**Teaching Neurodiverse Students – a few tips and resources**

**Tips – Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

* Be transparent and let students know what to do to be successful in the class
* Include a detailed schedule and plan of assignments in the course syllabus.
* Provide specific, explicit instructions for organizing information (e.g. a loose-leaf notebook with topical dividers or a naming scheme for computer files and folders).
* Begin the course with a discussion of diversity, including individual differences in social functioning; the goal is to reduce negative reactions to awkward social behavior.
* Strive to have a predictable class routine and avoid unexpected changes to the schedule.
* When speaking with the student minimize small talk and speak plainly; don’t use changes in tone or inflection of your voice to convey meaning.
* Write things down and use hand gestures for communication.
* When working with the student one-on-one, sit next to them rather than across from them.
* Ease the transition into each class and allow students extra time to settle in.
* Utilize the ASD student’s ability to think “out of the box,” strong attention to detail, excellent long-term and rote memory, ability to maintain prolonged focus on topics of interest, and reliability once expectations are understood.
* Use and label visuals, such as photographs, maps, and cross sections, in teaching.
* Give step-by-step instructions and, where possible, scripts for problem solving.
* Provide printed and online accessible notes and allow the use of a laptop or other voice-activated technology to take notes.
* Allow the use of headphones to block out sounds during an exam.
* For group projects, provide explicit instructions on: how to divide up work, the importance of being flexible in scheduling meetings, how to make workload decisions, the necessity of sharing personal contact information, guidelines for effective communication, and the necessity for adopting a collective mindset.
* Loose the counselor’s hat in talking with the ASD student; they will often respond to dry wit.
* Don’t give more than three rules at a time; make sure that that the student understands them and the consequences for not following them.
* Consider private interactions with the ASD student (e.g. email exchanges, coming to office hours for presentations) if inappropriate behavior distracts their classmates.

**Resources**

* The Neurodiversity Initiative (<http://www.wm.edu/sites/neurodiversity/about%20us/>)
* Background information from SAGE 2YC website:

<http://serc.carleton.edu/files/sage2yc/studentsuccess/workshop2013/neurodiversity_creating_inclus.pptx>