Welcome to the second newsletter of the College STAR Student Support Network! We are excited to connect with all of you and share what’s happening this quarter with our new national network!

In this issue:
- Quarterly Briefing
- Working Group Updates
- Best Practices & Strategy Share
- Campus Spotlight
- Staying Connected

QUARTERLY BRIEFING
We hope everyone is able to stay safe during these turbulent times! With so much going on for both our programs and students, we hope you can find a resource and some support within our quarterly newsletter.

On February 25th, we held our first quarterly meeting via Zoom where we were able to connect with updates about our individual programs, discuss what’s next for College STAR, and some time to break out into our working groups. We are looking forward to continued conversations at our next Zoom meeting on Tuesday, May 19th, from 11:00-2:00 EST. We hope to see you there!

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

K-12 TEAM

Thanks to the excellent work and dedication of this team, they have already begun planning a virtual conference geared towards K-12 partners. So far the group has three dates outlined for planning sessions (May 12th, June 16th, and July 21st). They are tentatively considering hosting the virtual conference in the Fall of 2020!

RESEARCH TEAM

The Research working group has been collecting data from our Student Perceptions Related to Workforce Readiness Survey, and ask for assistance in continuing to recruit students to participate during the Spring 2020 semester. In our last quarterly meeting, they discussed how to incentivize the survey and decided to provide campuses that achieve 10 survey responses, or 10% of their juniors and seniors to receive a gift card. The survey will close on May 1st. This team is also working to plan a survey that engages with alumni, and are working to explore a multitude of ideas for how to set up this survey.

RESOURCE TEAM

During the last virtual meeting, the Resource working group developed a more routine schedule to keep our facebook page active and engaging for all of our members. Please continue to invite your coworkers to our page!

https://www.facebook.com/groups/525647224897956/
BEST PRACTICES & STRATEGY SHARE:

UTILIZING ZOOM TO KEEP STUDENTS CONNECTED

Given the nature of present circumstances, it was my hope to share how The West Virginia Autism Training Center’s College Program for Students with ASD at Marshall University is engaging with students remotely. The difficulties of supporting students at this time are abundant; from ever changing course requirements, maintaining consistent social and independent living supports remotely, and providing coping mechanisms for the anxiety regarding the uncertainty of tomorrow. Hopefully sharing some of this process in converting to an online format will help as you all round out your semesters, and prepare for the future.

First and foremost, the immediate challenge was to work with students who have limited technological resources at their disposal. The first step was coordinating with families and students to establish a preferred and available primary means of communication, as well as outline what program supports would look like in a physically distant landscape.

The next step, was to transition all student supports into an online format that promised consistency and routine. Program staff moved quickly to modify the vocabulary from on campus to online in all students calendars and schedules. Both Student Support Specialists and graduate assistant mentors regularly reminded students to work on material for each course according to students original, on campus class schedule in order to preserve regular routine. In addition to maintaining weekly academic meetings, all mental health counseling was transitioned to a secured zoom account.
Visualizing how to transition more previously in person supports, to an online format was the next step. Utilizing the personal meeting room option in a shared Zoom account, program staff could host study halls and proctor exams. In order to prevent mass chaos of over 20 students in one Zoom meeting, the meeting host assigned each student and mentor team to a ‘breakout room’ within the meeting, that allowed for private one on one tutoring. Utilizing this Zoom feature allowed staff to share one common meeting link with students, and avoid the confusion of sending out a different link for every meeting. Focusing on simplifying the online transition was paramount to student success.

GROUP EVENTS VIA ZOOM

Through this time of providing remote supports, group offerings for students has transitioned to an online format as well. The rationale for this was twofold; not only do these groups keep students engaging and learning social skills in a supportive environment, but they maintain a sense of routine that is familiar and comforting in this time of uncertainty. The three groups offered on a weekly basis are below.
MEN'S GROUP

The Men's Group curriculum was developed last spring through combining the previously offered Health and Wellness program curriculum with student insight. After meeting weekly with a core group of students over six weeks, a curriculum that tailors discussions regarding mental, physical, and emotional health to student specific topics emerged. The conversion of the Men's Group curriculum to an online format has been relatively easy due to the strong sense of community this group has developed. The weekly meetings range anywhere from discussing coping with academic anxiety, managing familial conflict during quarantine, learning a simple cooking recipe, and discussing the many stressors of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

DISCOVERY GROUP

Discovery Group consists of a group of students from the program and the Marshall University community that meet to discuss a wide variety of topics. Topics from this semester include self-advocacy, anxiety management, creative arts therapy involving art and music, developing study skills, and developing coping skills for stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. This group has been modified for distance-style learning, as well, and serves as a great place for students to check-in with each other and keep in contact, as well, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

HERD GROUP

HERD Group (Helping Each other Respond Decisively) is an intensive social skill building group that has been modified for a campus-based setting from the UCLA PEERS curriculum. Selected students for this group are committed and motivated. Students meet with the CPSASD’s mental health counselor and practicum student weekly and have social coaching sessions weekly, which have all been modified for distance-style learning at this time.

SOCIALS EVENTS VIA ZOOM

Overcoming the challenge of providing social connectivity while being physically distant during this time of remote learning as also required creativity. One way in which this is provided to students is through maintaining the weekly Friday night social events lead by staff and mentors. Some of the events the program has hosted this semester are below!
VIRTUAL SCAVENGER HUNT

The two mentors who planned this event developed a lengthy list of common household items. For this event, the staff leading the event would say the name of the item students were supposed to find, such as “find a toothbrush”. After each item was announced, the students would grab that item as quickly as possible. The last student back was eliminated until the next round, and the last student standing won!

PET SHOW AND TELL!

For the pet show and tell event, students and their furry friends joined into the meeting, and were able to share with the group their favorite quarantine companions. Not only did the students who had pets enjoy the chance to share with the group, but for other students seeing all of the fuzzy faces was a welcomed distraction from studying!

JEOPARDY!

The mentors in charge of this event utilized an online platform that allowed them customize their own Jeopardy board. The mentors then tailored trivia questions to students interests, such as video games, sports, and Marshall University.

ASSISTANCE WITH ZOOM

As with any form of technology, we are bound to hit a couple snags. Working remotely has proven to be a challenge for both students and support staff alike. Something I have been doing is trying to keep track of issues that anyone is having with Zoom, and provide them with immediate resources to help. An approach I have been utilizing is to develop screen recordings of common issues students or staff are having. I then upload them into a shared google drive folder. I have embedded the link below in hopes that some of you might find something useful as well. If you have had or are currently having any trouble with a feature of Zoom, please email me at fragnoli@marshall.edu. I would love to keep developing more videos to help with common issues anyone is having with Zoom.

ZOOM HELP GOOGLE DRIVE

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT
MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR
STUDENTS WITH AUTISM
SPECTRUM DISORDER

The College Program provides individualized skill building and therapeutic supports to degree seeking students with Autism Spectrum Disorder through a mentored environment while navigating a college experience at Marshall University.

The College Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder was established in 2002. Students participating in the program have met acceptance criteria for Marshall University and have been admitted to The College Program through a separate application process. The program uses a positive behavior support approach to assist participating students. Social, communication, academic, leisure and personal living skills are assessed through person-centered planning.

WEST VIRGINIA
AUTISM TRAINING CENTER
AT MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Through a team-work approach, a framework for supports is created prior to the first semester of enrollment. Each student, along with family members and university staff who support them, participate in future planning. A plan is developed to guide the team toward strategies that provide support, and which focus on goals that may lead the student into competitive employment and more independent living.

The CPSASD provides support to students as they live an otherwise typical college lifestyle. Students attend regular classes, live in typical residence halls and use the resources available to them within the university community. Students receiving supports from the College Program can expect to meet regularly with staff to carry out the strategies of support. Although services are individualized, they generally are fit into three categories of support: academic, social and independent living.

*Academic Supports* may include:
- Course advising, based on the learning strengths, abilities and interests of each student
- Students, program staff and team members working together to determine reasonable accommodations beneficial to each student
- Strategies designed to teach students organizational skills
CHEERING ON THE HERD!
MEET THE STAFF
ANNUAL AUTISM RALLY

CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

The CPS ASD has implemented a Safe-Space inspired training program, called Allies Supporting Autism Spectrum Disorder. This training has a primary focus of working with college campus faculty, staff, and community organizations to serve and create awareness regarding individuals with ASD. We want to enable campuses to deepen their support by enhancing understanding of the disorder, discover strategies known to be helpful, and create welcoming spaces to foster development. This project provides training and technical assistance to help develop individual or group ability to provide a safe and welcoming space for individuals with ASD. Trained allies will promote understanding and acceptance of individuals with ASD in their professional and personal lives in order to spread the ally mentality.
FINDING MORE INFORMATION

If you are looking to find more information regarding the program, please click the icons below, or email fuller26@marshall.edu.

STAYING CONNECTED

Please mark your calendars for our quarterly *full-group* meeting opportunities via Zoom:

- Tuesday, May 19 - 11:00-2:00 EST
- Tuesday, September 1 - 11:00-2:00 EST
- Tuesday, November 17 - 11:00-2:00 EST