

Neurodiversity: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Elizabeth Davis, DNP, MSN, RN, CNL, Associate Professor AACN Diversity Leadership Institute 2025

Background

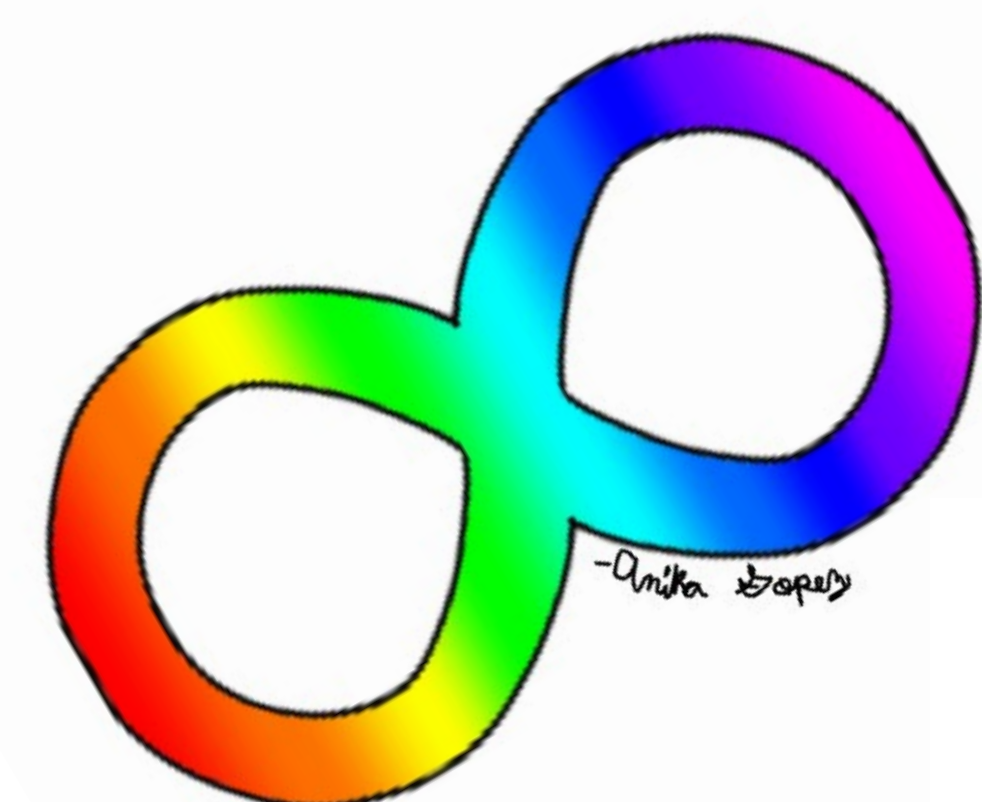
- ❖ Neurodiversity “umbrella” includes autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, learning disabilities and Tourette Syndrome
- ❖ Diverse way in which the brain functions
- ❖ Estimated 15-20% of global population are neurodiverse
- ❖ 10-30% of college students identify as neurodiverse
- ❖ Challenge with access to diagnoses
- ❖ Not recognized until independence at college
- ❖ American Disabilities Amendments Act (2008) broadened to include neurodiversity, anxiety and depression
- ❖ Neurodiversity is part of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to address the challenges students with “invisible” disabilities experience in nursing education.

Project Objectives

- ❖ Increase faculty knowledge, skills and attitudes surrounding neurodiversity
- ❖ Promote integration of Universal Design for Learning
- ❖ Improve student experience in classroom learning spaces
- ❖ Encourage faculty utilization of resource toolkit
- ❖ Adoption of neurodiverse inclusive campus recommendations
- ❖ Align student handbook with disability best practices



“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” – Audre Lorde



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Methods & Design

- ❖ Apply for special projects graduate assistant
- ❖ Provide faculty professional development
- ❖ Collaborate with Student Accessibility Resources
- ❖ Develop Student Success Task Force
- ❖ Explore opportunities to change to physical learning space

Kotter's Eight Step Change Model



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Implementation Strategies

- Special Projects Graduate Assistant
- ❖ Ongoing review of the literature and recommendations of best practices
- ❖ Review student handbook for alignment of recommended disabilities accommodations
- ❖ Survey faculty to assess gaps related to neurodiversity knowledge, skills and attitudes
- ❖ Project Period: August 2025-May 2026

- Faculty Professional Development
- ❖ Host focused “lunch and learns”
- ❖ Provide teaching resources integrating Universal Design for Learning
- ❖ Create faculty resource toolkit

- Student Success Task Force
- ❖ Support from leadership
- ❖ Establish metric and data
- ❖ Examine barriers related to success

- Physical Environment
- ❖ Seek funding focused on physical environment
- ❖ Sensory friendly
- ❖ Flexible seating

Plan for Evaluation

- ❖ Survey students regarding lived experiences in classroom learning space
- ❖ Pre/Post survey of faculty regarding knowledge of neurodiversity

Acknowledgments

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References





Creating Inclusive Learning Environments for Neurodivergent Students

Elizabeth Davis, DNP, CNL

Biography

Dr. Elizabeth Davis scholarship focus is on teaching and learning in the classroom. This has led her to exploring access in nursing education for students with disabilities with a primary focus on neurodiversity, Utilizing Universal Design for Learning principles Dr. Davis strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all students to succeed.

Contact Information



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