The College Autism Project: Evidence-Based Advocacy to Improve Outcomes for College Students with Autism

A large and fast-growing population of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are completing high school with reasonable expectations for postsecondary success. However, without empirical literature to guide them, college educators are likely ill prepared to help these students manage the academic, social, emotional, self-advocacy, and communication challenges they face once in college. The R3 presentation will provide an overview of the College Autism Project and outline results from two related studies.

Study 1: Drawing from personal interviews with a diverse group of students with autism, the current study amplifies these students’ voices to define salient issues affecting these students’ college experiences and outline institutional initiatives with potential to promote positive outcomes for students with autism.

Study 2: This study is an exploration into how college students with ASD describe their support systems during conversations about the transition to higher education. These support systems could be emotional, physical, or academic support systems; provided at home, at school, or otherwise – simply a means of support while they are in college. In particular, this study explores how these students describe their experiences within an online environment among their peers.