

Autism Services Center Summer Transition Program



WESTERN MICHIGAN
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Program Overview

This summer, the Autism Services Center (ASC) is partnering with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to pilot a comprehensive transition program for six high school students with ASD. We are thrilled to provide this much needed experience for these young adults interested in attending college one day!

Students will be living in residence halls for nearly eight weeks while taking a three-credit WMU course of each student's choosing and working in paid on-campus positions. WMU mentors, weekly social and study skills workshops, a weekly college experience course, and on-the-job training will support our students in their exciting endeavor.

The Summer Transition Program has started with a sprint. Students have already moved in, attended their first week of classes, navigated the WMU campus, and interviewed for their on-campus employment placements.





Moving In

Let the adventures begin!

Our high school students are getting their first taste of living in the residence hall (dorm) this summer. On the first day of classes, students and their parents examined their rooms, received keys, and began making their dorm rooms feel like home for the next seven weeks. All the students went home for the long holiday weekend, which gave them the opportunity to get items they noticed they had forgotten or that others were finding useful.

Armed with fans and a positive attitude, our students are combating the heat of the summer while living in the non-air conditioned residence hall. We have had many conversations on ways to cool down their rooms and where the best air conditioning is on campus.

Living in the residence hall allows students the valuable experience of getting to the cafeteria for a meal during set meal time, finding their way around WMU's campus,

learning out how to do laundry, and navigating the social norms of using a public bathroom. The Summer Transition Program built in a lot of support the first week to help students get to the cafeteria and find their classes; by the end of the week, they were comfortable getting around campus and started exploring more on their own!

Program Sponsors

WMU's Autism Center of Excellence would like to extend our deepest thanks to the Great Lakes Center for Autism Treatment and Research and Novel Responses, INC for their generous donations to the Autism Service Center's (ASC) Summer Transition Program.

Platinum Sponsor



The Great Lakes Center's mission is to serve children affected by autism and other neurodevelopmental challenges by enabling each individual to reach his or her full potential through evidence-based practices. They strive to support and improve the quality of life for children and their families and help them in the pursuit of health, safety and independence in their community. To learn more about the Great Lakes Center, please visit their website at <http://www.autismtreatmentresearch.org/>

Silver Sponsor



Novel Responses, Inc's mission is to enhance lives through behavior intervention. They recognize that each child is unique and believe that parental input and involvement are critical to a child's progress. To learn more about Novel Responses, Inc, please visit their website at <http://www.novelresponses.com/>



Interviews

Matching Students and Employers

One of the integral components of the Summer Transition Program is on-campus employment with on-the-job training. We have partnered with different departments and offices on WMU's campus for our placements; students will be working in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Dean's office, CAS marketing office, CAS budget office, the economics department, University Computing Center, and University Libraries. Sara Volmering from University Libraries, Jordan Marshall from the economics department, Cheryl Peters from CAS advising, and Kim Hunt from CAS Dean's office sat on our panel for interviews (pictured from left to right).



Our students participated in an interview workshop prior to the interview. The workshop focused on starting an interview with a firm handshake, making eye contact, listening and answering the questions asked, providing specific examples, and speaking clearly and loud enough to be heard. The panel interview provided a great opportunity to practice these skills in a real setting.

The questions asked during the interviews gauged students' interests, skills, and comfort in completing various tasks, such as how they felt with delivering documents around campus, answering phones and greeting visitors, filing, working on a computer, and organizing. Their responses helped us match the students with "good-fit" jobs. The students started their jobs this week and we will have updates as we continue.

Meet the Staff

Kourtney Bakalyar

This section will feature a different Summer Transition Program staff member each edition.

Kourtney Bakalyar is the coordinator of the Autism Services Center (ASC) at Western Michigan University. Kourtney's responsibilities include providing individual developmental advising to college students with ASD to build academic skills, social skills, and independent living skills with the goal of helping students to meet their goals of a college degree.

Kourtney has taught students with learning disabilities, emotional impairments, autism spectrum

disorder, mild and moderate cognitive impairments, multiple and severe impairments, and other health impairments in the secondary self-contained setting and within elementary resource programs. Kourtney is finishing her dissertation research that focuses on a formative evaluation of autism services in higher education to complete her doctorate in Special Education with an emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis. During the pursuit of her doctorate, Kourtney taught core courses for WMU's special education undergraduate program and supervised a practicum site where she provided feedback to pre-service educators.



Kourtney Bakalyar (right) is the coordinator of the Autism Services Center at Western Michigan University





To stay up to date with the Summer Transition Program and other Autism Services Center events, find us at...

Contact email: kourtney.k.bakalyar@wmich.edu

Website: www.wmuace.com

Facebook:
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