



P R O J E C T D A R E

Best Practices

Students with ASD in the Postsecondary Environment

1. **Transition programs** such as Project DARE and Make the Cut, encourage students with ASD to get to know the college, connect with a counsellor and other staff, to promote a greater comfort level when they arrive in September.
2. Provide **tours** of the Disability Services area, the AT Lab, Test Room and Quiet Study Room before classes begin. Take a walking tour with the student a week before school, so they are familiar with the proximity of each class.
3. Encourage students to **reduce courses early**, if they have too much on their plate or are experiencing far too much anxiety. Success at a few courses is a better outcome than low or failed grades resulting from a far too heavy course load.
4. Take advantage of **regular meetings** with a Learning Strategist, Adaptive Technologist, and a counsellor. Students may find that meeting every week at the same day and time with one of these specialists, will keep them on track.
5. Meetings with each of the **professors**, to explain what ASD is, share information, and talk about accommodations and supports, are essential. There is still a lack of awareness about students with ASD in the postsecondary environment.
6. Because college and university students are adults, there is normally little if any contact with parents by the counsellor. With this group however, there is more of a need to **involve parents**, both to support the student and assist the parent with the transitions. Postsecondary education requires a great deal of independence, which students with ASD may lack.
7. If the student has a **case worker**, it is helpful to involve this person in your meetings. Students feel well supported when they can connect with someone both on and off campus.
8. Faculty need to understand the importance of assisting the ASD student with **group work**, helping the student fit into a group, and socialize appropriately with peers. This is a mandatory skill, particularly for college programs.
9. If the student agrees, it may be appropriate for the counsellor to go to a class and talk about what ASD is. Once **peers** have an understanding of the behavior they are seeing, they may be more empathetic. If possible, ask for one volunteer who will take the initiative to ensure that the student is included and not ridiculed or left out.

10. Referring a student with ASD to Counselling Services to assist with how to handle stress and **social situations**, may be needed.
11. Encourage students to join **Aspirations**, a social opportunity for students with ASD.
12. Take the time to learn about an **area of interest** that the student may have. Try to connect new learning to this area of interest.
13. Ensure regular appointments with a **Learning Strategist** are made, to develop effective organization and time management strategies. These students tend to respond best to visual strategies and cues. Keeping it concrete, and breaking large assignments into smaller pieces is critical.
14. If time permits, **send an email** to the student after each meeting with a short summary of the main points of discussion and next steps.
15. Connect a student with ASD to a **good peer tutor**. Because processing and storing information will be difficult in some content areas, these students will need to review material until they understand it. Working with a mature peer tutor can also reinforce good social skills.
16. Keeping appointments and assignment due dates in one place can be a huge issue for these students. Working with them on ACSIS, Blackboard, college email issues, and keeping track in a **paper or electronic agenda** is a must.
17. Continue with **meetings throughout the semester**, and take an opportunity to reinforce all the progress to date, encouraging the student to keep going.
18. Keep a **sense of humour**. Having a good laugh together does wonders for the spirit.

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