Developing school spirit
    - Finding alternative ways to socialize
- Student Programming Board (Program Council)
  - Committee comprised of students with disabilities
  - Can design programs they want
  - Same objective as Student Activities events
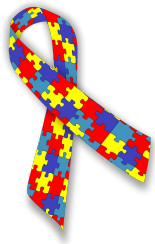
Orientation

- Provided by **Orientation** and **Residence Life,** with support of **Disability Services**
- Accommodations
  - Individual rooms
  - Opting out of overnight stay
    - Still will need to attend entire orientation session
  - Opting out of social activities
- Training
  - For professional staff and student staff
  - How to ensure students with ASD are getting the most out of their orientation experience
  - How to interact with parents of students with ASD
    - Ways to build trust

Orientation
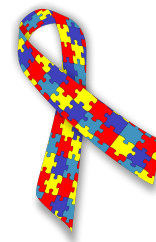
- Provided by **First Year Experience** and **Disability Services**
- Breakout/ Educational session
  - Session will include:
    - Accommodations offered and how to request them
    - Accommodations difference between high school and college
    - Self-Advocacy
    - Advantages and Disadvantages of Disclosure
    - Communication Strategies
   - Organization Skills
    - Social Skills

Estimated Budget for Services 2017-2018

Office/Department	Amount	Purpose
Disability Services	$82,500	- Hire peer tutors, peer mentors, note takers, and other part-time staff - Fund outreach programs - Update adaptive software - Hire full-time specialist to assist with ASD program services
Mental Health Services	$36,900	- Specialized staff development on ASD for counselors - Hire an intern to assist with increased workload
Residence Life	$100,000	- Hire a full-time residence life specialist dedicated to teaching life skills - Improve dorm rooms (install carpet, lighting) in 25 dorms - Mentoring and socializing meetings
Academic Affairs	$95,500	- Staff to teach faculty workshops - Install carpet in 10 classrooms - Install incandescent lights in all classrooms
Student Activities	$5,000	- No immediate increase - Extra cost to create new events or change existing events
Orientation	$500	- Reserve individual rooms for students with ASD who request them - Additional room reservation for educational session
Total	**$320,400**	

Future Recommended Programs/Services

Program/Service	Amount	Purpose
Pathway Program with local Community Colleges	$70,000	● Improve the transfer process through collaboration and consistency ● Recruit students with ASD
Continue improving the classroom environment	$350,000	● Install carpets, sound dampening materials, incandescent lights ● Upgrade older electronic equipment to limit "humming" background noises
Career Counseling Program	$50,000	● Expand the Counseling Services to include career counseling
Orientation session for students with ASD	$27,000	● Additional session if there is enough interest ● Amount based on a full orientation session of 250 students, includes dining, staffing, room rentals, residence life, and supplies ● Paid through orientation fee ($140/student)
ASD Case Managers in Disability Services	$80,000	● Hire two full-time case managers who will provide intensive support for students with ASD (help students improve life skills, monitor academic status & communicate with instructors, provide updates to parents, and more)
Total	**$577,000**	

Summary
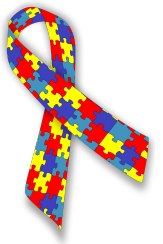
- Students with ASD are enrolling in greater numbers at Hill Valley University
- Successful collaboration across all functional areas will improve:
  - Retention and graduation rates for students with ASD
  - Reputation as a supportive institution for students with ASD, leading to enrollment growth
  - Transition into college for students with ASD
  - Employment rates for graduates with ASD
- **Investing in the ASD Program will have immediate and long-term positive returns when it comes to student development and achievement, institutional growth, and state educational outcomes.**