



Pathways Collegiate Program

Supporting students on the autism spectrum as they earn their college degree and explore career opportunities.

Discover Your Pathway to a College Degree and Beyond



Aurora University is excited to introduce the Pathways Collegiate Program for the 2022-2023 academic year.



The Pathways Collegiate Program is designed to help students on the autism spectrum garner the support and guidance needed to adjust to campus life, earn their university degree, and make a successful transition to the workplace.

This innovative program is designed with a broad array of services to help students on the autism spectrum succeed while they are attending Aurora University — both in their academic studies and social life.

AU provides an immersive support system for our students in the Pathways Collegiate Program to meet their current needs as well as encourage success and growth. In this individualized program, students will have support as they get accustomed to college life and take part in a two-year career exploration experience.

Each student's individualized plan addresses:



Executive Functioning



Social and Emotional Functioning



Independent Living Skills

As part of the Pathways Collegiate Program, students arrive on campus before the academic year officially begins, allowing them to move into their residence hall early and become acclimated to campus.

We know that if provided with the right support, the right environment, and the right encouragement, college-capable students on the autism spectrum can earn their degrees and make a successful transition from college to a career.

AU is currently accepting applications to the Pathways Collegiate Program and will welcome the first class of college freshmen and transfer students into the program in the fall of 2022. Students must meet the Aurora University admission requirements on their own merit before they are eligible to take part in the Pathways Collegiate Program.

Pathways students receive a wide range of support services.



Individualized Plan

The Pathways Collegiate Program provides each student with an individualized plan for success. Before a student begins their first semester, they will have an initial meeting to discuss their plan.

A team of people will be working together to develop an individualized plan to help each student succeed. Together, the team will determine strategies for support that will be available to each student throughout the school year.

Each student's team includes:

- » Student
- » Parent or guardian
- » Director of Pathways programs
- » Pathways advisor
- » AU graduate social work student

After a review of each student's strengths and challenges, the team will set year-long goals with objectives and benchmarks in the following areas:

- » Academics
- » Social and emotional functioning
- » Independent living
- » Early career/post-college plans



Sensory Supportive Spaces

At AU, we understand that sensory regulation is key to both the physical and psychological comfort of individuals with autism spectrum disorder. For this reason, we have dedicated a portion of a residence hall specifically for AU students on the autism spectrum.

The spaces are designed with the goal of alleviating anxiety so that students can focus their energy and emotions on a positive college experience.

The design features include:

- » Common spaces with flexible seating
- » Quiet study spaces outside of the residence hall rooms
- » Private showers with adjustable water pressure
- » Adjustable lighting
- » Cool, pale colors
- » Acoustic panels on ceilings and walls to reduce auditory distractions
- » Flooring designed to reduce sound
- » Patterns that limit visual stimuli



Social and Recreation

As part of AU's Pathways Collegiate Program, students will have an opportunity to practice social skills and develop relationships in fun and relaxed settings.

A wide array of social activities and recreational outings are available. Freshmen, sophomores, and first-year transfer students are required to attend a minimum of one weekly activity each month and two monthly outings each semester. Juniors, seniors, and transfer students who have completed at least one year of the Pathways Collegiate Program are required to attend a minimum of one weekly activity each month and one monthly outing each semester.

Some activities require students to bring cash or a credit card to pay additional fees or for leisure spending.

The goals of the activities and outings are to:

- » Develop independent living skills
- » Make friends
- » Get used to using public transportation
- » Have fun!

Weekly activities may include:

- » Group dinners
- » Gym/Fitness groups
- » On-campus game/movie nights
- » AU sporting events, theatre, art, and other on-campus activities
- » On-campus volunteer opportunities with Libby's Place and Wackerlin Center for Faith and Action

Monthly activities may include:

- » Sporting events
- » Bowling, laser tag, miniature golf
- » Volunteer/charity opportunities
- » Movie theatre premieres
- » Shopping at a mall
- » City of Chicago events



Weekly Advisor Meetings

To stay on track, students in the Pathways Collegiate Program will have informal weekly check-in meetings with their Pathways advisor.

A formal meeting between the student and the Pathways staff will take place near the end of the first semester to monitor progress of goals, conduct a self-assessment and reflection, and evaluate needs for changes in support.

An annual review will take place near the end of the first academic school year that includes all team members. At that meeting, the team and Pathways staff will:

- » Evaluate progress on goals
- » Set goals for the upcoming school year
- » Evaluate needs for changes in support



Seminars

As part of the Pathways Collegiate Program, students attend regular seminars to equip them with the skills to succeed in college and their early careers.

College Living Skills

Freshmen, returning sophomores, and first-year transfer students will spend two hours each week in a seminar devoted to teaching, modeling, and practicing social, emotional, and executive function skills.

The first hour will focus on understanding and practicing the covert rules and social norms of navigating college life. The second hour will be devoted to answering students' questions, managing materials, reviewing progress and expectations in classes, setting goals, making long-term plans for assignments, and other logistical needs.

Career Skills

Returning juniors, seniors, and transfer students who have already participated in at least one year of the Pathways Collegiate Program will spend two hours every two weeks in a seminar focused on career skills and the transition to post-college life.

Students will learn how to seek employment and will receive support in navigating any issues in their current jobs.

During these seminars, students will participate in career workshops and practice job-seeking and interview skills with AU Pathways staff and outside employers. For juniors, the seminars will be coordinated with AU's Junior Mentoring Program.



Study Tables

We know that good study habits are essential to success in college. Freshmen, sophomores, and first-year transfer students are required to attend three hours of study table or tutoring sessions, or a combination of both, every week. Juniors, seniors, and transfer students who have completed at least one year of the Pathways Collegiate Program are required to attend one hour each week.

During the study table time, students can schedule their weekly check-in meeting with their Pathways advisor and work on executive functioning skills as needed.

Students also have the option of holding one-to-one or small group tutoring sessions in specific content areas. These sessions must be scheduled ahead of time through AU's Academic Support Center and, when verified by the tutor, count toward the required study table and tutoring hours.

- » Study tables and tutoring sessions are facilitated by peer mentors and Pathways staff members.
- » Multiple time frames are available to accommodate students' schedules.
- » Students will have a work plan to follow during the session.
- » Check-in and check-out times are required.
- » Students may elect to go beyond the three hours and use these study support services as frequently as needed.



Peer Mentors

Each student in the Pathways Collegiate Program will be paired with a peer mentor.

Mentors are trained in supporting individuals on the autism spectrum. They will be able to offer guidance regarding academics, social situations, and independent living.

Students meet with their mentor individually in a casual format on a regular basis. Students and mentors are encouraged to participate in campus activities together.



Career Exploration Experience

Students in the Pathways Collegiate Program will be assigned a community mentor in their field of interest during their junior and senior years. They will spend two years learning valuable career skills from their community mentor, shadowing, and practicing professional social skills. Students may participate in internships or paid work experiences as part of this program, depending on availability at the mentor's workplace.

Project Presentation

The Career Exploration Experience will culminate with a project presentation based on the student's major or field of interest at the end of their senior year. This project is beneficial not only as a real-time experience, but also as students build and present their resume to potential employers.

The mode of presentation will be relevant to the mentor experience. Some examples include:

- » Research project
- » Portfolio of work
- » An interview of multiple field site colleagues
- » Reflective paper on the work or internship experience
- » Marketing materials to promote a specific job or career

Ongoing Career Guidance

We will support students in a variety of ways as they look for their first job.

- » Students will receive an Individualized Strengths and Skills Profile (ISSP) to help determine a desirable and realistic career.
- » Pathways staff will help students research volunteer, intern, or part-time job opportunities to build work experience while they are an AU student.
- » We will help students develop their resume, write their cover letters, and develop their portfolio.
- » Students will have opportunities to attend career fairs and workshops.
- » Workforce recruiters specific to individuals with autism will help students with their job search.



Faculty and Staff Support

AU professors and select staff, including coaches, club sponsors, and resident assistants, will receive a student profile with individualized information, strategies, and supports based on each student's ISSP meeting.

Given the need, or if determined necessary during the ISSP meeting, a Pathways staff member will meet with a student's professors at the beginning of the semester.

Upon request, or an observed need over the course of the semester, students may ask a Pathways staff member to attend a meeting with their professors. At this meeting, the Pathways staff can serve as a neutral perspective, help take in and later reflect on important information, and help the student develop self-advocacy.

Pathways staff will be available to consult with strategies upon request by faculty members.



Meet the Director

Brianne Jonathan joined Aurora University in April 2020 as the director of AU's Autism Initiative and Pathways Program. Brianne brings a wealth of experience to this role. She previously worked with students with special needs, with an emphasis on autism, in both public school and private clinic settings. During her time as a special education teacher, Brianne developed and implemented a program designed to help students with autism build executive functioning, and social and emotional skills. She holds a BA in Special Education and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from AU and is currently a doctoral candidate in AU's EdD program. She has also served as an adjunct professor at AU since 2018.



347 S. Gladstone Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506-4892

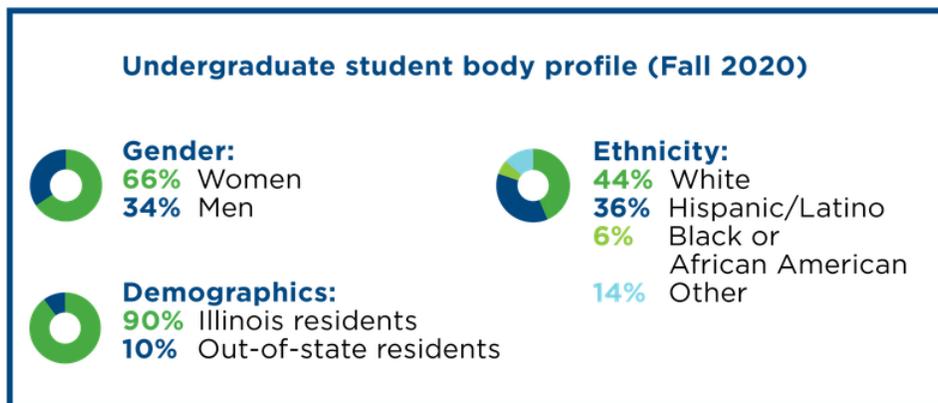
For more information, please contact
Brienne Jonathan, Director of Autism Initiative.
bjonathan@aurora.edu | 630-844-4209
aurora.edu/pathways



Aurora University is a four-year, private, nonprofit, accredited higher education institution offering students an excellent education. We were [founded in 1893](#) in Mendota, Illinois, as a seminary college, before moving to Aurora in 1912.

Our main campus is in Aurora, the second largest city in Illinois, and located approximately 45 miles from Chicago. We also have campuses in Woodstock, Illinois, and Williams Bay, Wisconsin. AU offers:

- Residential, commuter, full-time, and part-time programs.
- [Undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees](#), as well as certificates and endorsements.
- [Plus One graduate programs](#), which allow students to earn a master's degree in just one year.



At a glance, Aurora University offers the following:

-  **50+** majors and minors
-  **6** residence halls
-  **24** NCAA Division III teams
-  **98%** of students receive financial assistance
-  **40%** of undergraduate students transfer to AU
-  **60+** student organizations and clubs

Helpful links:

[Campus map](#)

[2021 Viewbook](#)

[Majors and Minors](#)

[Admission](#)

[Financial Aid](#)

[Housing and Residence Life](#)

[Academic Resources](#)

[Student Organizations](#)

[College Programs for Students with Autism | Pathways at AU](#)



Please contact Brianne Jonathan at bjonathan@aurora.edu if you have any questions!