

BRAD MCGARRY CENTER FOR NEURODIVERSITY



At Mercyhurst University we have nearly 40 years of supporting students who learn differently. We are known internationally for our success in supporting neurodivergent students through their college journey, and we encourage you to read more in this brochure about the many options available through our Brad McGarry Center for Neurodiversity.

This Center seeks to grow and expand the offerings available for degree-seeking neurodivergent students. We are in our 17th year of the Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM), and in response to demand from students and their families, our programming is expanding to welcome a broader neurodivergent community. We seek to grow in a thoughtful way – we welcome the chance to chat with students and families about whether our programming may be a good fit your educational journey.

We are here to help – please reach out to get started!

Ryan Palm '07

Executive Director

Brad McGarry Center for Neurodiversity

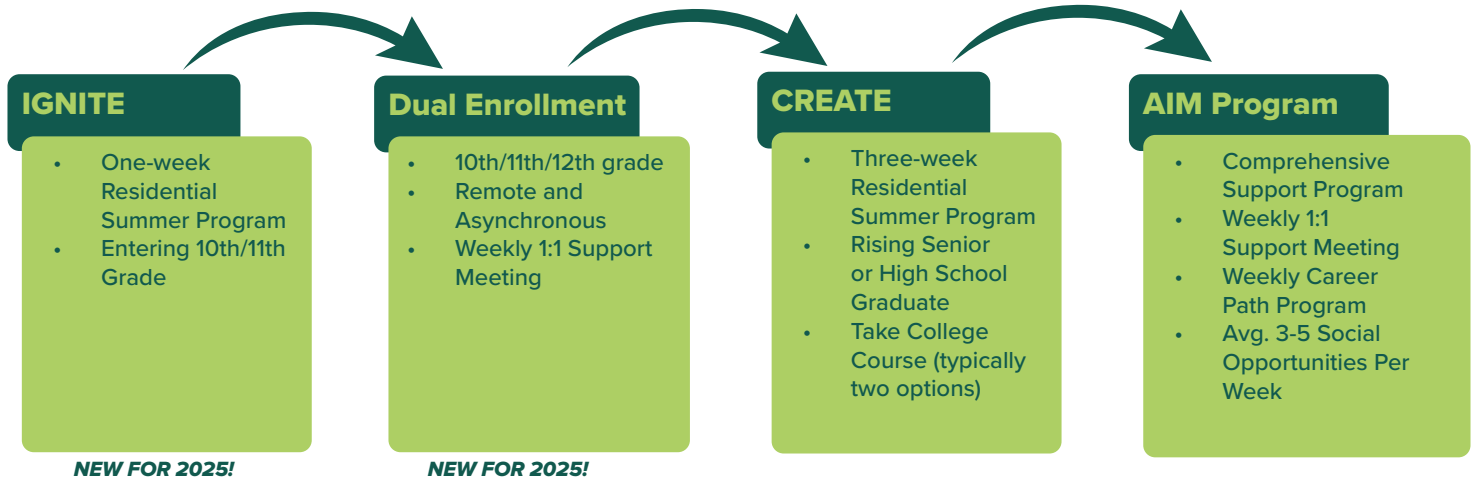
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Pathway to College



Through our Brad McGarry Center for Neurodiversity, we support students starting in their high school years with hopes of building skills, abilities, and confidence to help in the transition to college. Here's a quick overview of our programs, each explained in additional detail on the following page. You can enter this pathway at any point – for example students are not required to have completed a summer program or dual enrollment to apply for AIM. Our programming is intended for students whose ultimate goal is to seek a college degree, and we are here to support each student's unique journey.



Programming Support Pillars

The Center for Neurodiversity strives to support students in all areas of the college experience. The following list represents some of the supports and programming that are provided for students. All these activities are available for students in the fee-based Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM), and many are presented in a modified format for dual enrollment and summer programs to simulate the support experience.



Weekly 1:1 Meetings with Student Support Coordinator



Opportunities for single bedroom accommodation in housing supported by sensory lounges, study spaces, and more.



Weekly Career Path sessions focused on preparing students for life after college with emphasis on resumes, networking, and interviewing skills.



Variety of social engagement opportunities designed for neurodivergent students to include meal gatherings, cooking classes, fitness classes, and more.



AIM Staff collaborate closely with campus partners such as Counseling Center, Dining Services, Learning Support Services, Faculty, and Career Development among others.



Wide variety of off-campus trips to include local ComiCon, social activities, vocational trips to major metro areas, and visits to local/regional prospective employers.

Summer Programs



The Brad McGarry Center for Neurodiversity offers two summer programs for neurodivergent students. Each program requires an application and applications are reviewed in the order they are received. These programs are space limited – apply as early as possible!

IGNITE

- One-week residential program
- Simulated college classes
- Rising high school sophomores and juniors
- College 101 sessions
- Social activities
- All-inclusive cost of \$1,250 per student

CREATE

- Three-week residential program
- Students take three-credit college course
- Rising high school seniors and graduates
- College 101 sessions
- Social activities and local trips
- Vocational trip to local employer
- All-inclusive cost of \$5,200 per student

For more information about summer programs, please visit <https://mhur.st/neuro-summer>

Dual Enrollment Programing

The Brad McGarry Center for Neurodiversity begins its second year of facilitating dual enrollment programming for neurodivergent high school students. Our dual enrollment model includes several courses offered for the fall and spring semester, mirroring the Mercyhurst University academic calendar. The courses are taught by Mercyhurst faculty members who are experienced teaching neurodivergent students. The courses are asynchronous and remote – providing ultimate flexibility for students. There is no on campus presence required. Some highlights include:

- Small class size fostering a sense of community and connectivity with the professor.
- Weekly 1:1 support meeting with assigned student support coordinator to talk about key planning and executive functioning strategies helpful in the course and life overall.
- Invitation to special “College Preparedness” virtual programming offered by Center for Neurodiversity staff.
- Opportunities to visit Mercyhurst campus and meet course professor and support staff, tour campus, and learn more about opportunities for neurodivergent students.



Contact Ryan Palm at rpalm@mercyhurst.edu for the latest updates on dual enrollment offerings.

Autism Initiative at Mercyhurst (AIM)

The Center for Neurodiversity's signature initiative, the AIM program begins its 17th year in fall 2025. The AIM Program provides robust support for neurodivergent students enrolled at Mercyhurst University. There are over 60 students in the AIM program, providing a strong community to help first-year students in the transition to college.

You've found your place. Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, our program is expanding to welcome a broader neurodivergent community. An autism diagnosis is no longer required for our AIM program. We're committed to helping you thrive on campus and look forward to welcoming you as part of our Mercyhurst family.



“There is a strong sense of community among AIM students. We enjoy attending events together, playing video games, and more.”

– AIM student

LEARN MORE AND APPLY



For more information about our programming:

- All Center for Neurodiversity Programming: <http://www.mhur.st/neurodiversity>
- Virtual Information Sessions: <http://www.mhur.st/aim-info>
- Email Us: aim@mercyhurst.edu
- Phone: 814-824-2222