

5-2017

# A Qualitative Study of the Effects of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program

Jessica Post

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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A qualitative study of the effects of the University of Arkansas autism support program

Jessica Post

University of Arkansas

Honors Thesis

Program in Communication Disorders

## **Abstract**

Individuals who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder are often united by the following characteristics: difficulty communicating and interacting with others, inhibited ability to function socially, difficulty functioning academically or at work, and trouble transitioning to independent lifestyles (Lord, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to determine how undergraduate students with Autism Spectrum Disorder perceive the helpfulness of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program in the following areas: reducing college- related stress, facilitating academic success, facilitating social success, and preparing individuals for independent adult roles. In short, the study sought to determine the effects of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program on participating undergraduate students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Data was collected via a paper and pencil questionnaire and an oral interview for undergraduate members of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program to complete. The results of this study are beneficial to any individual who has a connection to autism in academia (i.e. students with autism spectrum disorders, autism support program employees, peers, professors, researchers, family members, etc.) and provides useful qualitative data on the strengths and weaknesses of one of many college-level autism support programs through the eyes of participating students.

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## **A qualitative study of the effects of the University of Arkansas autism support program**

### **Introduction**

Autism Spectrum Disorder is an umbrella term for a group of disorders that vary widely in terms of skills, symptoms, and severity. However, disorders on the autism spectrum are often united by the following characteristics: difficulty communicating and interacting with others, inhibited ability to function socially, difficulty functioning academically or at work, and trouble transitioning to independent lifestyles (Lord, 2013). One can imagine how these characteristics might negatively affect an individual who is working towards a college degree. Per a 2009 study by Cristi Ford, the needs of students with HFA or AS (Autism Spectrum Disorders) who attend college can be grouped into three main categories: (1) transition to college needs, (2) academic support needs, and (3) social support needs (Ford, 2009). The number of dedicated four-year programs that provides these supports is small, but as the number of students with autism entering postsecondary education increases, more colleges and universities offer programs and accommodations to help them manage the demands of college life (Rao, 2015)." The University of Arkansas Autism Support Program was among the first of such programs.

It is the aim of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program to provide the intensive assistance students with high functioning autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD-NOS, and non-verbal learning disability need to be successful in college and in life in general ("Autism Support Program". n.d. Retrieved from <http://autism.uark.edu/>). Resources offered by the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program include daily academic coaching sessions, weekly 1-on-1 peer mentoring sessions, biweekly group peer mentoring sessions, daily study hall, and on-campus living accommodations both with and near other program members.

These resources exist to support participating students in critical areas and guide them towards academic success, social competence, and successful transition to independent adult roles, but are these program resources successful in aiding students in the above areas? This is a question worthy of investigation. Because the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program- like other university-based autism support programs- is a relatively new organization, gauging its overall success would be a challenging and complicated operation. However, determining the effects of program resources by interviewing program participants is both possible and beneficial. Therefore, another question worthy of investigation is this: How do participating students perceive the helpfulness of the program?

A handful of research regarding university-based autism support programs has been conducted. One such study was conducted by Cristi D. Ford in 2009. The purpose of Ford's study was to examine models of support programs in higher education for college students with High Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome (Ford, 2009). A more recent study was conducted by Kelly L. Wise in 2015, and this study also focused on logic models for an autism support program (Wise, 2015). These studies have been informative, but they lack an important element: the perceptions of program participants. A 2012 study by Marguerite Martino McCarty sought to address this lack of detailed research: "Clinicians and academics have been attempting to understand the college experience of students living with Asperger's Disorder. Absent in this pursuit are the direct opinions and perspectives from the students themselves." (McCarty, 2012, p. 6). McCarty's research is both extensive and informative, but one issue is the small sample size that she gathered data from. Her research participants consisted of four students who were interviewed about their academic and social college experiences in relation

to the specialized support program and pursuits outside of the program. McCarty argued that more qualitative research was needed to further understand this population and their experiences (McCarty, 2012), and that is precisely what the current case-study provides.

The purpose of this study is to determine how participating students perceive the helpfulness of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program in the following areas: reducing college- related stress, facilitating academic success, facilitating social success, and preparing individuals for independent adult roles. In short, the study sought to determine the effects of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program on participating undergraduate students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is my hope that this information will be beneficial to any individual who has a connection to autism in academia (i.e. students with autism spectrum disorders, autism support program employees, peers, professors, researchers, family members, etc.).

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

The participants of this study were 10 undergraduate students who are members (or recent members) of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program. The participants' ages range from 18 to 25, and their class standings range from freshman to senior. Two of the participants are female, and the remaining eight are male. All participants are English-speaking and have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder by a trained professional. All participants were required to give written informed consent as approved by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board prior to participating in the study.

### ***Measures***

A two- method approach was used to answer the research questions. Study participants were asked to complete both a written questionnaire and an oral interview. The written questionnaire was twofold, first asking whether the program has been beneficial to them and facilitated academic and social success as well as if the program has prepared them for independent adult roles. In the second part of the questionnaire participants were asked to indicate how they feel about specific resources offered by the Autism Support Program. For both parts, participants were asked to rate the accuracy of given statements as not true (N), a little true (L), a lot true (A), very true (V), or unsure (U).

Oral interview questions compounded on questionnaire topics and offered participants an opportunity to share in detail their experiences with and opinions about resources offered by the autism support program. The oral interview also required participants to describe a situation in which they received support (emotional, social, academic, or otherwise) from someone involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program, and it also asked them to describe what their social life might look like if they were not involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program or had never been involved. Lastly, participants were asked what they consider to be the most helpful aspect of the program, what aspects could be improved, and whether they would recommend involvement in the program to incoming college students with an autism spectrum disorder.

### ***Procedure***

Data collection consisted of two phases: the pilot stage and the second stage. During the pilot stage of my data collection, I created a questionnaire and oral interview material to answer my research questions, and then I recruited two current members of the University of



Arkansas Autism Support Program to pilot both. After these two trial interviews, I made modifications based on participant feedback to reduce some of the redundancy of my initial data collection materials.

During the second stage of data collection, the modified questionnaire and interview materials were administered to ten individuals who are current or recent members of the University of Arkansas autism support program (including the two members who piloted the initial materials). Each questionnaire and interview were conducted consecutively during a 20-minute session that took place in a private and quiet seated area.

### ***Analysis***

Data gathered from each questionnaire and interview set was pooled to create a compendium of responses. Responses to questionnaire items were grouped based on participant ratings from the given choices, and oral interview responses were grouped into categories based on similarity.

## **Results**

### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire was divided into a Part 1 and a Part 2. Responses to all questionnaire items were grouped based on participant ratings from the given choices. Part 1 of the questionnaire asked participants to rate the accuracy of several statements regarding the helpfulness of the University of Arkansas autism support program in reducing college-related stress, facilitating academic and social success, and preparing each participant for an independent adult role. Participants rated each statement as very true, a lot true, a little true, not true, or unsure. Responses regarding the program's reduction of college-relates stress and

facilitation of academic success were largely positive, and responses regarding the facilitation of social success and preparing individuals for independent adult roles had more variation.

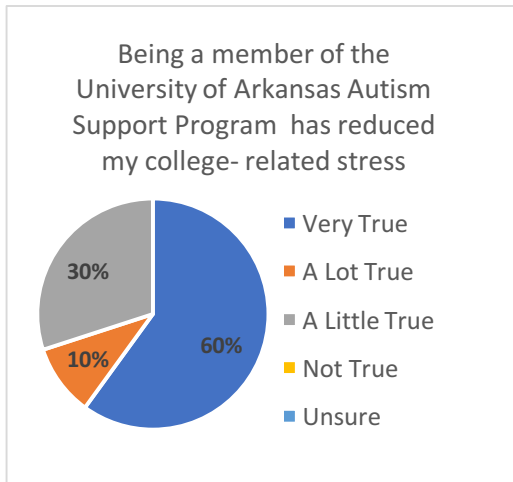


Figure 1: College-related stress



Figure 2: Academic success

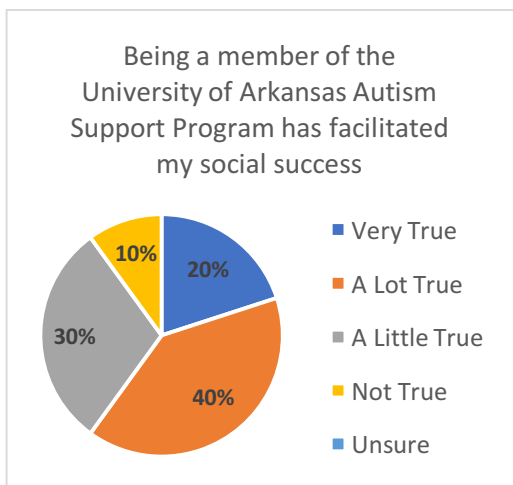


Figure 3: Social success

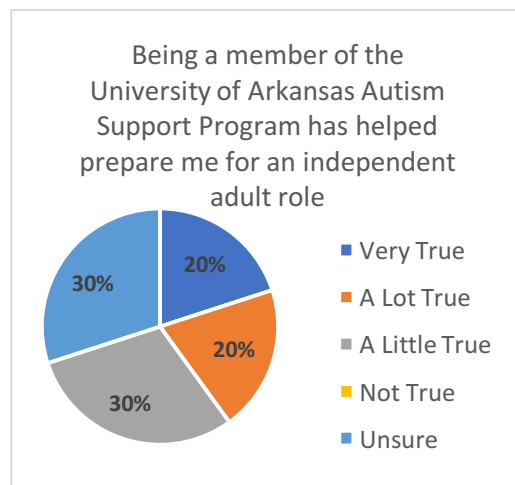


Figure 4: Independent adult role

Part 2 asked participants to indicate the degree to which they agree that specific resources offered by the autism support program are helpful and enjoyable to them. Once again, participants rated each statement as very true, a lot true, a little true, not true, or unsure. Responses regarding academic coaching and 1-on-1 peer mentoring were all positive,

and responses regarding group peer mentoring, study hall, and living accommodations with other participants varied between positive and negative. Results are depicted in figures 5-9.

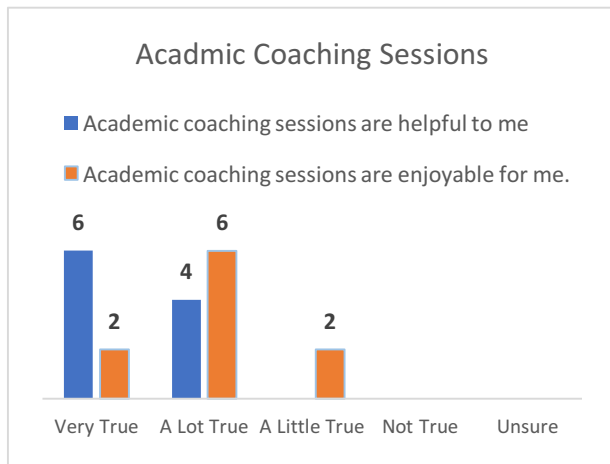


Figure 5: Academic coaching

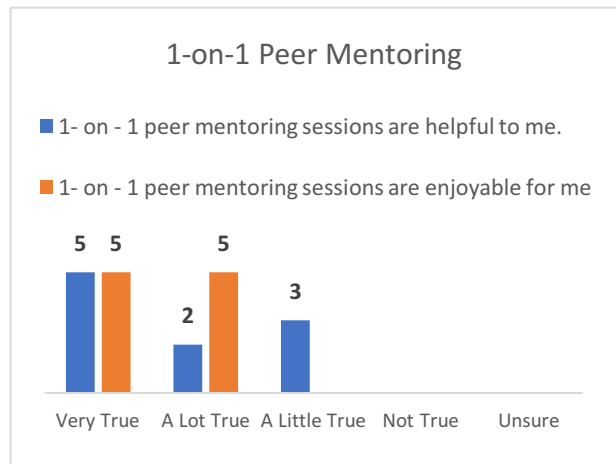


Figure 6: 1-on-1 peer mentoring

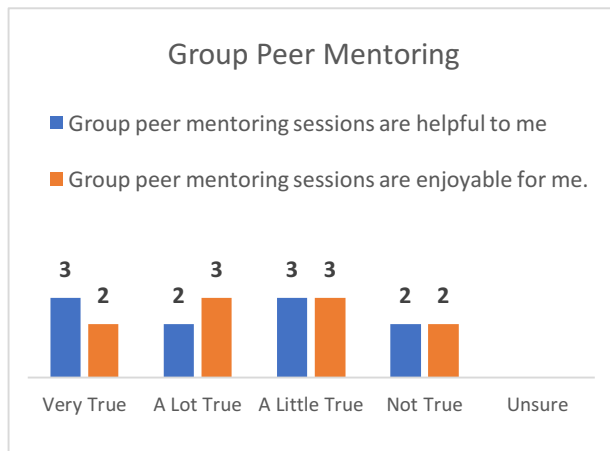


Figure 7: Group peer mentoring

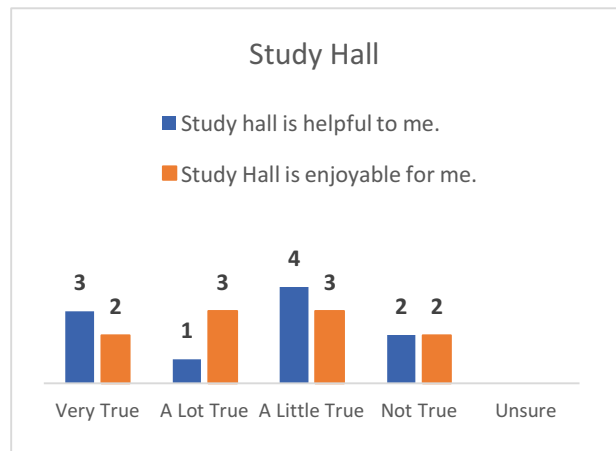


Figure 8: Study Hall

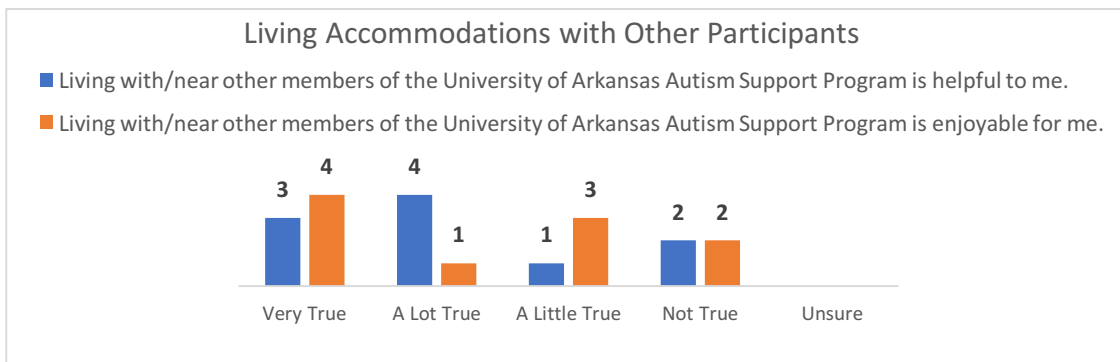


Figure 9: Living accommodations

## **Interview**

The first 5 interview questions compounded on questionnaire topics and offered participants an opportunity to share in detail their experiences with and opinions about resources offered by the autism support program. Specifically, the participants were asked, “how do you feel about the following resources offered to you by the program?” Responses were recorded as direct quotes and then grouped into categories based on similarity.

The following table is a summary of the responses.

<b>Program Resource</b>	<b>Positive Responses</b>	<b>Negative Responses</b>	<b>Indifferent Responses</b>
Academic Coaching	9	1	0
1-on-1 Peer Mentoring	5	3	2
Group Peer Mentoring	5	5	0
Study Hall	6	4	0
Living accommodations with other program participants	7	3	0

*Figure 10: “How do you feel about the following resources offered to you by the program?”*

Nine out of the ten participants gave positive responses when asked how they feel about academic coaching. The one negative response came from a participant whose class schedule consists of advanced computer science courses. This individual reported that the academic coaches were not proficient enough in computer science to be helpful, but this individual also reported that his academic coaches helped him find a tutor in his area of study.

Five out of the ten participants gave positive responses when asked how they feel about 1-on-1 peer mentoring, three gave negative responses, and two indicated indifference.

Common themes of the positive responses were that 1-on-1 mentoring helped with honing

social skills and provided a relaxed environment to discuss school and life in general. The common theme of the three negative responses was that the participants did not understand how 1-on-1 mentoring is helpful to them.

Group mentoring received five positive responses and five negative responses. Participants who gave positive responses reported that they enjoy spending time with other people during group mentoring and that they do not experience many- or any- group social events otherwise. A common theme amongst negative responses was that participants desired different activities than those that typically take place during group mentoring sessions.

Study hall received six positive responses and four negative responses. A common theme of positive responses was that participants liked the structured time to complete assignments. The four participants who gave negative responses reported that they either prefer independent study or that they complete most of their assignments during academic coaching rather than study hall.

Seven out of ten participants gave positive responses when asked how they feel about living accommodations with other program members, and three gave negative responses. Two of the three negative responses were rooted in the fact that two specific individuals did not get along when they were roommates. The other negative response came from a participant who reported that he would rather live with individuals who do not have autism because he predicted that such individuals would be more socially adept and might encourage him to “go out and do things.”

The oral interview also included situation-based and introspective questions in addition to the previous questions. All responses to these questions were recorded as direct quotes and

can be found in Appendix A. First, participants were asked to describe a situation in which they received support (emotional, social, academic, or otherwise) from someone involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program. Six of the ten respondents described a situation involving an academic coach, three described a situation involving the program director, and one described a situation involving a peer mentor.

*“My peer mentor took the time to get to know me very well, and he helped me change my major to something that suited my personality more than computer science: communications. It seems ironic for someone with a communication disorder to major in communications, but he really made an impact on me, and I’m so happy in this major. I can’t imagine doing anything else, but I wouldn’t have had the guts to change it without my mentor.”*

**-Respondent 1**

Participants were also asked to describe what their social life might look like if they were not involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program or had never been involved. Seven out of ten respondents indicated that his/her social life would be significantly different, and the remaining three indicated that there would be no change in his/her social life.

*“My life would be extremely solitary. I can easily imagine that I would only know one or two people on campus.”*

**-Respondent 6**

Lastly, participants were asked what they consider to be the most helpful aspect of the program, what aspects could be improved, and whether they would recommend involvement in the program to incoming college students with an autism spectrum disorder. Eight participants indicated that they consider academic coaching to be the most helpful aspect of the program, and the remaining two indicated that they consider the social experiences of the program to be the most helpful. Regarding program improvement, seven participants indicated that group mentoring could be improved, but the ways that participants would like group

mentoring to change varied widely. Two participants indicated that a reduced cost would improve the program, and the remaining participant responded that a stronger connection between the autism support program and the career development center on campus would improve the program. Finally, all ten respondents indicated that they would recommend involvement in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program to incoming college students with autism spectrum disorder. A common theme amongst responses was that the program is a very useful tool to help individuals with autism navigate college, and it is worth finding out whether the program can be helpful and make a difference.

### **Discussion**

The current study was meant to determine the effects of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program on participating undergraduate students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The specific aim was to determine how undergraduate students with Autism Spectrum Disorder perceive the helpfulness of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program in the following areas: reducing college- related stress, facilitating academic success, facilitating social success, and preparing individuals for independent adult roles. Although results varied for some questionnaire and interview topics, participant responses were largely positive, suggesting that the University of Arkansas autism support program has positive implications for individuals with an autism spectrum disorder who are attending college.

Results from the questionnaire were largely positive- with the majority of responses rating questionnaire items as some degree of “true”. Specifically, responses regarding the program’s reduction of college-relates stress and facilitation of academic success were all positive, and responses regarding the facilitation of social success and preparing individuals for

independent adult roles were mostly positive- with one respondent rating “being a member of the University of Arkansas autism support program has facilitated my social success” as “not true” and three respondents indicating that they are unsure whether the autism support program has helped prepare them for an independent adult role. Additionally, responses regarding academic coaching and 1-on-1 peer mentoring were all positive, and responses regarding group peer mentoring, study hall, and living accommodations with other participants varied between positive and negative, with 80 percent being positive and 20 percent negative. These results suggest that the clear majority of participants in this study perceive the program resources as some degree of helpful to them.

Responses to interview items were also largely positive, with the only major discrepancies being participants’ feelings about 1-on-1 per mentoring and group peer mentoring. Five out of the ten participants gave positive responses when asked how they feel about 1-on-1 peer mentoring, three gave negative responses, and two indicated indifference. Similarly, group per mentoring received five positive responses and five negative responses. The remaining responses all indicated participant affirmation of the University or Arkansas autism support program and its resources- including participant responses to situation-based and introspective questions.

### ***Limitations and Future Directions***

While the aim of the current study was to provide qualitative data on the effects of the University of Arkansas autism support program, there were several limitations that future studies should address. First, because the study focused on the perceptions and opinions of members of the program, the results are not guaranteed to be accurate representations of how



involvement in the program has affected each individual member. Additionally, the program director predicted prior to data collection that some participants would have difficulty thinking introspectively as some interview questions required. She expressed that some members of the program may not understand how much of an impact the autism support program has on their lives and overall college experience, and therefore some participant perceptions of the effects of the program may be flawed. It should also be noted that the participants in this study are not representative of all collegiate individuals with autism because individuals with autism spectrum disorder vary widely in terms of skills, symptoms, and severity. Interpretation of the results was also difficult due to the small sample size and lack of a control group. There are a number of individuals who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and also attend the University of Arkansas but are not involved in the autism support program; This population could be considered for a control group. Lastly, several current members of the University of Arkansas autism support program chose not to participate in the study, so the results of this study do not include perceptions from all program members. It is possible that responses from the 10 participants might be very different from what the non-participating members might have revealed.

Future studies should include a larger sample size and implement a control group if possible. Additionally, it would be beneficial to collect data routinely on individuals who participate in the autism support program and conduct a longitudinal study to see how the program affects individuals over time. Future studies could even follow individuals beyond college in an attempt to determine how individuals function in independent adult roles after involvement in the University of Arkansas autism support program.

## ***Conclusions***

Though research regarding autism is not uncommon, studies on college-level autism support programs are scarce, and more qualitative data is needed to assess existing programs. Despite its limitations, the current study showed positive implications for the helpfulness of the University of Arkansas autism support program in reducing college-related stress, facilitating academic and social success, and preparing participating individuals for independent adult roles.

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## Appendix A

**Table 1.** Open responses for interview question about support

**Describe a situation in which you received support (emotional, social, academic, or otherwise) from someone involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program:**

<b>Respondent 1</b>	“My peer mentor took the time to get to know me very well, and he helped me change my major to something that suited my personality more than computer science: communications. It seems ironic for someone with a communication disorder to major in communications, but he really made an impact on me, and I’m so happy in this major. I can’t imagine doing anything else, but I wouldn’t have had the guts to change it without my mentor.”
<b>Respondent 2</b>	“I remember having this huge history paper that was really overwhelming. I’m great at history, but I didn’t know where to start. My coach helped me through it.”
<b>Respondent 3</b>	“My coach gave me some last minute help editing a Comp II paper. It put my mind at ease.”
<b>Respondent 4</b>	“Dr. Greene always made herself very available to me. I could contact her anytime if I had a question or if I was concerned about something.”
<b>Respondent 5</b>	“I struggled with geology as a freshman. The professor moved so quickly through lessons and didn’t clarify information like I needed him to. My academic coach would give me extra lessons and explain content to me at my own pace. This saved me from what felt like a hopeless situation.”
<b>Respondent 6</b>	“Dr. Greene brought her dog to campus close to finals week, and I guess that was great emotional support. I was stressed out and missing my four dogs at home. I loved it. I don’t know why, but it was easier to focus on finals after playing with that dog.”
<b>Respondent 7</b>	“I had to do an explanatory synthesis in my comp class. My coach helped me organize my thoughts and put them on paper.”
<b>Respondent 8</b>	“I’ve been having trouble with discrete math. My coach couldn’t help me, but she helped me find a great tutor, and that was extremely helpful.”
<b>Respondent 9</b>	“Dr. Greene was always willing to help me talk to professors when I felt nervous. It’s just hard for me to go to a professor’s office and ask them questions. I never know what to say.”
<b>Respondent 10</b>	“My coach helped me go through my physics notes page by page until I understood everything.”

**Table 2.** Open responses for interview question about social life

**Describe what your social life might look like if you were not involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program:**

<b>Respondent 1</b>	“There would be a huge change. I’ve seen tons of social improvement in myself since starting the program. I probably wouldn’t ever go out and meet new people. I would constantly be in my room complaining about being lonely and unhappy, but I probably wouldn’t have taken any action to be social.”
<b>Respondent 2</b>	“I would definitely have less friends.”
<b>Respondent 3</b>	“I may have been more hostile in the way I treat others due to the stress of dealing with school and having roommates who wouldn’t understand me as well as people in the program do. All of my roommates had autism like me until I moved off campus.”
<b>Respondent 4</b>	“I wouldn’t have as many people to talk to or hang out with. I would probably be alone in my room for most of the day, and I would always eat alone in the dining hall.”
<b>Respondent 5</b>	“I would isolate myself constantly except for when I’m in class, and I would have no friends. I would probably be really awkward with roommates when trying to be social, and I would feel like an outcast.”
<b>Respondent 6</b>	“My life would be extremely solitary. I can easily imagine that I would only know one or two people on campus.”
<b>Respondent 7</b>	“I don’t think my social life would be any different.”
<b>Respondent 8</b>	“My social life would be very different. I’d have less friends and less people who understand me. I’d have less people to go to for help.”
<b>Respondent 9</b>	“Probably no change.”
<b>Respondent 10</b>	“I doubt my social life would be any different than it is now. I didn’t involve myself in almost any social events in the program.”

**Table 3.** Open responses for interview question about improvement

**What aspects of the program could be improved?**

	<b>Program aspect</b>	<b>Complete participant response</b>
<b>Respondent 1</b>	Partnership with Career Development Center	“It would be nice to have a stronger connection with the career development center. This would help with choosing a major, finding internships, finding jobs.”
<b>Respondent 2</b>	Group mentoring	“More group mentoring opportunities.”
<b>Respondent 3</b>	Group mentoring	“I wish attendance at group mentoring was better. It’s usually just three or four people.”
<b>Respondent 4</b>	Group mentoring	“It would be nice to have more activities to choose from. We always do the same things.”
<b>Respondent 5</b>	Group mentoring	“I think there should be more social events- more group mentoring activities.”
<b>Respondent 6</b>	Group mentoring	“New activities at group mentoring.”
<b>Respondent 7</b>	Group mentoring	“There should be different things to do at group mentoring besides video games, board games, and the rock climbing wall.”
<b>Respondent 8</b>	Group mentoring	“Less group mentoring events. Just once a week would suffice.”
<b>Respondent 9</b>	Cost	“I think the cost of the program should be reduced. I know several people on campus who could benefit from the program if they could afford it.”
<b>Respondent 10</b>	Cost	“I think there should be a lower cost option for people who only want or need certain things from the program. I only really used academic coaching, so it would have been nice if the amount I paid could have reflected that.”

**Table 4.** Recommendation

**Would you recommend involvement in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program to incoming college students with autism spectrum disorder? Why or why not?**

	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Why or why not</b>
<b>Respondent 1</b>	Yes	“This program helps kids with autism succeed in college. It’s helping me and it has helped people before me. It works and it is worth it.”
<b>Respondent 2</b>	Yes	“In my opinion, the program improves a student’s chances of being successful academically and socially. It is an opportunity to build friendships within the program and have a “real” college experience.”
<b>Respondent 3</b>	Yes	“It’s a good way to help you become adjusted to college academic life and learn how to balance a busy schedule, but your position on the spectrum definitely impacts how helpful the program is or isn’t for a person.”
<b>Respondent 4</b>	Yes	“A student with autism could have delayed learning. The program helps you improve your life skills and academic skills.”
<b>Respondent 5</b>	Yes	“It’s not a good fit for everyone because of the broad spectrum of autism, but it’s worth giving it a shot.”
<b>Respondent 6</b>	Yes	“It keeps you organized and on track. It’s hard to keep up with all that you have to get done in college, but that’s worse when you have autism. You can utilize the program’s resources to help you in whatever unique ways you need. I use the program differently than others because I feel that I am more high functioning than some of my peers. The program has helped me so much, so I imagine it could be tons more helpful to guys or girls who struggle more than I do.”
<b>Respondent 7</b>	Yes	“Why not get extra help? It sets you up for success. It can’t hurt.”
<b>Respondent 8</b>	Yes	“Autism diagnoses are increasing nationwide, so the number of college students with autism will eventually increase too. I say they should turn to the program for extra guidance.”
<b>Respondent 9</b>	Yes	“It’s a good idea to at least try the program and see if it’s helpful for you or not. You can always decide you don’t want to participate.”
<b>Respondent 10</b>	Yes	“It’s worth finding out if it is helpful for an individual.”

## Appendix B

### Paper-and-Pencil Questionnaire: Part I

Please rate the following statements as: unsure (U) not true (N), a little true (L), a lot true (A), or very true (V)

- Being a member of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program has reduced my college-related stress.
  - (Circle one): (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
- Being a member of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program has facilitated my academic success.
  - (Circle one): (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
- Being a member of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program has facilitated my social success.
  - (Circle one): (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
- Being a member of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program has helped prepare me for an independent adult role.
  - (Circle one): (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)

### Paper-and-Pencil Questionnaire: Part II

Please rate the accuracy of the following statements to indicate how do you feel about specific resources offered to you by the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program

1. Academic coaching sessions are helpful to me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
2. Academic coaching sessions are enjoyable for me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
3. 1- on - 1 peer mentoring sessions are helpful to me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
4. 1- on - 1 peer mentoring sessions are enjoyable for me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
5. Group peer mentoring sessions are helpful to me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
6. Group peer mentoring sessions are enjoyable for me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
7. Study hall is helpful to me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
8. Study Hall is enjoyable for me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
9. Living with/near other members of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program is helpful to me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)
10. Living with/near other members of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program is enjoyable for me. (U) (N) (L) (A) (V)

### Oral Interview Questions:

- How do you feel about the following resources offered to you by the program?
  - Academic coaching sessions
  - 1- on - 1 peer mentoring sessions



- Group peer mentoring sessions
- Study hall
- Living accommodations with/near other program participants
- In your opinion, what has been the most helpful aspect of the program?
- Describe a situation in which you received support (emotional, social, academic, or otherwise) from someone involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program:
- What aspect(s) of the program could be improved?
- Would you recommend involvement in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program to incoming college students with autism spectrum disorder?
  - Why or why not?
- Describe what your social life might look like if you were not involved in the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program:

## Appendix C

Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

December 21, 2016

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Jessica Post  
Kimberly Frazier

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-11-205

Protocol Title: *A Qualitative Study of the Effects of the University of Arkansas Autism Support Program*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 12/20/2016 Expiration Date: 12/19/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times. This protocol has been approved for 10 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

109 MLKG • 1 University of Arkansas • Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201 • (479) 575-2208 • Fax (479) 575-6527 • Email [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu) *The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.*