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Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration 2013 Yearbook:

Jazzing It Up

Edited by
Frances Kochan, Linda Searby
and Maysaa Barakat

Editorial Assistance by
Altamese Stroud-Hill

Published by:
Auburn University
College of Education
3084 Haley Center
Auburn, AL 36849
September 2013



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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The *Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration Yearbook* is a refereed journal published under the auspices of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (SRCEA). The title of the 2013 Yearbook, *Jazzing it Up*, was the theme of the 2012 Annual Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The Council is a non-profit, professional society that exists for the improvement of educational leadership preparation programs through the promotion of research and the exchange of ideas and information. Membership is open to all persons interested in the improvement of preparation programs for educational administrators. An annual meeting is held in the Fall, at varied locations in the South.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of SRCEA and/or joining us at the 2013 annual meeting in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma should check the SRCEA website (www.srcea.us)

Anyone interested in submitting a manuscript for the 2014 *Yearbook*, should refer to the information contained on page 22 of this *Yearbook*. If you are willing to be a reviewer for the publication, please see page 44 or contact

Dr. Ronald Childress, Editor

SRCEA Yearbook

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AUTHOR NOTES

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Rebecca Hansen is the Program Coordinator for the West Virginia Autism Training Center's College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome at Marshall University. Ms. Hansen is currently a doctoral student in Education Leadership in the Graduate School of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia. Her area of emphasis is in student affairs issues within higher education, with specific interest in issues related to access and comprehensive supports for students with autism spectrum disorders. Ms. Hansen holds an undergraduate degree in Biology and a master's degree in Student Affairs Counseling. She has provided individualized and person-centered supports for students with ASD at Marshall University for over nine years.

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Gwendolyn A. Martin is a licensed professional counselor currently employed as an elementary school counselor. She earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Georgia, where she also works as an adjunct professor in the College of Education. She has over 16 years of experience in public education that began as a Special Education Teacher. Research and writing interests include barriers to women in school leadership, role perceptions of school counselors, training teachers to use data to drive instruction and student motivation.

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Michael D. Richardson is Meraux Endowed Professor of Educational Leadership and Department Head for Educational Leadership and Technology at Southeastern Louisiana University. Previously he served as Professor of Educational Leadership and Director of Doctoral Studies in the Tift College of Education at Mercer University. In addition he held faculty and administrative appointments at Western Kentucky University, Clemson University and Georgia Southern University. Dr. Richardson served as Founding Editor of the *Journal of School Leadership* and as Editor of the *Journal of At-Risk Issues* and Founding Editor of both *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* and *International Review of Educational Administration*. Dr. Richardson served as a secondary and elementary principal, Personnel Director, Director of Special Projects, Coordinator of Federal Programs, and Assistant Superintendent before entering higher education.

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Linda Searby joined the Educational Leadership faculty at Auburn in January, 2012. She is the Review Editor for *Mentoring & Tutoring Journal*, and serves on the Executive Boards of the International Mentoring Association and the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration. Dr. Searby has published over 18 articles in her area of research, which focuses on mentoring from the protege’s perspective, specifically on the development of a mentoring mindset in proteges. Dr. Searby’s research interests also include the assistant principalship and instructional leadership preparation.

Sandra Bass Talbert is serving in her 8th year as superintendent of Lorena Independent School District in Lorena, Texas. She has been an educator in public schools for 28 years and is committed to leading by example, building consensus among all stakeholders in education, and is herself a lifelong learner. Sandra’s service in education has ranged from elementary schools to college level including a variety of roles such as teacher, administrator, and statewide trainer. Sandra received her Bachelor’s Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University, her Master’s Degree from Sam Houston State University, and her Doctorate from Tarleton State University. She currently serves on multiple local, regional, and statewide education committees and has been recognized for her leadership among educators.

Tina M. Tinney is currently an Instructor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana where she also earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. She has been a higher education faculty member for 14 years, with 7 years as an instructor at the university level and 7 years in the Community College system during which time she served as an Associate Professor, program director and Chair of Health and Natural Sciences. Her research interests include student success, the transfer function, and accountability and assessment in higher education.

Reflections on the 2013 SRCEA Yearbook

Frances Kochan, Linda Searby & Maysaa Barakat
Auburn University

Last year's SRCEA conference theme was *Jazzing It Up*. We think the title is very appropriate to this 2013 Yearbook, as it contains a mixture of many diverse ideas coming from both seasoned scholars and newer arrivals. The topics cover issues in K-12 and higher education and they are situated in a wide variety of settings. We think that, like jazz, the parts of the journal come together to form an interesting and exciting whole.

The first article, *Successful Principals in High Poverty Schools: Some Basic Criteria*, written by Sheila Moore, received the SRCEA Outstanding Young Scholar Award. Dr. Moore's article focuses on principals of successful and unsuccessful schools who serve high poverty student populations. Like the music of jazz, she moves from the traditional focus of most such research to look at the demographic factors related to these principals including such elements as race, gender, age, and years of service. Her findings provide important information for those hiring principals and point to a wide spectrum of research ideas for others to consider.

The second paper, written by past president Barbara Mallory, *Jazzing up the Leadership Repertoire: Findings from Action Research*, also looks at leadership at the school level. It not only incorporates the conference theme in its title, but describes a setting which depicts an ensemble of people, with differing roles, creating a new way of working together through a distributed leadership model. The rich descriptions provided help the reader to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes used and the outcomes achieved in this exciting approach to change.

Edward Bouie, in his manuscript, *The 'Do Something Syndrome': Planning for School Improvement in a Turbulent Political* environment, presents a stimulating overview of the political environment which has forced schools into a continuous cycle of change. This movement and back and forth

flow is similar to the notes that flow from a jazz number, but unlike the unique sounds that emote from the instruments, Bouie presents an environment of discord, in which inappropriate models are being thrust upon schools, causing them to "do something" which may not be a viable solution to the problems before them.

Like the ebb and flow of jazz, Sandra Bass Talbert and Don Beach move the focus of the Yearbook back to the individual leader in their article, *Superintendent Retention: Organizational Commitment and Superintendent Longevity*. Continuing the metaphor of jazz, these authors take a look at the longevity of the superintendent through a creative lens. They examine, not what others, such as the school board or community think or do, but rather focus on the commitment of the superintendent as an element in his or her continuation on the job. The result is an intriguing and unique look at the issue of superintendent retention, which offers intriguing avenues for future research.

Christopher Pritchett and Trellys Riley continue the focus on school leadership in their paper, *School Leaders' Perceptions of the Importance of Disposition Standards for Potential Leaders*. The authors help us to see, that like a jazz group, all players must have a voice and a part to play in the final outcome if it is to be successful. They delve into school leaders' perceptions of university preparation programs and the standards used in creating and implementing them. They move us from the school setting to the connections between schools and universities. This helps us to transition to the next part of the Yearbook, which focuses on issues more closely connected to higher education. Musically then, we move to another tempo.

Pamela Lemoine, Michael Richardson, Evan Mense, and Kenneth Lance, not only change the tempo, open up a whole new dimension of

learning in their article, *Cyberlearning: The Social Media Connection*. They explore new horizons through their comprehensive description of the world of social media and how it is and can be used in higher education to foster learning and personal growth. They present the challenges and open our eyes and our ears to new possibilities. The concepts of equity and fostering learning for all through social media carry-over, like a musical theme, to our next study.

Marc Ellison, Jaclyn Clark, Michael Cunningham, and Rebecca Hansen present a melody of hope in their manuscript, *Academic and Campus Accommodations that Foster Success for College Students with Asperger's Disorder*. Here, they identify the attributes necessary if institutions want to ensure success for students with Asperger's Disorder. The authors stress the need to have an environment in which, like a good jazz ensemble, the parts create a whole in which everything and everyone one is able to add their own special attribute to enrich the outcome.

Tina Tinney's article, *Using a Biological Lens to Investigate Successful Student Outcomes: Linking Planning, Policies, and Population Dynamics*, like the previous authors, examines issues within the environment. However, she addresses them from the perspective of how students' use the resources available within the university setting relates to their learning

success. This manuscript, which won the outstanding graduate paper award, completes our repertoire. As a graduate student who demonstrated outstanding research and writing skills, like the jazz musician who plays a new sound or rhythm, she helps us to see how we can build on past knowledge to create new understandings.

We thank all of the authors for their contributions to the *Yearbook*. Our gratitude also goes to the reviewers, who are listed separately, within this document. They graciously contributed their time and expertise to assure a high quality publication. Thanks also go to Altamese Stroud-Hill, our wonderful assistant, who formatted all of the materials and helped to complete this task. We could not have completed it without her.

This will be our last year as co-editors of the *SRCEA Yearbook*. We have appreciated the opportunity and thank the officers and SRCEA Board for their support over the last two years. We pass the mantle on to Dr. Ronald Childress, in the College of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University in Charleston. Dr. Childress has been a prolific contributor to the journal and has served as a reviewer for many years. He will bring his expertise and commitment to this task and we thank him for accepting it. We know he will do a fantastic job.

Academic and Campus Accommodations that Foster Success for College Students with Asperger's Disorder

Marc Ellison, Ed.D, Jaclyn Clark, MA.T., Michael Cunningham, Ed.D., & Rebecca Hansen, MA
Marshall University

Abstract

Although the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has risen significantly since first described in the 1940s, there is a dearth of information in regard to effectively supporting the classroom instruction and navigation of campus society for students with Asperger's Disorder, and how to support their navigation of a campus society. This qualitative study explores factors needed to provide effective supports to college students diagnosed with this disorder. Investigators convened a panel of experts to provide input on the topic, and then used a Delphi surveying method to categorize common themes identified by panel members. The findings resulted in the creation of the Best Practices Checklist for On-Campus Supports of Students with ASD in Higher Education checklist. The information gleaned should be of value for those in higher education whose students may have ASD and for the school leaders they prepare.

Background

Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disability Not Otherwise Specified (PDD NOS) are psychological conditions commonly described as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), a term that suggests flexibility regarding impairment within this continuum. Research demonstrates that while individuals diagnosed with ASDs experience a "disruption in development [that] occurs across multiple areas of functioning" (VanBergeijk, Klin & Volkmar, 2008, p. 1360) those diagnosed can range from mildly to profoundly affected by the disorder. The prevalence of ASDs has increased significantly since the disorders were first described in the 1940s by doctors Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger. The Centers for Disease Control currently reports the prevalence in the United States at 1:88 children (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>). Males are affected at a rate five times greater than females: 1 in 54 boys are diagnosed with an ASD, while 1 in 252 girls are affected.

In contrast to Autistic Disorder, individuals diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder (commonly called Asperger's Syndrome) develop language and communication skills along typically expected

milestones and experience no clinically significant delays in adaptive functioning or cognitive abilities, with the exception of skills used for social interaction. Indeed, those with AS often have well developed vocabularies and "may possess cognitive abilities similar to neurotypical or gifted individuals" (VanBergeijk, et al., 2008, p. 1359).

Despite pervasive and often debilitating social, emotional, and communication challenges that exist within the autism spectrum, evidence suggests many individuals with ASDs have the intellectual capacity to learn within a mainstream educational environment (Huckabee, 2003) and many may be intellectually gifted (Huber, 2008). Some with Asperger's Disorder may be attracted to careers that can be reached only through the completion of academic study at an institution of higher learning (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Burtenshaw & Hobson, 2007). Indeed, the obsessive, fixed interest symptomatic of the disorder provides the focus for intense, rigid study and the ability to grasp narrow expertise of a specific subject (Farrell, 2004).

Evidence suggests that in 2008 there were "between 284,000 and 486,000 individuals"

(VanBergeijk, et al., 2008, p. 1359) under the age of 20 diagnosed with milder forms of ASDs potentially preparing to enter American colleges and universities. The increasing prevalence may create significant difficulties for colleges and universities unprepared for a growing number of students who have the intellectual ability necessary to enter college, but lack the social and cognitive organization skills necessary to graduate. The successful support of college students with more traditional physical or learning disabilities is well represented in education research and literature (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008; Wolf, Brown, & Bork, 2009). There is a dearth of research, however, regarding how best to support college students with AS (VanBergeijk, Klin & Volkmar, 2008).

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore elements needed to provide effective academic, social, and independent living supports to college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder. Specifically, researchers were interested in investigating the pedagogical and social accommodations necessary for an effective college experience for this student population. It was anticipated that a deeper understanding of the education and support needs associated with Asperger's Disorder would benefit individual college students diagnosed with the disorder and the faculty and staff within higher education who must instruct and support them.

Methods

This qualitative study explored the phenomenon of providing effective instruction and support to college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, especially those issues related to their access and supports that address needs specific to their disorder. The research questions were:

1. What challenges do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder anticipate *most* students diagnosed with the disorder will experience on a traditional college or university campus?
2. What supports do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder

anticipate *most* students diagnosed with the disorder will require for success on a traditional college or university campus?

3. Do experts believe traditional "academic adjustments and reasonable modifications" commonly found in higher education meet the needs of *most* college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder?
4. What do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder report as barriers to providing necessary classroom and academic accommodations to college students diagnosed with the disorder?
5. What do experts in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder report as barriers to providing necessary non-academic supports (on campus, but outside the classroom) to college students diagnosed with the disorder?

Through purposive sampling, ten experts were identified and invited to participate in an open-ended survey. Invited panelists were selected from diverse backgrounds; each, however, had extensive knowledge of autism spectrum disorders and professional experience in supporting college students with Asperger's Disorder. Panel members included college professors, autism researchers, disability support coordinators in higher education, and individuals diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder who hold college degrees and who speak publically on the subject of autism-specific supports within higher education. Panelists were invited to participate by blind email. Seven of the ten agreed to participate. A description of panel members is included in the *Settings and Participants* section of this paper.

A Delphi protocol was designed to solicit information from panel members in multiple rounds until a consensus was reached among them. Investigators anticipated three rounds of surveys; however, only two rounds were necessary before consensus was reached. Round 1 of the survey (Attachment A) consisted of five questions that gathered opinions on: (1) the most common challenges students with Asperger's Disorder typically face in college, (2) the type of assistance

most commonly needed to effectively support college students with Asperger's Disorder, (3) the effectiveness of traditional disability services in higher education for students with Asperger's Disorder, (4) barriers to effective academic supports, and (5) barriers to effective non-academic supports.

Data received from Round 1 were organized into common themes, placed into a matrix (Attachment B) and then sent to panel members who were asked to either "agree" or "disagree" with results that emerged from that round. Panel members who disagreed were asked to explain their contention in detail. Round 2 of the survey (Attachment C) also provided the opportunity to provide new or clarifying information about each data category. More detailed information about this analysis is provided in the data collection and analysis section.

Setting and Participants

The exchange of surveys and responses took place electronically via email. Panel members included disability service professionals employed in higher education; noted researchers and autism professionals; college faculty with experience teaching or supporting students diagnosed with AS; and individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders who have a public, national reputation (through authoring books or articles on the subject) for expertise regarding this phenomenon. A description of individuals who participated as panel members follows.

Participant 1: The director of a university-based autism service program and clinic that specializes in the support of college students with Asperger's Disorder.

Participant 24: The director of a university-based program that specializes in supporting and educating individuals with autism spectrum disorders across the lifespan, and has extensive experience developing support programs for college students with Asperger's Disorder.

Participant 5: The director of an educational program for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Participant 5 has a national reputation for expertise on the topic of adult services for individuals with Asperger's Disorder. Participant 5 agreed to participate, and replied with responses to Round 1.

Participant 47: An author, former university faculty member, and public speaker diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder.

Participant 58: A university faculty member, author, and public speaker diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder.

Participant 69: A disability services employee within higher education who has experience developing supports for college students with Asperger's Disorder.

Participant 710: A disability services employee within higher education who has experience with developing supports for college students with Asperger's Disorder.

Three additional individuals — a university faculty member and author diagnosed with an ASD, a director of a statewide autism support program, and a person who has publically disclosed a personal diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder and who directs an organization dedicated to teaching self-advocacy skills to the population — were invited but declined to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Panel members were asked to complete each Delphi survey round by specific dates and reply electronically with answers to investigators. Data from Round 1 were organized per question, and an emergent category analysis was performed. Categorized responses were then ranked from "Most Cited" to "Least Cited" among the panel.

Two investigators independently analyzed each categorized response, and then compared outcomes to ensure a reliable interpretation of data. Disagreement occurred surrounding the

organization of responses of the terms *self-advocacy* and *disclosure*. One investigator interpreted the terms as a significant topic deserving of a stand-alone category. A second investigator interpreted the relevance of the terms to be contained within the context of other topics that addressed symptoms, such as *executive functioning* or *communication challenges*. Due to the prevalence of the terms in the responses from panelists, however, a decision was reached to make *Self-Advocacy and Disclosure* a separate and distinct category. Responses from panel members and the emergent categories that resulted are:

Challenges most students with Asperger's Disorder will experience on a traditional college campus

Panel members suggest a variety of challenges that exist for most college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, with the majority of those challenges being outside the traditional "academic," environment. Types of challenges identified by panel members, from most-to-least cited responses are: *social interactions with peers and professors*, *executive functioning challenges* (particularly in regard to time management and academic organization), *social communication challenges* (especially in understanding and using the pragmatics of language), *dorm life and independent living*, (hygiene problems or roommate issues), *dining hall and food preference issues*, *difficulty working in groups*, and challenges involving *self-advocacy* and *disclosure* of their psychological diagnosis.

Themes that emerged from these responses indicate most college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder will experience: (1) academic challenges, (2) social challenges, (3) communication challenges, (4) independent living challenges, (5) challenges with cognitive organization, and (6) challenges with self-advocacy and disclosure.

The supports most college students with Asperger's Disorder will require to be successful

The ability to recognize and access "resources" and "information" were key components to the supports panel members believed integral to college success. Needs identified, in most-to-least cited order, were: *a responsive disability services office*, *assistance with executive functioning elements necessary for the typical college lifestyle* (such as calendar and scheduling support, assistance with organization of assignments, and help with preparation for assignments and exams), *assistance with social interaction and participation* (especially professionals who can model correct social skills, or provide assistance in learning new social skills), *assistance with identifying campus resources* (such as school based clubs, organizations, and tutoring services), and *access to effective counseling services* (to help reduce anxiety and develop stress management strategies).

Emerging themes believed necessary for successful supports were: (1) access to basic academic adjustments and reasonable accommodations, (2) service personnel to provide direct academic assistance and/or advice, (3) service personnel to provide direct social assistance and/or advice, (4) assistance with identifying campus resources, and (5) mental health services.

Assessing the ability of traditional disability services to meet the needs of students with Asperger's Disorder

Panel members voiced strongly that traditional disability services on modern college campuses do not meet the needs of students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, with six of the seven panel members replying "No" to this specific survey item. Comments about this item were categorized into two groups: *traditional accommodations tend to be academically related* (extended time on exams, etc.) *assistance is needed in regards to clarification and interpretation of test questions and academic assignments*. The latter seemed directly tied to communication and language difficulties symptomatic of ASD.

Panel members suggest the needs of students with Asperger's Disorder differ greatly from the historical and traditional focus of disability services in higher education. Emergent themes were: (1)

characteristics of this disorder require a greater need for social supports than is provided by traditional disability services, and (2) the language challenges associated with the disorder requires a specialized delivery of information to the student. Some panel members opined that traditional disability services can be helpful; however social based supports are of a greater need than academic based supports.

Barriers that prevent necessary classroom and academic accommodations

The misunderstanding and misinterpretation of symptoms, along with a general lack of knowledge about the disorder, appears to be primary barriers to effective academic accommodations. In most-to-least cited order, panel members report the *lack of understanding* about the needs of students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, the fact that *social needs are often unforeseen* because of the strong academic competence, and that *intelligence often masks the social needs* of those in this student population as three of the top four barriers to academic accommodations. Acknowledging that dedicated resources (including dedicated professional staff) are necessary for students with this disorder, panel members' second most mentioned barrier to providing academic accommodations was *limited resources and space* within disability or support offices.

Themes that emerged as barriers to effective academic accommodations were: (1) *knowledge of and about the disorder*, (2) *finances and available resources of traditional disability office*, (3) *too strong an emphasis is placed on academic ability by college faculty and staff, with too little emphasis placed on social ability*, and (4) *self-advocacy skills of student to request academic accommodations and the decision on disclosing the diagnosis to administrative staff and professors*.

Barriers that prevent necessary non-academic supports to college students with Asperger's Disorder

Panel members expressed a variety of reasons that effective supports may be prevented from occurring outside the classroom. Those reasons

include: the *expense of hiring staff*, and the general *lack of staffing* to provide necessary supports, *negative attitudes and perspectives of faculty and administration towards students with Asperger's Disorder*, and a *lack of knowledge of the non-academic needs of support for this population*.

Themes that emerged in this category were: (1) *finances and resources of traditional disability office*, (2) *attitudes of faculty and staff on campus*, (3) *lack of knowledge among college faculty and staff about non-academic needs*, and (4) *student self-advocacy for non-academic related accommodations and decisions on disclosure of diagnosis*.

Once themes were categorized, investigators developed a matrix to illustrate how individual responses from panelists fit themes that emerged from the group (Attachment B). That matrix, a brief analysis of initial findings, and Round 2 of the Delphi Survey were then sent to panel members. Round 2 of the survey asked panel members to "agree" or "disagree" with the results, and provided each an opportunity to add or clarify information.

Four of the six panel members who responded to the Round 2 survey agreed with the results. Participant 7 added "Self-Advocacy and Disclosure likely pose as a top challenge" to the sections *Challenges to Campus Living* and *Non-Academic Barriers*. Participant 4 disagreed with content in the *Challenges to Campus Living* section, stating "Communication challenges are more significant." Participant 4 also disagreed with content in the *Non-Academic Barriers* section, stating "Faculty/Staff attitudes have a greater effect."

Conclusions

Upon receiving and evaluating data from Round 1 and Round 2 of the Delphi survey, the following interpretations conclude this study:

1. *Social Challenges, Independent Living Skills, and Cognitive Organizational Skills* were mentioned as a need more often by expert panelist than was *Academic Challenges*. This suggests panelists agree that students diagnosed with Asperger's

- Disorder are, generally, intellectually capable of performing in the classroom but struggle with the social and organizational aspects of the college lifestyle;
2. Resources dedicated to meeting the *Social Challenges* of students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder are considered integral to effective college support;
 3. Traditional disability services are ineffective for supporting this student population due to: (a) its historical focus on meeting academic rather than social needs, (b) its lack of resources, and (c) its general lack of expertise regarding the disorder;
 4. The panel of experts connected *self-advocacy* and *disclosure* more to academic success than to other aspects of campus life;
 5. *Mental health services* are identified as a necessary support for college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder. These services, however, were mentioned fewer times by the panelists than the need for: (a) dedicated staff with specialized knowledge to provide supports, (b) having a well-informed campus community, and (c) utilizing a well-staffed support program with expertise in the disorder. An equal number of panelists mentioned the need for having staff to teach students to *identify on-campus resources and supports*, which would generally include student mental health services;
 6. The panel of experts revealed *faculty and staff attitudes* may play a role in college success for college students with Asperger's Disorder. More panelists expressed a need, however, for increased on-campus *knowledge and information* about the disorder.
 7. *Finances* and *Resources* were identified by the majority of panelists as barriers to academic and non-academic success alike due to the high cost of hiring personnel with expertise.

Implications

Results of this study demonstrate that Asperger's Disorder is an enigma within higher education: the symptoms associated with the disorder—communication and socialization problems, difficulty establishing and carrying out goals, and

difficulty advocating for personal needs—create significant challenges for college faculty and support staff more familiar with students who demonstrate developmentally appropriate self-direction, communication, and social skills. The tradition within higher education is to admit, instruct, and support students who exhibit the academic and social leadership skills necessary to transition into the workforce. Panel members in this study suggest students with Asperger's Disorder may suffer an on-campus attitudinal bias: attitudes about the disorder may create unwillingness to provide intensive supports, and a general lack of understanding about the disorder may lead to the development of a deeper bias.

Higher education is guided by the principle, however, that a complete college education includes life skill training, career guidance, and training students in the art of relationship building. Accreditation bodies expect colleges to support student development in social understanding and cognitive organization, the very skill set delayed in this student population. VanBergeijk et al. (2008) state colleges must “learn to address the social and organizational difficulties of this [the AS] population” (p. 1362) and suggest that failure to develop an academic culture that recognizes and accommodates those needs is equivalent to being noncompliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As evidenced by this study, a lack of understanding about Asperger's Disorder within higher education creates significant barriers to delivering effective academic accommodations and support strategies. Colleges and universities would benefit greatly from hearing first-hand about the needs students diagnosed with the disorder have in higher education. Forming student panels comprised of students with Asperger's Disorder to inform college administration on policy and practice helpful to specific needs of the population would be a significant step toward a more understanding campus society. Dedicating finances and other resources to on-campus support programs with expertise in supporting students with Asperger's Disorder, modeled after the traditional TRIO

programs, for example, could assist with building a supportive infrastructure for students. And finally, the development of a best-practice checklist that outlines those supports known to be most effective with college students diagnosed with AS would be useful tool for students and family members as they interview at and visit colleges they wish to attend.

Summary

Experts who participated in this study agreed that, generally, college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder have the intellectual ability necessary to succeed in the college classroom. Experts also agreed that social and independent living skill deficits, along with a general lack of understanding about the disorder among college faculty and staff, are most likely the causes for failure. This study suggested traditional disability services have been ineffective in meeting the holistic needs of students with Asperger's Disorder, and that more effective supports can be provided within campus cultures that embrace diversity, recognize the importance of a well-informed campus community, and dedicate resources to this student population.

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Attachment A: Round 1 of the Delphi Survey

Thank you for taking time to complete this qualitative survey. Your knowledge and expertise on the subject of supporting students with Asperger's Disorder in college is recognized and valued, and will be helpful in determining the direction of my doctoral research on this topic.

This questionnaire serves as the initial round of a Delphi survey. Subsequent rounds (likely three rounds) developed by the answers you provide will be sent to you electronically during the next several weeks.

The five questions that make up this survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please answer in detail; then, email the completed survey as an attachment to co-investigator Rebecca Hansen. Her email address is fuller26@marshall.edu Please return your response as soon as possible, but no later than February 29, 2012.

1. Please describe the challenges you expect *most* students with Asperger's Disorder will experience on a traditional college or university campus.

2. Please describe the supports you anticipate *most* students with Asperger's Disorder will require to be successful on a traditional college or university campus.

3. Do traditional "academic adjustments and reasonable modifications" commonly found in higher education meet the needs of *most* college students diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder? Please explain your "Yes" or "No" answer.

4. What barriers exist to providing necessary classroom and academic accommodations to college students with Asperger's Disorder?

5. What barriers exist to providing necessary non-academic supports (on campus, but outside the classroom) to college students with Asperger's Disorder?

Attachment B: Response Matrix from Round 1 of Delphi Survey

"X" indicates the expert panelist identified this specific area issue in their survey responses

Challenges to Campus Living

Responder	Academic Challenge	Social Challenge	Communication	Independent Living	Cognitive Organization	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
1	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	X	X		X	X	
5		X			X	
7		X				X
8	X	X	X	X	X	X
9		X	X	X	X	
10		X		X		

Most Effective Supports

Responder	Access to basic accommodations and modifications	Staff to Provide Academic Assistance	Staff to Provide Social Assistance	Assistance in Identifying Campus Resources	Mental Health Services
1	X		X	X	X
4	X		X	X	
5			X		X
7	X		X		
8		X	X	X	X
9	X				
10		X	X		

Are Traditional Disability Services Effective?

Responder	Yes	No
1		X
4		X
5		X
7	X	
8		X
9		X
10		X

Why Traditional Disability Services Are Not Effective

Responder	Has a Focus on Academics	Does Not Meet Social Needs Inherent In Disorder	Lack of understanding in how to communicate information to students
1	X	X	X
4	X		
5	X	X	
7			X
8	X	X	X
9	X		X
10	X	X	

Academic Barriers

Responder	Knowledge of AD	Finances and Resources of DSS	Weighted Focus on Academics	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
1	X	X		X
4			X	
5	X			X
7		X		X
8	X	X	X	X
9	X	X		
10	X	X		

Non-Academic Barriers

Responder	Finances and Resources	Faculty/Staff Attitudes	Lack of Knowledge on AD's	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
1	X		X	
4	X	X	X	
5	X		X	
7			X	
8	X		X	
9	X		X	X
10	X	X	X	

Attachment C: Round 2 of the Delphi Survey

The five themes developed from Round 1 of the Delphi survey serve as section headlines below. If you agree with the expert panelist opinions documented in the Response Matrix under that heading, simply place an “X” beside: “I agree with the panelist on this topic.” If you disagree with their responses, or recognize something is missing from that section, place an “X” beside that survey item and then write in your response in the space provided. Please email your responses (by pasting them into an email or by attaching this document to an email) to Rebecca Hansen, fuller26@marshall.edu before March 23, 2012. Thank you for your participation and your expertise.

Challenges to Campus Living

_____ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix

_____ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:

_____ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

Most Effective Supports

_____ I agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix

_____ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:

_____ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

Why Traditional Disability Services Are Not Effective

_____ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix

_____ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:

_____ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

Academic Barriers

_____ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix

_____ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because:

_____ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add:

Non-Academic Barriers

_____ I agree with the panelist comments found in the Response Matrix

_____ I don't agree with the panelists comments found in the Response Matrix. I don't agree because: _____

_____ There is something missing, or something I'd like to add to this section of the Response Matrix. I'd like to add: _____

Attachment D: Response Matrix from Round 2 of the Delphi Survey

"X" indicates the expert panelist "Agreed" or "Disagreed" with the Response Matrix from Round 1

Challenges to Campus Living

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4		X	Communication challenges are more significant
5			
7		X	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure likely pose as a top challenge
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

Most Effective Supports

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4	X		
5			
7	X		
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

Why Traditional Disability Services Are Not Effective

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4	X		
5			
7	X		
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

Academic Barriers

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4	X		
5			
7	X		
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		

Non-Academic Barriers

Responder	Agree	Disagree	Missing
1	X		
4		X	Faculty/Staff attitudes have a greater effect
5			
7		X	Self-Advocacy and Disclosure likely pose as a top barrier
8	X		
9	X		
10	X		