



# A College Training: Faculty of Autistic Students Train Together

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# Special thanks to:



Laura Klinger



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**TEACCH**  
Autism Program  
*Services Across the Lifespan*



# Special thanks to:

The autistic students, parents, and community college instructors who completed a 1-hour interview and shared their experiences regarding community college instruction. Without them, this work would not be possible.





# A note about terminology

# Presentation Overview



Overview



Ongoing Project



Q & A

# Overview



# Kate



IEP throughout school

Received 1:1 support throughout high school

School providers were unaware of how to support her; tended to give her A's regardless of the work



Received accommodations through the Disability Services Offices

Expressed the expectation that she would receive a particular grade regardless of her work

Unable to complete her 10-hour internship to receive her degree

# Transition to Adulthood

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Transition services are expected to begin when a student turns 16 years of age



Students exit high school and there are few available supports

Period of  
'disengagement'



Poor outcomes for autistic people in employment, education, living arrangements, etc.



# Postsecondary Education

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Klein, LaPoint, & Klinger, in press



Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)  
are witnessing an increase in  
enrollment for autistic students.

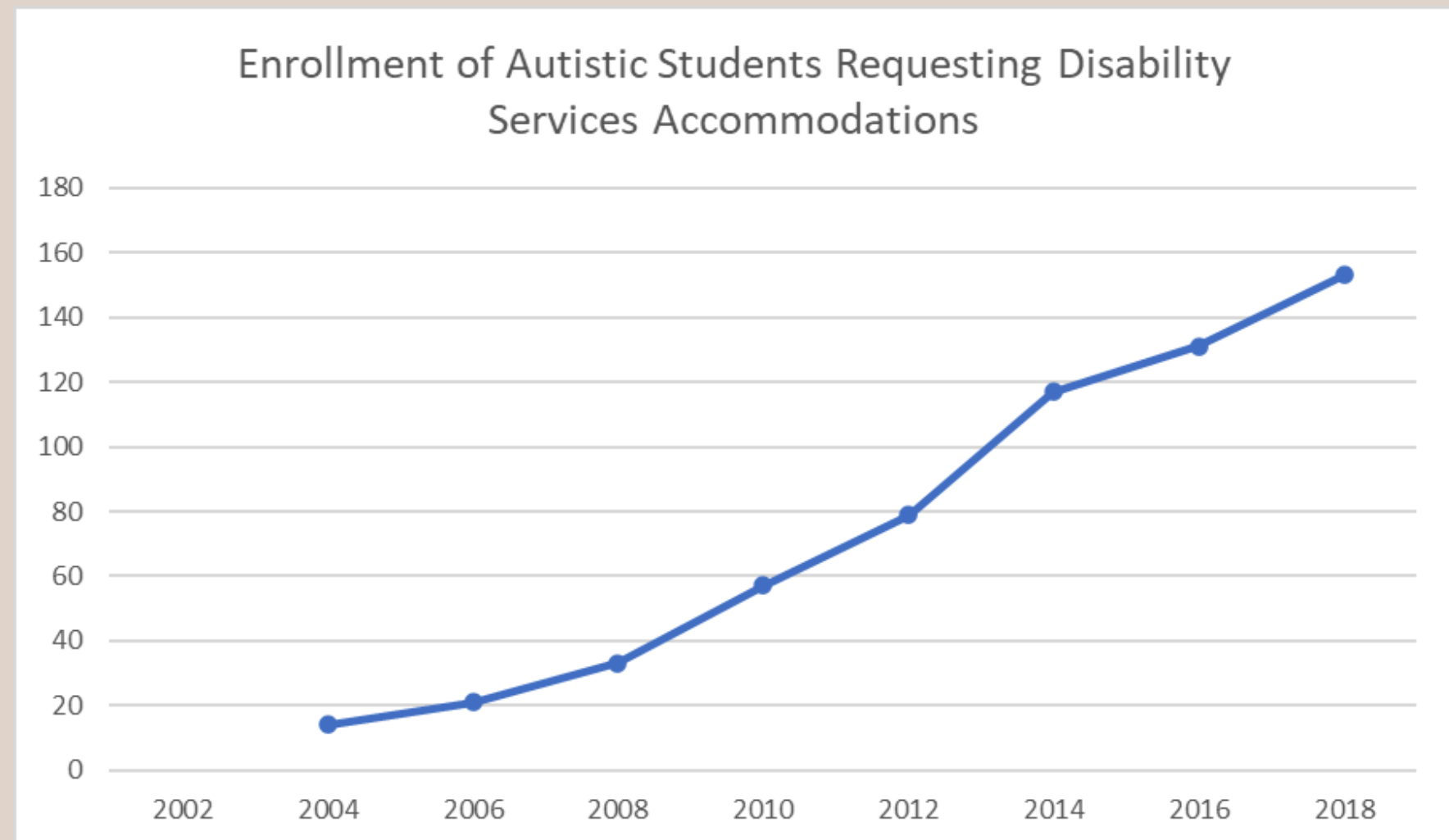
# Postsecondary Education

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Klein, LaPoint, & Klinger, in press



Community colleges are witnessing the greatest shift  
(Roux et al., 2015)



Note. A large community college in the Southeastern region of the United States reported a 2467% increase in enrollment of autistic students requesting disability services accommodations between 2003 and 2019.

# Postsecondary Education

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Klein, LaPoint, & Klinger, in press



Social interactions

Byrne, 2022; Jansen et al., 2017;  
Van Hees et al., 2015)



Executive functioning

Cai & Richdale, 2016; Dymond et  
al., 2017; Jansen et al., 2017; Van  
Hees et al., 2015



Mental and physical health

Fernandes et al., 2021; Gurbuz et  
al., 2019



Drop out

Cage & Howes, 2020; Glennon,  
2001; VanBergeik et al., 2008

# Postsecondary Education

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Uncertainty about  
supporting autistic students

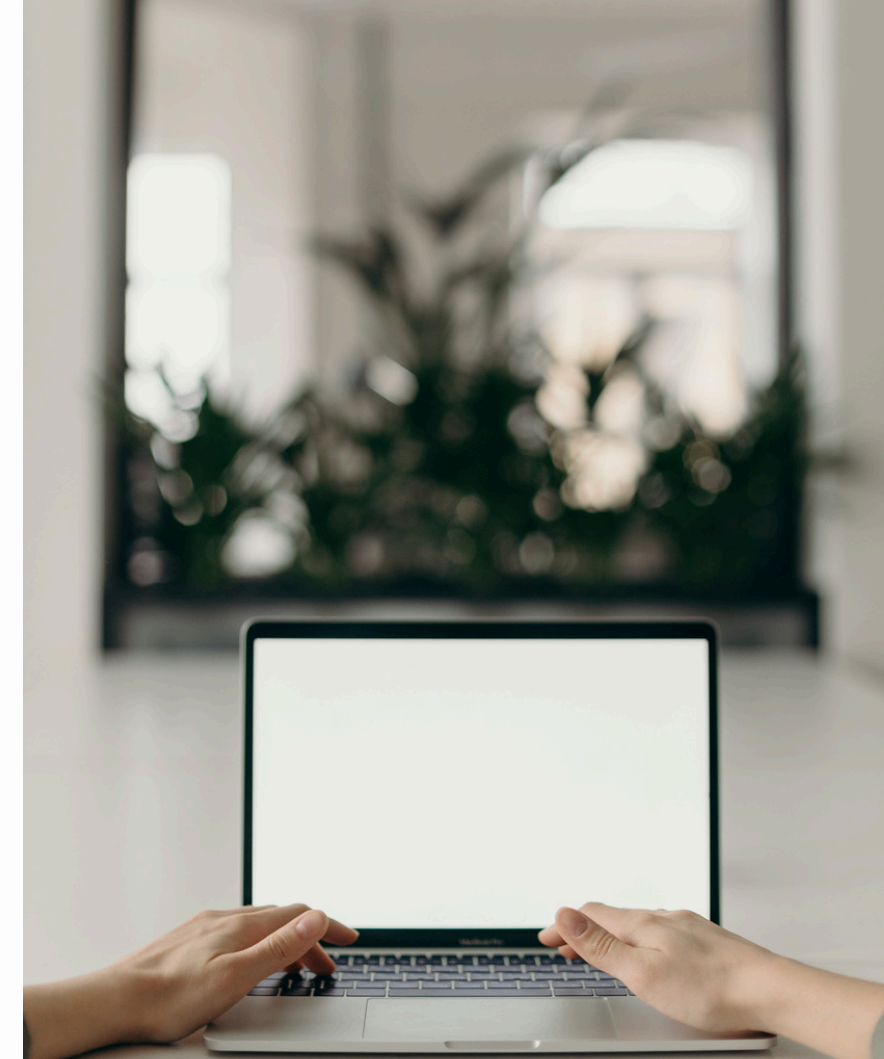
Faculty and staff members report a  
*lack of knowledge*  
about autistic students and being ill-equipped  
to support autistic students within this context.



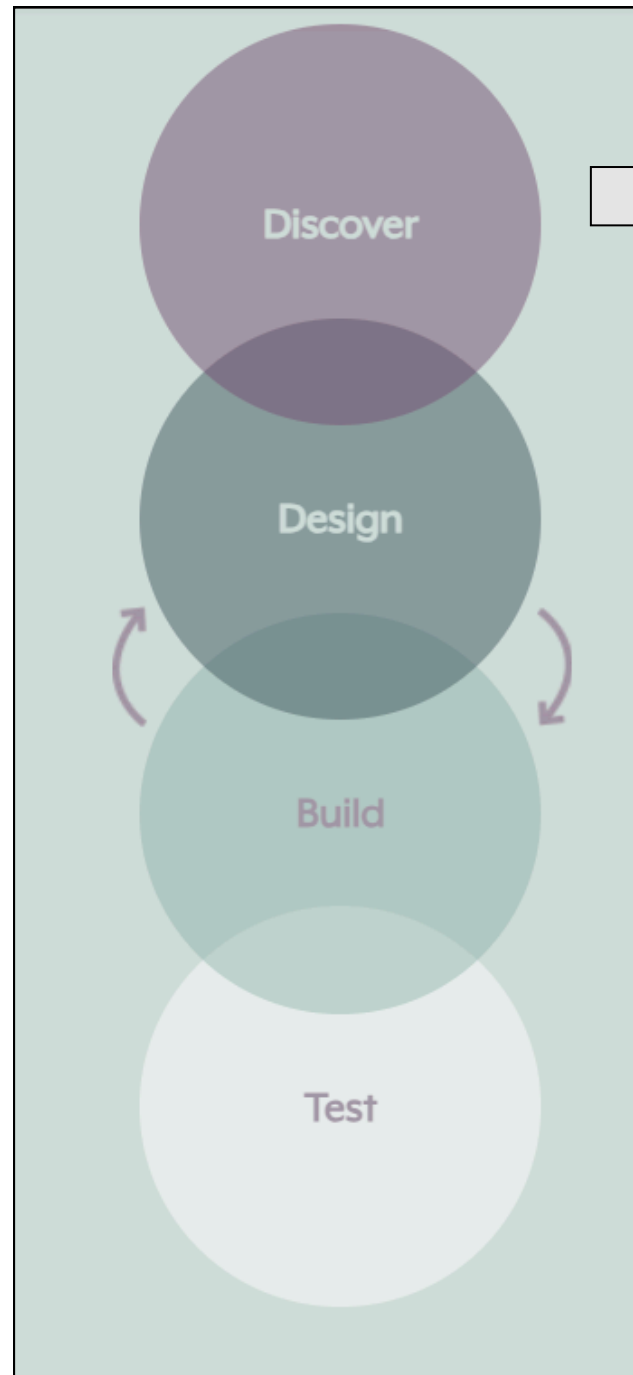
# ACT FASTT: A Virtual Toolkit to Support College Instructors of Autistic Students

PI: Shannon Crowley LaPoint

Co-Is: Laura Klinger, Glenna Osborne



# Methods



## Participants (n = 45)

Autistic adults who are currently enrolled in community college or attended community college in NC within the past year

Parents of autistic adults

Community college instructors

## Semi-structured Interviews

Experiences (both positive and negative) of autistic students in the classroom

Understand the training needs of community college instructors

# Thematic Analysis

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1) Familiarizing yourself with your data

2) Generating initial codes from the data

3) Searching for broader themes

4) Reviewing themes

5) Defining and naming themes

6) Producing the report

# Results

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## Setting Expectations and Transparency

### Setting the stage

“I think clear expectations and structure are helpful for me. Um. And outlining that in in the in the beginning of the course” (160304)

“Please let your students know they need the books” (160301)



# Results

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## Setting Expectations and Transparency

### **Structured assignments**

“Um, and then others are a bit more vague and just say tell us about yourself. Which **I don't think the vagueness is very helpful...**” (160305)

“I remember in acting class I once said I have a house. Um, because - it's hard to come up with - **I didn't know what to say.**”

(160304)

# Results

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Setting Expectations and Transparency

## **Intentionality with group work**

“If you are going to do a group assignment, make sure it **makes sense to do a group assignment**” (160301)

# Results

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## Bi-Directional Interactions

### **Approachability of instructors**

“And. I don't know. I think it's just a preference for me because I always prefer when teachers seem human and approachable” (160304)

# Results

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## Bi-Directional Interactions

### **Facilitating check-ins when concerns arise**

"She's, you know, she's checked up on me like, especially when I was moving from [Town], she was making sure, hey, you know, is everything OK because you haven't been in my class in a couple of weeks" (160301)

# Results

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## *Familiarization with Student Needs*

### **Have humility and seek clarification**

“If the instructor that does not have any experience with autism or people with that. Also ask them like hey, let me know if you need help or tell me what you need so I can help you graduate and help you learn and so that you can have a great time and also receive this” (160306)

# Results

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## *Familiarization with Student Needs*

### **Create space for additional processing time**

"Give us time to process this as well because he went over chapter after chapter after chapter like in 30 seconds. Like, talks about the cells. Next, talks about body parts, all all in one day..." (160306)

# Results

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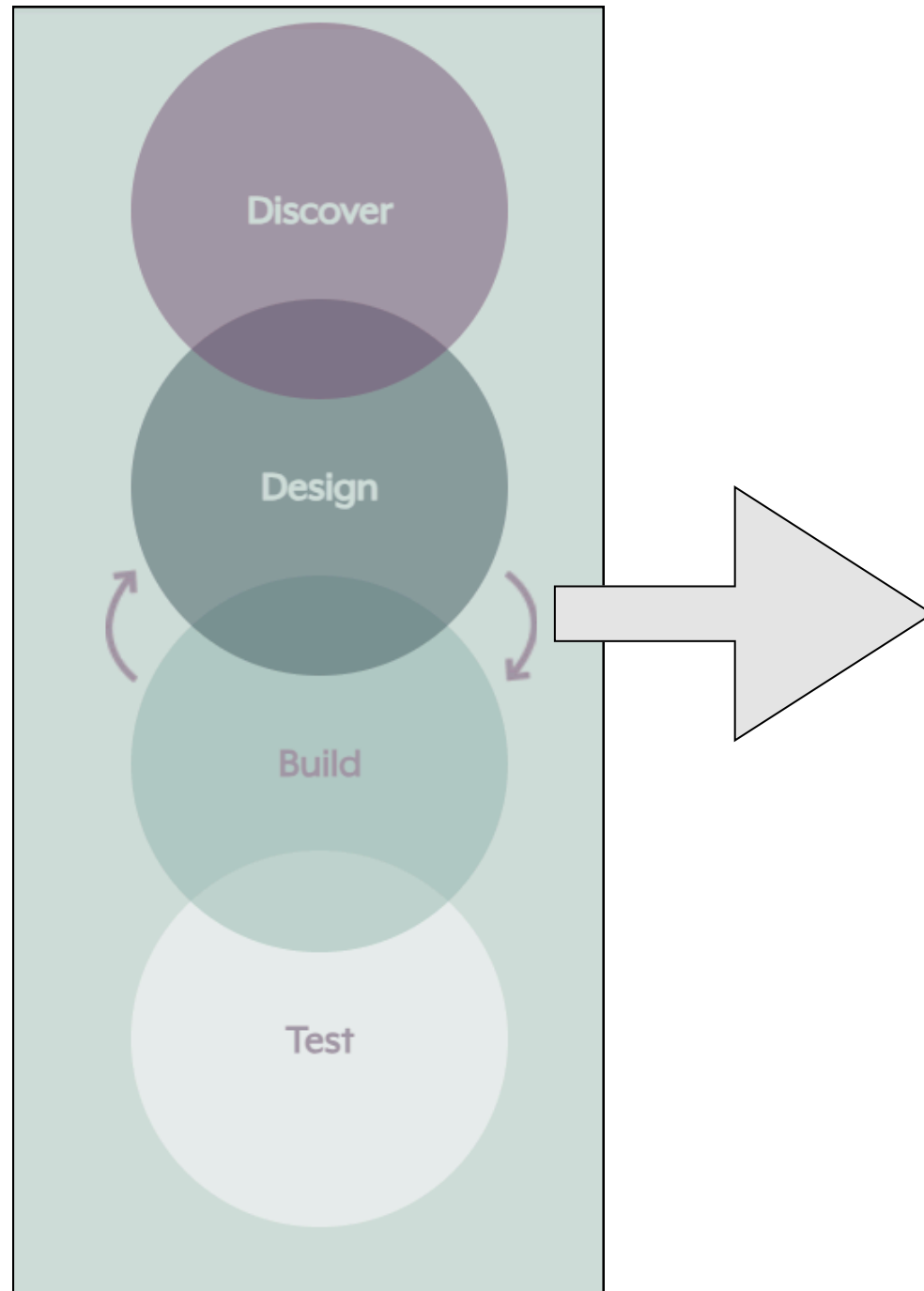
## *Familiarization with Student Needs*

### **Detrimental impacts of 'forgetting' accommodations**

"...the system only gave me an hour instead of an hour and a half. Uh, and we couldn't really like get in touch with my teacher, uh, quickly enough to remedy that" (160304)

"...Sometimes they do forget, but it's on accident more or less." (160306)

# Methods



## Proposed Toolkit Content

Understanding the strengths and challenges of autistic college students

Disability Support Office communication & accommodations

Structuring courses to support the executive functioning needs of autistic students

Arranging the classroom to meet autistic students' sensory needs

Supporting autistic students' social interaction in the classroom

Coping strategies & supporting autistic students in crisis



# Results

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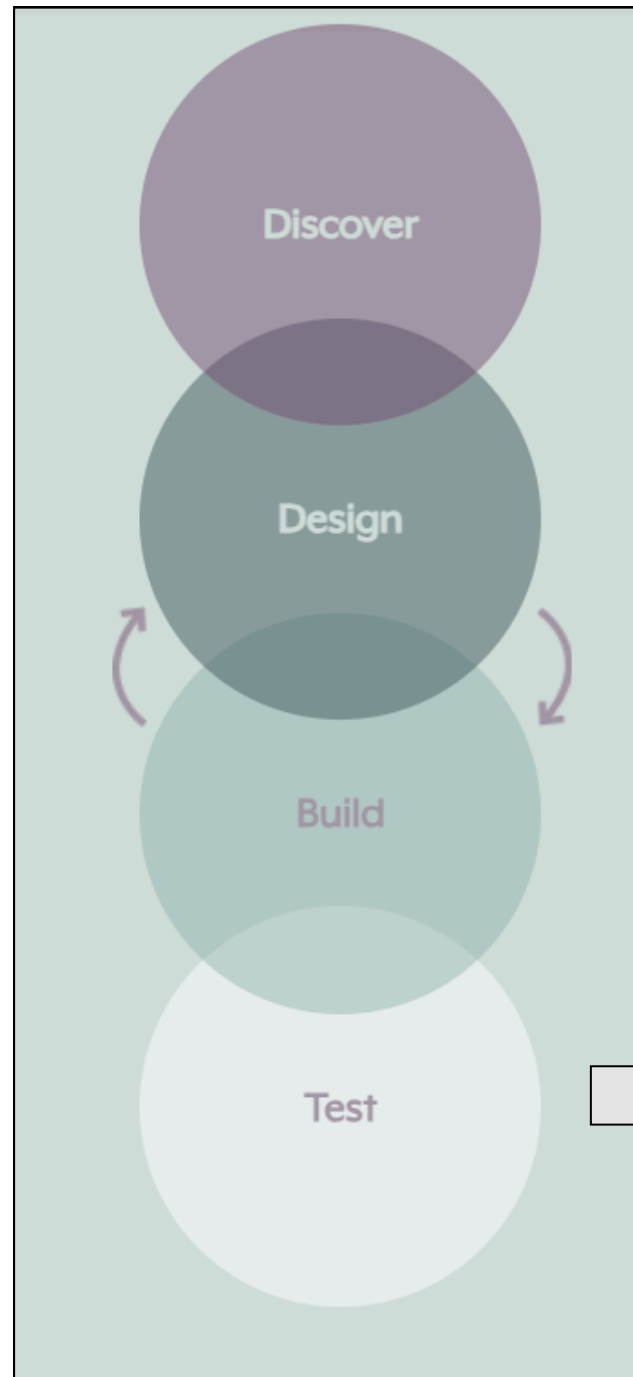
## Modifications to Toolkit Content

“That there isn't really a set standard. It's legitimately a spectrum and demystifying it. And just acknowledging that this isn't going to be a catch all case will really help” (160314)

“  
IF YOU'VE MET ONE  
PERSON WITH  
AUTISM, YOU'VE  
MET ONE PERSON  
WITH AUTISM.  
”

*Dr. Stephen Shore*

“It looks different and everybody's not going to have the same thing. And it just goes back to understanding what it can look like for one, it's not going to look like for the other.” (160203)



**Open Trial**



**Baseline assessments**

Online toolkit

Post-assessments

# Results

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*Disability Support Office*

## **Alignment between accommodations and needs**

“Um, I am technically getting the thing where you can like record in class  
but I don't use that.” (160301)

# Vision

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**Create a  
comprehensive  
postsecondary  
experience for  
autistic people.**



# Vision

**Educate faculty & staff on best practices for supporting autistic people.**



**Any Questions?**



**Thank You!**