

## Classroom Tips for Faculty:

- Set clear rules and boundaries. In many instances, a student with Autism may be unaware of an issue but will accept being told proper classroom etiquette.
- Be clear when you speak to the class, specifically outlining what you expect from them regarding assignments.
- Write down any changes to the syllabus, assignment dates or class routine and ask if there are any questions.
- Meet the student after class with his/her questions, don't talk with them about their specific needs in front of the class.
- If needed, provide oral instructions and written instructions.
- Interpersonal skills may be difficult for a student with Autism, keep that in mind when speaking with the student about behavior issues in the classroom.
- Be clear on expectations. You may need to repeat instructions, the student with Autism may not get it the first time you explain these expectations.
- Be patient, realizing the student is trying to communicate, it may be much more difficult for them to understand the non-verbal cues.
- Provide detailed and clearly understood syllabus, be available for questions about the syllabus.
- Call or email the Office of Disability Services for assistance, 217-206-6666 or sweav3@uis.edu.



### DEAN OF STUDENTS

Founders Residence Hall 178  
4800 Eliza Farnham Drive  
Springfield, IL 62703  
Phone: (217) 206-8211  
Fax: (217) 206-6048  
Email: deanofstudents@uis.edu  
www.uis.edu/deanofstudents

#### **Our Office Provides:**

Advocacy & Support  
Student Conduct  
Student Rights & Responsibilities  
Student Grievances  
Campus Behavioral Intervention Team (CBIT)

#### **Office Hours**

Monday – Friday  
8:30 am – 5:00 pm



#### **Counseling Center**

University of Illinois Springfield  
One University Plaza, MS HRB 64  
Springfield, IL 62703  
Phone: (217) 206-7122  
Fax: (217) 206-7665  
Email: counseling@uis.edu

#### **Office of Disability Services**

University of Illinois Springfield  
One University Plaza, MS HRB 80  
Springfield, IL 62703  
Voice: (217) 206-6666  
TDD: (217) 206-6668  
Fax: (217) 206-7154  
Email: ods@uis.edu

## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

### What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

*The following information is sourced from Johnston Community College, Overland Park, Kansas.*

Autism is a complex neurobehavioral condition that includes impairments in social interaction and developmental language and communication skills combined with rigid, repetitive behaviors. Because of the range of symptoms, this condition is now called Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

- No two students are alike, especially students with Autism.
- Due to the diversity of Autism, you may see only a few or maybe all of the characteristics associated with Autism.
- Behaviors that seem odd, unusual, or even rude are in fact often unintentional.



### The ASD student may find it difficult to:

- Transition and/or adapt to changes with the class schedule or syllabus.
- Organize, initiate, plan, carry out and complete specific tasks.
- Think abstractly, things tend to be black or white.
- Be in an environment that is noisy, has bright lighting and distractions with other students.
- Interpret others' body language and facial expressions.
- Ask for assistance from others, even when people reach out to them.
- Separate from perseverative cognition. It is a collective term in scientific psychology for continuous thinking about negative events in the past or in the future (e.g. worry, rumination and brooding, but also mind wandering about negative topics).

Below are the main categories that students with ASD may struggle and the many ways these may present in the classroom.

### **Communication Skills**

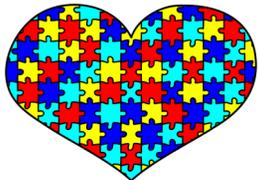
All students with ASD have some problems that may interfere with receptive or expressive communication. Some of these differences are very subtle and can lead to misunderstandings. Communication difficulties include processing verbal exchanges more slowly, misunderstanding sarcasm, idioms and jokes, very literal interpretation of words, and misunderstanding gestures and body language. Students with ASD may also have difficulties initiating communication, trouble staying on topic, taking turns and following conversational “protocol”. Some may be slower to organize thoughts and speak, and/or their voice tone and volume may be unusual.

### **Social Skills**

The social challenges for a student on the autism spectrum include problems understanding others perspectives, sharing space and making eye contact. Many individuals with ASD have extreme social anxiety and have difficulty negotiating with others, and working in groups. These students likely will not understand the “unwritten” classroom expectations and will often misinterpret facial expressions and other non-verbal cues.

### **Coping Skills**

Individuals with an autism spectrum disorder frequently have comorbid disorders mainly anxiety and stress. Sensory overload, social and communication expectations as well as transitions and changes often trigger anxiety and stress. When under stress, students on the autism spectrum may engage in behaviors that look strange and may even make others feel uncomfortable. These behaviors may include rocking, pacing, waving or flapping hands or fingers repetitively, chewing on their clothing or body, rambling on a topic of interest or they may display inappropriate emotion for the situation. They also may unexpectedly leave the situation with no explanation before or afterwards.



## **SERVING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

The decision to attend College is a major step in a student’s life, especially if there is a documented disability to manage. The many challenges they may face makes the transition from high school to college more difficult for some students. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is here to make the transition smoother for students with disabilities by providing academic accommodations to students with a wide range of disabilities, including students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). We serve students according to their individual needs, as we know not all students with the same diagnosis have the same need.

### **What ODS does to make the transition to college smoother in the classroom and other areas of the student’s life.**

We have grown this year with students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We provide academic accommodations on an individual basis. We work with each student’s professors to set up appropriate academic accommodations and supports based upon the interview with the student and the medical documentation provided to us.

Students with ASD may need ODS to be more involved with the professors, usually at the student’s request as we cannot reach out to the professor unless with the student’s permission. For example, we encourage students to present their academic accommodation letter to their professors and talk with them about their disorder/disability and any other services they may need with labs, field trips, etc. However; some students with ASD may need assistance contacting their professors. To ensure they are comfortable with the process, we offer role- playing for all students who may need help to feel more confident talking with their professors about their academic accommodations requested.

We email students periodically throughout the semester to ask if there are any problems. If the student tells us there are no problems; yet, there are problems, the only way we would know is if the professor lets us know. We want to assist when something isn’t going smoothly and solve the issues immediately. Once we are aware of an issue, we are in contact with the faculty, housing and other offices involved to ensure the appropriate accommodations are being provided. We want to be sure professors know to contact us with any problems in the classroom related to their accommodations. We will always be available also with evening courses, we give students and professors our private cell phone numbers to ensure availability.

### **Accommodations offered to students with ASD:**

When students contact the ODS to register for accommodations, they make an appointment to meet with a DS to ensure the approved documentation for the requested accommodations.

- The student receives an Accommodation Letter to give to their professors for approval via signature, with requested academic accommodations needed for each course.
- The student and professor sign the letter in agreement for the requested accommodations.
- The professor may question any accommodation believed to jeopardize the integrity of the course and may contact the ODS, DS to discuss their concerns and set up a meeting with everyone involved if necessary.
- The professor may also contact the ODS, DS to ask about any behaviors in the classroom that are interrupting to the other students in the class, inclusive of but not limited to, seizures and Tourette’s Disorder.
- After the letter is returned to the ODS with the signatures, the requested accommodations may be provided to the student.
- If there are other concerns of the student, related to conduct, the professor needs to contact the Dean of Student’s Office.
- The ODS, DS is available to discuss any concerns the professor has about attendance, testing format changes, illness in class (such as seizures or Tourette’s disorder).
- The ODS, DS is also available to schedule a meeting with the student, professor and DS if needed for clarification of information or needs discussion about course progress.



# Awareness