

Inclusivity Inside the Classroom: Implementing Universal Design Techniques for Teaching & Learning

Maria Guadagnoli and Nancy La Monica (Seneca)

This facilitated discussion/ panel will explore inclusivity inside the classroom with a focus on Universal Design Learning (UDL) principles with hybrid and online learning environments. While the focus will be on hybrid and online learning environments, these tools and techniques can also be applied to in-class learning. The purpose of the discussion/ panel is to demystify some of the myths professors and instructors have around providing accommodations within the classroom and offer strategies that are innovative and revolutionary within the current teaching models and paradigms. The focus will be on expression, engagement and representation that take into consideration collaboration, access and flexibility. The why, what and how of learning will be explored. For example, how do we find different ways of teaching and learning with students that reaches all learners without the need to request accommodations? This also works for Covid-19 pandemic times as most students have to manage the innuendos of work, family responsibilities and online learning. Creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive environment will allow for the breakdown of systemic barriers that segregate the teacher and the learner. To conclude, the panellists will provide examples that demonstrate an out-of-the-box thinking approach that begins to break down the barriers to inclusion.

Maria Guadagnoli is a Doctoral Candidate in the field of Critical Disability Studies, specializing in pain and disability. Maria has over 16 years of experience teaching and providing remedial services to post-secondary students with and without disabilities at the college and university levels. During this time, she developed multiple teaching tools and techniques as well as compiled useful resources that have assisted and even enhanced her students' writing skills and assisted them in becoming highly successful in their respective fields. Many of these students have gone on to pursue specialized and advanced programs, such as Social Work, Psychology, Business, Education, Nursing and Law. Maria has also presented these teaching tools and techniques as well as various topics related to disability, health and the importance of disability narratives at multiple national and international conferences. Maria currently teaches Writing Strategies, through the School of English and Liberal Studies, at Seneca College.

Nancy La Monica completed her Ph.D. in Human Geography at McMaster University. In her doctoral research, she used autoethnography to explore the experience of navigating the emotional geographic space of graduate school for non-visible disabled students with learning disabilities and mental health disabilities. An integral part of her work includes exploring the emotional work and emotional labour that students do as they contend with processes of disablement in the academy. Nancy plans to continue this work to include disabled faculty members. She has presented at multiple national

and international conferences on the topics of disability, access, accommodation and autoethnography. Currently, she develops and teaches Universal Design and Access, Disability Access: Reimagining Access and Inclusion, and is working on her third course on Lived Experiences of Disability and Ableism, in the School of English and Liberal Studies, at Seneca College.