

W&M Neurodiversity Initiative

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NEURODiVeRSiTy

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Neurodiversity is...

- A commitment to appreciating and supporting students with brain differences.
- An appreciation for this form of diversity in enriching our campus community.
- An initiative launched in 2012 at W&M, unique among colleges and universities and now a model for others.
- A very William & Mary approach: forward, inclusive, student-centered.



Neurodiversity at W&M reaches widely

Across Campus

- Office of Diversity
- Counseling Center
- Residential Life
- Transfer Students
- Student Affairs
- Charles Center
- Student Accessibility
- Academic depts
- School of Ed.
- Law School
- Freshman orientation
- Reves Center
- Career Center

Off campus

- Colleges such as Duke, Drexel, UVA, VCU, VTech,
- Public and private k-12 schools locally and nationally
- W&M DC Campus
- National and international conferences (inc. IMFAR)
- National advocacy groups
- NIH, NIMH
- SAP & tech companies career partnerships
- Media coverage, media commentary

Support for the Neurodiversity Initiative and Scholar in Residence appointment from:



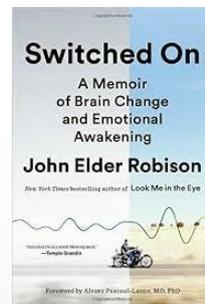
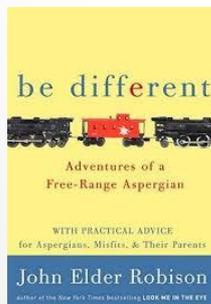
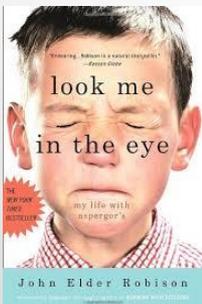
John Elder Robison, W&M Scholar in Residence, 3 x NYT bestselling author, NIH, IACC, WHO representative on autism, businessman, entrepreneur, flame guitar inventor, and more...

Office of the Provost
Charles Center

University Teaching Project x2
Creative Adaptation Award

Dean of A&S
Dept. of Psychology

Arnow Family Fund
Olitsky Family Foundation
(\$150,000+)



Neurodiversity programming at W&M includes

Campus

- Introduction to Neurodiversity for departments, programs, and other groups
- Inclusive classroom modules
- Support for individual students
- Neurodiversity Student Group

Campus and community

- Olitsky Family Foundation Speaker series
- Community and Alums active in the Neurodiversity Working Group
- W&M students mentoring local teens
- Connecting people and resources



Teaching Neurodiversity: University Teaching Project

- Awarded a UTP in 2012-2013
- Provide resources to faculty and students for making a classroom welcoming to all – best practices approach
- Offered suggested practices for
 - Social situations (e.g., group work, seminar courses, office hours)
 - Executive function challenges
 - Sensory stimulation in class
- Resources on our webpage: wm.edu/neurodiversity

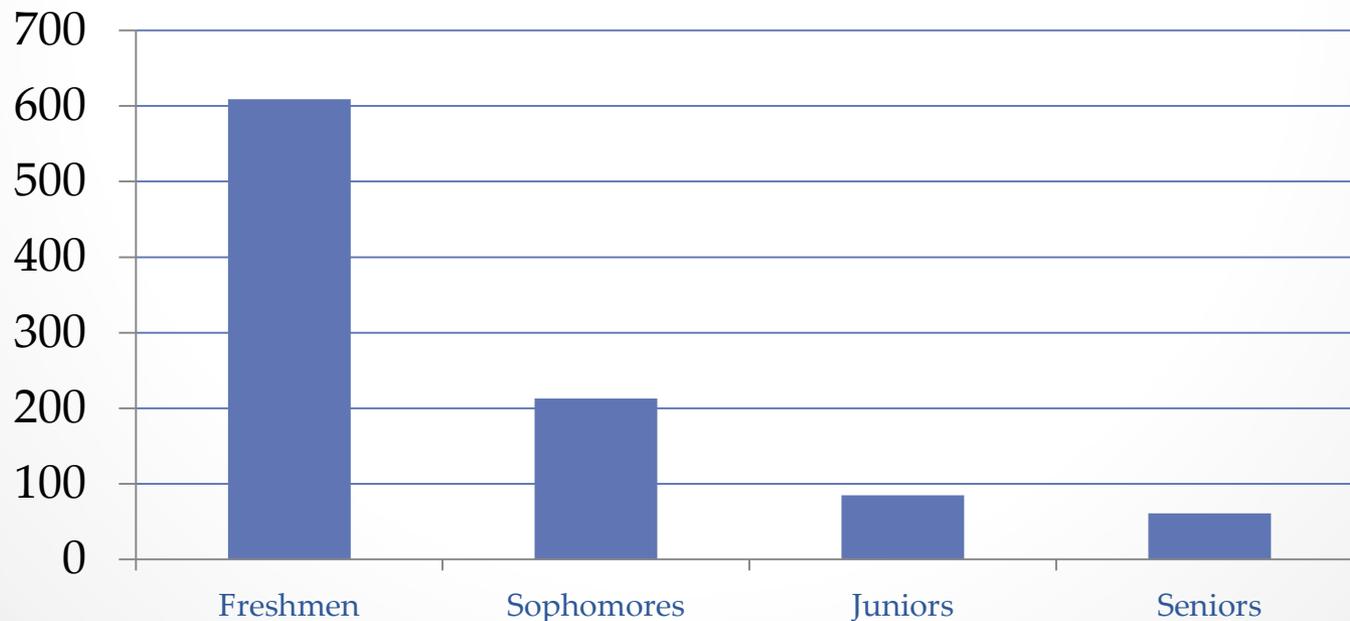
Teaching Focus:

- 1-credit Spring course (~15 students) on campus and in Summer (W&M DC office)
- 5 instructors: Burk, Dickter, Wulf, Zeman and John Elder Robison
- Other speakers include Neurodiverse advocates
- Topics:
 - Differences in
 - Social cognition
 - Sensory processing
 - Societal issues
 - History of neurodiversity
 - Legal concerns
 - Practical, interpersonal topics
 - Social blindness

Neurodiversity Research:

Characterizing the W&M Population

- $N = 968$ (408 males), 7 self-reported
- Suggests that approximately 70 undergrads at W&M are autistic



Research: Characterizing the W&M Population

definitely agree slightly agree slightly disagree definitely disagree

- **Communication:** “Other people frequently tell me that what I’ve said is impolite, even though I think it is polite.”
- **Social Skill:** “I prefer to do things with other rather than on my own.”
- **Imagination:** “If I try to imagine something, I find it very easy to create a picture in my mind.”
- **Attention to Details:** “I usually notice car number plates or similar strings of information.”
- **Attention Switching:** “I prefer to do things the same way over and over again.”



Research: Characterizing the W&M Population

- Cut-off for autistic traits = 32
- Range from 5 (few autistic behaviors) - 46 (many autistic behaviors)
- Average = 17.55
- Over 200 students at W&M would be characterized as outliers on this measure (having many autistic behaviors)



Research: Characterizing the W&M Population

- Challenges autistic individuals reported in the classroom
 - Awkward social situations such as group projects
 - Attention deficit
 - Obsessive-compulsive tendencies
- Our research showed that non-autistic students held implicit and explicit biases towards their autistic classmates

I'm proud as an alum that William and Mary is taking a leadership position with the Neurodiversity Initiative. It broadens our perspectives and creates a less homogenous, more creative and inclusive community.

As a parent, I'm thrilled that our son gets the support and guidance from peers and mentors within the ND group, easing his transition to college life so he can see for himself what a special place W&M is.

Heather and Eric Dean, '86, P'19

[For more information: www.wm.edu/neurodiversity](http://www.wm.edu/neurodiversity)

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