The Alliance of Autism College to Employment Programs (aka The Alliance) is an association for research-minded practitioners dedicated to autistic college students' success and building inclusive campus communities.

The Alliance conducted a nationwide online survey study that assessed the anxiety levels, needs, and concerns of autistic undergraduate students regarding a variety of COVID-19 pandemic-related factors. This tip sheet explains the results and provides examples to help support students.

Survey respondents...

- 43% had a GPA of 3.6 or above
- 70% participated in an autistic support program
  - Of those, 35% preferred a combination of in-person and online support
- Resided at home:
  - 48.7% before COVID-19 restrictions
  - 47.4% during COVID-19 restrictions

Research conducted by:

Jessica Monahan, PhD, University of Delaware
Kelsey Baldwin, MA, University of Delaware
Brealy Garrison, University of Delaware


For more information about the Alliance, email info@collegeautismspectrum.com
**Figure 1. Quantitative survey data.** Respondents rated their level of anxiety for each of the eight factors using the following scale: 0=not anxious at all, 1=somewhat anxious, 2=anxious, 3=very anxious.

*63-76 respondents answered these survey questions

**Respondents were most anxious about…**
- Contracting COVID-19
- Spreading COVID-19

**Respondents were least anxious about…**
- Wearing Masks
- Social Distancing

**Figure 2. Qualitative survey data.** Respondents answered three open-ended questions. The three most prevalent themes for each item are shown below.

### What are some ways your support program or university can help you be successful (academically, socially, and emotionally) during the semester?

- Academic Support and Considerations
- General Support
- Social Support

### What are some of the concerns you have about online classes?

- Attendance and Work Completion
- Logistics (how to access classes and learn online)
- Quality of Learning

### What are some of the concerns you have about in person classes?

- Catching COVID-19
- Miscellaneous (uncertainty, hesitancy, general ambivalence, etc.)
- Others Not Following Safety Procedures
# ACADEMIC SUPPORT

## Tips and Suggestions

**To Provide...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support for Executive Functioning</th>
<th>Access to Staff</th>
<th>Tutoring Opportunities</th>
<th>Check-Ins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing an easy way for the student and support person to plan the term, set academic and social goals, break down each course and integrate into a total plan for the term that includes all courses, and review progress as the term continues</td>
<td>Keeping lines of communication open, reaching a support person in case of urgent need, getting answers to questions that feel urgent, supporting access to other resources</td>
<td>Continuing access to tutoring services, encouraging use of existing academic supports, determining barriers that may exist, supporting student in scheduling and attending tutoring</td>
<td>Creating regularly scheduled virtual check-ins (individual or group) to ensure the student is on track, understands their weekly plan, has the opportunity to connect with others, and is working to build responsibility and interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use/Suggest...**

- Planning apps, or processes
  - Google Docs, Sheets, Calendar
  - My Study Life
- Learning Management System (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas, etc.)
- Assignment trackers
- Goal setting
- Backwards planning
- Schedule appointments online
- Text message app
- Virtual office hours
- Support person available via chat during work hours
- Remote staff can utilize Google Voice in place of office phone to ensure staff are readily available to students by phone
- Academic support services
- Online tutoring
- Faculty office hours
- Teaching assistants/GA
- Virtual meeting platforms
- Breakout rooms for information sharing or teamwork
- Visual supports such as checklists, calendars, agendas, whiteboards, and applicable handouts

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**Alliance Steering Committee Members:**

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Amy Edwards, Drexel University  
Cherie Fishbaugh, West Chester University  
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**WELLNESS AND HEALTH SUPPORT**

**To Provide...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Management</th>
<th>Mental Breaks</th>
<th>COVID-19 Preparedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping students manage the anxiety that can hinder success</td>
<td>Encouraging technology and study breaks to help prevent feeling drained or overwhelmed</td>
<td>Providing reassurance, information, and resources about COVID and related institution safety plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use/Suggest...**

- Mental health counseling
- Mindfulness (e.g., meditation, breathing, yoga, apps)
- Identify triggers and calming strategies
- Self-care routine (e.g., sleep, nutrition, movement)
- Activity (e.g., exercise, change of scenery, journaling, drawing)
- Schedules for breaks (e.g., focus keeper, Pomodoro focus timer)
- Social connection (e.g., call, talk, text, video chat)
- Institutions’ online training re: COVID-19 precautions and trusted sources (e.g., CDC)
- Staying healthy (in light of COVID concerns) through discussion, workshops, information-sharing

**SOCIAL SUPPORT**

**To Provide...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual Engagement Events</th>
<th>Social Networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staying connected and socially engaged</td>
<td>Staying active and connecting with peers who have similar interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use/Suggest...**

- Gaming platforms (e.g., Kahoot, Jackbox, Scriblio, Xbox-live)
- Group chats (e.g., Group Me, Discord)
- Watch parties (e.g., Netflix, Disney+)
- Campus clubs/organization (e.g., interest, service, Greek life)
- Campus events and activities (e.g., campus life, residence life)
- Connections with academic groups and peers with similar majors (e.g., study groups, academic clubs)

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