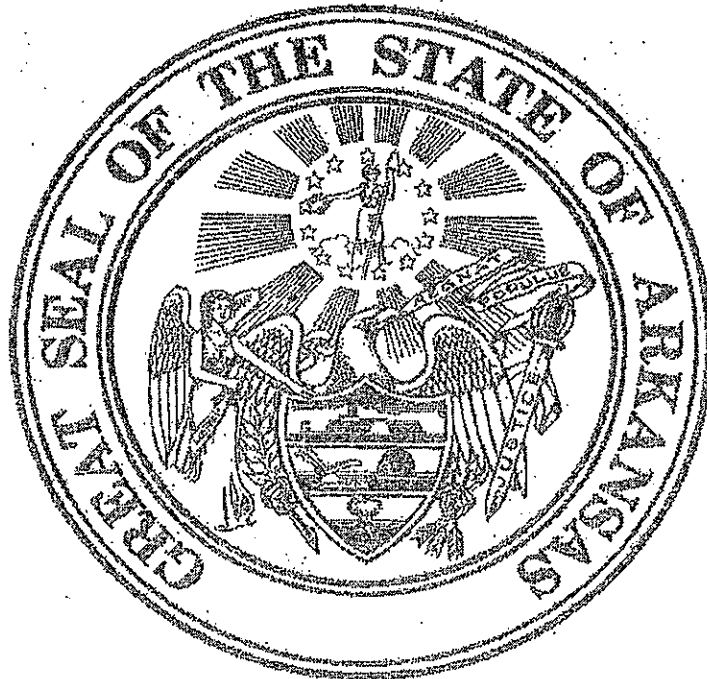


**Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism
Request for Information
June 14, 2012**



Arkansas Department of Higher Education
114 East Capitol Ave., Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 (501) 371-2000

Arkansas Northeastern College

From: James Shemwell [mailto:jshemwell@smail.anc.edu]
Sent: Thursday, June 14, 2012 8:56 AM
To: Nichole Abernathy
Cc: Dr. Robin Myers; Sherri Bennett; Laura Yarbrough
Subject: Fwd: FW: Autism Task Force Meeting Agenda

Nichole,

Responding to Director Broadway's question, ANC has yet to have a student request assistance with regard to autism. If we did, we would review the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) as provided by the public schools and make any reasonable accommodation. Our Adult Education/GED program offers accommodated teaching and testing for students with learning disabilities. Program features include frequent breaks, private testing sessions, extended test time, audio, and/or a scribe.

Thanks,
Jim

Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts

Although we are not a college or university, ASMSA has students each year with some form of autism. Usually what we see is Asperger's, a milder form of autism. In each case, there is a meeting of the academic counselor and instructors to determine the accommodations that need to be put in place. This generates a formal academic plan that is shared with the student and parents to ensure that the student has every opportunity for success in the classroom.

Janet

Janet Hugo, Ph.D.

Director

Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts

501-622-5100

Arkansas State University – Beebe

Hello Nichole,

Please find attached word document and pdf document concerning the requested information regarding Higher Education opportunities for students with Autism. Please let me know if the attached documents do not open correctly or I should provide other information. Thank you.
Tisha

Tisha L. Marzewski | Disability Services Coordinator
Arkansas State University-Beebe | Student Success Center
501.882.8906 | tmarzewski@asub.edu | www.asub.edu



ARKANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY
BEEBE

Beebe, Heber Springs, Searcy
Little Rock Air Force Base

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Shane Broadway, Interim Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education

FROM: Tisha L. Marzewski, Coordinator of Disability Services, ASU-Beebe

DATE: June 7, 2012

Subject: Information Requested Concerning Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Autism

P.O. Box 1000
Beebe, AR 72012

Phone:
501-882-8906

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501-882-8901

Web Site:
www.asub.edu

Students with Autism and Asperger syndrome at Arkansas State University-Beebe have access to all services available through the Office of Disability Services. These services include accommodations used in the classroom and testing, assistive technology, and advocacy and study skills guidance. Every student using services through the Office of Disability Services receives individual attention. This individualized service provides an avenue to customize accommodations that relate to each student's strengths and weaknesses and creates access to higher education.

Through the use of individualized service, the Office of Disability Services is able to deliver access more efficiently for students with Autism to higher education. The following are examples of how individualized services are provided by the Coordinator of Disability Services.

1. The coordinator works one on one with students before classes begin to explain how higher education experience will be different from his/her high school experience. This allows both the student and the coordinator to pinpoint areas of weakness and also areas of strengths and develop a plan of how accommodations will assist the student.
2. The coordinator meets with instructors before the semester to provide education on autism and Asperger syndrome and to review all accommodations that students will use.
3. Instructors are trained on how to manage some of the common challenges that many students with autism face in the classroom. This would include techniques on how to prevent a student who is heading for a "melt down" from disrupting the whole class by letting the student take a breather in a pre-determined room in the building and then coming back to class, how to work with a student who may want to ask constant questions by using a 3 questions per class rule with the student, how to correspond with a student who does not speak in the class by using a question note card system, and many other techniques that can be incorporated into the classroom that allows the student with autism to be a part of the learning experience.
4. The coordinator works with students to create a system of keeping the class materials organized and a system to aid students in keeping track of class due dates and testing dates.
5. The coordinator works with students to connect the students with campus resources such as the Learning Center and Student Support Services and also external resources such as Arkansas Rehabilitative Services.
6. The coordinator provides ongoing support during the semester to assist as needed for students, staff, and faculty.

TLM

CC: Dr. Kalthoff, V.C. Academic Affairs, ASU-Beebe
Dr. Garrett, V.C. Student Services, ASU-Beebe
Mr. Moore, Director Student Success Center, ASU-Beebe

Arkansas State University – Jonesboro

Nicole and Shane:

ASU-J does not have any specific programming for autistic students other than providing whatever ADA accommodations are appropriate through our disabilities services office. Although I do not have any specifics on the number of students enrolled with autism, I have noticed that we are either seeing more autistic students enrolling at ASU, or more students or their parents are making us aware of autism, especially during new student orientations. I think we are serving the needs of these students if their needs are such that there is a way to accommodate them.

Sorry I don't have more information to report.

Lynita

Lynita M. Cooksey, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Services
Dean of University College
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro
P.O. Box 179
State University, AR 72467
870.972.2030

Henderson State University

Over the past decade several students on the Autism/Asperger's spectrum have self-identified and been served through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at Henderson State University. Through documentation and in partnership with each student, functional limitations and strengths are identified. Appropriate accommodations are determined and academic support resources are discussed. Students are encouraged to meet regularly with one of the DRC Education Specialists. Opportunities are provided through role-playing appropriate behavior as needed. The DRC has a self-contained computer lab which allows for student and staff interaction. The Lab provides opportunities for socialization among students with a variety of disabilities and a means for staff to observe student behavior. Socialization issues can be addressed as noted.

The DRC staff at Henderson has designed our program service model for this population upon trainings presented by Lorraine Wolf, PhD., Janie Theirfeld Brown Ed.D., and John Ortiz, Ph.D., leaders in the field of Autism and Asperger Syndrome studies (*Students with Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for College Personnel* by Lorraine Wolf, PhD., Janie Theirfeld Brown, Ed.D., and G. Ruth Kukiela Bork, M.Ed. and *The Five Umbrellas: A Strength-Based Framework for Asperger's, High Functioning Autism, and Nonverbal Learning Disorders* by John Ortiz, Ph.D., Director and Founder of The Asperger's Syndrome Institute).

Vickie Faust, Assistant Director
Disability Resource Center
Henderson State University

National Park Community College

Nichole,

Attached is a list of services our campus offers for students with autism. Our Student Services staff also has a few questions, which they have listed at the end of the document. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Melony Ritter

Special Projects Coordinator

National Park Community College

501-760-6410

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT NATIONAL PARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

1. Evaluation of Accommodation and Services Needed for Students with Autism – A review of the student's educational/psychological testing and an interview with the student determines what accommodations are needed in order for the student to have equal access. Other services needed such as counseling, social cue training, and tutoring are provided if needed.
2. Students who require recorded textbooks are assisted with ordering textbooks from Learning Ally. Electronic textbooks can be ordered from the Textbook Publisher.
3. Self-Advocacy coaching is provided by the Disability Specialist. The student is advised to meet with their instructors on an individual basis to discuss his/her accommodation needs.
4. Adaptive equipment training is provided to students who need to utilize the Dragon Naturally Speaking voice dictation systems, Premier Software Systems, and Sara scan and read systems.
5. Study Skills and Test taking techniques are provided to students who need additional study skills training other than what is provided in the College Seminar Class.
6. Career Counseling is provided to students which includes interest inventories, resume writing, job interviewing techniques, assessment for possible accommodations for essential job functions for a chosen career field.

7. Learning styles counseling is provided to students to determine if they learn best by hands-on, visual, listening, or a combination of different learning methods.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING STATE WIDE SERVICES BEING PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH AUTISM.

1. What services will Rehabilitation Services and ACTI provide to students with Autism?
2. How can educational institutions best supplement the services currently provided by the state agencies and local school districts?
3. How can colleges and agencies build a cooperative relationship to assure that autistic students receive the best educational experience possible?

NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Dear Senator Mary Anne Salmon and Representative Uvalde Lindsey,

As part of his preparation for Friday's Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism discussion of higher education opportunities for students with Autism, ADHE Interim Director The Honorable Shane Broadway asked institutions about programs and services they offered:

The NorthWest Arkansas Community College Vice President for Learner Support Services, Dr. Todd L. Kitchen, provided the attached summary on NWACC services and approach to serving students with autism.

I thought it was very well crafted, complete and I call your attention to it.

Thank you,

Jim Hall

Executive Director, Community and Government Relations
NorthWest Arkansas Community College
One College Drive, Bentonville, AR 72712



Wednesday, June 13, 2012

NWACC Services for Students with Autism

*From Todd L. Kitchen, Ed. D.
Vice President for Learner Support Services*

As you know, the nature of our work in supporting students with disabilities in higher education settings is highly individualized to the needs of each student. The nature of Autism, as a "spectrum" disorder, is such that students who may share a diagnosis may present with a widely divergent academic interests, strengths and challenges.

All students who are on the spectrum and who choose to engage with our Disability Resource Center are afforded an individually crafted plan of academic accommodations to support them in their time with the College. This plan is a living document which can be revisited during the student's time with us – something we review periodically and intentionally with students, particularly when and if they are struggling. Academic research supports that a strong working alliance with students is beneficial to a range of important higher education outcomes: higher engagement, higher retention/completion, improved satisfaction rates. For new students or those who are struggling, we may recommend a standing weekly "follow along" meeting with a Disability Resources counselor to touch base and provide direction and guidance as the semester progresses. This also serves to reinforce to students that the Disability Resources staff are a standing resource for them: when problems arise, we want them to reach out to us. In some cases, students may elect to have their parents or guardians involved, though we work with students to develop strong, appropriate self-advocacy skills so that they are better able to navigate school and life on their own.

We are committed to supporting students with Autism and other developmental disabilities toward their fullest engagement with the offerings of the College. We engage students early and often in dialogue about their academic and career interests, using available information from their education records to assist them in planning their higher education journey. Our focus is on finding a "good fit" for all of our students. We do not steer students away from a given degree or program in which they express interest. All students, however, must meet the appropriate entrance/continuance criteria (typically evaluated through academic preparedness and progress measures), either with or without reasonable accommodations. Some students may not be able to satisfy the required technical standards for a given program of study, which may also prevent them from a given path.

There are a range of legal terms associated with these analyses – “otherwise qualified,” “fundamental alteration,” among others – but we work to discuss these aspects in clear and commonsense terms when we speak with students and parents.

Adjustment to significantly different routines (as compared to K12) and managing a new set of performance/social expectations tend to be two of the most significant barriers for college students on the Autism Spectrum. We have found facilitating what we informally call an “exploratory semester” (ES) to be of particular benefit in working this group of students. The exploratory semester is more descriptive of the “how” of the college experience than the “what” since it is not uncommon for students on the spectrum to have a strong sense of what they wish to study academically. The focus is on facilitating “College resiliency.”

The “exploratory semester may include:

- Frequent (typically weekly or biweekly) “follow along” meetings with Disability Resource Center counselors to work on skills such as time and stress management strategies; working with peers on group projects, positive and meaningful discussions with faculty members;
- Fewer credit hours or opting to take courses from instructors with whom the student is already familiar/comfortable;
- Taking online courses (if have appropriate computer skills) where the social dynamic is very different and primary engagement is through text which can be drafted/redrafted in privacy;
- Engaging outside resources (external to the College offerings) such as life coaches, personal/group therapies, private academic tutors;
- Focus on cultivating a comfortable social network: joining a student group of interest, meeting other students with Autism (some do, many do not), participating in community service or volunteer opportunities, engagement with church/other faith affiliations.

Please let us know if we can provide any additional information.

Dr. Todd L. Kitchen can be reached at tkitchen@rwacc.edu, or 1-479-619-4232 (office phone).

South Arkansas Community College

From: Barbara Jones [mailto:brjones@southark.edu]

Sent: Friday, June 08, 2012 01:45 PM

To: Nichole Abernathy

Cc: Shane Broadway; Valeriano Cantu

Subject: FW: Autism Task Force Meeting Agenda

Higher Education opportunities for students with Autism at South Arkansas Community College.

South Arkansas Community College (SouthArk) through Student Services provides reasonable accommodations to all students with documented disabilities, including those students with autism. The students must disclose the disability and then present documentation. After reviewing the documentation, our ADA counselor meets with the student and discusses reasonable accommodations. A Reasonable Accommodation Request Form is completed, and the VP of Student Services approves. A letter is sent to the instructor(s) with the accommodations listed—the disability is not noted in the letter. The student is encouraged to meet with the instructor(s) to discuss the accommodations given. Some of the accommodations are: extended time on testing, use of tape recorders, testing in an isolated environment, etc.

In addition, SouthArk initiated a pilot program for young adults (age from 19 years old to 29 years old) with intellectual disabilities in fall 2011. The *Stepping Stones* program, as it is called, began with eight students and one teacher/facilitator enabled through external funding provided by the Murphy Oil Corporation. The initial class of eight students had been “main-streamed” and had exited from special education high school programs. As a pilot program, entrance criteria has been developed for eligible students to include: completion of high school program, interview by case manager, a minimal reading level, basic conversational skills, independent self-help skills and students that are no harm to themselves or others.

The goal of the program is to create individual life plans for the students. The program includes: independent living skills, social interaction skills, workplace skills, and, if interested, academic/technical instruction (credit or non-credit) for students that are interested in or could benefit from such courses or adult education certifications. Student objectives include any or all of the following:

- regular college for credit coursework (with and without assistance)
- non-credit course work or certifications (i.e., GED, WAGE, CRC)
- job and vocational training
- internships
- employment

Our 2011-12 students ranged in age from 19 years old to 29 years old. Their diagnoses ranged from Downs Syndrome to Autism. This project has included collaboration between Hope Landing, local professionals, parents, and the administration of SouthArk. The project is housed on the East Campus of SouthArk. Various individuals have volunteered to assist students as needed for field trips, internship sites, and other

South Arkansas Community College

activities. All eight students have participated in work-related internships in their area of interest. Two of the eight students have been hired on a part-time basis at an area corporation. The students have attended various social events and volunteered for various organizations in the community. With an additional grant received in March, we anticipate hiring another teacher/facilitator such that additional students may be accepted to the program in the fall.

If you have any additional questions, please give me a call. Barbara

University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton

Nichole;

In response to Mr. Broadway's request, below is a statement from UACCM's Director of Counseling Services.....

We work with multiple students with Autism or Asperger's. I am certified to offer dietary/nutritional supplement counseling for a gluten free/casein free lifestyle. Sensory integration is a part of the Autism spectrum and we accommodate for students with sensory issues (testing services and classroom accommodations). "Black and white thinking" related to Asperger's is addressed through disability counseling services and professional counseling services, if needed. We utilize thought/choice mapping and cognitive-behavioral approach for cognitive restructuring for students with Asperger's. I am able to treat the "tag along" disorders of Autism, such as: OCD, ADHD, and anxiety. Our office serves as a "calming" safe location for students and students utilize the office frequently to maintain their behavior while stressed. Social stories and transition ques are used to help students on the Autism spectrum; these are research/evidence based best treatments. This is an individual disorder; when you see one person with Autism, you have seen one person with Autism.

Thanks,
Darren Jones
Vice Chancellor for Student Services

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

From: Thomas E C Smith
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2012 11:47 AM
To: Sharon L. Gaber
Subject: RE: Autism Task Force Meeting Agenda

Beginning Fall, 2012, we will implement our Autism Support Program. The goal of the program is for students with autism spectrum disorders to enjoy the full college experience and to be successful. The program will provide the intensive assistance students with high functioning autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD-NOS (pervasive developmental disorders – not otherwise specified), and non-verbal learning disabilities need to be successful in college. These students will matriculate as undergraduate U of A undergraduate students who have the cognitive abilities to be in college but require more help than their typical peers to complete a college degree. Services will include: (1) academic coaching; (2) accessing and supplementing available university services; (3) life coaching; (4) peer mentors; (5) social skills training; and (6) full integration into campus life. Students will receive 15 – 20 hours of direct contact each week with program staff, who will work closely with university faculty and various administrative offices, including Enrollment Services, Center for Educational Access, Enhanced Learning Center, Residential Life, and Student Activities. Students must apply to the program and be a fully admitted student to the university.

At this time it looks like we will have 7 – 10 students this fall. Students pay an additional \$5,000/semester for services. This is significantly less than a program that is beginning at University of the Ozarks which was highlighted in an article in the Democrat-Gazette a few weeks ago. Dr. Aléza Greene can answer any specific questions, and I am sure she would be happy to testify or speak to legislators about the program. tom

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Nichole,

We don't have any specific programs for students with autism at UALR. However, we do have several students with Asperger's Syndrome, which is on the autism spectrum. When most people hear the word Autistic, it conjures up an image that is perhaps not the most helpful. I can't think of an example of an autistic student at UALR who didn't have Asperger's Syndrome. So when we talk about this student population, we use Aspergers rather than Autistic. It is, in my opinion, a much more accurate term for the students we see in our four-year institution. Aspergers students are high functioning and often do very well in the classroom. The area where our department is called in is almost always for social situations like the residence hall, or study groups. A common accommodation might be for the student to have a private bedroom in the residence hall, so he or she can have a break from being around people all day long, which can be trying.

We have a student-led group - Students Beyond Barriers - that we advertise to all incoming students who register with the DRC, and several with Aspergers are involved. This group gathers regularly during the school year to watch movies that depict disability, and then discuss the messages, both explicit and implicit, in the film and how that help or hurt people with disabilities. It is also a safe place where students can express their frustrations, their victories, and just their day-to-day experiences at UALR.

If there is any further information I can provide, please don't hesitate to let me know.

All the best,

sd

--

Sharon Downs | Director
University of Arkansas at Little Rock | Disability Resource Center
501.569.8252 office | 501.303.4064 mobile | 501.569.8068 fax | sadowns@ualr.edu | ualr.edu/disability

University of Arkansas at Monticello

Dear Ms. Abernathy,

Per Mr. Broadway's request, the response below is in reference for information concerning institutional programs or services provided to students with autism.

The University of Arkansas at Monticello recognizes that autism is a broad spectrum disorder and as such, accommodations for students with autism must and will be considered on an individual case-by-case basis. A student's medical documentation and professional recommendations are first reviewed for any diagnosed disability. All class syllabi include a statement regarding disability services. Reasonable accommodations are arranged, in association with services provided by other professional agencies and suggested accommodations offered by professional agencies.

Accommodations for students with autism may include: verbal testing; tutorial assistance; audio books; counseling; guidance and assistance to maintain orderly daily routines; preparation for anticipated changes in routines; planning and practicing communication strategies and social routines; quiet areas – including private residential assignment and study areas; guidance and direction for and with faculty/staff; access to computerized testing; access to computer use for writing; request for classroom notes or in-class note assistance; headsets or other audio control devices; visual schedules and graphic organizers; visual or written instructions; and other reasonable assistance as determined and needed on a case-by-case basis.

I hope Mr. Broadway finds this information helpful as he prepares to speak with the Legislative Task Force on Autism this Friday. Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Jay Hughes
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Good Morning Nichole;

This note is in reference to Mr. Broadway's request for institutional assistance provided to students with autism.

At the University of Arkansas at Monticello, a student's medical documentation and professional recommendations are first reviewed for any diagnosed disability. Any and all cases are evaluated individually. Reasonable accommodations are then arranged, in association with services provided by other professional agencies. Any class includes a syllabus statement regarding disability services, as well. For autistic students, services may include:

Counseling.

Guidance and assistance to maintain orderly daily routines.

Preparation for known changes in routines.

Social interaction strategies.

Quiet areas—including private residential assignment, and recommended study areas.

Guidance and direction for and with faculty.

Computer/testing/study areas.

Request for classroom notes, or in-class note assistance.

University of Arkansas at Monticello

Headsets or other noise control devices.
Other reasonable assistance as determined and needed.

Again, each case is evaluated on an individual basis.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Best wishes,
Mary

Mary Whiting
Dean of Enrollment Management
University of Arkansas at Monticello
P. O. Box 3600
Monticello, AR 71656
870-460-1026--phone
870-460-1926--fax

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

**Students with Autism
at the
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff**

Students with autism have a full range of disability and student mentoring services available in order to assist with their matriculation at this university. The Disability Services Office can provide reasonable accommodations, to include note taking, tape recorder, non-distracting environment for testing, extended time on tests and homework assignments and other accommodations deemed appropriate each individual student. Also, a customized academic support plan will be developed to include academic tutoring, either by a peer or by the instructor. Additionally, the student will be provided a peer mentor to assist with social and academic needs.