

The image features a large, semi-circular graphic on the left side, divided into a red upper portion and a dark grey lower portion by a white curved line. The red portion contains the Rutgers University logo and a faint, large-scale watermark of the university's seal. The seal is circular with a sunburst in the center and the text 'RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY' around the perimeter. The logo text is white and positioned in the top left corner of the red area.

RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW JERSEY

**Rutgers University
Neurodiversity Taskforce:
Focus Group Results**

IDEA Grant

“The work to build an inclusive academy can take many forms. The IDEA grants invest in grassroots efforts to encourage understanding and learning, enable relationship building across difference, and offer new ways to promote equity and diversity.”

Enobong (Anna) Branch

Senior Vice President for Equity



**Innovation
Grants**



Our Grant Proposal: A focus of Neurodiversity

- Neurodiversity: neurological diversity, natural variations in the human brain, autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, dyslexia
- There is a current social movement which seeks *civil rights, equality, and inclusion* for neurodiverse people
- Goal of our project: improve climate, promote access, and increase equity for neurodiverse students, faculty, and staff

Rutgers University Taskforce

The taskforce is comprised of stakeholders invested in supporting higher quality services for neurodiverse individuals.

This includes faculty, staff, students, and neurodiverse self-advocates



Meet Our Taskforce Members

Milagros Arroyo

Associate Dean for the School of Arts and Sciences

Joseph Charette

Executive Director, Rutgers Dining Services

Kenneth Cop

Executive Director of Public Safety

Mary Beth Daisy

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at RU Camden

Paul Gilmore

Administrative Dean, Honors College

Amy Gravino

Relationship Coach at RCAAS

Samuel Jones

Assistant Dean of PTL at RU School of Social Work

Jane Matto

RU Student, SAS

Cameron Matulewski

RU Student, School of Engineering

Richard Novak

VP for Continuing Studies and Distance Education

Mark Robson

Distinguished Professor of Plant Biology

Ilene Rosen

Associate Dean, RU School of Engineering

Zachary Sanborn

Postal Clerk at Rutgers IPO

Adam Tropper

RU Student, School of Arts and Sciences

Henry Velez

VP for Institutional Planning and Operations

Bill Welsh

Associate Vice President, RU Access and Disability Resources

Henry Daheng Zhang

GSAPP School Psychology Psy.D. Student

Model neurodiversity initiatives: University level



WILLIAM & MARY
CHARTERED 1693



LANDMARK
COLLEGE

University of
Massachusetts
Amherst



University of
La Verne

Stanford University

Model neurodiversity initiatives



About Us

W&M Bridge Program

W&M Neurodiversity in the News

Events

John Elder Robison

Neurodiversity Student Group

Resources

Opportunities for Giving

Contact Us



Sites / Neurodiversity

The Neurodiversity Initiative

The Neurodiversity Initiative seeks first to serve our campus community and ultimately to be a model for other campuses.

The Neurodiversity Working Group, composed of administrators, alumni, community partners, faculty, staff, and students, organizes campus events and programs in support of the Neurodiversity Initiative.

But what *is* “neurodiversity?”

Neurodiversity is both a philosophy and an emerging civil rights movement. Neurodiversity Scholar in Residence John Elder Robison has written [this](#) defining neurodiversity.

Acknowledging and appreciating the wide range of human neurologies, including Autism and ADHD, for example, while also acknowledging and appreciating the challenges of brain difference, is key to neurodiversity.

- Goal is to create more inclusive campus for neurodiverse students, increase awareness for neurotypical students
- Weekly student group meetings
- Two-day university wide neurodiversity training

Model neurodiversity initiatives: Company level



Autism at Work

Walgreens

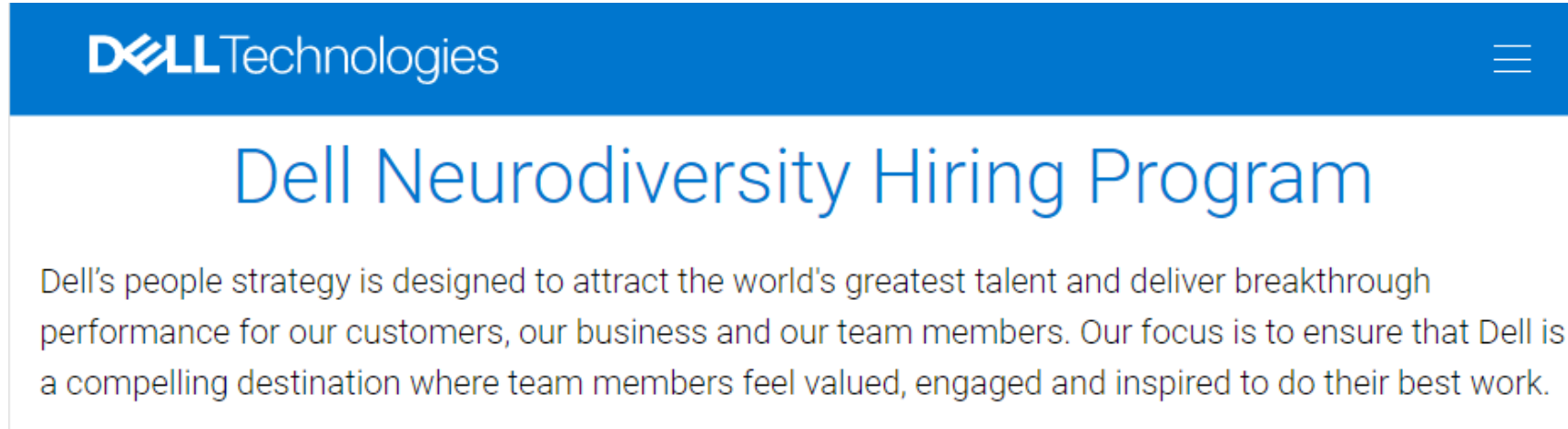


Microsoft



AT&T

Model neurodiversity initiatives



The screenshot shows the Dell Technologies logo in the top left corner of a blue header bar. To the right of the logo is a white hamburger menu icon. Below the header, the title "Dell Neurodiversity Hiring Program" is displayed in a large, blue, sans-serif font. Underneath the title, a paragraph of text in a smaller, grey font reads: "Dell's people strategy is designed to attract the world's greatest talent and deliver breakthrough performance for our customers, our business and our team members. Our focus is to ensure that Dell is a compelling destination where team members feel valued, engaged and inspired to do their best work."

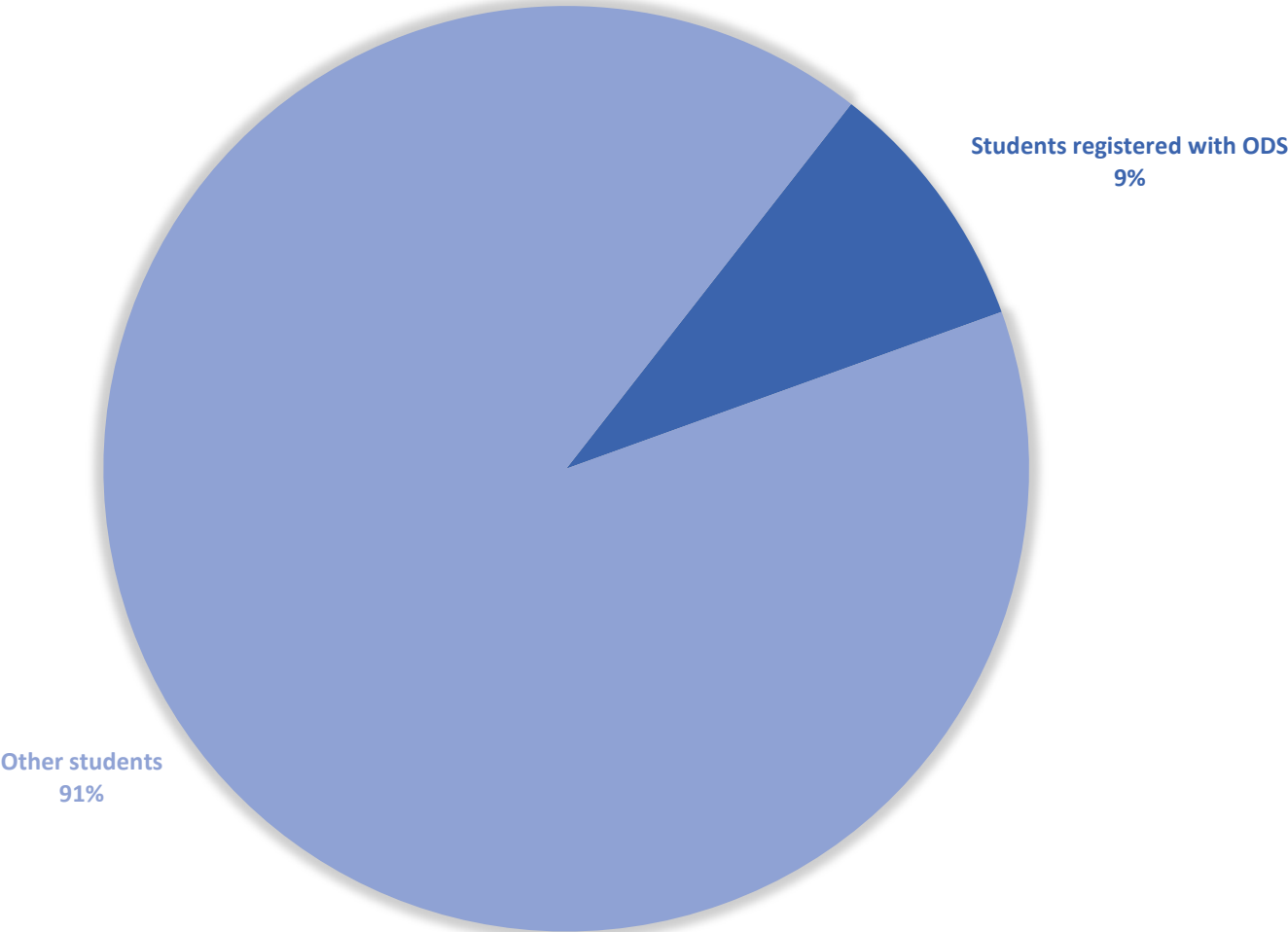
- Modified application process for neurodiverse applicants (e.g., skills-based interview)
 - Consult with experts in disability field to best support neurodiverse employees
 - Trainings for higher level staff on supporting neurodiverse employees
- Trainings for neurodiverse employees on what accommodations and supports are available to them

What qualities make these model neurodiversity initiatives?

- Clearly defined initiatives and goals
- Provide accommodations (above and beyond ADA requirements)
- Strengths-based approach
- Training and education

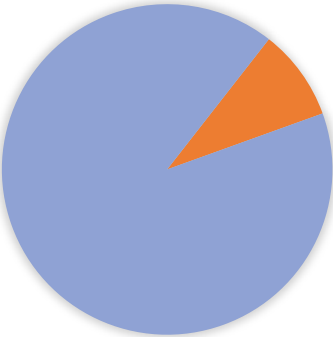
Why do we need a neurodiversity initiative at Rutgers?

TOTAL RUTGERS STUDENTS



PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS

TOTAL STUDENTS



Neurological Condition, 350, 6%

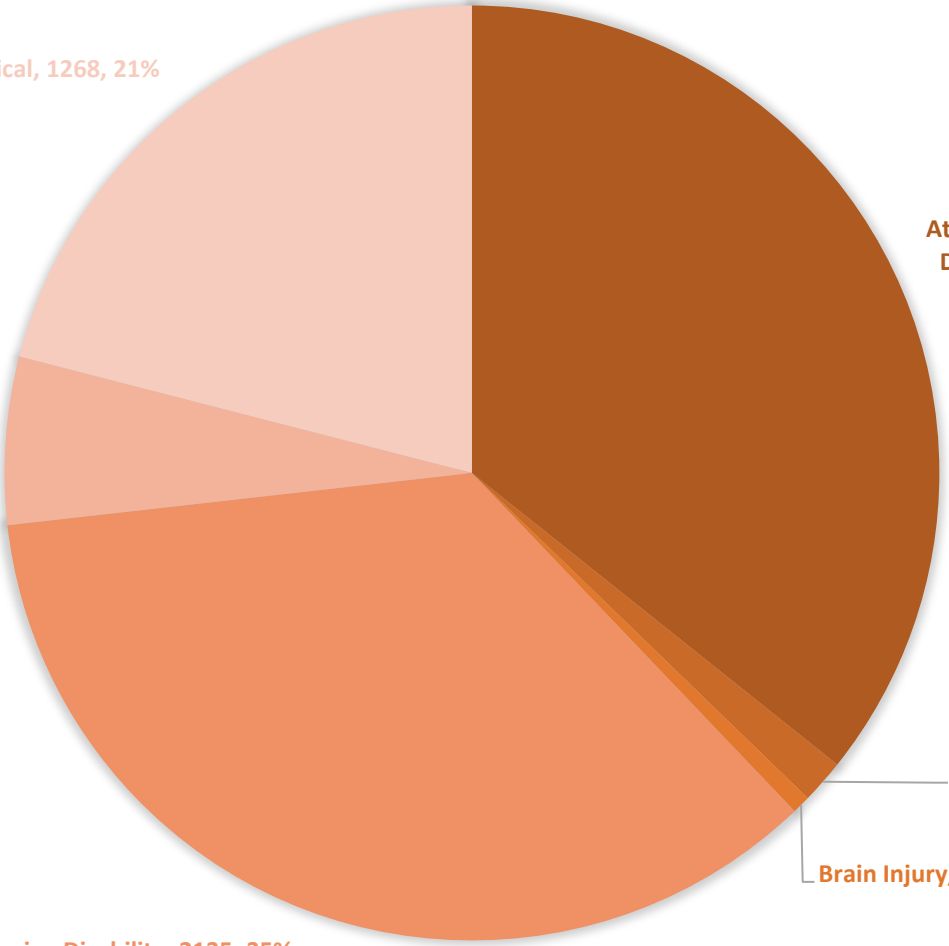
Psychological, 1268, 21%

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), 2158, 36%

Autism, 92, 1%

Brain Injury, 38, 1%

Learning Disability, 2135, 35%



Project Goal:

- 1) To better understand the current state of climate and accessibility for neurodiverse students, faculty and staff
- 2) To understand the need for supports or resources to make the university more inclusive for neurodiverse students, faculty, and staff

Methods

- Participants:
 - 13 Students
 - 5 Academic faculty
 - 12 Staff
- Procedures:
 - Conduct interviews (individual and focus groups) with various campus stakeholders
 - Code interview data using inductive coding method to collect common themes

Results

- Lack of/need for faculty/staff training
- Lack of faculty/staff understanding
- Lack of/need for more student services
- Promote existing services
- Judgement and harmful stereotypes
- Lack of/need for faculty and staff resources

“At your last workshop, you had these ‘what would you do’ scenarios and I thought, ‘oh my gosh, I have no idea what I would do”

“The only training that I've received that **could maybe fall into this category** is like mental health.”

Lack of/Need for training

Indicated by faculty and staff

“Training faculty on how they can work with these students **will really be an important key to help our students feel more comfortable in the classrooms.**”

“So, this is probably the most important time to really start learning and having different sessions and groups for all of us to learn, **so that we know how to best help the student population as well as our coworkers.**”

“I think that professors are not aware of the full spectrum of symptoms of ADHD... it sounds like **a lack of professor education** around the topic.”

Lack of Understanding Indicated by students

“If do something inappropriate or weird, **I need someone to advocate** that “that’s just [name],” don’t punish her if she yells at you, it’s just her instinct.”

“Me showing up late, is not because I don't care... if I took the [entrance exam] 4 times and applied to [program name] 3 times. **I obviously want to be here. I obviously care about my career...** but showing up to to lecture 5 or 10 min late is only because leave the apartment, come back to get my keys. I leave the apartment, go down to the lobby, and then come back because I forgot my ipad charger or something. **There’s just a lack of organization, misperception of time.**”

“But there's no student or anything that encourages students to come study together in a study group. They just tell you, like, you know, ‘go find out your learning style.’”

Lack of/Need for more student services

Indicated by students, faculty and staff

“Students have to pay out of their pocket for these services, which from a student perspective we’ve received a lot of feedback that it inherently feels wrong. It feels like they have to pay for something the university should be providing because it is so essential to their success here.”

“There should be someone that is like his job is to reach out to you, and see like how you're doing with this, or how you're doing with that or like you know when they hear that you're late for an assignment or a class, or something like that, they reach out to you and they offer you like positive, constructive advice, or things like that. It shouldn't be that you know ‘go find a psychiatrist, or go find a therapist.’”

“And before this meeting I actually **did not even know that exam accommodations were available** for ADHD”

“It should be more proactive. It should be **promoted more that we are a community that embraces neurodiversity**, we are the place for that.”

Promote Existing Services

Indicated by students, faculty and staff

“There are so many great things out there, but **nobody knows about them.**”

“I think we **don't promote what we do** with your group as much as we could.”

“Personally, I'm okay with like if I submit assignment late. I'm okay with being like 10% off on it like I'll accept the consequences that that's just me personally.

But I think **what really leads to shame and fear, and like not wanting to even try in the first place, is when I feel like I'm being judged...** Some people definitely do. They'll be upset if you submit something late. But I guess just the fear of being judged or being looked down upon by your professors for doing for making like basic mistakes like that.”

Judgement and Harmful Stereotypes

Indicated by students, faculty and staff

“I see a **mismatch between how faculty take a neurodiverse student...** maybe that student speaks loudly or is rude to them, and I think that’s not the intention of the student.”

“It's very interesting in the [competitive graduate program] setting because **the expectation is those students would not make it here** essentially, or they would not have been admitted.”

“And I don't know of any [resources] for faculty or staff other than HR”

Lack of/Need for faculty and staff resources

Indicated by faculty and staff

“We should have a resource page with someone you could click on for consultation... I'd love to know that I'm accommodating our students in a way that the university will support.”

“If we could have those things put up as resources, I think a lot of people would engage with it. “

“But sometimes like having I feel like having like a point person that we could contact and say like, we have this student here all of our concerns.

How can we like work together, or something to help the student get through this process?”

Conclusions

- Faculty and staff are not provided with sufficient training to support neurodiverse students.
- The lack of training and knowledge among faculty and staff is apparent to students.
- Faculty, staff, and students would benefit from more resources and increased awareness of existing resources.
- Faculty, staff, and students observed a judgmental and non-understanding culture at the university.



Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services
rcaas.rutgers.edu

RCAAS Newsletter: <https://rcaas.rutgers.edu/newsletter>
<https://www.facebook.com/RutgersCAAS>

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