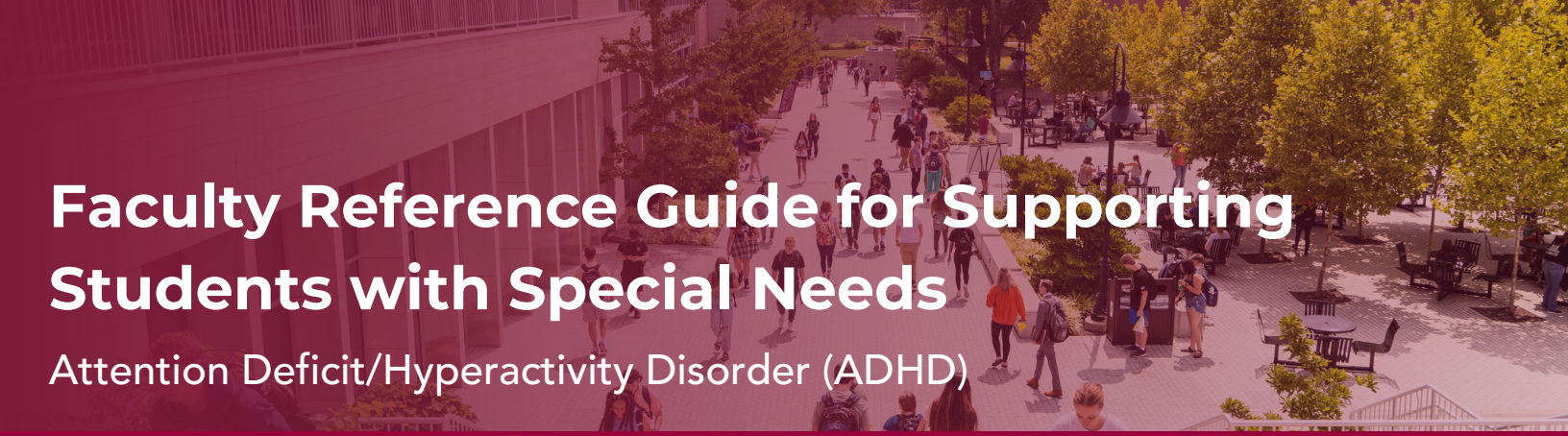




Faculty Reference Guide for Supporting Students with Special Needs

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Neurodiversity and ADHD

"Neurodiversity" is a term used to explain that people's brains function in unique ways. Variation in brain function and behavior is a natural part of the human experience.

ADHD is one of several kinds of neurodiversity. ADHD affects each person differently, but the symptoms can be similar. People with ADHD can experience two types of symptoms: attention deficits or inattention, and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity.

How Students Experience ADHD

Every student experiences ADHD differently, but the following are some common observations.

- People with ADHD may struggle to pay close attention to details.
- The student might struggle to maintain attention to a certain task for a long period of time, or conversely, they might hyper-focus on one task for an extended period of time.
- Outside stimuli might distract them from a task.
- Students with ADHD might worry about forgetting tasks, talking points, etc.
- Many people with ADHD also struggle with depression and anxiety.
- Their problems with attention and/or remembering tasks can cause them to struggle to start or complete projects.
- The student might have had behavioral issues as a child.
- Multitasking can be difficult, including following tasks with multiple steps.
- The student might have a low tolerance for frustration.
- The student might have trouble organizing their thoughts or tasks.
- A student with ADHD might have poor time management skills.
- The student might make decisions impulsively.
- The student might focus on the negative.
- The individual might have difficulty with self-regulation.

What you might observe in the classroom

- Concentration can be hard for students with ADHD, and they may avoid tasks that require it.
- Students may interrupt the instructor or a classmate.
- The student might fidget or move around.
- It can be hard for students with ADHD to keep up with listening and taking notes at the same time.
- The student might miss deadlines or appointments.
- College students with ADHD might exhibit a higher prevalence of challenges related to mental health, including anxiety and depression.

Strategies to try

- Provide a set schedule with details documented in a syllabus and/or on the course calendar in Blackboard.
- Provide clear instructions and expectations for assignments. If instructions are provided verbally, also provide them in writing.
- Consider adding guided notes before class like a graphic organizer to help students stay focused in class.
- Provide calendar invitations when scheduling a meeting with the student.
- Provide clear, written communication that is concise when possible and logical to follow.
- Provide checklists for assignments, deadlines for steps in the process of a project, intermittent check-ins, and/or review sheets.
- For timed exams, ask the student if they need a visible clock or if that increases anxiety for them.
- See if they have accommodations through the Center for Student Accessibility. If not, ask if they would like you to refer them. Remember that they do not have to use their accommodations if they choose not to do so.
- Consistently place information in the same location, using the same tools and structure. When using tools like Blackboard, clearly label the information. Provide students with updates if the structure changes.
- Encourage them to meet regularly with a tutor or mentor to go over their deadlines and responsibilities for the week.
- Provide the readings and assignments for the next class session in writing (on the board or projecting), verbally explaining the reason for the assignment, what they should look for, and how the readings and assignments will be used. Permit them to take photos of the information with their phones.
- If the lecture is long, allow a few breaks during the lecture for students to move around.
- Avoid giving timed readings to discuss during class. Allow students to read the material outside of class and discuss the next day.
- Send reminders through email or Blackboard to help students remember when assignments are due or when an exam is coming. The course calendar can also be set to send reminders.