



Stairway to STEM (www.stairwaytostem.org) provides multi-media resources and an online community for autistic students transitioning from high school to college, particularly in STEM fields.

PANEL PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

Autism 101 – presented by Sara Sanders Gardner

- Language – Language is a personal choice, but many individuals prefer to use autism as part of their identity and prefer to be called “autistic”. Learn more about autistic culture at www.autisticadvocacy.org.
- Autism Myths – Autism is not just a social communication disorder, and many autistic people are affected by neurological conditions such as Sensory Processing Disorder. The challenges autistic students face are myriad and complex--it’s not just a matter of their figuring out how to “fit in,” and asking students to do so is harmful.
- Ableism – Autistic people shouldn’t be asked to conform to behaviors common in their more neurotypical peers on the one hand or be given special treatment on the other.

Universal Design for Learning – presented by Susan Woods

“A framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.” – CAST.org

- Utilize multiple measures of assessment and opportunities for the demonstration of competency in course content. These include:
 - Rubrics to set clear standards for evaluation
 - Using E-Portfolios
 - Student presentations (group or individual)
 - Video or web-based reports or presentations
 - Multiple-format tests (allow for student choice)
 - Research or reflective papers
- Educators should have awareness of accommodations and support offered through Disability Services and how to access to request accommodations.
- Overview of Universal Design for Instruction:
http://www.facultyware.uconn.edu/files/udi2_fact_sheet.pdf
- Application of UDI principles in developing a Blackboard site:

Community – Presented by Justin Robbins

- Autistic students can join together to create supportive student groups on campus specifically targeted for autism.
- This may be their first chance to establish community with others who they relate to, and those communities can be not only significant but potentially transformative.
- Student communities and groups can educate others about autism, change perspectives, and promote neurodiversity.

Obstacles – Presented by Elinore Alms

- Some students lack the resources to obtain an autism diagnosis and therefore do not have the documentation to receive DSO services.
- Without proper supports, autistic students may have difficulty filling out a college application or completing placement assessments.
- Accessibility plays a major role in student success not only in college, but even when applying to colleges.
- When we talk about blending autistic and differently-abled students into community colleges and STEM careers, what we're really talking about is best practices for everyone. It follows that when our most disadvantaged students' needs are met, we are leveling the playing field for all, with or without a "documented need."

Connect with us:



Have Questions? Post them to our forums:

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/forums/>



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