



A New College-to-Career Initiative for Students with Autism

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Website: <https://www.cds.udel.edu/spectrum-scholars/>

Frequently Asked Questions

Please note: Many people prefer to use person-first language, like “a person *with* autism.” Others, especially many self-advocates, strongly prefer identity-first language, like “an autistic person.” Both terms are used by Spectrum Scholars in order to recognize and respect the range of preferences among those impacted by autism.

1. *Q - What is the Spectrum Scholars initiative, a program for students with autism funded by JPMorgan Chase & Co.?*

A - There are three elements to the Spectrum Scholars initiative:

- A. Supports for selected Spectrum Scholars: A comprehensive support system for select undergraduate students with autism (*Spectrum Scholars*) at the University of Delaware-Newark campus. Supports begin for first-year students, continuing throughout their undergraduate experience. The program includes individualized coaching, peer mentoring, and career exploration experiences. Priority admission is given but not limited to those studying Computer & Information Science or Electrical & Computer Engineering.
- B. Supports for autistic students across campus: Supports for autistic students across campus whether or not they are a Spectrum Scholar, include:
 - Workshops to build skills for college and career success
 - Group supports conducted in collaboration with other UD departments
 - Consultation for connections to campus and community resources.
- C. Supports for UD faculty, staff, students, businesses & the community: Training and resources on supporting people with autism are offered to UD staff/faculty/students and community groups and businesses, including JPMorgan Chase & Co.

2. *Q - How many first-year undergraduate students will be accepted to receive supports for selected Spectrum Scholars (as described in Question 1) each year?*

A – New students will be admitted each year according to the following schedule:

Semester Start Date	Approximate # of New Student Participants
Fall 2020	7
Fall 2021	8
Fall 2022	8
Fall 2023	7

3. *Q – How do students qualify to apply to become a Spectrum Scholar?*

A – All prospective Spectrum Scholars seeking comprehensive support must first apply and be accepted into the University as full-time, first-year matriculated undergraduate students on UD’s main (Newark) campus. **Interested students may submit their Spectrum Scholars application at any time prior to April 2nd, 2021 for consideration for the 2021-2022 academic year.** Interviews and selection decisions will be conducted after Spectrum Scholars staff has been notified of the student’s admission to UD. Priority will be given to students majoring in Computer & Information Sciences or Electrical & Computer

Engineering. Students interested in Spectrum Scholars are encouraged to contact Program Manager Pam Lubbers (pwlub@udel.edu), to indicate their interest and request more information.

4. *Q – Do you need to have a diagnosis/classification of autism in order to participate?*

A – Yes. In order to participate, students must have a documented diagnosis or classification of Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (including Pervasive Development Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified or Asperger Syndrome). Acceptable documents include a psychological, neuropsychological, or psychoeducational evaluation. This must be documented either through a psychologist diagnosis or classification through the student's school system.

5. *Q – What types of supports and experiences can a student expect to receive:*

A – Students receiving services as an admitted Spectrum Scholar (as described in Question 1) can expect the following:

- Weekly coaching in academics, organization, social relationships, campus life and self-advocacy
- Peer mentorship from trained and supervised undergraduate students
- Progressive internships, job interview preparedness, and other career exploration experiences, in collaboration with the University of Delaware Career Center, and with JPMorgan Chase & Co. and other businesses.

6. *Q – How are families involved in the program?*

A – University of Delaware values the role that families play in supporting their student and recognizes that many autistic students depend greatly on their family for support. We also value the development of self-advocacy and self-determination, and support students in their growth of these skills. As a result, program staff do not typically engage with families directly without the student being present. General information is provided to families, in addition to opportunities to connect with other families to share strategies and provide program feedback.

7. *Q – Do students have to pay for these services?*

A – No. Students receiving supports through the Spectrum Scholars initiative, funded in part by JPMorgan Chase & Co., will not be charged for the additional services provided. Students **are** responsible for all tuition, housing costs, and other typical student fees as identified by the university. For questions about tuition and fees, please contact UD [Student Financial Services](#) (Phone: 302-831-2126).

8. *Q – If a student is not an admitted Spectrum Scholar, are they still eligible to receive across campus supports?*

A – Yes. Services for admitted Spectrum Scholars as described in Question 1A, such as individualized coaching and peer mentorship, are only available to students who are formally selected for the initiative. All autistic students, regardless of whether they are a selected Spectrum Scholar, will have access to the supports aimed at the broader autistic community on campus (supports for autistic students across campus as described in Question 1B). All students with disabilities will also benefit indirectly from the training that will be provided to university faculty, staff, students and community groups and businesses. In addition, all students with disabilities at the University of Delaware are encouraged to connect with the [Office of Disability Support Services \(DSS\)](#) (Phone: 302-831-4643) to determine the reasonable accommodations for which they are eligible. The [Office of Academic Enrichment](#) (Phone: 302-831-4555) has referral information for tutoring resources at the university.

9. *Q – What type of professional training in autism will be available?*

A – A range of training options will be available, including larger group trainings, web-based trainings, individual consultations, and other types of resources.

10. *Q - Who is eligible to receive professional training?*

A – Any staff/faculty interested in learning more about how to support and include students with autism and other disabilities are eligible to receive training. Local community groups and businesses are also eligible.

11. *Q – Who is operating this program?*

A - Spectrum Scholars is an initiative of the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies, and supported by grant funding from JPMorgan Chase & Co. The Center for Disabilities Studies works to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families through education, advocacy, service and research. For more information, please visit the center's website at <http://www.cds.udel.edu/>.