

2014 Convention Program Summaries

For those of you who either couldn't make it to the annual convention or attend every workshop we asked presenters to share summaries of their programs in the newsletter.

Thank you to those of you who allowed us to include these in our newsletter!



"Big Bang" and ASD: What Administrators Need to Know

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Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are increasing exponentially. Administrators need to know their obligations as well as effective means to support students with ASD as part of their professional competency. This 2014 ACPA Conference presentation sponsored by CCAPS focused on helping administrators understand how to be proactive and avoid the pitfalls of the "business as usual" approach as our student populations become more diverse. The primary professional competencies addressed through this session focused on Inclusion and Legal Issues.

This multi-media, interactive session provided participants with the opportunity to:

- gain a solid understanding of the characteristics, challenges and joys of being an ASD student
- examine the legal obligations of post-secondary institutions and survey how these obligations differ from what ASD students and families experience in elementary and secondary schools and consider how this may lead to confusion in expectations
- discuss and discern how to manage behaviors displayed by ASD students through the use of video segments of the sitcom, "The Big Bang Theory" with interactive electronic polling and group discussion
- consider best practices for the ASD student and the Institution as they relate to pre-enrollment preparation, tools for success in achieving a degree, and effective means to engage as contributing alumni.

ASD students bring value to our learning communities and also bring challenges. The importance of training faculty, staff, students, and campus vendors needs to be stressed. For example, a security officer trained to recognize the difference between a belligerent intoxicated student and an overwhelmed, over stimulated ASD student in a state of distress can effectively resolve a situation rather than escalate the incident.

The wrap-around services experienced by ASD students in elementary and high school do not continue in the post-secondary arena. Therefore, ASD students and families often experience a disconnect, given the focus of the college transition to self-advocacy, independence and limited accommodations. While classroom accommodations are important, providing support for ASD

students outside the classroom, in residence halls, on athletic teams, and in student clubs and organizations. The key is for administrators to know their rights and responsibilities under Federal law to protect themselves and their institutions. They ought to clearly articulate expectations to students on the Spectrum and their family members.

Getting the best people to discuss solutions to challenges is often the best approach to finding effective resolutions. In the case of ASD students this is particularly helpful. Tapping the best practices for the ASD student, for the Institution and exploring ways to incorporate a Universal Design for Learning are valuable approaches to avoid litigation, support our institutions, and ultimately support the success of our ASD students.

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