



ASD

AFFINITY PROGRAM

There are very few specialized college programs for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and Defiance College's new program, to be known as the ASD Affinity Program, breaks new ground in its approach. This innovative program provides inclusive services to support academic, residential and social environments thereby providing a comprehensive living and learning environment for the students.

The ASD Affinity Program builds on Defiance College's success with its Hench Autism Studies Program, in which high school students with autism have been receiving high-school level instruction on the Defiance College campus, in coordination with the Defiance City Schools.

Defiance College has announced the start of an innovative program to enable college-age students with autism to pursue a college education. Under the program, which is currently accepting applications from qualified students to enter Defiance College with the beginning of the fall semester in August, students will receive a broad range of comprehensive services to enable them to adjust to and succeed in a college environment.

“We are thrilled to be able to offer this new opportunity for college-age students with autism,” said Mark C. Gordon, president. “As a college, we already are committed to working with all of our students individually to tailor their educational experience to their own personal interests and goals. This is a logical next step for us, but, more importantly, it is a wonderful new opportunity for a group of students who have traditionally not had sufficient opportunities in terms of college.”

The new program will accept a limited number of college students each year who are academically qualified yet may require social and living support to navigate the traditional college residential campus.

“As the number of children diagnosed with autism increases, the need is greater than ever to provide for avenues of success into adulthood,” said Dr. Barbara Schirmer, provost. “Defiance’s ASD Affinity Program will assist students in reaching their full potential in a college setting.”

The Affinity Program will provide a quality academic experience with appropriate support services. The program seeks to foster independence for young adults with autism by providing a residential campus experience with numerous services in place to maximize opportunities for success and entry into the workforce.

Students accepted into the program will receive campus housing with live-in staff support and supervision by trained individuals; peer mentoring with advice on courses, co-curricular opportunities and other academic matters; faculty advisors within their area of study; and regular meetings with staff members.

The program will promote social and personal growth with the assistance of peer mentors, residence advisors, and instructional sessions.

The ASD Affinity Program will be led by Dr. Clarissa Barnes, the director of Defiance’s Hench Autism Studies Program and an assistant professor of special education at Defiance College.

“The ASD Affinity Program isn’t designed to provide a college-like or parallel experience for students with ASD; it is designed to support students with ASD as they have a true college experience,” said Dr. Barnes. “The comprehensive services that we are offering will allow students with ASD to participate in all aspects of college life just like any other Defiance College student - from living in the residence halls to midnight breakfasts during finals week and everything in between.”

The Hench Autism Studies Program was created in 2007 through the vision of Defiance residents Eric and Deb Hench. In collaboration with Defiance City Schools, it includes an on-campus public school classroom for adolescents with ASD, summer camp for adolescents and young adults, a resource center for families, specialized undergraduate peer mentor training, an undergraduate minor in autism studies, and licensure within the Master of Arts in Education program for intervention specialist.



Students interested in applying to the ASD Affinity Program should go to www.defiance.edu/autism/affinity/index.html on the Defiance College website to begin the application process. Additional questions regarding applications can be directed to Brad Harsha, Director of Admissions, at 419-783-2365 or bharsha@defiance.edu.



TO SUPPORT THE ASD AFFINITY PROGRAM

If you are interested in providing financial support for the ASD Affinity Program at Defiance College, please contact Matt Gilroy, Chief Development Officer, at 419-783-2316 or mgilroy@defiance.edu.

Who the ASD Affinity Program serves:

The ASD Affinity Program is designed to serve college students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (DSM-5); autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, or pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) (DSM-IV-TR). The program is designed for students who meet the Defiance College admissions requirements and have an average (or above average) intellectual ability. In general, these are students who may be able to handle the academic rigor of college, but need support in making the transition and succeeding in the college environment. This program is not designed to support students who require constant direct supervision or who have severe behavior problems. Students who have documented instances of aggression or self-harm are not appropriate for the program because the program does not include the necessary interventions or supports for those individuals.

The benefit of the ASD Affinity Program extends beyond the students with ASD and their families. This program will be of benefit to the Defiance College community and the larger community of the city of Defiance. The prevalence of ASD is one in 68 (CDC, 2014); this means that many Defiance College graduates will have colleagues with ASD, clients with ASD, or know someone who is impacted by ASD in their lifetimes. The ASD Affinity Program provides an opportunity for students to get to know individuals with ASD and to assist in supporting those students. Students will also receive instruction on common characteristics of individuals with ASD in the context of campus-wide diversity awareness and training. Through this process the students with and without ASD will learn many valuable skills that may be used in their professional and personal lives. This focus on educating communities about ASD as an issue of diversity is paramount.



ASD AFFINITY PROGRAM

provides a wide range of services

ACADEMIC SUCCESS



Defiance's ASD Affinity Program offers students with ASD the environmental and professional support services needed to overcome barriers and provide for avenues of academic success in the traditional college setting. The prominent place our Hench Autism Studies Program has enjoyed on the Defiance College campus has fostered a campus-wide appreciation for the contributions students with ASD bring to the college community and support for the services provided to ensure their academic achievements.

Some key features of the ASD Affinity Program include:

- ◆ Students enroll in no more than 12 - 13 credit hours during their first semester of coursework leading toward the bachelor's degree. Beyond the first semester, credit hour levels are based on academic performance in alignment with the policy for all Defiance College students.
- ◆ Faculty advisors in the student's major are being trained to work with students with ASD and strive to provide the same type of advising offered to all Defiance College students.
- ◆ Peer mentors and tutors assist with advice about courses, course sequences, co-curricular opportunities, instructors and other academic matters.
- ◆ Students meet regularly with the Director of Student Academic Support Services and Student Support Coordinator.
- ◆ A comprehensive evaluation of appropriate support services is conducted for each student during the spring of the academic year and implemented for the following fall.

RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT



Defiance College residence life experience offers ASD Affinity Program students life skills in the accomplishment of independent living. ASD Affinity Program residence advisors and peer mentors provide instruction and facilitate skill development in the context of individual and shared responsibility and relationships with fellow students.

- ◆ ASD Affinity Program students live on-campus in apartment style housing under the supervision of trained resident advisors and the coordinator.
- ◆ Apartment units include two bedrooms, a kitchenette, full bath and a study area.
- ◆ Resident advisors live in residence with ASD Affinity Program students and receive their training in Defiance College's own Hench Autism Studies Program.
- ◆ Resident advisors provide oversight, peer modeling, and intervention in support of daily living, social and academic components of the program.
- ◆ Weekly instructional sessions (non-credit bearing) by the ASD Affinity Program coordinator focus on skills needed to integrate with the campus community and into the community following college.
 - ◆ Instructional session topics include a variety of adult decision making and community/life skills. Examples include:
 - ◇ Living with a roommate
 - ◇ Budgeting and banking
 - ◇ Scheduling and keeping appointments
 - ◇ Finding housing, setting up utilities, purchasing items for independent living
 - ◇ Meal planning, grocery shopping and cooking
 - ◇ Laundry
 - ◇ Using public transportation
 - ◇ Personal safety
 - ◇ Hygiene
 - ◇ Personal appearance
 - ◇ Keeping one's home clean and safe
 - ◇ Time management

Services continue...

SOCIAL & PERSONAL GROWTH



Defiance College's ASD Affinity Program intentionally promotes competencies in social behavior, relationship building, communication and environmental awareness. Social and emotional competencies are integrally related to success in the academic domain.

- ◆ Peer mentors facilitate structured social opportunities, which are available during common times such as meals, facilitate new social connections, and assist with social concerns and questions.
- ◆ With the assistance of ASD Affinity program residence advisors, students engage in a menu of campus and community events such as sporting events, theatre performances, music performances, shopping excursions, movies, and festivals. Through these experiences students will be encouraged to develop individualized social networks.
- ◆ Instructional sessions (non-credit bearing) designed to strengthen social skills and enhance personal confidence occur weekly under the direction of the ASD Affinity Program coordinator.
- ◆ Transition to different types of social support occur as a combination of performance in all three domains of academic, social, and residential and daily living are improved.

HENCH AUTISM STUDIES PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dr. Clarissa Barnes is the Director of the Hench Autism Studies Program and an Assistant Professor of Special Education at Defiance College (DC). She earned both her Ph.D. (2013) in Rehabilitation with an emphasis in Behavior Analysis and Therapy and her M.S. (2010) in Behavior Analysis from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIU). Clarissa received her B.S. (2007) in psychology from Western Michigan University. She is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral.



Dr. Barnes has more than seven years of experience working with individuals with ASD. Her experiences range from early intervention to adult services. Her research interests include exploring instructional methods to establish basic and complex verbal repertoires in individuals with and without disabilities, and investigating staff training methods that are both effective and accessible to the non-behavior analytic community. She has presented and co-presented 25 professional presentations, posters, and workshops as well as authored and co-authored four journal articles published in peer reviewed journals and one book chapter.

Dr. Barnes is also strongly interested in advocating for the science of behavior analysis. Teaching other professionals and non-professionals about the science of behavior analysis is an activity that she finds both rewarding and important.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Lisa Crumit-Hancock is the Director of Student Academic Support Services. She earned her BS in English and History from Defiance College (1991) and her MA in American Culture Studies from Bowling Green State University (1994). Prior to taking an administrative position, she taught in higher education for seventeen years. As director of SASS, one of her responsibilities is managing the Learning Commons, which includes the recruiting, training, and supervising of peer tutors and writing consultants.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Rebecca Zebrowski is coordinator of the ASD Affinity Program providing direct supervision for peer mentors and resident advisors. In addition to managing RAs, peer mentors and data she (in collaboration with the Director of the Hench Autism Studies Program) is responsible for developing and teaching non-credit bearing instructional sessions. Rebecca received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Defiance College, and she has been an autism rehabilitation counselor for Monarch Boarding Academy in Cleveland.

PROFESSIONAL STAFFING



ADVISORS, MENTORS AND TUTORS



RESIDENT ADVISORS

Resident advisors are specially selected graduate students who provide supervision in the residential setting. In addition, the RAs serve as instructional coaches for the students in the ASD Affinity Program. RAs collect data on student progress in daily living, service, and engagement. These data are graphed and interpreted by the coordinator to guide intervention services for individual students.

PEER MENTORS

Peer mentors are available to students in the ASD Affinity Program to serve as support during academic and leisure activities. The role of the peer mentor is diverse and is defined based on the needs of the mentee. In general, peer mentors facilitate the structured social opportunities, are available during common free times, facilitate new social connections, and assist with social concerns and questions.

PEER TUTORS

Peer tutors serve to provide academic support to students in the ASD Affinity Program. Peer tutors use their knowledge and academic skills to provide academic assistance. The role of the peer mentor may include, but is not limited to, clarifying assignment instructions and guidelines, editing papers, assisting students in understanding and learning content specific material, and promoting the development of study skills. All peer tutors are supervised by the Director of Student Academic Support Services.

PAM GERTZ TO LEAD PARENT GROUP FOR ASD AFFINITY PROGRAM

For Pam Gertz, the new ASD Affinity Program at Defiance College has personal significance. As a parent of a son on the autism spectrum, she understands the value of the support system that ASD Affinity will provide. And, because she feels so strongly about the opportunities that the program can deliver to college students with autism, she has agreed to lead a parent advisory board.

She is excited about the launch of ASD Affinity and thinks that much of what would appeal to families of students with ASD is what would appeal to all families of prospective college students. “Defiance College is small enough to embrace students and offer them experiences that others can’t,” she says.

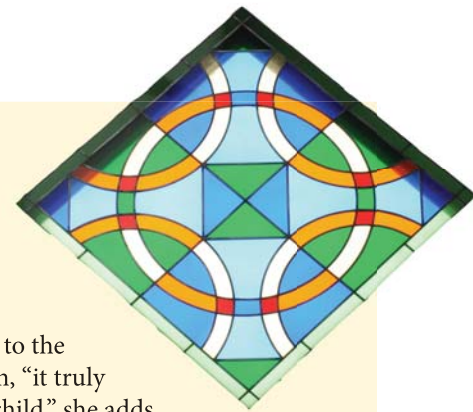
The college’s core curriculum as well as opportunities for internships and travel will enrich students in terms of work readiness and becoming productive young adults, she adds.

Perhaps more importantly, because of the success of the Hensch Autism Studies Program, Gertz says Defiance College “is very enlightened” with respect to autism.

From the ASD Affinity staff to the faculty to the administration, “it truly takes a village to educate a child,” she adds. Defiance College has created in ASD Affinity what Gertz describes as a distinctive holistic program with support services provided in all areas including academic, social, community and residential.

With the rise in diagnosis of individuals on the autism spectrum, secondary education is responding and better preparing students who leave high school ready for college. “And this is the best way for them to get a typical college experience with the support they need,” says Gertz, a resident of the Akron area.

Her son, now 24, attended a college program at Indiana University and is now an assistant teacher at The Ohio State University’s Nisonger Center. Gertz and her husband, Marc, first learned of Defiance College and the ASD Affinity Program through Wendy Pestrue, DC’s former vice president for institutional advancement. “We met Mark (Gordon) and Clarissa (Barnes) and toured the campus and fell in love with it,” she says.





HENCH AUTISM STUDIES

serving as a focal point for teaching, scholarship, and action to serve people with autism and their families

The Hench Autism Studies Program was created in 2007 through the vision of Defiance residents Eric and Deb Hench. The comprehensive program provides a wide array of services to address the multi-faceted needs of a growing population of individuals with autism. The program specifically supports late adolescent students with autism as well as parents of children on the autism spectrum. These services include:

HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

In partnership with Defiance City Schools, Defiance College has an ASD high school classroom on campus. This classroom has the capacity to serve six students (1:3 professional to student ratio) and is designed as a life skills learning lab. That is, all of the academic/daily living skills that are targeted are taught in "real life" situations.

SUMMER CAMP

The Hench Autism Studies Program offers a day camp for adolescents each summer. The camp is at no cost to families and provides a fun, comfortable, bully-free environment for the participants to make friends, explore new activities, and enjoy their summer. Camp activities include fine art, film creation, recreational leisure, and photography. Campers also have an opportunity to go on a variety of camp field trips (e.g., putt-putt golfing, Splash Bay Indoor Water Park, Toledo Zoo, the movies, etc.).

ASD AFFINITY PROGRAM

Defiance College's ASD Affinity program assists students with ASD in reaching their full potential in a college setting. Varying levels of academic, social and residential support are designed to aid students in meeting their personal and professional goals.

RESOURCE CENTER

The Hench Autism Studies Program resource center, located on the first floor of the Pilgrim Library, is open to the public. The resource center is a safe place to find videos, articles, and books related to autism spectrum disorder. The friendly and knowledgeable Pilgrim Library staff are available to assist students, professionals, community members, and families who are interested in learning more.

CAREGIVER MEETINGS

Within the last year the Hench Autism Studies Program has partnered with Kaitlyn's Cottage for caregiver meetings. These meetings are designed to be a place where caregivers can come to connect with other caregivers. The goal is threefold: to create a peer community for caregivers, to create a place where caregivers/family members are heard/understood, and to create a place where parents/caregivers can get reliable information on the issues that are important to them.

AUTISM STUDIES MINOR

Students who attend college at DC have the option of minoring in autism studies. This minor provides students with a basic understanding of what ASD is, the interventions that exist for individuals with ASD, how ASD impacts the family and community, and how they can effectively serve this population in their chosen professional field. The focus in these courses is on ASD as an issue of diversity.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development courses are available to professionals interested in learning more about ASD. Workshops include basic information about ASD and skill building portions.

The National Center for Special Education Research (2011) reports that young adults with disabilities, including ASD, were less than half as likely as their typical peers to be enrolled in a four-year college or university. This lack of participation in higher education is underscored by a report that indicated that youth with ASD were more likely than youth with specific language impairment, learning disabilities, or intellectual disability to be completely disengaged from post-secondary education and employment (Shattuck, Narendorf, Cooper, Sterzing, Wanger, & Taylor, 2012). No causal variables were directly linked to the lack of participation for students with ASD; however, it is likely that at least one contributing factor is the lack of appropriate supports in higher education for students with ASD.