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The Autism Program at Ancilla College (APAC)

The Origin of APAC

In Consideration of a Comprehensive Program at Ancilla College for Capable Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

In early discussions regarding the establishment of a program to assist those with ASD, this “white paper” was developed to provide information to the Ancilla College community and beyond. We briefly review the following: characteristics of ASD; diagnosis of ASD, educational programs, the origins of the “Asperger” designation; a summary of existing college programs at four year institutions and a brief summary of data on ASD. This white paper describes the rationale for establishing APAC designed to serve capable college students with ASD.

Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Those with ASD exhibit the following:

- Difficulty with social interactions, from mild to severe
- Repetitive speech, often unrelated to the social context
- Inability to empathize
- Inability to understand nonverbal communication, from mild to severe
- Focus on self, from mild to severe
- Lack of eye or logical verbal communication, from mild to severe
- Obsessive focus on an unusual topic
- Awkward movements or mannerisms, from mild to severe

Children with autism may also have accompanying learning problems and receive special education services, when autism is diagnosed.

The Diagnosis of ASD-Issues and Features

Diagnosis of ASD has the following contextual elements:

- ASD often remains undiagnosed until the individual has other difficulties in school

- Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder may receive their diagnosis when seeking help for related issues such as anxiety or depression
- When diagnosed, the focus is usually on difficulties with social interactions
- Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder may have exceptional language development
- Use of language skills may tend to be inappropriate, illogical or awkward
- Symptoms of ASD are often confused with ADHD
- Those with ASD tend
 - To have difficulty seeing things from another point of view
 - To resist discussing anything other than their own specialized interests
 - To not realize others are not listening
 - To not understand intent behind others' communication
- Other features of communication difficulty
 - Unusual intonation
 - Loud speech inappropriate for social context
 - Crying or laughing inappropriate for the social context
- Sensory overload may also be present for many diagnosed with ASD
 - Difficulty concentrating in certain noise environment
 - Specific sensory hyper-sensitivity which interferes with communication and normal brain function

Not all those with ASD show evidence of all of these symptoms. There is a wide variance in how these symptoms are displayed across individuals—a variance which explains the difficulty in diagnosis.

Finally, those with ASD often display unusual gifts such as an ability to engage with intense focus on a task. Ample evidence exists that those with ASD can learn communication and social interaction strategies using those gifts and lead productive and even high functioning lives.

Education and Programming

As with most such conditions, there is no one best “treatment”. The overall goal of the Autism Program at Ancilla College (APAC) is ***to create a supportive environment and assist those with ASD to enhance their ability to function effectively in social interactions, thereby maximizing their potential to learn and lead productive lives.***

Critical features of educational programming include

- Living facilities designed to enhance improvement in social interaction skills and minimize the effects of sensory overload
- Knowledgeable instructors who can adjust instruction in key ways, e.g. repeating and reinforcing key ideas
- Training of faculty and staff in how to support the overall goals for those with ASD

- Tailored counseling which may focus on techniques of cognitive behavioral therapy or other strategies
- Specialized group programs led by trained personnel
- Tailored occupational and physical therapy

Additional medical treatment for, e.g. anxiety disorder and depression may also be an option

A Brief History of ASD aka Asperger Syndrome

An Austrian pediatrician (Asperger) in 1944 worked extensively with four children who showed evidence of the following:

- General social interaction difficulties
- Lack of nonverbal communication skills
- Lack of empathy with peers
- Inappropriate speech patterns for the social context
 - “Broken” speech patterns
 - Overly formal speech patterns
- Focus on narrow topics of interest

In 1981, an English physician, Lorna Wing published a series of case studies with like symptoms. Wing’s writings became well known in the 1990’s. Recent historical research as detailed in a book entitled *Neurotribes* indicates that the condition now known as ASD may have been recognized much earlier.

Diagnosis of ASD is an imprecise art. Certain features of the disorder may differ for those who exhibit high levels of functioning and Asperger’s-but the treatments and educational processes may be the same.

For our purposes, we will generally refer to ASD rather than the more common label of Asperger Syndrome. ASD also presents with a complex composite of physical, emotional, intellectual and neurological factors ***that differs with each individual.***

Model Programs for Students with Autism

Currently, there are a number of programs to serve students with ASD:

- Rutgers Developmental Disabilities Center
 - Residential choices
 - Asperger’s Disorder College Program services
 - Goal development
 - Team meetings
 - Guidance for socializing
 - Orientation to campus life
- The Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM-Mercyhurst University)

- Support in academic and social aspects
- Group and individual support
- Communication building
- Systematic development of social skills
- Key assessment tools
- A bank of program development strategies
- A comprehensive transition to college program

AIM is one of several national models for four year programs. AIM is one of the oldest and established programs for serving college students with ASD. (for further information, Google the Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM))

- Midwestern State University (Wichita Falls, Texas)
 - Counselor and peer support
 - Special living quarters with peer mentors
 - Staff and faculty support
- St Joseph's University (PA) Kinney Center for Autism Education and Support
 - Autism advocacy in the broader community
 - Campus awareness
 - Events and courses
- Boston University Supported Education Services
 - Individualized assistance with building academic skills
 - Social interaction support
- University of Alabama College Transition and Support Program
 - Improving study skills
 - Academic support
 - Support from faculty, clinical psychologists, graduate students
- Eastern Michigan University Autism Collaborative Center
 - Comprehensive programming
 - Academic
 - Counseling
 - Nutrition Therapy
 - Community Outreach
- University of Connecticut READ program
 - Family support
 - College transition support
 - Varied levels of support according to need
 - Weekly meetings
 - Materials and information
- Marshall University Autism Training Center
 - Classroom support
 - Management of assignments

- Socialization
- Independent living support
- Social activities

In the past several years, numerous other institutions have been in the process of establishing additional programs and services to serve students with ASD.

Data on the Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder

“Autism Spectrum Disorders is a group of developmental disabilities characterized by impairments in social interaction and communication and by restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior . . .The complex nature of these disorders, coupled with a lack of biologic markers for diagnosis and changes in clinical definitions over time, creates challenges in the (precise) monitoring of the prevalence of ASD.. . .Information (was) obtained from children’s evaluation records at any time from birth through the end of the year when a child reaches 8 years. . .” (CDC, 2012)

The CDC report indicates the following:

- About 1 in 68 in the 2012 study (11 states) were identified with ASD or roughly 2% of the population (Emerging evidence may now indicate a higher incidence.)
- The new estimate is 30% higher than four years before which could be the result of a greater awareness of the disorder
- The number or percentage varies widely across communities
- **Nearly half had average or above average intellectual capability**
- Boys were nearly 5 times more likely to be diagnosed with ASD
- About 80% identified with ASD received special education services for autism but some were never diagnosed by a clinician but exhibited symptoms as recorded in the evaluation records used by the CDC

Conclusion

Creation of a comprehensive program will involve at least the following:

- Modified facilities
- A support infrastructure which includes highly trained personnel, e.g. program director, counsellors, general college personnel, etc.
- Outreach to and collaboration with regional autism agencies and organizations
- Training of all faculty and staff to assist them in creating an appropriate learning environment for future ASD students
- A web-based learning and training resource
- A sustainable funding initiative
- Collaboration with other higher education institutions across the state and nation

Why has Ancilla College made such a strong commitment to the program?

- While there are an increasing number of colleges developing or supporting such a program, the need is much greater than existing programs can serve
- APAC (Autism Program at Ancilla College) provides a model program which can be adapted/adopted by other institutions across the state and beyond
- The program can reflect the current and historical mission of the college

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Spring 2016, presented to faculty/staff at a campus-wide meeting

Revised, October, 2017

The APAC Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan was developed through a staged process: a campus wide meeting in 2016 to explore the feasibility of an autism initiative; appointment of an internal/external advisory board; identification by board members of key success variables which must be in place; distillation and review of the mission, vision and strategic imperatives of the program.

The Mission of the Autism Program at Ancilla College(APAC)

The mission of the Autism Program at Ancilla College (APAC) is to support highly capable college students on the autism spectrum and to give faculty and staff the resources for providing a supportive campus community. It embraces the core values of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC) including openness of spirit, community, simplicity, dignity, and respect which flow from joyful service to all, especially the underserved. APAC will enhance the quality of campus life and increase the potential for successful careers and/or future academic success.

The Vision for the Future and Sustainability of APAC

Vision statements are only useful when those who create them are committed to keeping them in the foreground of the program or organization. There may be multiple vision statements which underlie the mission and strategic imperatives. Vision statements reflect what its proponents believe will be the impact of carrying out the strategic imperatives of the initiative/program. The following are the vision statements to which APAC is committed:

- ***Ancilla College will provide a challenging and supportive environment for capable college students with ASD***
- ***Ancilla College will provide highly trained faculty and staff in support of students in APAC***
- ***Ancilla College will be a leader in supporting college personnel across the state and nation, providing support and resources to expand support in the higher education community for students with ASD***
- ***Ancilla College is about fostering a "family" atmosphere and deep bonds among the cohort of students with ASD, future alumni with ASD and the external community***

The Strategic Imperatives of APAC

The Strategic Imperatives of APAC are more than a set of general goals and were developed through a strategic action planning process. Rather, they express what **must** be accomplished and sustained in an exemplary manner for the program to be successful. Ultimately, they express what must be accomplished and sustained **for students to experience success**. The strategic imperatives are periodically reviewed by the APAC advisory committee and are the basis for conducting all actions of the program.

The Strategic Imperatives for APAC fall into four broad categories: transition to college life; living and learning in the college environment; transition to the baccalaureate degree and/or career; fundraising and financial sustainability.

The following are the strategic imperatives which focus on **transition to college life**:

- ***Ancilla College must provide comprehensive in-depth training on navigating the college environment prior to the first year of college***
- ***Ancilla College must provide comprehensive preliminary training regarding social engagement tailored to the individual student***
- ***Ancilla College must identify and communicate high expectations with regard to social interaction and behavior in the classroom, campus life and the community***
- ***Ancilla College must communicate high expectations with regard to academic performance and with adherence to the standard rules of campus life***

The following are the strategic imperatives for **living and learning in the college environment**:

- ***Ancilla College must provide students the opportunity to live in facilities adapted to students on the high end of the spectrum***
- ***Ancilla College must provide appropriate accommodations with regard to the individual needs of students on the spectrum***
- ***Ancilla College must provide ongoing faculty/staff support in continuous improvement of the campus environment and application of best practices in the field***
- ***Ancilla College must provide high quality/qualified comprehensive counseling/other support services***
- ***Ancilla College must provide a well-structured process for enhancing social engagement, opportunities for internships and preparation for life beyond college***

The following are the key strategic imperatives related to the **transition to the baccalaureate and/or career**:

- ***Ancilla College must provide a comprehensive program for transitioning to the baccalaureate/career at the beginning and throughout the first two years***
- ***Ancilla College must develop a network of corporate and collegiate networks for career and academic placements with parallel early internship opportunities***
- ***Ancilla College must assist students in developing career portfolios***

The following are the strategic imperatives for **fundraising and sustainable financial stability**:

- ***Ancilla College must establish a transparent and multifaceted fee structure for the initiative which is distinctive but complementary to the institution fee structure***
- ***Ancilla College must implement an ongoing aggressive fundraising campaign focused on endowments, operational support and facilities***
- ***Ancilla College must establish a long term and stable funding resource/ budget in support of the program***

The Mission/Vision/Strategic Imperatives as a Framework for All Activities of APAC

As APAC unfolds, the mission, vision and strategic imperatives must provide a basis for all activities of the initiative. Advisory Board meetings and correspondence will make ongoing reference to these elements of the Strategic Action Plan. Specific individuals will be designated as the lead coordinators. Measurable outcome statements will be developed for each strategic imperative with regular written reporting of progress toward those outcomes. Ultimately, the program will be structured to serve 36-48 students with a possibility of incremental expansion, resources permitting.

In the Fall of 2017, the initial phase of APAC was launched serving 7 students in a house provided by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ on the east side of the Ancilla College campus. An 8th student is a part of the program but chose to live in a campus residence hall. The program was launched at a ceremony keynoted by the Lieutenant Governor of Indiana and other dignitaries.

APAC General Admission Procedures/Financial Support

The following are the general criteria for admission to the APAC program:

- *GPA-3.00 High School GPA*
- *Admission to the College is Required*
- *Successful Completion of APAC Screening Assessments*
- *Assessment for Eligibility for Indiana Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Supplemental Funding*
- *Application for Specialized External Scholarship Funding*

Potential financial resources include the following:

- *Ancilla Scholarships*
- *Indiana Department of Vocational Rehabilitation funding*
- *Other, e.g. student loans, special external scholarships, etc.*
- *Special scholarships for students with ASD (Admission and Financial Aid personnel can assist parents and students in seeking and applying for funding from funders who specialize in scholarships for students with ASD.)*

For further information, contact the **Office of Admission**

The APAC Advisory Board

The APAC Advisory Board is appointed by the President of Ancilla College and includes faculty, staff, community representatives and professionals within the autism field. The role of the Board includes the following functions:

- *To serve as a resource for program personnel, faculty and staff of Ancilla College*
- *To review and provide best practice **recommendations** for policies and procedures*
- *To assist in raising funding for the program*
- *To network with other professionals and autism organizations*
- *Current members of the Board include the following:*

Kristy Banks, Assistant Professor of Biology, Vice President-Enrollment Management, Ancilla College

Susie Black, Director/Ministry Center Services, The Center at Donaldson (Ancilla Campus)

Joshua Diehl, Ph.D., Chief Strategy Officer for Autism Services, Logan Center, South Bend, IN

Michele Dvorak, PHJC, Ed.D. Provincial Councilor/Vicaress, Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ

Emily Hutsell, Development and Alumni Relations Manager, Ancilla College

Kelly Manning, Director of Admission Events and Visits/Counselor/Recruiter, Ancilla College

James D. Riley, Ph.D., Chair; Institutional Partnerships/Strategic Outreach, President's Office, Ancilla College

*Kristen Robson, **Director, the Autism Program at Ancilla College(APAC); ex-officio***

Sam Soliman, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ancilla College

Dr. Todd Stilson (MD), Physician, Saint Joseph Health System

Ellen Stillson, Plymouth/Marshall County Representative

Beth E. Sweitzer-Riley, Ph.D., Special Projects Coordinator, President's Office, Ancilla College

Joel D. Thomas, Assistant Professor of English, Chair, Division of Humanities, Ancilla College

John "Jack" Weisz, Associate Vice President, Raymond James, Fort Wayne

The APAC Tool Box for College Personnel

The APAC Toolbox consists of a “catalog” of strategies for fostering social engagement and talent enhancement for college students with ASD. The “catalog” was compiled by participants at a training workshops for college personnel across Indiana supported by the Ball Brothers Venture Fund in collaboration with the Independent Colleges of Indiana and held on the Ancilla College campus on November 14, 2016 and February 17, 2017. The workshops were conducted in collaboration with consultants from the Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst (Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA).

Possible strategies for fostering social engagement and enhancing talent include the following:

(Social Engagement Strategies)

- Establish connections group to “meet and greet,” provide opportunities to learn and practice social prompts
- Find ways to connect students who have a need (social need; academic need) so there is a mutual learning experience
- Emphasize whole campus support so students can connect with supportive faculty/staff/coaches
- Get to know students on a personal level
- Continue to strive to establish an environment of comfort; raising awareness within FERPA boundaries; increase campus awareness
- Use role playing; scripting for social strategies
- Establish peer mentoring: match up students with a mentor on campus
- Provide help in transitioning activities; modeling positive behavior
- Establish Intentional housing; no random assignments
- Establish summer bridge program
- Establish and maintain climate of comfort
- Use scenarios and scripting
- Create support systems with collaboration from other groups
- Create cadre of life coaches: adults who provide one-on-one focus on targeted needs to learn and practice social interactions
- Establish club for students with ASD where they chose activities and meet weekly
- Reach out to autism resources in the community for community/social engagement
- Practice outlining – expectations/planning; help with schedules and time management
- Use guided small group interactions to model social engagement strategies
- Establish individualized mentoring – work with students intentionally, to help them be successful in relationships with “neuro typicals”
- Facilitate interactions in interest based activities (as with Mercyhurst’s 2-club rule)
- Promote 1:1 direct contact with faculty
- Provide student sensitization via mentoring: modeling social engagement
- Require participation with support – socially or in classroom, knowing expectations

- Encourage involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Provide personal support for interactions with unfamiliar situations
- Structure progressive steps for achieving more challenging social interactions
- Create structured social interaction/engagement activities – snack time, birthdays, etc.
- Guide students to define goals
- Create opportunities for positive reinforcement (setting up situations)

(Talent Enhancement Strategies)

- Establish cohort of ASD students for talent night
- Structure new student orientation to let students know in advance (marketing, emails, etc.) that there will be prize drawings at the end (using discriminative stimulus. . .); hidden talents may emerge
- Structure project-based learning and problem-based learning opportunities
- Create competitions in areas of proficiency, e.g math, robotics, etc. while working on teams
- Use teams, e.g. develop discussion guides for meeting with ASD students to explore talents/interest
- Engage faculty and staff as “detectives” to explore for hidden talents
- Foster Inclusion in broad range of activities
- Structure group meetings with topical focus of interest
- Focus on understanding student needs first
- Use Applied Behavior Analysis – increase/decrease; gain/escape; to what interests are students drawn vs. areas of avoidance
- Use informal and/or verbal surveys of interest
- Bring in outside community members to explore student interests
- Use peer mentoring
- Engagement in intergenerational opportunities and service
- Recognize the talents – point them out
- Find ways *to utilize* talents – how can we foster an environment of growth
- Reinforce talent, intentional recognition and reinforcement of talents
- Use mentoring in field of interest
- Use active/reflective listening to explore interests
- Focus on step by step sensory integration; sensory overload may mask talent
- Identify what are individuals strengths through structured Summer Bridge Program (evaluation)
- Identify how students learn; not all students with ASD are the same!

The above catalog is meant to stimulate interest and serves as a starting point for developing a set of strategies to support students with ASD. Developing an initiative is a long terms process and any of the strategies above would need further research and planning to adapt them to specific programs, institutions or settings. In most cases, a small subset of social engagement and talent enhancement strategies can serve as a foundation for long term program development.

Resource Review Section

Volumes have been written in the past two decades with regard to autism. For college personnel, the challenge is to find the most relevant sources for learning about and developing college programs to support students with ASD. In addition, the knowledge base related to autism at all levels is expanding exponentially. There are many viewpoints and philosophies as to how to build effective college programs. Good decision-making will be based on sifting through the ever expanding knowledge base and keeping updated on best practices. The Resource Review Section is meant to aid college personnel in that process.

Periodically, additional reviews will be added.

Review no. 1

Emerging Practices for Supporting Students on the Autism Spectrum in Higher Education: A Guide For Higher Education Professionals (Lead Institution-The Rochester Institute of Technology)(Google “Emerging Practices for Supporting Students on the Autism Spectrum. . .”)

This guide was produced through a collaboration of the following institutions: Eastern University, Mercyhurst University, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, The University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, University of West Florida and Western Kentucky University. Funding for the publication was provided by the Autism Speaks Family Services Community Grant.

The publication presents a thorough summary of recent practices developed at these institutions for building a community of support for college students with ASD.

The following topics are presented:

- What is the Autism Spectrum Disorder?
- Opportunities and Challenges in the College Environment
- Mitigating Student and Environmental Challenges
- The Campus-wide Response for Supporting Students with ASD
- A Support Model Planning Worksheet
- Selected Program Models (reflective of collaborating institutions)
- Selected References

The publication is a foundation resource for institutions in the initial planning stages of building a campus community supportive of students with ASD.

In the section *What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?*, two of the main distinguishing features of ASD are described: difficulty with social interaction and restricted/repetitive behaviors and interests. Additionally, rigid routines, heightened sensory function and difficulty expressing

emotions are often present. The origins of autism are briefly reviewed along with the associated perceptions of those origins. Readers are reminded that students with ASD may also show evidence of the same developmental challenges as those without ASD: identity, cognitive and moral development challenges. What may be missing in this section is a little broader description of associated learning challenges requiring a multiple accommodation plan for mitigating those challenges. In addition, a fuller description of ASD from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder might be helpful to depict the complexity of ASD.

In the section *Unique Strengths and Challenges of College Students with ASD*, the tendency for students with ASD to learn within focused areas, a propensity for visual learning, presence of strong memory skills and superior mathematics skills is highlighted. Areas of underdevelopment are described in six domains: executive functioning, academic skills, self-care, social competence, self-advocacy and career preparation-described as areas of challenge.

Executive functioning refers to meta-organizational capabilities which underlie the ability to organize/plan, self-direction/self-discipline. Difficulty with EF can also lead to issues of impulse control resulting from the frustrations with the mismatch between college level expectations and students' ability to meet those expectations.

Academic Skills as described are often termed "learning skills"-study skills, adjusting learning strategies to meet expectations, how to read a textbook and/or online study, research skills (especially online). Problems with abstract language and writing (due to fine motor dysfunction) are also sometimes evident. Any program should have strategies for addressing these issues.

Self-Care refers to personal wellness, hygiene, sensory integration, stress management and medication management (A substantial percentage of ASD students will have prescriptions to manage anxiety and/or other manageable health issues.) Sensory overload issues, e.g. dining hall, constant presence of others, etc.) may manifest in self-soothing behavior which may be inappropriate. Without programming to address these issues, students with ASD may face insurmountable challenges.

Social Competence refers to the ability to understand social interaction. Understanding verbal and nonverbal communication is key to social competence. Understanding "others' perspective" or theory of the world is critical. (There may be some emerging controversy in this area.) Social competence is a major hurdle to overcome and without it, students with ASD will not be able to function after graduation in almost any career field. Students with ASD may actually possess excellent vocabularies and *appear* highly articulate which may lead to misinterpretation of social difficulties.

Self-Advocacy refers to the ability to know and communicate needs as well as basic rights. Most students who have the opportunity to enter college have not had experience in this realm as parental advocacy has supplanted this function.

Career Preparation refers to exploration and eventual job search. Given the difficulties in social competence, this may well be the most challenging domain in the long run. Temple Grandin refers to her experience as a difficult and rocky journey. She recommends the development “back door” routes to eventual employment. Making a transition to the world of work may be even a more difficult challenge given the total lack of supportive structure in most career settings. She suggests developing those interrelationships with companies and career sources early and creating opportunities for students to experience the world of work with correlative support.

The section on *Mitigating Student and Environmental Challenges* discusses strategies for mitigating challenges facing college students with autism. The particular value of these strategies is that they are based on the practical experiences of the collaborative institutions: strategies that require changes in the college environment; strategies that directly impact those on the spectrum.

The importance of raising awareness of autism through support groups, mentoring, special events, guest speakers can be part of an overall *indirect campus environment* initiative. Ongoing training in all areas of the campus is critical in terms of fostering support but also of changing the culture and climate of the campus environment. Tailored faculty and staff training is *de rigeur* of any program to support students on the spectrum. One overlooked aspect of such training in this publication is the tendency for one size fits all answers juxtaposed with the need for the ongoing deepening of overall campus knowledge of autism. Training never ends and knowledge continues to grow.

One suggestion in this publication is the designation of academic liaisons for each academic area. While a desirable goal, it may be impractical in many settings to add still another responsibility to individual staff and faculty in some settings. The contexts should be considered when implementing this best practice.

Another critical suggestion is a set of regularized appointments along the lines of an ongoing counseling model. This, along with target services which specifically address the domains discussed above could prove beneficial.

What is particularly revealing is that most of the suggestions for (indirect support) mitigating student and environmental challenges should and could be a part of a broader initiative to serve all students since most of them are linked directly to higher levels of retention. But this takes the expenditure of greater resources and may go against the grain of the academic view that students should be independent learners from the start. These suggestions include mentoring, targeted instruction and transition to college programs (as well as transition to career). In fact, to some degree, the challenges retaining students with ASD to graduation mirror those of retaining all others.

A major component of any program to serve students with autism also includes *direct support*. Briefly discussed in this publication are the following direct support strategies:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Targeted Instruction
- Transition programming
- Supported Living
- Social programming and student empowerment

It is stipulated that the size of the population may dictate the degree or nature of such services.

It is suggested the individualized coaching/mentoring is one option. It is hard to imagine a program without individualized coaching. Each student presents a different constellation of autism issues as well as other anomalies. A prescriptive program for some may be appropriate for one student but may not be appropriate for another.

Targeted instruction should be tailored to meet individual needs and include focus on the above domain issues. Transition programming is also discussed and may include instruction in navigating the college campus, independent living skills, communication processes in class and out of class and time management.

Supported living is identified as a key component and includes attention to roommate placement, sensory integration issues, identification of independent living competencies, trained residential hall personnel and individual dialogue with such personnel. The key issue is not to establish housing to isolate students but to provide a positive learning environment campus-wide. *It should be suggested that the sensory overload issues of students with ASD should not be underestimated. Some students with ASD may not be aware of the subtle negative effect on learning, classroom interaction and anxiety levels created by sensory overload. Care should be taken in providing appropriate sensory mitigation housing (macro strategies) as well as individual tools for reducing sensory overload (micro strategies). Failure to do so may result in non-retention of students.*

Social programming is essential and could include the following:

- Newly developed social skills applied in controlled settings
- Dedicated space for social gatherings
- Mentoring interaction with others on campus
- Educating campus members on what to expect
- ASD sponsored events; invitations to familiar peers

Student empowerment may involve

- Effective decision-making strategies
- Reciprocal, caring relationships
- Strategic empowerment of parent sans the helicopter syndrome

The section on *Identifying a Campus Response to Support Students with ASD* presents a range of options with regard to program elements. At the very least, it is suggested that a campus-wide task force be formulated to address the campus-wide needs. In addition to addressing the campus-wide environment, the need to clearly establish the program within the campus structure is discussed. There are also specific legal and ethical considerations beyond any particular office or department inherent in establishing such programs.

In addition, addressing issues of disclosure, especially from the students' perspective is critical. With regard to professional disclosure, faculty and staff need to become familiar with both FERPA(Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) as well as HIPPA(Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996). Without such critical knowledge, faculty and staff may inadvertently violate federal law, subjecting themselves to serious liability. Students may be guided through role playing in how and when to provide disclosure. Tools for disclosure should be provided.

Program admission criteria and intake is a complex process and should be based on best practices such as those employed by Mercyhurst University. Other topics included in this section include the following:

- How to respond to applicants who may not benefit from the program
- Those attending but not in the program
- Program staffing requirements (general discussion)
- Program funding, i.e. because of the nature of the program, funding structures should differ from the typical academic funding processes
- Evaluating program success (Program success must be measure differently than the typical academic program, i.e. use of qualitative case descriptions).

Included with this publication are planning worksheets which may assist institutions in implementing programs to serve students with ASD.

The publication is a valuable first read for college personnel who are in the initial stages of forming a program. It is NOT designed as a comprehensive source for implementation and sustainability.

There are some issues not addressed and these include but are not limited to the following:

- While it is acknowledged that not all contexts are the same, the minimum resources, personnel and program elements are not clearly evident
- A key faculty dilemma emerges from discussions with faculty leaders and takes the form of this question: I know what the the big picture is. . .but what do I do on that first day and in a given situation?
- There are no specific program element protocols, e.g. communication strategy protocols for specific situations in class or out-of-class

- There are no case descriptions included for students who have gone through a program with key elements and best practices

It may be a bit early to identify absolutes with regard to these additional “best practices.’ These questions and issues are still evolving in the field. There are additional and valuable professional resources. It is strongly recommended that any institution at the beginning stages of developing a program to serve students on the spectrum carefully read this publication and make contact with the individuals listed from any of the cooperating institutions.

Respectfully submitted,

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Institutional Partnerships and Strategic Outreach

President’s Office

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Ancilla College

External Organizational and Institutional Resources

In the long term, the key to enhancing opportunity for college students as well as adults with ASD will come through a synergy of collaboration with numerous organizations across the state and beyond. Included below are just a few key organizations which provide services in support of college students, adults and children with ASD and their families. It is the philosophy of APAC that such synergistic support must begin early and be sustained through adulthood for those with ASD.

The Indiana Resource Center for Autism

The Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) is an established and comprehensive service supported by Indiana University focused on improved outcomes for those with ASD. As stated on the IRCA website, its work “. . .is focused on goals around early detection and diagnosis, effective early childhood and school-age programs that utilize evidence-based practices, transition across grade levels and across stages of life, post-secondary opportunities, community employment and living options, family support, and other activities that lead to an improved quality of life. . .”

(www.iidc.indiana.edu or Google Indiana Resource Center for Autism)

The Logan Center (South Bend, IN)

“**LOGAN** provides resources and effective autism services to families in north central Indiana and southwest Michigan so they and their families may achieve their desired quality of life. . .”

(www.logancenter.org/autism/) or Google Logan Center, IN

INSOURCE (South Bend, IN)

INSOURCE is a statewide agency which provides Indiana families and service providers the information and training necessary to assure effective educational programs appropriate for children and young adults with disabilities. Each state is required to establish and sustain such an agency.

(<http://insource.org>) or Google INSOURCE, IN

Autism Speaks

The familiar puzzle piece logo has long been recognized as the official logo of Autism Speaks. It represents the complexity of ASD and providing the comprehensive support structures for

those with ASD and their families. Autism Speaks was founded in 2005 as a national and comprehensive services organization. Its mission: “Autism Speaks is a dedicated to promoting solutions across the spectrum and throughout the lifespan, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism spectrum disorder; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions. . .”

(www.autismspeaks.org) or Google Autism Speaks

The AWS Foundation (Fort Wayne, IN)

From its website: “AWS Foundation was founded in 2007. . .(Mission) Together with like-minded community partners, we help children and adults with enduring intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities live as independently as possible, be included in the community and function at their highest potential. . .(Vision). . .We envision a community in which people with enduring intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities are engaged fully and meaningfully in all aspects of community life. . .”

(<http://awsfoundation.org>) or Google AWS Foundation, IN

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I apply for the APAC ?

Contact the Admissions Office at Ancilla College. ***Students must first apply for admission to Ancilla College. Admission to APAC requires a separate application process.***

2. What financial aid is possible?

- External Scholarships
- Indiana Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Specialized scholarships may be possible for students with ASD
- Student loans

Contact the Office of Admissions ***early*** for further information

3. Will my credits be transferable to four year institutions?

- Ancilla College has collaborative transfer advising relationships with over 20 institutions. Most Ancilla College courses will transfer unless the four year institution has special program or admission requirements. Contact the Admissions and/or Advising Office for further information. A list of the collaborating institutions is on the Ancilla College Transfer Pathway webpage under “About Ancilla.”
- Ancilla College has a special relationship with Mercyhurst University and is in the process of developing a collaborative transfer relationship. As a four year institution, Mercyhurst has a model program for serving students with ASD (AIM-The Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst).

4. What are living arrangements?

For 2017-2018, an on campus house has been provided by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC) for the initial phase of APAC. Plans are being developed for expansion.

5. What are the admission requirements?

- Students must first be admitted to the college; **admission to the APAC program is separate**
- Students must, at minimum, have a HS GPA of 3.00 and must also complete and pass a separate screening assessment; an interview with the Director of the APAC program; successfully complete a summer bridge program prior to their first semester (Beginning in the Fall of 2018).
- Students must meet all other requirements for admission to Ancilla College

6. What is a FAFSA?

Free Application for Federal Student Aid must be completed and submitted as early as Fall prior to the following Fall. Contact the Office of Admission and Financial Aid for further information.

7. Is there a bridge program to help prepare me for college life?

Beginning in the summer of 2018, students will participate in a bridge program specifically designed to enhance their ability to successfully navigate the campus environment.

8. Who do I talk to about financial aid?

Contact the Admissions Office and Financial Aid advisor for further information.