



# **Neurodiverse College Students and Classroom Distractions**

**Alexander Larson, Claudia Sherman,  
& Adam R. Lalor, Ph.D.**

**Landmark College  
May 2023**

# Issue

- Sought to better understand neurodivergent student perceptions related to the issue of peer distraction.

# Method

- Participants were recruited via:
  - Campus-wide emails, word of mouth and flyers to complete a 24-item survey
- Sample (n = 44)
  - Largely White men who have been at LC for more than 2 semesters
  - Diagnosis
    - LD (n = 12; 30%)
    - ADHD/ADD (n = 24; 60%)
    - Autism (n = 16; 40%)

LANDMARK COLLEGE  
INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING

## Neurodiverse college students and classroom distractions

Take a 20-30 minute survey and tell us about your experiences with peer-related distractions in your classes.

Conducted by Julia Gray, Alexander Larson, Alexander Marin, Claudia Sherman, and Dr. Adam Lalor

Approved by Landmark College IRB

If you have any questions, please email [institute@landmark.edu](mailto:institute@landmark.edu)

# Discussion

- Students strongly agree that distraction policies need to be shared at the beginning of the semester (and in evaluations)
- Students agreed that distracting classmates should be spoken to in the moment for *immediate* changes in behavior
- However, students would prefer if the professor speaks to a distracting student at the end of class to mitigate *long-term* distracting behavior
- Students agreed that their learning would improve if professors were stricter in enforcing distraction-related expectations

## Discussion (Con't)

- The two most common distractions perceived by students were off-task computer usage and calling out
- Students claimed to be aware as to when their behavior was distracting
- Number of semesters attended significantly impacted results

# Conclusion

- Distractions are perceived by students as detrimental to their success and can lead to them experiencing negative emotions
- More resources should be devoted to minimizing distractions in the classroom – such as classroom management training (See Meyers, 2003 for strategies)
- Investigating potential technological tools for mediating distractions – for example, providing student access to laptop privacy screens