

The Cody Center, Stony Brook University

Stony Brook, NY

www.codycenter.org

Supported College Program Pilot Semester

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

The primary goal of the Cody Center/SCCC program was to help commuter college students with Autism Spectrum and related disorders reach their greatest level of adult independence and self-defined quality of life, while living at home and attending college. This partnership makes accessible a public community college education with its affordable price to students with autism spectrum disorders, for whom the disability services office is not able to provide the more intensive services required by this population of young persons. The Cody Center/SCCC pilot program was the first of its kind to take place solely on a commuter campus.

PROJECT STEPS:

- Initially, twelve students identified as having an autism spectrum disorder were referred by center providers and the SCCC counseling center. Eight of the twelve students joined the pilot program, which started on August 26, 2008. The two female and six male program participants, who range in age from 18 to 21 years old, received special education services throughout their school careers, and were already accepted to SCCC before joining the program. Three of the eight students previously attended college on their own, unsuccessfully. Five of the program members were recent high school graduates who never attended college.
- In addition to registering with the SCCC counseling office, each student completed a program application and wrote an essay about his/her expectations, goals and motivation for joining the program. Project staff interviewed students individually and with their parents/advocates. Seven of the eight students signed consents to share educational information with his/her parents and necessary college personnel.
- We provided thirty, one hour psycho-educational student group meetings (2 per week) and five two hour parent meetings (1 per month) throughout the semester. In addition to the groups, we provided twelve hours a week of individual college life coaching/counseling and three hours a week of academic tutoring specifically for group members. The five program members who had never attended college were enrolled in a three credit Personal Growth class, offered by SCCC. Program staff remained in close contact with the Personal Growth professor and observed students in the classroom throughout the semester. This cooperative effort proved to be a great help in connecting program members with the campus community.

OUTCOMES:

At the end of the semester, we asked the parents and students to evaluate the program by completing an anonymous questionnaire based on the students' original goals and description of success in college.

All of the students reported that the three most important aspects of the program that added to their success were: the "safety net" it provided; the assistance with accessing services on campus and the availability of people to talk to while on campus.

The aspects of the program most important to parents were: helping their sons/daughters and families manage anxiety about college; providing a “safety net” on campus; and the on-campus support students had access to.

The overall satisfaction rating for both the parents and the students was 90%. Seven of the eight current students will continue to participate in the Cody Center program through the end of this academic year. (One of the eight students plans to transfer to a four year college). We have begun to receive new applicants for next year and will expand the student base beginning in the fall semester of 2009.