

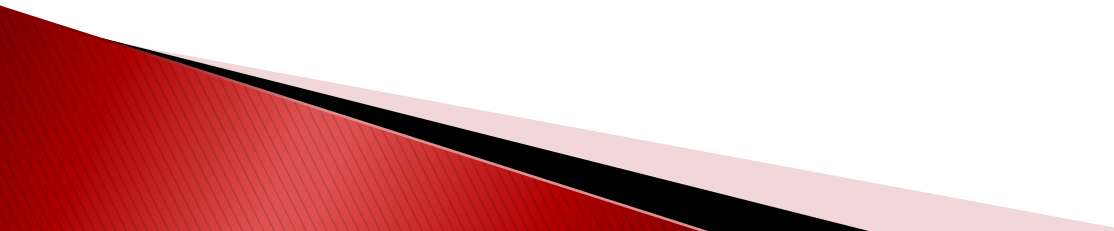
# Making the Pieces Fit: Providing Academic Supports to UNM Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Karla M. Paul, M.A., Ed.S.  
PhD student in Special Education  
Student Success Specialist

Cameron Langner  
Masters student in Special Education  
Student Advisor, A&S

# Quick Overview

- ▶ Information on UNM's Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) and disability law.
  - ▶ Definition and characteristics of autism spectrum disorder.
  - ▶ Supports for advisors to support retention of students with ASD.
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# Accessibility Resource Center

► **Website**

<http://arc.unm.edu>

**Office phone:**

(505) 277-3506

**Fax:**

(505) 277-3750

**Mailing Address:**

1 University of New Mexico  
MSC06 3810  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

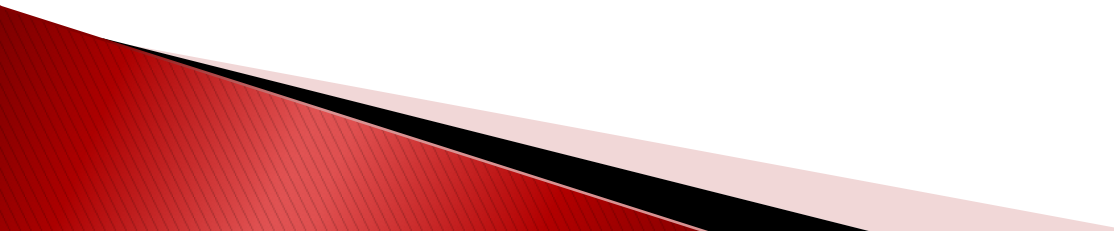
**Campus Location:**

Our office is located on the second floor of Mesa Vista Hall: 2021 Mesa Vista Hall  
across the courtyard from the SUB



# Mission of ARC

Accessibility Resource Center recognizes individuals with disabilities as one aspect of a diverse community and is committed to the provision of comprehensive resources to the University community (faculty, staff, and student) in order to create **equitable**, inclusive, and practical environments.





# Americans with Disabilities Act

- ▶ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is the civil rights guarantee for persons with disabilities in the United States.
- ▶ In its current form, the bill was amended and signed into law on September 25, 2008 known now as “ADA Amendments Act of 2008”.
  - Expands the protections of the original ADA to include more individuals with less severe impairments.
  - Revisions to the definition of “disability” to more broadly encompass impairments that substantially limit a major life activity.
  - Clarify coverage of impairments that are episodic or in remission that substantially limit a major life activity when active.

# Positive Language Empowers

Individuals are sometimes concerned that they will say the wrong thing, so they say nothing at all, thus further segregating people with disabilities.

Use of “People First” language.

Ex. Student with autism....  
Student who is deaf....



*By using words with dignity, we encourage equality for everyone.*

**Words with Dignity**

**Avoid these words**

**person with a disability/disabled**

cripple/handicapped/handicap/invalid (literally invalid means "not valid")

**Person who has/person with  
(e.g. person who has cerebral palsy)**

victim/afflicted with (e.g. victim of cerebral palsy)

**uses a wheelchair**

restricted, confined to a wheelchair/wheelchair bound (the chair enables mobility).

**non-disabled**

normal (referring to non-disabled persons as "normal" insinuates that people with disabilities are abnormal)

**deaf/hard of hearing**

deaf mute/deaf and dumb

**disabled since birth/ born with**

birth defect

**psychiatric history/psychiatric disability/  
emotional disorder/mental illness/consumer of  
mental health services**

crazy/insane/mental patient/wacko/  
a lunatic/a psychotic/a schizophrenic

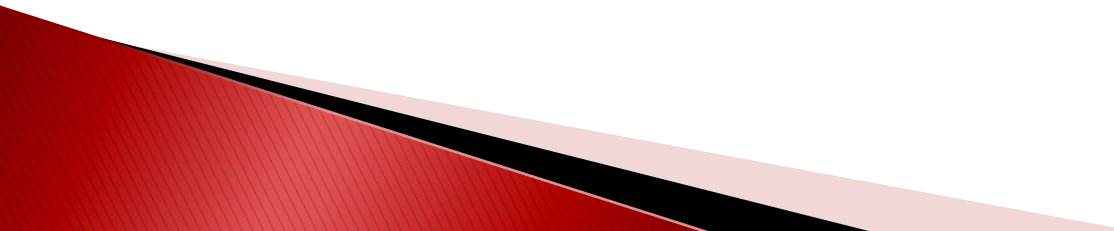
**epilepsy/seizures**

fits

**learning disability/intellectual or developmental  
disability/ADD/ADHD**

mental retardation/slow/retarded/lazy/stupid/underachiever

# Activity

- ▶ In groups of 3, come up with other words to describe the common idiom.
  - ▶ Present to session participants.
  - ▶ As a group, we are to guess what is being described.
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# Social Communication: Common Idioms Used in Schools/Society

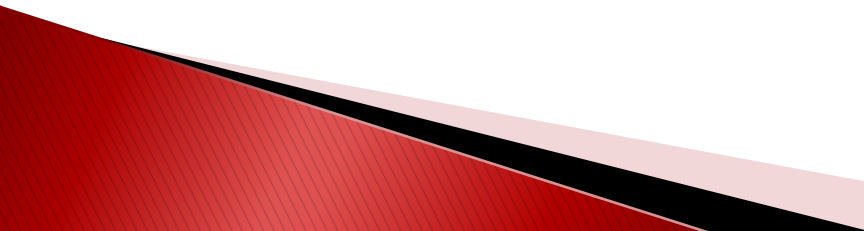
- ▶ “Give it a shot.”
- ▶ “Slipped my mind”
- ▶ “Be in hot water.”
- ▶ “It’s a piece of cake.”
- ▶ “It cost an arm and a leg.”
- ▶ “Slipped my mind.”
- ▶ “The ball is in your court.”
- ▶ “Don’t beat around the bush.”
- ▶ “At the drop of a hat.”
- ▶ “Can’t judge a book by its cover.”
- ▶ “Cry over spilt milk.”
- ▶ “Ice-breakers”
- ▶ “Bite the bullet.”

# Activity

- ▶ **What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?**
  - How do you know if someone has ASD?



# Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fifth Edition) also know as the “DSM-5”

- ▶ “Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts...”
  - ▶ “Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities...”
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# Autism Spectrum Disorder

- ▶ Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may have been previously identified as having “Asperger’s Syndrome” or “High Functioning Autism”.





# Remember the “Spectrum” part

- ▶ If you have met ONE person with autism, you have met ONE person with autism.
- ▶ Strengths of each student vary depending on where they fit on the spectrum.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder

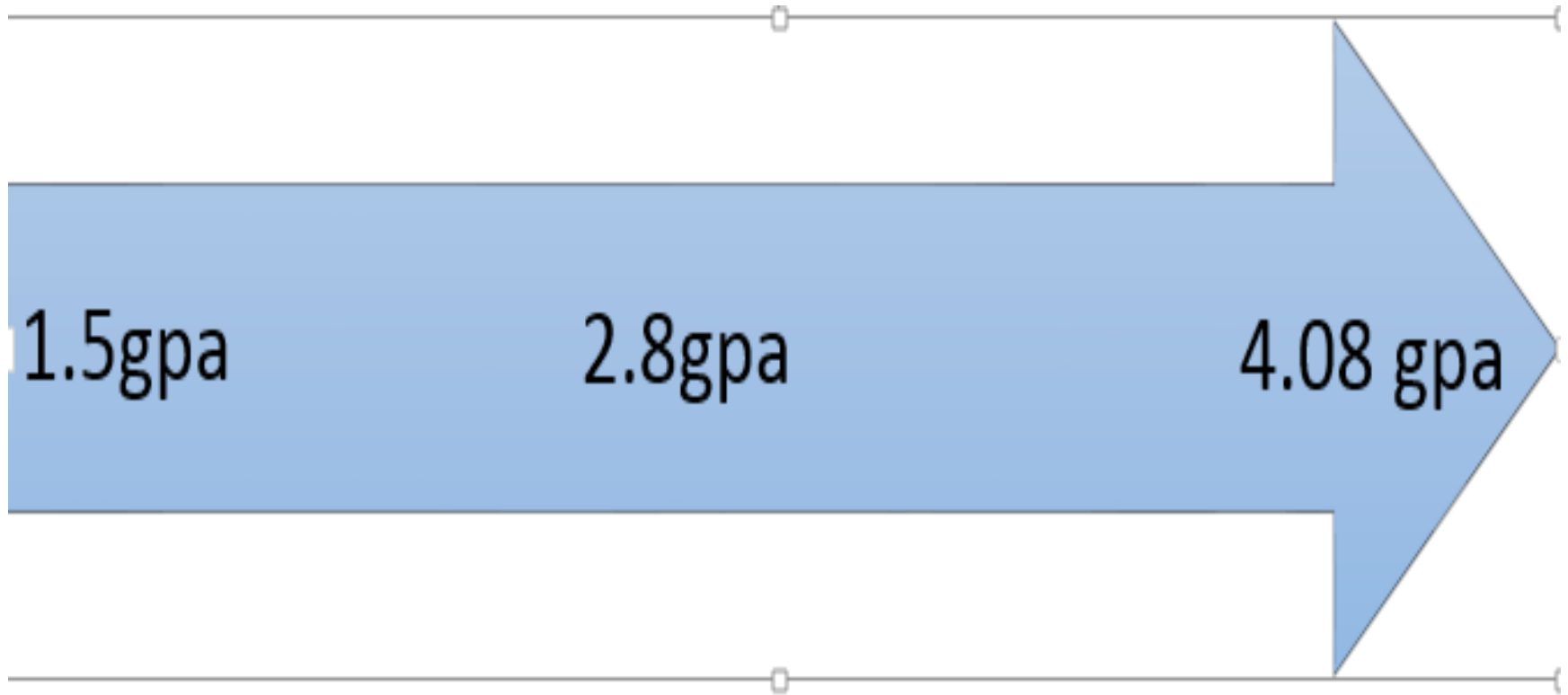


Severe  
Autism

Autism

High-Functioning Autism  
Aspergers Syndrome

# Examples of spectrum of gpa

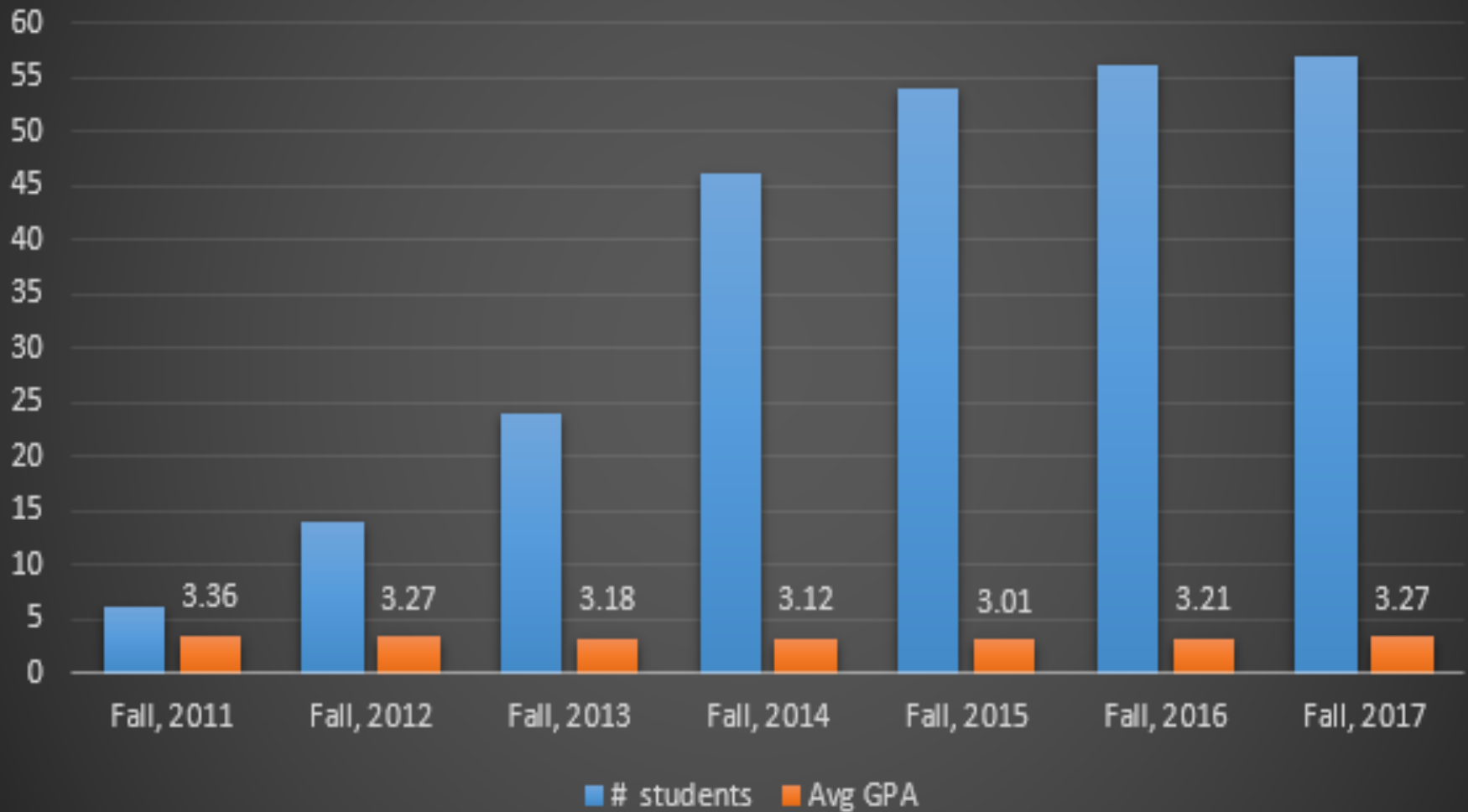


# Increased Enrollment at UNM


- ▶ Current figure is 1 in 68 people are diagnosed with ASD. (.01%)
- ▶ Male to female ratio is almost five to one.
- ▶ At UNM main campus, currently about 60 students enrolled and receiving support from ARC\*. ( $60/1000 = .06\%$ )



## Students w/ASD + semester GPA



# General Characteristics related to college

- ▶ Problems with organization (including initiating, planning, carrying out, and finishing tasks).
  - ▶ Difficulties with transitions and changes in schedule.
  - ▶ Deficits in abstract thinking (concrete, focuses on irrelevant details, difficulty generalizing).
- 

# General Characteristics (cont.)

- ▶ Problems asking for help
- ▶ Unusual sensitivity to touch, sounds, and visual details, may experience sensory overload

# Social Characteristics

- ▶ Difficulty understanding social cues (**group work can be a challenge; classroom behavior**).
- ▶ Difficulty understanding others' point of view (**might not be able to tell if professor or students are becoming frustrated with their behavior**).



# Social Characteristics (cont.)

- ▶ Difficulty understanding people in different roles (**might appear disrespectful to other students or university staff and faculty**).
- ▶ Difficulty understanding “personal space” (**might stand too far or too close when interacting**).



# Repetitive Behaviors/Interest Characteristics

- ▶ Might “perseverate” on one thought or idea (**can make it difficult to transition between classroom topics**).
- ▶ Might have very intense, single focused hobbies or interests (**can make staying focused on class topic a challenge**).
- ▶ Might demonstrate unusual hand movements, especially when under stress (**might appear unusual or can be distracting to others in class**).

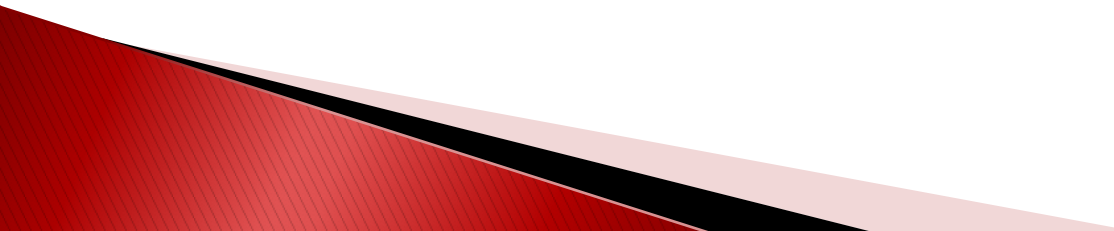


# Communication Characteristics

- ▶ Unusual use of facial expressions and eye contact **(can be interpreted as lack of engagement or boredom).**
- ▶ Unusual tone of voice in conversation **(can be interpreted as rude or disinterested).**
- ▶ Limited use of gestures/body language **(can make it difficult to convey feelings and also relates to difficulty understanding the body language of others).**

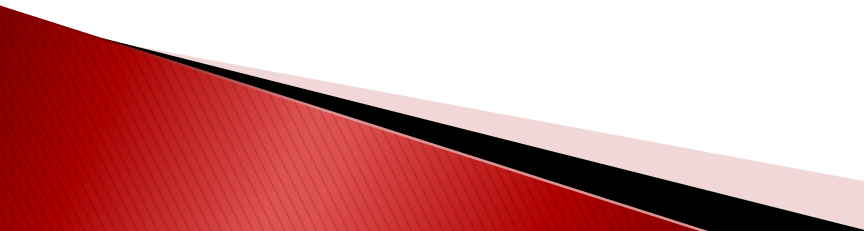


# Communication-continued

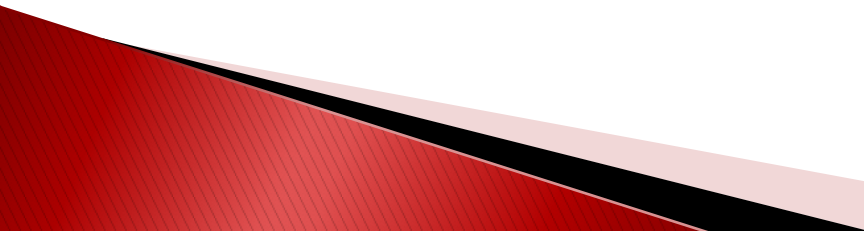
- ▶ Difficulty participating in back and forth conversation (**can make it hard to work in groups or participate in classroom discussions**).
  - ▶ Difficulty initiating communication (**can make it hard to ask for help**).
  - ▶ Difficulty understanding sarcasm or subtle meanings of words (**can impact social interaction in class as well as auditory and reading comprehension**).
- 



# National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) best practices

- ▶ Strengths Based Advising is ESSENTIAL when working with students with ASD.
  - ▶ Let them perseverate (with a time limit)—it shows the student that you are interested in their interests.
  - ▶ Work to establish trust.
  - ▶ Assist with Visual Supports.
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# Anxiety Issues for Students with ASD

- ▶ Young people with ASD may experience anxiety as a result of spontaneous interactions (Kern & Kendall, 2013).
  - ▶ A person with ASD can become anxious when asked to do something that they had not planned to do (Hare et al., 2015).
  - ▶ Individuals with ASD have more social anxiety than individuals without ASD (Bellini, 2006).
  - ▶ Social anxiety was a frequent co-occurring psychiatric problem for people with ASD (White et al., 2011).
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# Prevalence of Anxiety in Students with ASD

- ▶ Research reported estimates of anxiety and/or depression were found to be as high as 65% (Klin, 2011) and 79% in individuals with ASD (Mayes et al., 2011).
- ▶ The prevalence for the rate of anxiety in young people with ASD ranged between 47% to 84% (Sofronoff & Beaumont, 2009).



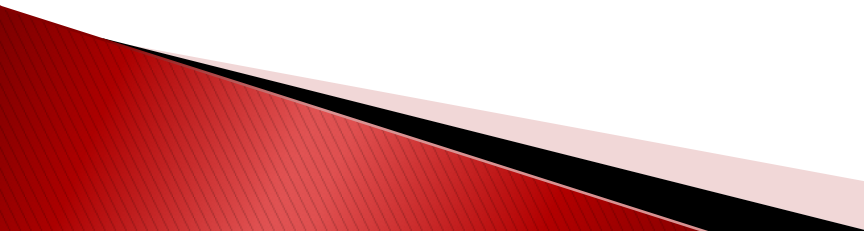
**DON'T TELL ME WHAT YOU  
CAN'T DO...**

**TELL ME WHAT YOU  
CAN DO!**

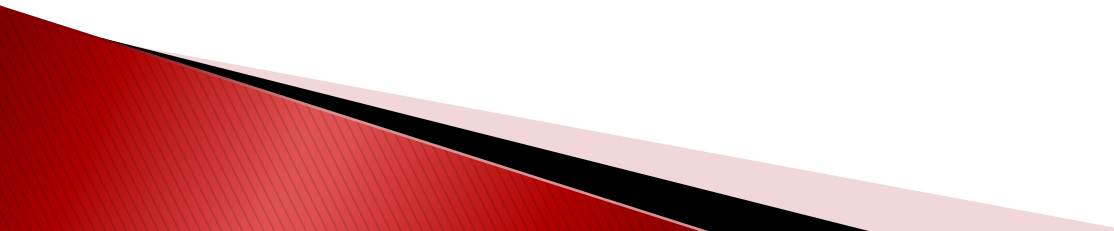
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# Learning Strengths

- ▶ Often use visual information for understanding content and demonstrating knowledge.
  - ▶ Might remember information over a long period of time.
  - ▶ Might have a high degree of focus on and knowledge about special areas of interests.
  - ▶ Often able to learn and follow specific rules when told explicitly what is expected.
  - ▶ Can be detail oriented and highly focused.
  - ▶ Often have unique perspectives and sense of humor.
- 

# Academic Accommodations

- Conversion of textbooks (FREE *Read & Write Gold* software).
  - Extended time on exams.
  - Recording of lectures (use of a Smart Pen).
  - Reduced course-load (Scholarships/Lottery).
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# How many students with ASD in each college?

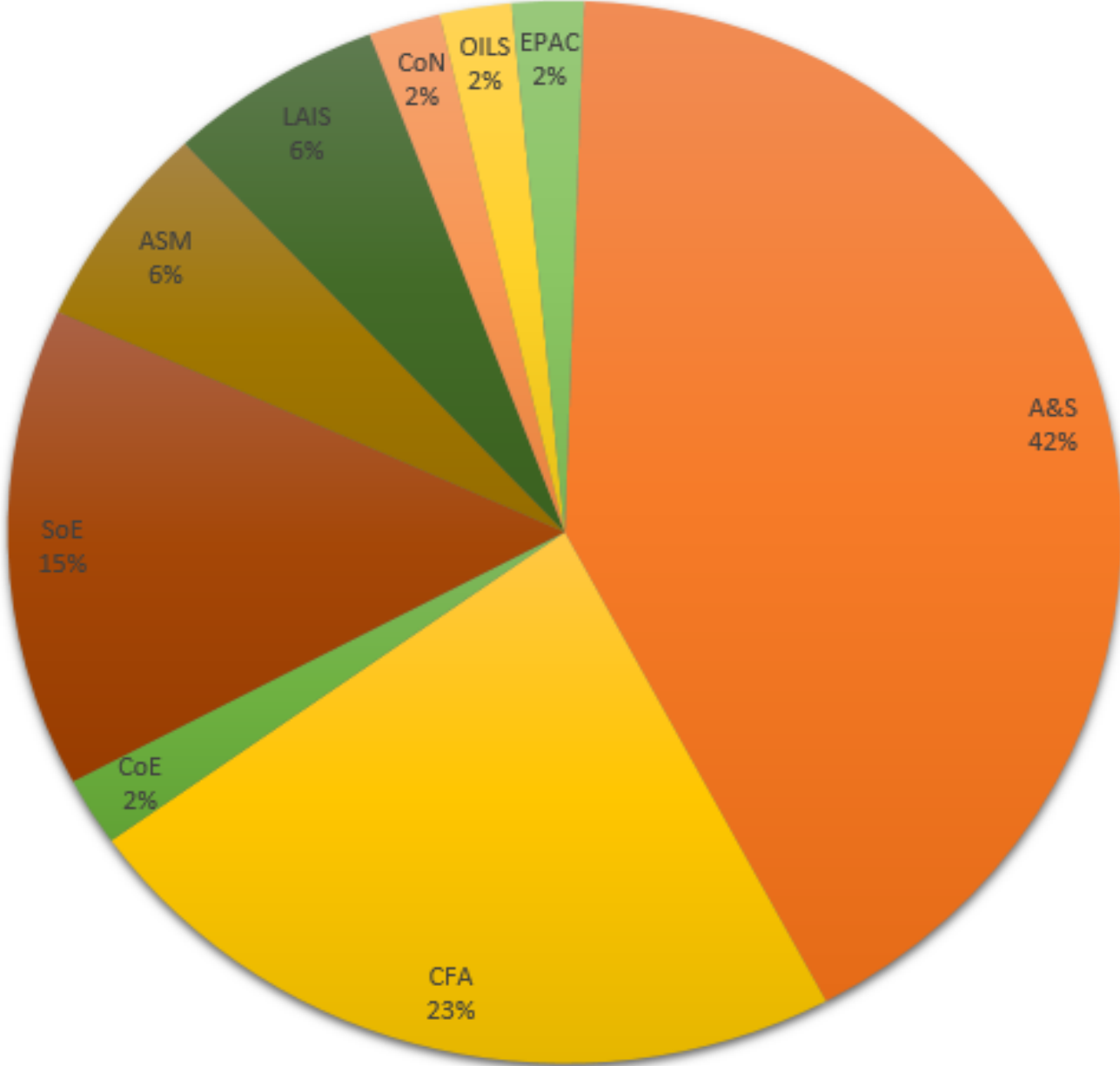
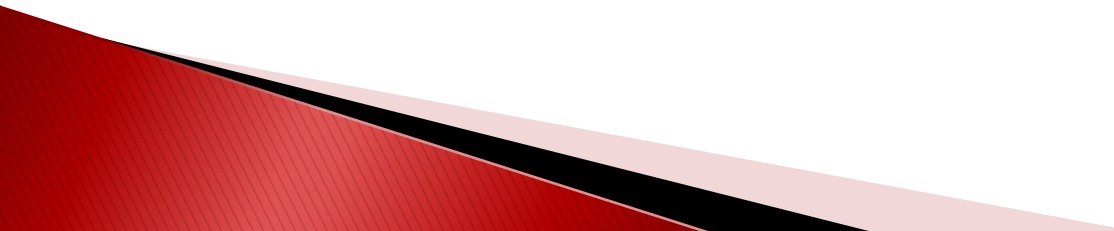


Chart Area

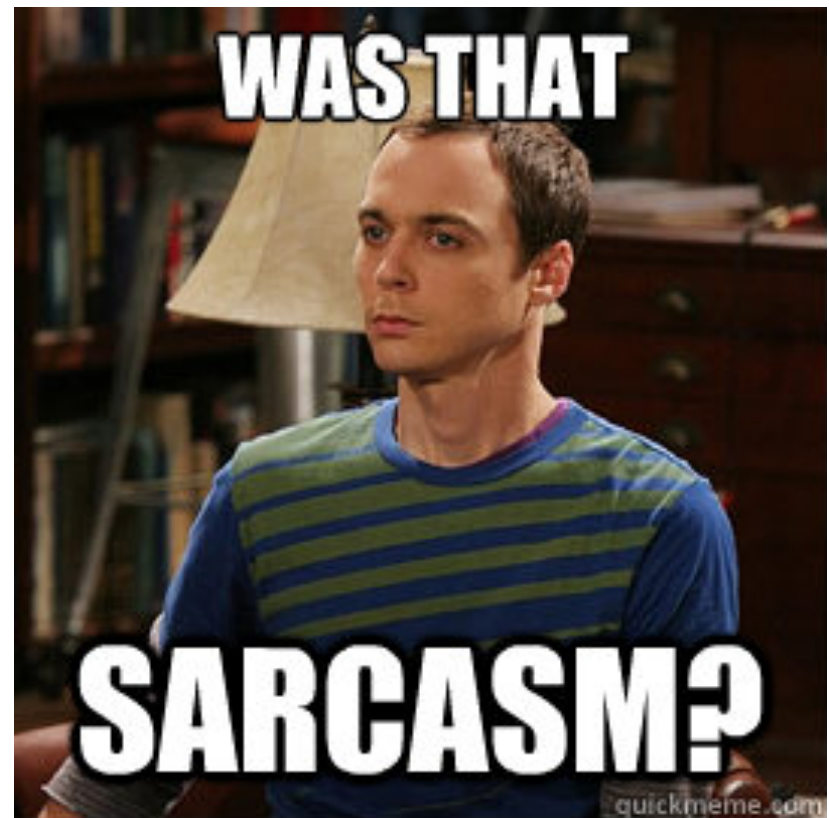
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# Advisor's Role in supporting students with ASD

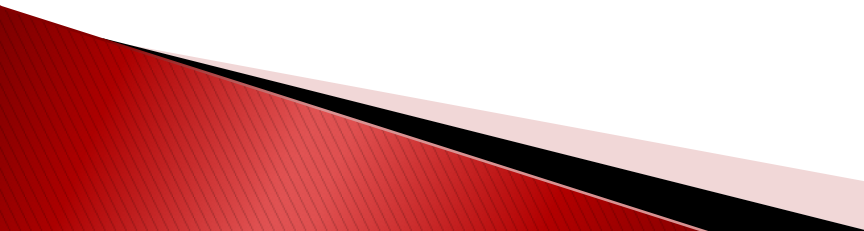
- ▶ Help student write down plan.
  - ▶ Email your notes to student (post visit).
  - ▶ Refrain from using idioms (or at least check for understanding).
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# Advisor's Role in supporting students with ASD

- ▶ Refrain from using sarcasm...



# Suggestions for Advisors

- Ask questions and ask for them to repeat your instructions.
  - Check for clarity.
  - Write everything down.
  - Be patient—allow for pauses!
  - Do not talk over the student!
  - Take YOUR TIME (if you need to present the information in chunks—do that).
  - Multiple appointments are better than multiple misunderstandings.
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# Retention is the key

- ▶ Retention is a HUGE issue as is engagement with non-preferred topics. Sometimes it helps to ask: “If money were no object and you knew you could not fail, what would you love to do?”
- Students with ASD struggle with failure—making mistakes is super difficult—so it is good to find out what makes them tick! The answer to this question helps establish rapport but also allows you to help them choose a schedule that ensures academic engagement even when they aren’t really interested in ALL of their other classes.





**TOGETHER**

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Questions??????