Looking at Collaboration through the Eyes of College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The number of students entering college with Autism Spectrum Disorder (which now includes Asperger Syndrome) is growing. It is important for college students, staff, and faculty to better understand the challenges these students face as they enter college classrooms and other college spaces, especially as demands include social interaction.

While the model of collaboration is pervasive as an outcome in Higher Education, and while college professors have readily integrated collaboration into course assignments and activities, those who work in Higher Education should question whether this expectation creates obstacles to success for many students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

A survey of the literature shows that there is little to no research that points to accommodations specifically designed for college students with ASD. Most colleges are unprepared for students with these challenges, and accommodations have remained general and static. College professors must fill this gap with informed and transformed practice. The concept of Universal Design for Learning, based on the concept of Universal Design in architecture, can help faculty think of curriculum as a building that needs new access ramps to help students with ASD succeed.

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