Neurodiverse College Students and Classroom Distractions

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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%)
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