Being a Catalyst for Change: Strategies for Developing an Inclusive Campus Culture

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Objectives

To consider:

- ❑ The importance of collaborating with key campus allies and stakeholders, including faculty and students, in the development of inclusive programming
- ❑ The evolving role of faculty and staff in meeting the needs of diverse student populations, including those with hidden disabilities such as adhd, autism spectrum, depression, learning disabilities and more
- ❑ Strategies to support a more diverse campus and the intersecting identities, including, first-generation, neurodivergent, LGBQTA+ and veteran students
- ❑ ‘Tool kit’ strategies to be a catalyst in an inclusive culture shift on your campus

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Being a Catalyst for Change: Strategies to Develop an Inclusive Campus Culture ‘Tool Kit’

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Strategies

1. **BUILDING COLLABORATIONS TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE**
2. **MEETING STUDENT NEEDS TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE**
3. **SITUATING DISABILITY IN DEI INITIATIVES TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE**

Being a Catalyst for Change:
Strategies for Developing an Inclusive Campus Culture

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Strategy #1

BUILDING COLLABORATIONS TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE

Examples of Inclusive Campus Collaborations

College Prep Transition Series

- ❏ Student panel - lived experiences having a disability and the transition to college

Flying First First-Generation Symposium

- ❏ Student panel of first-gen students with disabilities

Student Title IX Summit

- ❏ Best Practices Supporting Neurodivergent Students and Title IX

Access and Inclusion Week

- ❏ Dr. Judy Heumann / College of Education
- ❏ Swim Team documentary / Rowan Athletics

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Inclusive Campus Trainings

- ❑ New Faculty Orientation
- ❑ Ambassadors - Admissions
- ❑ PROS - Orientation
- ❑ Rec Center
- ❑ Residential Learning & University Housing
- ❑ Student Center & Campus Activities
- ❑ Tutoring/ Writing Center
- ❑ Unified Sports

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Inclusive Campus Training Collaborators

Neurodiversity Affinity Group for Faculty and Staff

PATH

- A program designed to provide career readiness training and post-graduation support to help **neurodivergent** students prepare to transition from college into the workforce. It is a co-active coaching program requiring active involvement from students.

Student Organizations

- Neurodiversity Club
- ASL Club

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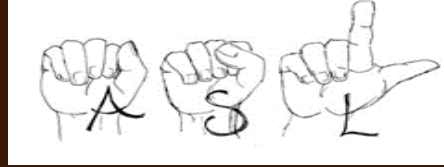
Accessibility Student Organizations

- ASL Club
- College Diabetes Network
- Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society
- Neurodiversity Club
- Student Accessibility Council



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College Compass

A **summer bridge program** for incoming residential and commuter students with disabilities providing a smooth transition to college and campus.

- ❑ Students move in one week before start of the fall semester
- ❑ Campus tours with class schedule
- ❑ Peer Mentors - neurodivergent students registered with Accessibility Services

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College Compass Collaborations: Promoting an Inclusive Campus

- ❑ Counseling/Wellness Center
- ❑ Residential Life and University Housing
- ❑ Public Safety
- ❑ Rec Center / Student Activities
- ❑ Tutoring / Writing Center
- ❑ Testing Center

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Strategy #2

MEETING STUDENT NEEDS TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE

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Building an Inclusive Classroom

The College Classroom Environment Itself Can Present Challenges For Student Success

- Where do I sit?
- How do I dress?
- When can I ask a question?
- What should I do if I don’t understand?
- What do I do if I disagree?
- How to groups work?

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Building an Inclusive Classroom

- Focus on Strengths

  Among the strengths that students with ASD themselves have identified are abilities to:

  - Study for long hours
  - Intensively focus on a topic
  - Use critical thinking to solve complex problems
  - Good strong memory
  - Excellent powers of observation

  (Gurbuz et al., 2019; Van Hees et al., 2015).

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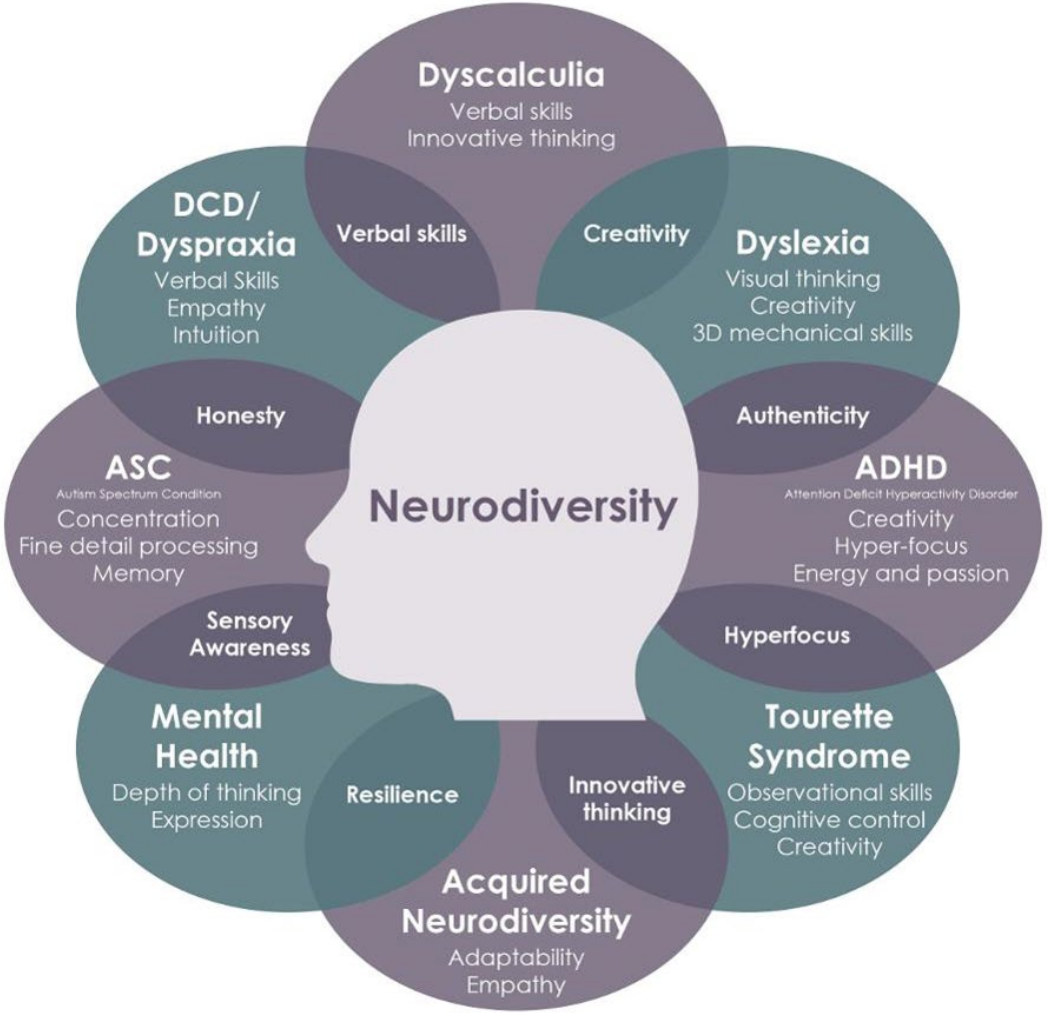
Considering students through a Strengths Perspective



Doyle (2020)

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Building an Inclusive Classroom

- Provide Accommodations and Supports for Areas of Difficulty
  - Problem: Some autistic students may have difficulty taking the perspective of the reader, resulting in writing that is of lower quality than that of neurotypical students
    - Solution: Instructor provides explicit cues as to how characters or subjects might react in a certain situation. Students could be paired to discuss the perspectives of others or to critique each other's writing using guidelines provided by the instructor.
  - Problem: Lack of organization/Poor time management
    - Solution: Encourage the student to use cell phone and/or computer calendars and reminders for due dates, with reminders if possible.
    - "Microsoft To Do" or "Focus Keeper" can be useful. Websites (e.g., https://info.cipworldwide.org/blog/12-best-apps-for-college-students-with-autism) often include apps that can help autistic college students with many routine situations.

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Building an Inclusive Classroom

- Use Universal Design for Learning Principles:
  Accommodations and Supports for ALL Students
    - Slides available before class so students can prepare and take notes
    - Websites to provide supplementary resources
    - E-text books that can be set to different font sizes and types

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Building an Inclusive Classroom

- Academic Supports Should Be:
  - Personalized: One size rarely fits all
  - Acceptable to the student: Listen to the student
  - Modified as needed
  - Eliminated when not needed

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Building an Inclusive Classroom

- Classroom performance can be impacted by outside factors:
  - Mental health issues
  - Socialization difficulties
  - Roommate issues
  - Personal care issues
  - Sleep issues
  - Nutrition

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CARES Team

- A weekly meeting to triage students of concern with Dean of Students, Accessibility Services, Advising, Athletics, Counseling & Housing

- Resiliency Counselors - follow up with students on CARES list each week

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Rowan Thrive: A Well-Being Initiative

- ❑ Physical
- ❑ Social
- ❑ Emotional
- ❑ Community
- ❑ Purpose
- ❑ Financial

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Strategy #3

SITUATING DISABILITY IN DEI INITIATIVES TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE

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SITUATING DISABILITY IN DEI INITIATIVES

- Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are increasing in higher education.
- DEI initiatives remain limited in relation to disability and neurodiversity.

> “It is essential to ensure that disability and neurodiversity are not only considered in terms of impairment and accommodation, but also through a DEI lens” (Dwyer et al., 2022, p.3)

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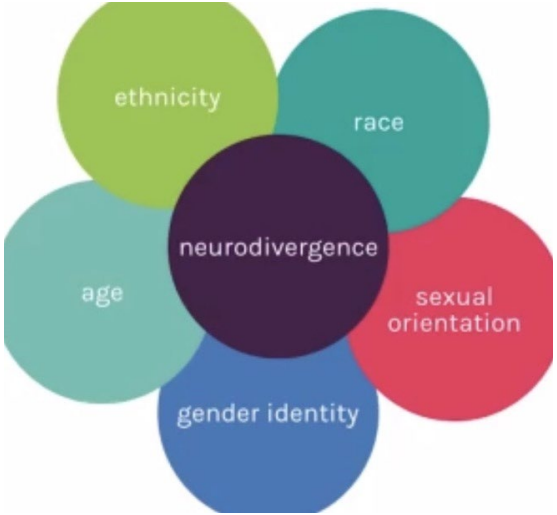
Intersectionality

“the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups”

- Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)



Eliminating bias from hiring

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SITUATING DISABILITY IN DEI INITIATIVES

- Division of DEI at Rowan University
  - SJICR
    - Speaker series, groups, advocacy (students of color, first-gen college students, LGBTQ students, etc.)
  - DEI Certificate
- DEI Neurodiversity Task Force
  - Score Card/ Survey
  - Book Studies & Author Talks
  - **Inclusive Pedagogy and Practices Certificate**
  - **Established a need for a Center for Neurodiversity**

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Inclusive Pedagogy and Practices Certificate

PD opportunity for faculty and staff

- ❑ Includes multiple modules and two tracks
- ❑ All participants begin with content in the same core areas of:
  (1) including disability within a culture of diversity,
  (2) understanding neurodiversity, and
  (3) foundations of Universal Design for Learning.
- ❑ Differentiated Tracks: Participants choose one of two tracks, pedagogy or practice.

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Inclusive Pedagogy and Practices Final Project

The purpose of this project is to identify needs and take action to reduce barriers to inclusion through pedagogy and/or practice. IPP participants will apply what they learn from modules and discussion to a relevant professional to contribute a more inclusive environment.

What do I do? When? Much of your work on this project will occur in between synchronous IPP Zoom sessions. During Zoom sessions, participants will have time and space to brainstorm, plan, share and receive feedback on their developing projects. While progress will look different for everyone, below is a general guide for planning purposes:

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Zoom #1 & #2: start your plan of action by identifying a barrier you've noticed on campus or in your workplace that you'd like to focus on for this course

Make a plan

Zoom #3: Develop an outline of your plan for breaking down the barrier(s) to inclusion you have identified. The format of is up to you. It can be written, something in your head that you describe, visual, or any format of your choosing. Just be prepared to share where you are at in the planning process.

Enact your plan

Between Zooms #3 & #4: aim to begin taking action steps to reduce the identified barrier(s), according to your plan

Share evidence

Zoom 4: come prepared to discuss your plan of action and if possible, bring some evidence of the work you have done thus far

Reflect in your community of practice

Zoom #5: In this final synchronous session, participants will present their inclusive goal(s) and evidence of the work they have completed throughout the course to make their classroom/workplace/campus more inclusive. **Reflect & celebrate!**

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Selected examples of past projects:

Pedagogy	Practices
• Accessible Chemistry Labs (evaluation of current practice and development of 1-page accessibility guides; integrating work of chemists with disabilities into course materials and lab spaces) • Integrating UDL principles into course syllabi and instructional materials • Inclusive Virtual Learning approaches • Five ways to make your Canvas course more accessible • Redesigning a major assignment • Increasing access and choice in a course • Incorporating a multimodal approach into instruction • Implementing a student-centered language approach • Developing "Universal Design for Tired People" guide	- Designing accessible, digital advising resources - Re-designing Admission Interviews for Inclusion of Neurodivergent Candidates - Designing inclusive environment within Savitz Hall - Training on best practices for Inclusive Staff-led student programs - Steps to promote inclusion in campus recreation - Developing a more inclusive approach to employee training on the policy prohibiting discrimination in the workplace and educational environment - Developing a Campbell Library workshop promoting inclusive pedagogy - Action planning for inclusive library online instruction

Establishing a Center for Neurodiversity

- The Center for Neurodiversity is a cultural center within Rowan University's Division of DEI.
- The Center for Neurodiversity situates neurodiversity in DEI initiatives recognizing that all aspects of human diversity are natural and valuable (dis/ability, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, etc).

Neurodiversity is recognizing brain/ mind/ body differences as natural human variation and as valuable.

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A Center for Neurodiversity as a Catalyst for Change

College is a time for students to form and strengthen their identity, but many neurodivergent students mask or hide their disability identity (Morrison, 2019).

Identity development is linked to wellbeing. Creating a positive identity means finding pride and community while pushing back against stigma (Schmulsky et al., 2021).

"Include (neurodiversity) more in your classrooms, teach works by neurodiverse authors, teach disability history, I'm tired of being left out of the conversation."

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A Center for Neurodiversity as a Catalyst for Change

image source

Identifying as a neurodivergent faculty or staff member comes with challenges, such as the risk of stigma and discrimination in the workplace (Mellifont, 2021).

Decreasing the stigma of neurodivergence and emphasizing the importance of a neurodiverse workforce may help decrease these risks.

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About the Center for Neurodiversity

- Mission: providing programming, research and community engagement that value and prioritize neurodiversity culture.
- The Center for Neurodiversity defines *neurodiversity culture* as group belonging and pride formed around shared lived experiences, personal disability identity, and social justice activism. For foundational readings on disability culture see Chiang (2019) and Peters (2000).

Image and white paper

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Center for Neurodiversity

Examples of Programming, Research and Engagement

Neurodivergent Student Advisory Board	Faculty and Staff Neurodiversity Affinity Group
Faculty and Staff Steering Committee	Participatory research to understand the development of disability identity
Neurodiversity and Intersectionality Speaker Series	Local school 18-21 transition program building meaningful connections
Sensory friendly student suite	Student Neurodiversity Club
Book clubs and author talks	Mentorship Circles
Faculty and Staff Lunch and Learns	Student Neurodiversity Studies Group

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Changing the landscape from exclusion to recruitment of diverse students in higher education.

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Tool Kit Strategies

1. **BUILDING COLLABORATIONS**
   a. Collaborating across student services offices and student organizations
   b. Collaborating with students to understand their experiences
2. **MEETING STUDENT NEEDS**
   a. Focusing on student academic and non-academic needs
   b. Recognizing mental health and wellness needs on campus
3. **SITUATING DISABILITY IN DEI INITIATIVES**
   a. Taking an intersectionality approach
   b. Engaging faculty in DEI initiatives
   c. Prioritizing and valuing neurodiversity culture

Thank you!

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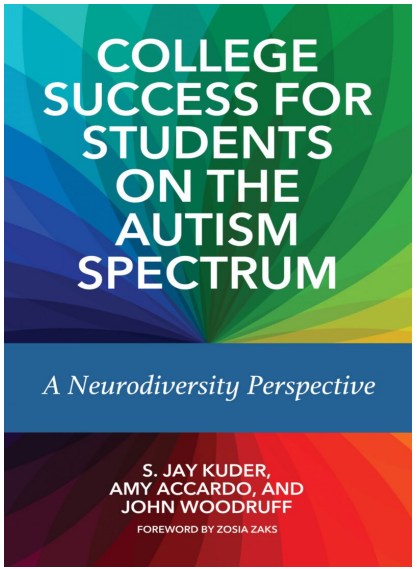

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