

What are Executive Functions?

Executive functions (EFs) are cognitive processes involved in goal-directed behavior. They help us regulate our thoughts, feelings and behaviors and manage our time and resources as we undertake and complete tasks. A student's ability to activate and apply EFs such as attention, judgment, planning, and behavioral regulation can have long-term implications for academic and personal success.

The following is a list of EFs:

- Organization skills
- Getting started with tasks
- Planning/setting priorities
- Working memory
- Self-monitoring
- Inhibition/impulse control
- Flexibility/shifting tasks
- Emotional control

Program Overview

ASU is pleased to announce a new student support program called "As-U-R," a service geared toward students with executive functioning challenges (EFC). EFC is basically defined by chronic difficulties in organization, planning, and decision-making, and can make success in college-level academics much more difficult. Some college students with EFC may have previously been assessed for or even diagnosed with ADHD or a learning disorder, but others



may not have been provided such psychoeducational services in the past despite struggling with such tasks. As-U-R provides a package of comprehensive skill-building, advisement, and service coordination geared towards addressing the symptoms of EFC.

Services Provided

- Transition assistance for incoming as well as graduating students
- Comprehensive psycho-educational assessment and coordination of individualized indicated services
- Learning skills services tailored to the needs of postsecondary education
- Tutoring and academic support
- Academic coaching and collegiate mentoring
- Drop-in assistance and dedicated quiet study rooms at As-U-R Study Central
- Specific training to address executive functioning challenges
- Access to assistive technology and supports



What do EFCs look like?

Executive functions vary considerably from person to person, and each person has relative strengths and weaknesses. Individuals considered to have EFCs are those who demonstrate a pattern of difficulty with more than one of the following processes:

- **Inhibition/impulse control** – The ability to stop one's own behavior and think before acting. For example, the student might agree to join friends for a social activity without first checking to see if he or she has homework or studying that must be completed.
- **Flexibility/shifting tasks** – The ability to change strategies or revise plans when conditions change. The student might have difficulty adjusting if the instructor changes from a lecture to group work and back to a lecture during a class session.
- **Emotional control** – The ability to manage feelings or emotional responses by considering goals or thinking rationally about the feelings. In class, the student might voice anger over a low grade or become argumentative in defending a strongly held opinion, which could cause conflicts with classmates and professors.
- **Working memory** – The ability to store information briefly in mind and use it to complete a task. Students might have difficulty listening to lectures and taking notes at the same time.
- **Task initiation/getting started** – The ability to recognize when it is time to get started on something and to begin without procrastinating. The student might have difficulty focusing on and starting a long-term assignment.
- **Self-monitoring** – The ability to monitor and evaluate one's performance and recognize the need for change. A student might not monitor the effectiveness of his or her study strategies and so might not abandon or revise strategies that have failed in the past.



- **Planning/organization/setting priorities** – The ability to create steps to reach a current or future goal and to make decisions about what to focus on. The student might not know when to start a project that is assigned well in advance of the due date and might have trouble understanding how to break assignments down into manageable steps.
- **Organization of materials/tracking systems** – The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials. The student might have difficulty keeping up with syllabi, assignments, and important course-related materials.

Applications for prospective ASU students will be accepted starting in February for the following academic year.

If you or a student you know might benefit from this program, see the College STAR As-U-R website for more detail and application procedures: <http://collegestar.appstate.edu/student-support>

If you have additional questions about the program or admission process, refer to our main website at <http://collegestar.appstate.edu> or email: asur@appstate.edu

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