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NOVEMBER 2020 — IN THE CLASSROOM

Welcome to "INCLUDE in the classroom," a monthly newsletter for faculty and TAs. This newsletter aims to increase awareness of neurodiversity and enhance teaching and learning to improve outcomes for neurodiverse students. The INCLUDE program has embraced a broad definition of neurodiversity that includes differences in sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other mental functions that are sometimes related to health diagnoses. A few examples of the many expressions of neurodiversity include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), dyslexia, and anxiety.
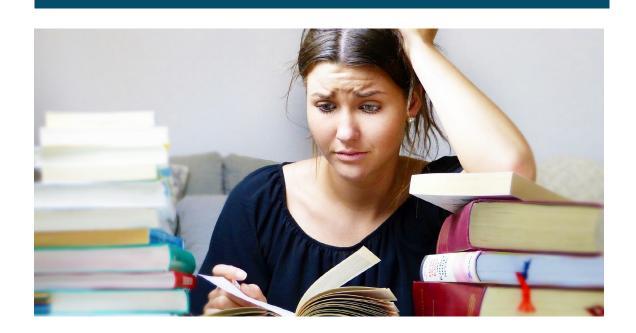
DID YOU KNOW?

Neurodiverse students face high levels of stress and anxiety in their courses, but due to stigma, many choose to not disclose their diagnosis, register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD), or even talk to professors and TAs about their challenges.[1] Thus, many neurodiverse students go through their education without access to supports that might help them to persist in their program.

>> WHAT YOU CAN DO <<

Intentionally create an inclusive environment in your course so that students feel comfortable and safe. One easy way to set the tone is to add a written inclusion statement to your syllabus or a verbal statement inviting students to discuss their challenges.[2] It is also important to acknowledge that neurodiverse students often have unique strengths that can be used to address areas of difficulty.[3]

Model inclusion statements may be found at:
https://cee.engr.uconn.edu/include/i-courses#INCLST

References:

1) Armstrong, T. (2012). Neurodiversity in the classroom: Strength-based strategies to help students with special needs succeed in school and life. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

2) Clouder, L., Karkus, M., Cinotti, A., Ferreyra, M. V., Fierros, G. A., & Rojo, P.(2020). Neurodiversity in higher education: A narrative synthesis. Higher Education, 80, 757-778. doi:https://doi.org/10.10007/s10734-020-00513-6

3) Orr, A. C., & Hammig, S. B. (2009). Inclusive post-secondary strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities: A review of the literature.32, 181-196.

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