

## Personal Perspectives on Success in College

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## What to Consider Prior to Entering College

- ▶ College Entrance Exams
  - SAT or ACT
- ▶ Disability Services
  - Requirements for Eligibility of Services

## College Entrance Exams

- ▶ Many Colleges Require Entrance Exams
  - ACT (American College Testing)
  - SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test)
    - Both Exams Are Timed
- ▶ Something to Consider
  - Taking College Entrance Exam With Accommodations
    - Information For Students With Disabilities-On Websites
      - Some Testing Accommodations Include:
        - Extended Time (Up to 50%)
        - Use of a Computer or Scribe for Essays
        - Reader or Exam on Audio Recording

## Disability Services

- ▶ To Qualify For Services One Must:
  - Present Documentation Verifying the Disability
    - Diagnostic Interview
      - Developmental History
      - Academic History
      - Family History
      - Psychosocial History
      - Medical History
      - History of Prior Psychotherapy and Pharmacotherapy
      - Discussion of Any Dual Diagnosis
      - Description of Presenting Problem
        - Psychologist, Medical Doctor, or Psychiatrist
    - No More Than Three Years at Time of Request
    - **This Takes Time!**

### Differences Between Disability Services in HS and College

In high school the school has the following responsibilities:	In colleges and universities:
<b>Identify students with disabilities</b>	Students must <b>self-identify</b> and a school is required to protect a student's right to privacy and confidentiality.
<b>Provide</b> an evaluation of the student's disability	<b>Documentation</b> of the disability, including a professional evaluation, is the <b>student's responsibility</b> .
<b>Classify</b> disabilities according to specific diagnostic categories	Colleges have specific guidelines for documentation of a disability. The classification or diagnosis of the condition is not as important. What matters is the <b>functional limitation</b> caused by the individual's disability.
<b>Involve</b> parents or guardians in placement decisions in most circumstances or with very few exceptions	Parents and guardian are <b>not involved</b> , and privacy laws may bar college staff from discussing a student's disability with parents unless permission is given by the student in <b>writing</b> .
<b>Provide</b> certain non-academic services	Ensure that non-academic services are <b>accessible</b> , and do not discriminate.
<b>Place</b> students in programs by a placement committee with parent participation and approval	There are <b>NO</b> IEPs, 504 plans, or placement committees; a student must be a <b>self-advocate</b> .
<b>Structure</b> a large part of the student's weekly schedule	Students structure their <b>own</b> schedules. Recommendations are made, however, it is the <b>student's responsibility</b> to follow the recommendations and established procedure.
<b>Modify</b> educational programs	<b>Provide reasonable academic accommodations</b> to accommodate the functional limitations of qualified students with disabilities, as indicated in appropriate documentation. Accommodations cannot lower or alter the standards of the program/course.
<b>Prepare</b> Individualized Educational Plans	College staff prepare accommodation letters that suggest reasonable accommodations.
<b>Provide</b> free and appropriate education	The <b>student</b> requests accommodations, but chooses his/her own classes and programs, within a school's requirements.
<b>Inform</b> parents of their procedural safeguards	<b>Inform</b> students of their rights and responsibilities.
Elementary and secondary institutions provide accommodations to have their students <b>BE</b> successful (IDEA)	Postsecondary facilities <b>provide access</b> and an <b>equal opportunity for students to be successful</b> (Rehab Act, ADA)

### Things for an ASD Individual to Consider When Choosing a College or University

- ▶ Level of Independence
  - Distance From Home
- ▶ Size
  - Campus
  - Class
- ▶ Disability Services Offered
  - Mentors
  - Networking With Other Students With Disabilities
    - Students With Disabilities Club
    - Honors Society For Students With Disabilities
    - Delta Alpha Pi
  - Support Group For Students With ASD
  - Programs to Assist Students With ASD



## Introduction

- ▶ Name: Michael Bode
- ▶ Age: 24
- ▶ Location: New Brunswick, NJ
- ▶ Diagnosed with Asperger's when I was 10 or 11
- ▶ Rutgers University Class of 2002
- ▶ Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Media Studies

## The Beginning

- ▶ In retrospect, I do not feel like I was ready for college when I started, due to a combination of Asperger's and being a year ahead in school. Considered taking a year off after high school, an idea that my parents rejected, but in retrospect would have been a good idea.
- ▶ Community college may have also been a good option, but at the time I felt like that would hurt my reputation.
- ▶ Did not put much thought into the college application process, and only applied to two schools.
  - Seton Hall University gave me a \$10,000 scholarship, but was still not affordable. Although sometimes I think a small college may have been better for me, SHU was not "the one".

## The Beginning (cont.)

- ▶ Rutgers was close to home, affordable, and had a good reputation, so it was good enough for me at the time.
- ▶ Decided to dorm in spite of living near campus, in order to get away from home and experience the social scene.



**RUTGERS**  
UNIVERSITY

## Dorm Experience, Year One

- ▶ Spent my first year in Clothier Hall, an all-freshman high-rise dorm.
- ▶ Dorm had a very social, and often loud and wild atmosphere, although my floor was mellower compared to others.



## Dorm Experience, Year One (cont.)

- After being shy most of the time during high school, I made a concerted effort to "come out of my shell"
  - I attempted to be as loud and outgoing as many other people, but ended up coming on too strong and being way too open about myself and my feelings, as well as generally "awkward".
  - Although some people were friendly towards me, I largely ended up being shunned, and was sometimes even called names like "creepy".
  - I was sometimes sternly spoken to by my RA and even the hall director.
- My roommate (David) was not very social at all, and was barely even there during the second semester.

## Dorm Experience, Year One (cont.)

- ▶ Fire drills and false alarms were a concern for me early in the year, especially while I was sleeping. But the alarm ended up not being very scary, the drills were during the evening, and there were no late-night false alarms.
- ▶ My eating habits were poor and I ended up gaining the "freshman 15" if not more. Also had trouble keeping my room clean.
- ▶ In spite of the hardships, I was glad to be away from home and it was a learning experience.

## Dorm Experience, Year Two

- ▶ Returned to dorm for my second year in Frelinghuysen Hall, one of the "river dorms" mostly occupied by sophomores.



## Dorm Experience, Year Two (cont.)

- - Found that most people on my floor already found their friends, with many being friends with each other, and therefore were less eager to make new friends.
- - Got along fairly well with my roommate (Steve) and his friends during the first semester.
- - Was part of a three-way room switch and ended up living alone in a double room. Many would consider this a lucky break, but it made me feel even more isolated.
- - However, there was less overt tension between my floor mates and I compared to freshman year, and I was still glad to be away from home.

## Dorm Experience, Summer '04

- ▶ I decided to live on campus the following summer, living in the air-conditioned Hardenbergh Hall, another "river dorm".
- ▶ Probably the best dorm experience I had, as the atmosphere was mellow but friendly, and I succeeded in finding a group of friends to socialize with, although they were not lasting friendships.
- ▶ Was not particularly close with roommate (George), but we didn't clash and we did hang out together a few times.

## Dorm Experience, Year Three

- ▶ Returned to Hardenbergh for my third year.
- ▶ Most of my floormates were sophomores, so I felt a bit old.



### Dorm Experience, Year 3 (cont.)

- › Went through three roommates
- › First roommate decided fairly quickly to switch roommates with one of his friends.
- › Clashed with my second roommate (Max), who seemed to have a short temper and took issue with my lack of cleanliness. Left at the end of the semester.
- › Ended up becoming quite close with my third roommate (Patrick). A friend I had met online helped us bond. However, attempts to stay connected with him afterward ultimately proved fruitless.

### Dorm Experience, Year 3 (cont.)

- › I took a romantic interest in one girl on my floor.
- › Although I tried to merely appear friendly, I must have been making it obvious that I was interested.
- › Eventually she stopped returning my instant messages, and out of frustration I used a "chatting bot" to try and see if she was deliberately ignoring me.
- › This did not go over well, and since then I have learned to take it in stride when someone doesn't respond to my messages.

### Dorm Experience: Year Four

- During the first half of my fourth year, I lived in a single room in a smaller dorm (Hegeman Hall), which was divided into all-male and all-female sections.
- Was not a very social atmosphere at all, though I did get somewhat friendly with the guy living across from me. But at this point, I was content.
- My uncle convinced me to live at home during the second semester, which I did for the rest of my college time. It turned out not to be the best idea, and may have been a factor in me taking two more years to finish college.
- Overall, while my dorm experience had its ups and downs, I learned a lot from it and it helped to give me the independence I needed.

### Class Action

- Had a mix of large and small classes, with the larger ones mostly being general university-wide requirements.
  - Large classes mostly involved studying notes, and I actually liked that the professors didn't know you as I didn't have to worry much about how I presented myself in class, or risk humiliation for not knowing material.
  - Smaller classes usually involved a lot of group work and dealing directly with the professor, which was also good for me.
- I fared best in classes that were heavy on research, writing, and oral presentations.
- Memorizing facts was never my strong point, so my performance in lecture hall classes largely depended on my interest in the material.

## Class Action (cont.)

- Contrary to what is often thought about people with AS, science and math were my weakest areas.
  - I failed Pre-Calculus and Climatology the first time, and struggled to get a C in the former and a D in the latter when I retook them. These classes are part of what held me back from graduating on time.
- I chose Hungarian as a minor; it was a language I knew, and the classes were a cinch for anybody who spoke it.
- Besides classes in my major, the most rewarding and enjoyable classes for me were Basic Acting and Public Speaking. They helped me to come out my shell and learn to express myself better.

## Choosing My Major

- During my freshman year I was torn between Communication and Journalism as a major. I ultimately went with the latter, initially deciding to focus on print journalism.
- When I took Broadcast News Writing in the summer of 2003, I decided I wanted to go into radio.
  - Rutgers did not offer any other classes centered around radio – only print and television journalism.
  - In order to pursue my radio dream, I joined the campus radio station, WRSU, which ended up being a rewarding experience. (More on that later.)
- I continued with the major and did well in most of my classes, but ultimately I did not find myself pursuing a career in journalism.

## Super Duper Senioritis

- A number of factors kept me at school two years longer than I intended
  - As mentioned previously, I failed two classes.
  - There were several semesters where I ended up dropping a class, or only took four to begin with.
  - Attempts to secure an internship failed, and I did not end up getting credit for a summer class I took in Hungary. In both cases, this can be blamed on my negligence.
- I took my sixth year (2007-08) off completely before returning that summer to take my last two classes.

## My College Radio Experience

- My Broadcast News Writing instructor Tim Espar got me to join the news department at the college radio station, WRSU. I joined my junior year and served as an anchor, reporter, and producer.
- During my fourth year, I became the news director, which didn't go so well.
  - ▣ My leadership skills were lacking at the time
  - ▣ The previous administration had no real vision and did not prove to be a good act to follow
  - ▣ A fellow news team member (Chris) had larger ambitions for the department, which initially led to arguments, but ultimately I ended up letting him do much of the work.
- The next year found me going back to being a supporting player in the department, with Chris now being the director.

## My College Radio Experience

- I had previously considered branching out into other areas at the station, but it wasn't until my sixth and last year of college that I made a serious effort.
  - I joined the Production team and realized this was what I wanted to do all along – do voiceover and come up with creative ideas.
  - I became the Production Director the following year (after I graduated) and this went much better than my News Director stint. Once again the previous administration had not set the best example, but this time I was the one to turn things around.
  - I also became a music DJ the summer before, and since then my skills have come a long way. I love reaching out to the listeners and sharing my passion for music with them.
  - Additionally, I helped with the Promotions department, creating flyers and helping with station events.
  - While the news department was a great start, branching out was what really cemented my interest in radio and helped me reach new highs.

## ▸ My biggest regret at college was not getting the help I needed.

- I rarely used learning centers or tutors
- Never had an advisor or a dean that I regularly turned to
- Did not seek any guidance when seeking an internship, and did not consult with anyone before taking a class abroad
- Did not seek any disability services, which I could have gotten.

## What am I up to now?

- I finally managed to obtain an internship, albeit not for college credit
  - Goom Radio is a new internet radio service, currently in its beta stage.
  - I am one of the people in charge of “tagging” songs – classifying them by genre, and determining beginning/end points and “hooks” of the songs.
  - I have also gotten to record DJ demos, and assist with promotions.
- I plan on eventually going back to college to get my Master's degree in Information Science
- My social skills have improved greatly, and so has my social life. I have a close knit group of friends and am in a happy relationship.

## Lessons Learned

- There is no shame in not being ready for a four-year college when you finish high school, even if you have good grades. Feel free to take a year off or go to a community college – in spite of what anyone may tell you, it does not make you stupid or lazy.
- Living away from home is a good thing, and so is trying to make new friends – just take things slowly and don't try to force friendships.
- Put thought into what you want to do and where you want to go. If you really have no idea, then once again, maybe you need to take some time off or start of at community college.

## Lessons Learned (cont.)

- ▶ Try to find an advisor, and always check with someone to make sure you're doing the right thing, particularly when pursuing internships or studying abroad. Even if you think you know what you're doing, it can't hurt.
- ▶ Public speaking and acting classes are highly recommended if you have trouble expressing yourself.
- ▶ Remember, it's ALL a learning experience!

## Undergraduate School

### Factors That Led to Choice of College

- Distance From Home
- Size
  - Campus
  - Class
- Office for Students with Disabilities



## Distance From Home

- ▶ Should Depend On
  - Level of Independence
    - More Dependent=Closer to Home
    - More Independent=Farther From Home
  - Need to Decompress
    - Get Away From Campus
    - Get Away From Other Students

### Factors Concerning Decisions That Came into Play When Applying to Colleges

- ▶ Level of Independence
  - Dependent More so Than Independent on Parents
    - Apply Close to Home
      - Applications to Penn State University and Lock Haven University
        - Acceptance Granted at Each University
          - Wanted Independence
          - Away From Home
- ▶ Distance From Home
  - Wanted to be Close to Home Without Living at Home
    - Wanted to be Close Enough to go Home on Weekends
      - Decompress by Getting Away From Hustle and Bustle From Living on Campus

## What to Consider About Universities and Their Size

### • Emphasis on Research or Teaching

- Emphasis on Research
  - Focus is on Professors Conducting Research and Writing Books
  - Larger Class Size
    - More Likelihood of Class Being Taught by Teachers Assistants
    - Less Student/Professor Contact
- Emphasis on Teaching
  - More Teaching Centered
  - Smaller Class Size
    - More Likelihood of Class Being Taught by Professors
    - More Student/Professor Contact

## Factors Concerning Size that Came Into Play When Applying to College

- Grew up in State College
  - A Lot of Exposure to Penn State University
  - Campus Size Overwhelming
- Small University
  - Easier to Navigate
    - Difficulty Reading Maps
    - Difficulty Knowing Location
  - Smaller Class Sizes
    - Easier to Address Questions
    - Easier to Get to Know Peers
    - More Contact With Professors



- Become a Self Advocate
  - Know your strengths and limitations
    - This will help you determine what supports to utilize
- Common Types of Support Offered Through Disability Services
  - Time and 1/2
  - Note Taker
  - Books on Tape
  - Distraction Free Testing Environment
  - Priority Registration

## Steps to Receiving Accommodations

- Documentation by Licensed Psychologist, Psychiatrist, or Medical Doctor
  - Developmental History
  - Academic History
  - Family History
  - Psychosocial History
  - Medical History
  - History of Prior Psychotherapy and Pharmacotherapy
  - Discussion of Any Dual Diagnosis
  - Description of Presenting Problem
    - Sent to Office of Disability Services prior to start at University
- Beginning of Semester
  - Meet with Director of Office of Disability Services
    - Discuss Nature of Disability
    - Abilities and Limitations
      - Develop list of accommodations necessary for academic success
  - Letter detailing accommodations is then created
    - Handed or E-mailed to professors

## Accommodations Continued

**SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**ACCOMMODATIONS NOTIFICATION FORM**

**SUBJECT:** Student Accommodations

**STUDENT NAME:** CAITLYN BARNHART

**DATE OF REQUEST:** August, 2008

**SEMESTER:** Fall, 2008

**PROFESSOR:** E. MADRY  
B. DAILE  
C. WHEEL

**COURSE #:** ODS-450-01  
ODS-450-21  
ODS-450-01

The following accommodations are supported by the student's documentation and are recommended:

FACULTY SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATIONS	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Extended Print	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority Scheduling
<input type="checkbox"/> Extended time for tests	<input type="checkbox"/> Notification of faculty
<input type="checkbox"/> Retention	<input type="checkbox"/> Karzwell Reader
<input type="checkbox"/> Oral exam response	<input type="checkbox"/> Textbooks on tape
<input type="checkbox"/> Alternative testing sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Reader and/or scribe for exams
<input type="checkbox"/> Use of tape recorder	<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom accessibility

Other: **STUDENT MAY REQUEST READER FOR EXAMS.**

**It is recommended all students utilize the services at the Learning Center.**

In compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1992 and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, Shippensburg University makes every effort to meet the reasonable accommodation requests of students with qualified disabilities. Although students should be advocates for themselves, we recognize that it is often difficult for them to take the final step. Therefore, we encourage you to speak with your student(s) regarding specific accommodation(s) required for academic success.

If a student requires special testing accommodations, and you are unable to provide the accommodation, please contact Paula Madry, Director, Office of Disability Services (paulam@shippensburg.edu, ext. 1329 or 610-337-6141) at ext. 1344 who will assist you with alternative testing accommodations. All exams given by the Office of Disability Services are proctored.

**Paula Madry**

## Supports Received

- Met with ODS Director on regular basis
  - Check in
  - Address any problems
    - Find someone you can check in on with on regular basis
      - ODS Director
      - Advisor
      - Professor
      - Mentor
      - Counselor
      - Resident Assistant
- Priority Registration
- Note Taker
- Books on Tape
- Extended time on exams
  - Time and ½
  - Distraction free testing environment



## Living Arrangements

- Lived in dorm
  - Some dorms on hill
  - Requested dorm not on hill
- Lived with a roommate every semester
  - First year roomed with classmate from high school
  - Met friends through roommate
- Sophomore year lived with friends met through roommate
- Junior year
  - Roommate problems
  - Different each semesters
  - Help from RD and RA
- Senior year
  - Considered commuting or living in a single
  - Little social interaction
  - Wanted the full college experience
  - Decided to take a chance on roommates
  - Help with socialization



## College Life

- Mostly hung out with roommates
  - Met other friends through roommates
- Joined campus clubs
  - Hall council
  - PR
  - Psychology Club
  - Treasurer
- Job
  - During winter and summer break



## Graduate School

- Factors leading to choice of school
  - Academic Program
  - No standardized testing for entrance
  - Distance from home
  - Size of campus



## Academic Program

- Wanted to further studies in Psychology
  - Not sure what area of Psychology
    - General Psychology
      - Explore many different areas
        - Found niche



## Standardized Testing

- Standardized Testing for Graduate School
  - Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
  - Scores low on SAT
    - Took practice GRE's for free
    - Scored 600 out of 1600
    - No standardized testing for entrance



## Distance From Home

- Still somewhat independent
  - Wanted to move farther from home
    - Still wanted to be relatively close
      - Few hours from home



## Size of Campus

- Small campus
  - Difficulty reading maps
  - Difficulty knowing where I am in relation to landmarks



## Gearing Up For Graduate School

- Applied to Shippensburg University
  - Was granted acceptance
  - Program in General Psychology
    - GREs not required for entrance
  - Farther from home than undergraduate school
    - More independence
    - Close enough to go home on weekends
    - Sense of security
  - Small campus
    - Easier to navigate
    - Or so I thought....



## Assistance in Graduate School

- Sent notification of disability in to ODS
  - Documentation over three years old
  - Testing in spring before graduate school
  - Letter sent to ODS
- Met with director of ODS
  - Beginning of semester
  - Nature of disability
  - Strengths and limitations
    - Accommodations for success
      - Books on tape
      - Note taker
      - Use of tape recorder
      - Time and ½ on exams
      - Distraction free testing environment



## Living Arrangements

- No graduate student housing
  - Off campus
    - Second cousin
    - Pros and Cons
- Pros
  - Having family supports around
  - Not having to find classmate to reside with
  - Living off campus
- Cons
  - Living in someone else's house
    - Like being a guest all of the time
  - Isolated from classmates



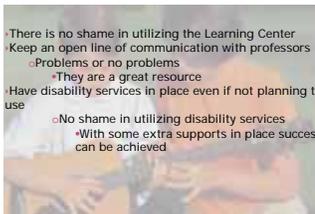
## Graduate School Life

- Socialized with peers in class
  - Occasionally attended graduate student association parties
  - Attended psychology graduate student parties
- Participated in campus clubs
  - Inducted into Psychology Honor Society (Psi Chi)
    - Attended meetings
    - Participated in Service and Social events
  - Inducted into Students with Disabilities Honor Society (Delta Alpha Pi)
- Job
  - Graduate Assistant for Psychology Department
    - 20 hours/week
    - Complete school work while on the job



## Lessons Learned

- There is no shame in utilizing the Learning Center
  - Keep an open line of communication with professors
    - Problems or no problems
      - They are a great resource
- Have disability services in place even if not planning to use
  - No shame in utilizing disability services
    - With some extra supports in place success can be achieved



## Questions



## Contact Information



Caitlin Baran M.S.  
 CaitEB518@gmail.com  
 • Put Autism or Asperger's in the subject line