

**Subject:** June Newsletter

**Date:** Monday, June 3, 2019 at 8:04:05 AM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** College Autism Network

**To:** Jackson, Brittany 1.

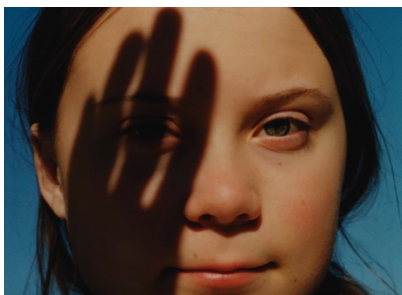
Here's your monthly update filled with research, resources, and news related to college students with autism.

[View this email in your browser](#)



**COLLEGE AUTISM NETWORK**  
ADVOCACY | RESEARCH | TRAINING

## In The News



### [The positive impact of having someone proudly autistic in the spotlight](#)

Greta Thunberg is a teenage climate activist inspiring activism for the environment and for autism. You can learn more about how Thunberg is helping others on the spectrum [here](#).



## [I'm Autistic: Here Are 5 Ways You Can Support Me at Work](#)

This article features tips for employers and neurotypical peers on how to support employees with autism.

## [He couldn't speak as a child. Now this autistic student is giving a commencement address](#)

Learn more about Bruno Youn's journey to success.

# Resources for Students

## Institutional Initiatives Highlight

### The College Success Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The College Success Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (CSP) at Eastern University is a comprehensive support program providing **social, academic, and residence life support**. The CSP is designed to meet each student where they are and to support them toward growth in all areas of functioning as they live and learn within a caring Christian community that is welcoming to students of any (or no) religious preference.

The CSP begins with a **pre-fall-semester orientation** for new students, providing a more ASD-friendly move-in environment and time for students to acclimate to the campus and to program staff prior to the start of university-wide orientation programs. During the semester, students participate in **weekly meetings** with the program Coordinator, a **weekly skills group (focusing on social, academic, self-care, self-regulation, and career-readiness skills)** facilitated by the Coordinator, **weekly meetings with an assigned Peer Mentor** (a fellow undergraduate student trained and supervised by the Coordinator), **supervised study sessions** (available 2 hours per night, 5 nights per week), **planned social events on and off campus** (at least monthly), and a **weekly support group led by the Graduate Mentors** (graduate students trained and supervised by the Coordinator). The Graduate Mentors live in the residence hall alongside students to provide support with residence life skills and to provide **after-hours emergency on-call services**. The CSP also offers liaison support, training, and consultation with university faculty, staff, and

departments in order to develop and strengthen awareness of autism spectrum disorder and the implementation of ASD-friendly practices across campus. As students move toward graduation, the CSP supports them with accessing services through the university's Office of Career Development and through resources in their home communities in order to **facilitate the transition** into the workforce.

The program is small and relatively new so outcome data is very preliminary. Since the current Coordinator took over the program in 2014, 85% of students who entered as freshmen returned for their second year, which is higher than the overall university's freshman retention rate. With only one exception, students who have successfully completed their first year have persisted to graduation, resulting in a higher graduation rate than the university overall. (This data does not include one student who transferred to another university after the first year in order to pursue a preferred major not offered at EU.)



## Research Update



Mark your calendars for our next CANVAS meeting: **Tues, July 16 at 4pm - 5pm CST** on [Google Meet](#). Our featured presenter is **Anastasia Anderson**(Macquarie University), who will be discussing her recent research projects. Indicate your attendance on our [meeting agenda](#).

If you want to check out materials from our Spring 2019 meetings, [check them out](#) on the CANVAS page on the CAN website.

# Postsecondary Students with Autism-Related Characteristics: STEM Fields and GPA

2019 IQAR Annual Meeting  
Phoenix, Colorado, Nov 2, 2019

OVERVIEW

**SUMMARY / ABSTRACT**

**BACKGROUND**

- Attendance: Increasing numbers of students with autism attending postsecondary education
- Graduation: Current graduation rates are below 50%
- STEM Majors: Public stereotypes and "systematizing" theories suggest autistic students are well-suited for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- RQ1: To what extent do college students exhibit autism-related characteristics?
- RQ2: Do students with high levels of autism-related characteristics pursue degrees in STEM fields?
- RQ3: Do autism-related characteristics relate to students' persistence in STEM majors?
- RQ4: Are student grades (GPA) related to students' levels of autism-related characteristics?

**METHODS**

**Sample:** 1,219 Undergraduates at a major research university in the United States

**Data:** Autism Quotient (AQ-10 Question version); AQ10, GPA, race, gender, ACT/SAT, major

**Analysis:** Correlation of means (r), t-tests, correlations (Pearson's r), and regression (OLS & Logit)

**RESULTS**

- RQ1: Autism-related characteristics have a nearly normal distribution across all students.
- RQ2: Relative to their non-STEM peers, students in STEM fields show slightly higher scores on the AQ10.
- RQ3: Persistence within a STEM major is not related to students' levels of autism-related characteristics.
- RQ4: Students' autism-related characteristics have no relationship with students' grades (GPA).

**IMPLICATIONS**

- Optimistic messaging: Students know that they do not need to be a STEM major to succeed at university.
- Realism: Students should feel confident they can succeed academically in postsecondary education.
- Future Focus: Research, advice, and practice should focus on non-academic support systems.

**1 PERCEPTIONS OF AUTISM, STEM, AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

**AUTISM IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

- Beliefs
- Challenges
- Clashes of Values
- Lack of Support
- Unsettled Exclusion Date

**AUTISM AND STEM**

- Optimistic Messaging
- Realism
- Public Stereotypes
- Systematizing Theories
- Public Stereotypes
- Systematizing Theories
- Public Stereotypes
- Systematizing Theories

**2 LANGUAGE**

**Person-First (Student with Autism) vs. Identity-First (Autistic Student)**

Use of both: This is an ongoing disagreement about the appropriate use of "with" associated with "has" or "are" (e.g., "has autism" vs. "is autistic") and the use of "person" vs. "autistic" (e.g., "person with autism" vs. "autistic person").

**Autism-Related Characteristics**

The use of the term "autism-related characteristics" to acknowledge that autism is a condition with varying degrees of severity, not a binary diagnosis, and that students with varying degrees of autism-related characteristics may have different needs and experiences.

**3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, PARTICIPANTS, DATA, AND ANALYSES**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- RQ1: To what extent do college students exhibit autism-related characteristics?
- RQ2: Do students with high levels of autism-related characteristics pursue degrees in STEM?
- RQ3: Do autism-related characteristics relate to students' persistence in STEM majors?
- RQ4: Are student grades (GPA) related to students' levels of autism-related characteristics?

**PARTICIPANTS & DATA**

- 1,219 Undergraduates at major research university in the Southwestern United States
- RS: Freshman, 200 Sophomore, 207 Junior, 251 Senior, 838 (69%) Women, 796 (65%) White
- Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ-10) Questionnaire, ACT/SAT, and Official Transcripts

**ANALYSIS**

- r Tests, Binomial Correlation, Logistic Regression, Ordinal Least Squares (OLS) Regression

**4 IMPLICATIONS**

**FOR STUDENTS**

- Confidence: Students can succeed academically in postsecondary education.
- Optimistic: Students do not have to be a STEM major to succeed at university.

**FOR RESEARCHERS & PRACTICE**

- Interventions: Supports need to focus on non-academic support systems.
- Future Research: Explore other factors contributing to persistence and graduation (Social Integration, Financial Literacy, Independent Living, Psychological Wellbeing)

FINDINGS

**RQ 1 DISTRIBUTION OF AUTISM CHARACTERISTICS**

Students' autism-related characteristics were measured by the 10-question version of the Autism Spectrum Quotient. The distribution of AQ-10 scores (on a 4-point scale) indicates that autism-related characteristics have a near-normal distribution across the entire population of college students.

How students scored on autism characteristics; none had scores of 0 or 10.

**RQ 2 ENROLLMENT IN STEM FIELDS**

Consistent with previous literature, majors in the STEM fields tend to have students with slightly elevated levels of autism-related characteristics. Logit model statistically significant differences in AQ10 scores for students in STEM vs. Non-STEM majors. These differences appear among students who start university in a STEM field ( $p = .02$ ); they are not apparent among students currently in STEM fields ( $p = .11$ ).

The magnitude of these differences, however, suggest the differences are of little practical significance.

|               | STEM  | Non-STEM |
|---------------|-------|----------|
| Initial Major | 21.90 | 20.80    |
| Current Major | 21.26 | 20.80    |

**RQ 3 PERSISTENCE IN STEM MAJORS**

Both public stereotypes and "systematizing" theories of autism suggest that students with autism are particularly well-suited for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields. It is contended that autistic students are both drawn to and successful in these fields because the characteristics of these fields—linear, logical, compartmental, and often with clear "right answers"—are consistent with the way an autistic mind processes information. Indeed, a growing number of researchers (including those from the U.S. State Dept.) suggest that postsecondary students with autism (disproportionately among STEM-related degrees) are successfully enrolled from 2-year to 5-year institutions more readily than do their non-STEM peers.

However, to graduate with a STEM degree, students who start in STEM fields must remain in these fields throughout their postsecondary program of study. With this question, I explore whether students with higher levels of autism-related characteristics are more likely to persist in STEM majors throughout their undergraduate experience.

Results indicate that students' likelihood of persistence within the STEM fields has no discernible relationship with the severity of their autism-related characteristics.

Correlations between AQ10 scores and persistence in STEM fields are not statistically significant ( $p > .425$ ).

Logit regression results likewise yield no significant relationship.

**RQ 4 GRADES / GPA**

Despite a recent uptick in the frequency with which autistic students pursue postsecondary education, current literature suggests that fewer than half of these students will complete their studies and earn a degree. In fact, there have been no large-scale studies exploring one of the best factors affecting student persistence and graduation: their grades. Not only do students' grades serve as a more granular and timely indicator of students' academic success, many employers use GPA as a screening tool before considering applications for employment.

Counter to the researchers' expectations, the results reveal no statistically significant relationship between students' autism-related characteristics and their GPAs. The bias of such a relationship was consistent across both genders, all racial/ethnic groups, and for students at every point in their undergraduate progress. The implications of these results are evident in their consistency across all of the variables in our statistical analyses.

DR. BRADLEY E. COX  
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE AUTISM NETWORK



Increasing numbers of students with autism are attending postsecondary education, but current graduation rates are below 50%. Public stereotypes and “systematizing” theories suggest autistic students are well-suited for the STEM fields. Within a population of 1,219 undergraduates at a major research university in the United States, data was gathered through the Autism Quotient (10-Question version; AQ10), GPA, race, gender, ACT/SAT, and major.

This research addresses 4 research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent do college students exhibit autism-related characteristics?
- RQ2: Do students with high levels of autism-related characteristics pursue degrees in STEM fields ?
- RQ3: Do autism-related characteristics relate to students' persistence in STEM majors?
- RQ4: Are student grades (GPA) related to students' levels of autism-related characteristics?

You can learn more about the results on [our website](#).

# Training and Resources



# College Inclusion Summit

We are hard at work planning the third [College Inclusion Summit](#) which will take place at Vanderbilt University October 23-25. We will have a preconference workshop led by Jane Thierfeld Brown and Laurie Ackles of [College Autism Spectrum](#) for those interested in starting a new program or taking an existing program to the next level. Jane will do double duty as our opening speaker as well, and we're thrilled to have this internationally-recognized expert on student success bring her knowledge and experience to the Summit.

The Summit is designed to bring together practitioners and scholars working on behalf of college students with autism. Visit our [website](#) for more information.

---

This is a fact sheet for professors who are seeking to become more autism friendly in their teaching practices. Tips include creating a relationship with the disability services office and meeting with students privately.



**A Spectrum of Possibility: Tips for Professors of College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

---

We are always looking for new resources to share. If you have any resources related to ASD in college, please email us at [info@collegeautismnetwork.org](mailto:info@collegeautismnetwork.org) so we can share the knowledge!

---

Were you forwarded this newsletter?

Do you want to get more content like this?

**Subscribe!**

 Share  Forward  Tweet

Contact

[info@collegeautismnetwork.org](mailto:info@collegeautismnetwork.org)

Facebook

[CollegeAutismNetwork](#)

Twitter

[CollegeAutism](#)

The authors whose work appears herein retain the copyright to the content therein. However, unless specified differently on specific pages/products, original material from the College Autism Network is licensed under the following Creative Commons license:



Original material from the College Autism Network by [Cox et al.](#), is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

This email was sent to [jacksonb1@hiram.edu](mailto:jacksonb1@hiram.edu)

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

College Autism Network · 3122 Mahan Dr. Suite 801-273 · Tallahassee, FL 32308-2500 · USA

