



Disability Resource Center

~Ensuring Access, Supporting Success~

AUTISM INFORMATION FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a disorder that can seriously impact communication, behavior, and social functioning. Some individuals with ASD are high functioning, while others have difficulty verbalizing and engage in constant repetitive behaviors. Individuals with autism bring positive attributes to campus, but often have a unique, sometimes challenging conduct in the classroom. Though individual cases and characteristics vary, there are some common characteristics of individuals with autism:

- inappropriate social interaction
- poor eye contact
- compulsive behavior
- impulsivity
- repetitive movements, actions or speech
- excessive talking or talking too little
- abnormal focus on a particular subject or activity
- unaware or difficulty understanding others' emotions
- difficulty "reading" non-verbal communication
- difficulty accepting points of view that differ from their own
- poor organization, time management and planning
- anxiety
- sensory sensitivity
- emotional reactions to unscheduled or sudden change
- focus solely on the details and may miss the "big picture"

Individuals with ASD often need individualized support or a specialized program that can address the identified needs. Although we do not have specialized programming at Thiel College, students with Autism can seek accommodations through the Disability Resource Center. If a student has identified to the DRC, he or she will provide faculty members with an accommodation letter outlining the accommodations required by law. To avoid liability issues, please do not attempt to "accommodate" a student without documentation from the DRC. Reasonable accommodations may not address all of the challenges students with ASD encounter. Faculty and staff may need assistance in managing students in the classroom and on campus. Below are some strategies that can be utilized— they are not required, but are recommended.

- Allow delivery of assignments in different formats such as electronically.
- Provide the option to work either individually or in a group.
- Provide visual aids.
- Allow for peer assistance when appropriate.
- Use concrete, clear directives.

- Keep language simple. Use phrases straight to the point – avoid “gray” instructions.
- Foreshadow and clarify changes in a schedule as soon as possible.
- Provide fewer choices for the student to pick from and make sure they are clear.
- Avoid using sarcasm, idioms, or other indirect language as this will confuse the student who tends to look at things literally.
- Provide a clear structure of procedures and what is expected not only in the class but for each individual assignment. If there will be changes to this structure give as much repetitive warning as possible as early as possible.
- Be aware of characteristics and social differences such as poor eye contact, speaking out, or impatient behavior and correcting others. If these actions occur and cause disruption, discuss expected classroom behavior outside of class time one on one. Students are accountable for following standards of conduct.

If you need additional information or support, please contact the DRC.

Additional Online Resources

<https://ldaamerica.org/educators/>

www.4teachers.org/profdev/index.php?profdev=sn