

Accessibility in the Classroom | Text Transcript | The Hub for Teaching & Learning Excellence

This is a text transcript for the recorded event “Accessibility in the Classroom” presented by the Hub for Teaching & Learning Excellence in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences (CSAHS). The event was recorded on September 27, 2018.

Transcript:

Byron Sheldrick:

As the last few people are getting some nourishment, I'd li-- My name's Byron Sheldrick, and I'm the Associate Dean Academic for the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences and I'd really like to welcome you all here to this workshop on accessibility in the classroom.

This is the first event sponsored by a new entity in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences called the Hub for Teaching & Learning Excellence. This is a new initiative, of the college, and it was launched as part of a, our strategic plan for the college.

And it's kind of a, it's hard to describe in some ways, it's kind of a physical and a virtual entity that is trying to create a community of practice around teaching and learning excellence within the college.

Part of that mandate is to host events like this, where we can bring people together from across the college, but also from across the university, to talk about teaching and learning, talk about some of our practices, some of our experiences, and to learn from each other as we develop our approaches to teaching and learning.

And so I'm really, really pleased to see such a great turnout, and really pleased to welcome you all here. We hope to have four, at least four of these sorts of events over the academic year, and there are a variety of other initiatives that the Hub is planning to sponsor.

And I'd like to say, the work of the Hub is also supported by a great advisory group that is made up of faculty, staff and students in the college, and I see several of those people here. I'll formally thank them at the end for their work.

But, I think we should get on with the business of today and our panel discussion, so I'd really like to welcome all three of our participants, Barry Praamsma-Townshend, the Manager of Accessibility Services in Student Wellness, Deborah Stienstra, who is a faculty member in Political Science, and I should add an old, old friend of mine.

Deborah Stienstra:

Old--A long time--

Byron Sheldrick:

A long time friend. Not an old, old friend. I'm the one who got older, Deborah, you stayed the same.

Deborah Stienstra:

Good try.

Byron Sheldrick:

And Deborah and I actually worked together at the Univer-- We were graduate students together, and then we worked together at the University of Winnipeg, where we both had our first academic positions. And Marinette Fargo who works in Computing & Communication Services around issues of digital accessibility.

So it's great to have three panelists here who are coming at things from very different ways. I should've added too, that Deborah, is a long-time expert in academic and scholar and practitioner; an advocate around disability issues and disability rights and is now the Director of The Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being on campus.

So I forgot, I got nostalgic and I forgot those details. So, I'm gonna ask each of our panelists to maybe speak for about five to 10 minutes on the theme: accessibility in the classroom, and then hopefully be able to open it up to questions and conversation because that's as important, a very important element of this.

So, I think we'll just go in the order of the program. So, Barry.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

Sure, maybe I'll start by just acknowledging that when we talk-- So my area, Accessibility Services, our primary responsibility is helping work out accommodations for students, so when they encounter a barrier, how are we gonna help them to have an equitable experience.

And I wanted to sort of start out by acknowledging that accommodations can feel tiresome sometimes, it can feel like a lot of extra work, and that it's important to be, I think, thoughtful about the fact that, as instructors, as faculty members, you have your own mental health, you have your own lives, some of you experience disabilities yourselves, and there can be pressure there as well.

And so, while my primary mandate is not Universal Design-- I'm a big advocate for this idea of Universal Design, which is the idea of, really of creating-- How do we create an inclusive learning environment right from the very beginning?

How do we think, before the semester begins, about a course, in order to create an inclusive environment for all kinds of different abilities?

So, I'm prefacing it by saying it's not my primary mandate but I think about it a lot. Some examples of things that either we see or we've heard people try, or that are important from our perspective; one of them is having a really great course outline that talks about what are the intended learning outcomes of the course.

I know that sometimes that sounds like I've drunk the Kool-Aid because learning outcomes is sort of a buzz concept at this point, but it really is so helpful for my area and for students with disabilities, so that we know right from the very beginning of the semester what's gonna be expected in this course, and where my student encounters some difficulties and how do we think, need to think about this student's abilities in the context of this course.

It's really helpful to have highlighted in there, what are the essential requirements. What are the things that, if you can't do them, it is not Chemistry anymore, if you don't understand-- If you're not engaged this part of the course. It is not Philosophy anymore if you're not engaged in this part of the course.

That also helps us to know, like, We're, we're never gonna be able to set this aside, and it comes up a lot around group participation.

If you're in a fourth year seminar class, and the whole course, everything that's gonna happen in this course is based around conversation that we're having as a group, it's really important for me to know that that is like, really core to how this class takes place.

Not just me, but also for students so they can anticipate themselves. We see profs, so, one of the great things that profs do sometimes, when they're lecturing, and I try to do this when I actually have a PowerPoint presentation or something on the screen, is describe the visual that you've put up on the screen so if a student has low vision, or even if it's just an information processing related issue, they can follow along with what's happening.

Occasionally, we have courses where there's a lot of content to cover, and it's just graph, after graph, after graph, and it happens very, very quickly, and so you have a hard time following. If you take the time to describe what you've put up on the screen, it forces you to slow down your pacing, just enough to make sure that people are able to follow along.

We, in the classroom, we get lots of conversation about group work, and how do we accommodate students, either students who have medical conditions that mean that they're gonna, it's gonna result in absences, or, maybe it's an anxiety issue or mental health issue that's gonna interfere with the way that they participate.

We could spend a whole day talking about that, I will say, maybe one of the, the key ideas there is, if you have a course that, where group work is essential component of the course, it's probably really important to teach students the group work skills, involved with knowing.

What does a good group look like, what do you do if the group work, as a group, not just for students with disabilities, but for all students, what happens if, the group dynamics don't work so well? How are you gonna get help? How are you gonna learn how to manage the dynamics better? In terms of presentations, it comes up a lot.

So if you're, you know, I think most students, at some point, in the course of their degree, need to do a presentation or need to have those oral communication skills. That's part of what a university degree involves.

But, over the course of that program, is there a bit of scaffolding so that students are gradually learning these skills and getting better over time? So what we do see is, is sometimes particularly in intro level courses, first/second year courses, maybe for a student who has a specific disability, there's alternatives, maybe they create a presentation where they're going to video record the presentation; that's what's gonna be played for the class.

So they've still, they're still learning how to verbally articulate themselves, they're still presenting information, they're still present, maybe they answer questions based on the presentation afterwards, but the core content is a little bit more relaxed 'cause they're presenting it on their own time.

Sometimes they just present to a faculty member or TA. Sometimes you break up the group into small groups so it's not as daunting. If you're really new to public speaking, a large group can be really daunting.

I'll highlight maybe two other things. One of them is Universal Design for exams. So we do have a number of profs on campus who, have used, the idea of giving, "Let's give everybody time and a half," for example. "Everyone who's writing this exam, "we'll give them all time and a half."

And that means that if all that you need is a little bit of extra time because you're using assistive tacker, because you have an information processing related disability, that you, you don't need to write separately from the rest of the class.

You don't have to go to the Exam Centre, you don't have to be treated differently, you don't have to be centered out, you don't even have to disclose that you have a disability, you could just write with everybody else. That really makes sense in some courses, it makes a lot of sense particularly if there's lots of multiple, if it's multiple choice-based exam.

Sometimes it's a little bit harder if it's a, to figure out how that's gonna work with an essay-based course. We've had profs using this approach for online quizzes for quite a long time, and then a couple years ago, we started moving into midterms where you have a little more discretion around the space.

We've had a harder time figuring out how that works in finals because finals are so heavily structured. If you give everyone time and a half, it creates overlap with other courses, but we did pilot it with some courses last winter, we got a couple courses where we're doing it again, this semester, and, it does allow students to participate a little bit better.

And then the last thing is, I think profs who invite students, to let students know right from the very beginning, you know, "I want to be an approachable person, I want you to know that you can come and talk to me if you have a concern about the course. Here's a good way of reaching me. Know that you don't have to come and talk to me if you don't feel comfortable, you can also go to Student Accessibility Services."

But just letting, making it known, not just putting it in a course outline and hoping that they read the course outline, 'cause, right, sometimes those are really dense. But knowing that students, being clear to students that you're an approachable person.

And the last piece of that is, if a student approaches you with an accommodation request that is unusual, complex, needs some real thought or consideration, be mindful that they might be asking other instructors for the same accommodation, and it might be fine in your course, and a very similar course it might not be okay because there's a subtle difference the student doesn't recognize the difference, but you and your colleagues will see the difference.

And are you setting up your colleagues for, either, you're the really difficult prof because you say no, or you're the really easy going prof who makes it difficult for others 'cause you've said yes when others would say no.

And the best way to avoid that is, anything that's unusual like that, give us a call so that we can have a conversation 'cause often we have, like the birds-eye view, of like, what's going on with other instructors and how other courses are accommodating people.

Byron Sheldrick:

Great, awesome, thank you. Deborah.

Deborah Sheldrick:

Great, well thanks. I'm really glad to be here. I brought my bear. Bet you're all wondering why I brought a bear. We're gonna wait, this is my teaser.

So I actually wanna change the title of this session to inclusion and accessibility in the classroom because I think that part of my goal, as a professor, is to minimize the number of accommodation requests you get through practices like Universal Design and creating community in the classroom.

So those are, I believe, just really good teaching practices. So, if you wanna include, and be accessible, be a good teacher. So what does that mean? It means, meeting the students where they're at. It also means, ensuring that everyone in the classroom can learn.

And I wanna point out a couple of things that we as professors do, that we may not be aware of, that create barriers for that notion of inclusion and accessibility.

First of all, we often assume that there's only one or maybe two senses that people learn through. So I am assuming here, that you all learn aurally; you learn by listening, because that's the only one of your senses that I'm engaging you with.

In a classroom setting, I would engage at least two senses. I would engage, at minimum, your aural listening, and my speaking, and your visual processing, because many students are learning through visual and other means. There's aural, verbal, logical, physical, solitary and social ways of learning.

My daughter is a graduate student right now, and over her undergraduate and graduate career, I've had these, she's in Ottawa, long and extended conversations with her. Why is that? Because my daughter learns by talking things out. She doesn't learn by hearing, or by reading.

She learns by engaging with someone else to think through her ideas. I am a learner who learns physically. And as a Political Science student, it was really problematic. Political Science is largely lectures and seminars. This is where bear comes in.

I have a colleague who was teaching, not in, she was a social work professor. And she was teaching an anti-oppression workshop about how people experience oppression, and she took her stuffy, and brought it to the workshop, and said, "Imagine how this stuffy feels."

So, you're this stuffy, or, you know, connect with this stuffy. Now when you're oppressed, this is how people feel. They feel like they're constantly being beaten on, or told they're not enough, or told they don't fit, or whatever way. Well what happens when you're actually allowed to do what you can do, well, you open up.

So the images that she shared were closing the animal up, being scrunched, opening it up. Those were images that really worked effectively for me. You know, it's been seven or eight years since I saw her do this, and I still know that it's an effective way. And I'll be curious at the end of the day what images you take from this.

I doubt if you'll take many of my words, but you may remember my bear. And then you may think, "Why did she bring a bear again? "Oh yeah, it was that example "of different ways of learning."

Another example, that I use often if you've heard me speak before, I would normally turn off the lights in here. When I turn off the lights, I would ask you to write your name and address on a piece of paper, and it would be a completely dark room. How many of you can write in the dark? Raise your hand.

Some of you can, okay. Well, I can tell you that, all of my blind friends can write in the dark. All of my low vision friends can write in the dark. Why is that? Well because they don't rely on the privilege, or the infrastructure, or the accommodation, of overhead lighting to process information.

I, as a sighted person, have lots of accommodations built into my everyday environment, including overhead lights. That's a privilege we don't think about as professors, when we say, "Everybody learns by me lecturing at you." Well, actually, not everybody does.

How many of us could lecture in dark classrooms? How many of us use whiteboards? Those sorts of things. So I think as a practical set of guidelines, we need to understand how we are teaching and learning ourselves in order to open our classrooms to all sorts of learners. And that's the inclusive part of it.

Accessibility's a tool to create some sorts of inclusion. Creativity and flexibility are really important. I am a firm believer, as you were saying, of building things in from the start. For me, that starts in the conception of the course. That doesn't start in the classroom.

It starts at the very beginning when I have an idea about the course. I build it in every step along the way. That means, I have all of the materials of my class available online so that people don't have to ask me for screen reading materials. So that doesn't have to be an accommodation; it's available to everybody, and there's an ease of it.

I have materials, all of the videos online. I have as many things as possible closed captioned. I don't spend extra money on it, but I go and look for closed caption and described videos so that people don't have to ask for accommodations.

I try and create community in the classroom. Not just am I open, but we're all responsible for co-learning. So I give my students a variety of assignments in a structure where they can choose what best fits their type of learning, or their schedule, or their lives. Right?

And so, it's not just about adapting to people who appear to be different, it's about creating a learning environment where we are a community, we learn from each other, we learn in ways that each of us can exhibit our strengths.

So I also find that when you create a community in your classroom, it's much easier to ask for things like volunteer note-takers to help people, because you feel like you care about everybody learning, and being strong.

So for me, those are the key pieces; building inclusion in from the beginning, being reflective ourselves about how we learn, and what ways of learning we're privileging in how we teach, being creative and flexible, and creating a community that is strengths-based.

That is, based on everybody succeeding, or succeeding to the best of their capacity in this particular moment; recognizing that we're all human beings and we all, and we're here to do something we really love. So thanks.

Byron Sheldrick:

Great, thank you, Deborah. Marinette.

Marinette Fargo:

Hi, I'm Marinette Fargo. Can you guys hear me okay? I work in Digital Accessibility Resource Centre with CCS. It's a relatively new department. I just started in July.

We have two students that work in the department as well. I have Gagandeep here today. She's a fourth year Computer, Science? Computer Science student, and I also have a student that is fourth year Psychology and our primary role is to help all of you people make your content accessible, and our campus, in general, with websites; anything that's digitally related.

So I'm really happy and impressed that we have this many people show up. I brought some handouts and some cards so you can contact us. I didn't bring nearly enough, 'cause I, I wasn't expecting this, so this is really great.

I would encourage you, if you have any questions, when you're working on your course content creation, when you're working on handouts, anything like that, if you have any questions, I would like that you would contact us because we're here to help. And I know it can be a bit daunting, and there's different information everywhere you look, but we specialize in that, and we're happy to help.

I was doing a little bit of research just trying to think about what I'd say today because I'm not a professor, or a Accessibility Specialist, but I am in the digital aspect. So, I've been in the field of accessibility pretty much all my life but I've been working in it for the last 10 years at the university.

Prior to that, I used to be in, Family and Children Services in Guelph, and I worked with hearing-impaired individuals, and I also grew up in a family where my foster parents were parents to differently-abled individuals.

So, this has definitely been a path that's followed me, and given me lots of direction, and I've seen it grow and change, and I'm really happy we're at a spot where this is being taken into consideration before we do anything, so, like Deborah said, and like Barry said, thinking about things before you start is always gonna be easier than trying to repair them after. This happens when we're doing anything that, for sure, is digital.

If we have to go back, and we have to edit things, or we have to, we post something online and then we get a request for captions, it's always gonna be more difficult, we're gonna set the student behind if we haven't thought of these things in advance.

So, keeping that in mind, to keep that at the forefront as you're planning, and use our resources, is a really great thing, I learned that, there are one in seven people, between, or after, over the age of 15 who identify as living with a disability, according to Stats Can.

So, we think about how many who are before 15, how many who have not identified as having a disability, and we know that number is gonna be much larger. And, 70% of those disabilities are invisible. So those are ones we really have to be mindful of when we're designing.

So we know we have to be aware of captioning for videos, we know we have to be aware of creating visual descriptions for those with a visual impairment, but we don't always take into consideration the more invisible disabilities, such as, an auditory processing, or an executive functioning; things where, a lot of content all at once, is very overwhelming to the individual.

It's hard for them to chunk it together, or relate it, so you may give them steps of the process that you want them to go through.

By the time they get to the process, they've forgotten all the steps. So trying to build in supports with that in mind, and breaking things down into digestible chunks is a really useful tool, and I think... Sorry, something just slipped my mind. I was thinking... It floated away. It may come back.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

It's a great thing we have a panel, we can go back to you.

Marinette Fargo:

Yeah, yeah. So, basically, that's what I have to share for all of you and do make use of our services, and please do take our contact info, and I hope to see you in the future as we are having lots of training, gonna be available on campus, so keep an eye out for that, and feel free to call with any questions.

Byron Sheldrick:

Great, that's fabulous. Just reflecting on everything the panel has said, and I'm thinking when I started as an academic where, you know, offices like Barry's existed, but really it was the student's responsibility to go seek that out, find the accommodation, request it, and then, faculty would kinda make adjustments as needed. And I think, Deborah, you're absolutely right.

This is about inclusion, so in that sense, we're at a different point, I think, now, with the work that Marinette and CCS are doing, and Barry's work, and trying to say, "How do we actually make the classroom accessible by being inclusive?" And that's a very different point, and it also requires some thinking shifts in how we do things, right?

And Deborah's point; I thought the overhead lighting was just an amazing example, so what I would consider, or might assume to be, and I'm gonna put it in air quotes, "normal" is in fact an accommodation that I get the benefit of.

And that's a different way of thinking about those things, so that's absolutely critical to sort of shift that mindset. And even this brief conversation is, means that I'm thinking about some of these things differently and so that's what we wanna do. I'm sure there are questions so I'm gonna open it up to the floor.

Questioner:

I have a two-part question. At the moment, I'm not creating all individual content, I am building on what has been provided in the past, and one of those, one of the things that has been done is that we do post

all the slides well ahead, but we take out certain keywords to encourage, to come in and participate in the class.

So the first question is, is that, does that hurt the concept of inclusion and accessibility, or does it marry the two ideals, as we were?

But the other thing is, my fear is if I get somebody who needs captioning, I'd like at some point to have some idea, can I have my presentations, my lectures video'd, so that I'm ahead of the game if somebody needs that because, if it comes as a request part way through, I don't have the time available, as a sessional, to do that, and I'd like to anticipate the need, basically, is what I'm saying. I'm asking what is available.

Deborah Stienstra:

I can't answer the, "What's available" question. I've only been here since last, well, I guess I can only now say I've been here just a year, so I should know more, but I don't. In terms of the slides, removing a word; I think it's really important to have all course materials available to all students in a way that they can use them.

When you remove the words ahead of time, in order to include, my question to you would be, "Why?" You want them to show up in class? But these are adults, and they are paying for this university education. Why not just trust that they'll show up? And if they don't, they have to live with the consequences.

That was my view of parenting, right? Consequences have to be equivalent, and to me, penalizing the students by removing the words actually tells them that you don't trust them to show up to class, whereas I'd rather say, "You're adults. This is your education to claim. If you don't claim it, you know, I can't take responsibility for, I can take responsibility for giving you the best education that you will claim, but I can't take responsibility for you showing up to class."

Questioner:

And I just want a second to speak to that 'cause that's a very good point, however, I'm teaching the 600 person introductory courses. There's a transition to becoming an adult, as there is when you are parent as well, to letting things out.

At the same time, we want to facilitate anybody who has any barriers, I also want to help them get used to being responsible for that way, and so we might move two or three, and then we negotiate with their colleagues.

Deborah Stienstra:

So rather than removing content, why not add content? That is a value-added. Some of my colleagues in Political Science, in exactly the situations that you're talking about, include little quizzes that you can only do online in class.

That, you know, they get bonus points for actually being able to say what's, and you can't, because of the way technology works, they can see the IP address, and so you can't, there's one person who can do it, and you can see that they're in class doing it. So there are ways of making it a bonus, rather than a penalty, and that's how I--

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

Can I pick up on that idea and say that part of what you can do in the classroom is that value-added of really enriching the learning. So if the content is already available, and then the purpose of coming to class is, this actually helps me to absorb and digest the material better; I think that incentivizes.

But going back to the idea with groups as well, is, and you're point about sometimes students are 17 years old and they're just moving into adulthood, sometimes you have to call attention to that learning process to them.

And so you have to explain, "Yes, the content is available to you. The purpose of coming into class isn't necessarily to give you new content, but is to help you to learn, and here's what that's gonna look like, and here's how I've structured the class to be a learning-rich environment."

And the other idea I want to pick up on that you talked about that's really important, that helps to incentivize coming to class, is that sense of community.

I think that, if people come to class and they feel like somebody else in the room is gonna know who I am, they're gonna notice when I'm not there, I'm gonna wanna see them and say, like, "How did you make out with the readings," or, "Man I really didn't get this," or, "Wow, that was really interesting."

And have, even if it's just a little bit of conversation, it's hard in 600 person class to do that, but you build in some breaks over the course of the conversation, even, you know, if you're lecturing for an hour and 20 minutes, that's a long time to lecture, so maybe you lecture in 15 minute chunks and after each 15 minutes, you take a five minute break, and that's the time to turn to the person beside you, "What did you hear, what stood out for you?"

And you start to build community that way, and that creates, I think, a richer environment and incentivizes coming to class.

Byron Sheldrick:

I've had a couple of colleagues who have tried to use engagement tools, who started, like Top Hat--

Deborah Stienstra:

That's the one.

Byron Sheldrick:

And those sorts of things. And I always, I like lecturing, so I'm actually a fan of lectures, 'cause I think I'm good at it, it's the way I've, I actually just like a captive audience. But, that's about me; I'll stop. But, you know, I always hate that moment where I stop in a lecture and I say, "Any questions?"

And I know there are questions, because I just went through the lec-- I was just talking, and I'm going, "I didn't understand what I was saying." I'm sure they didn't understand what I was saying, or that that wasn't as clear that I would've liked it to have been, or whatever, and it's silence, right?

You're just silence. And so one of my colleagues has now been using Top Hat to actually like pose questions or to actually, you know, and whatnot, and then you can see, "Oh, they actually didn't understand that," Right, because of the way they answered, but they're engaging that way. And then, he can cycle back and revisit that concept.

Now, I see that 20% of you didn't actually understand that. Let's talk about why, and what was it? And then he's getting engagement, so that's, that's a different way to do it, right, in terms of, but then those students are, hopefully, more inclined to come, if that sort of thing is happening, because they don't get those opportunities if they're just watching the video at home, or reading the course slides at home.

I also am firmly with Deborah on this, in the sense that, and I tell my students, and I've taught first year a lot, I tell them in the first class, "The best way to learn this, is to come. And if you don't, that's a really hard way to try and do this."

Now, by midterm, or some partway through, about a quarter is coming, or a third, or whatever, and I'm kinda going, "Okay you guys are the ones who wanna learn this, so I'm gonna teach it to you." And that's okay. It's hard, but, there's, We can't always be responsible for their choices too, right?

Deborah Stienstra:

And we can't always know what's going on in their lives.

Byron Sheldrick:

Yeah, that's true.

Deborah Stienstra:

I am, was struck when I came last year, and I taught a fourth year class, 25 students, not big, but you know, I created community, we talked lots about inclusion, and yet it wasn't until the end of the year that one of the students came to me and talked about her experiences being a first generation student, and the barriers that was causing.

Well, it was because she felt safe, but it took all of that time. So the inclusion bits, can be, have a much bigger benefit than simple accommodation or accessibility. Like, the tools are there to help people in lots of different situations, right?

Folks who may be single parents at 18, or things like that, may have had a really rough night, or may have a kid with illnesses, or, like there are a lots of things we just don't know about.

Byron Sheldrick:

Yeah, we got other hands, so Steffi?

Steffi Hamann:

I have a question following up on your comment, Byron, to all of you actually, maybe particularly to Barry for advice, 'cause I've been using Top Hat in class for exactly the reasons that you outlined.

You know, for those who are not familiar with it, is basically, during your lecture, you have the opportunity to put up questions on your slides and students use their electronic devices, and every student at this point has an electronic device, is what research shows, either their smartphones or their laptops, or their tablet computers, and they can answer questions, usually simple multiple choice questions throughout the lecture, and you get a really good feedback even in a classroom of 250 students, you get, sort of, responses, and I use it in three ways, specifically.

At the start of the class, I'll have three review questions about the reading for this particular class, and throughout the lecture, I break up the lecture, maybe 80 minute lecture at, you know, in chunks, to

review the stuff that is happening, you know, in the last 15, 20 minutes to make sure everybody is still with me, and I didn't lose anybody like you mentioned, and then I ask sort of opinion poll questions which is like, "What do you think right now?"

Byron Sheldrick:

Yeah, yeah.

Steffi Hamann:

Like, "Wake up, tell me what you think." And there's a 10% component of the class in terms of the grade that is allocated to this active engagement part, so if somebody decides they don't wanna do it, it doesn't fully sink their grade, and a lot of the questions are actually graded simply by participating; you don't have to get it right, you, you know, you get credit for being there and participating.

It's had really good responses, really good feedback. It did, sort of, boost a little bit of attendance. The only group of students that has approached me with, sort of, qualms about it were students registered with the SAS.

Deborah Stienstra:

Yeah.

Steffi Hamann:

Especially those that also take advantage of the note-taking services, for example, for whom this actually turned out to be an added stress--

Deborah Stienstra:

Anxiety.

Steffi Hamann:

Who can't face it, and that's something that I didn't anticipate. And so now I'm trying to deal with, you know, in the effort of making these lectures more inclusive, and sort of, getting more feedback, it seems there's a small group of students that I'm actually pushing out, and whether you guys have thought about this, have encountered it, or have any hints about--

Deborah Stienstra:

Yeah, I'll say something. Well, I wanted to say that, I physically, in my own body, learned about slower thinking and so I have chronic fatigue syndrome, and part of that is that when I'm tired, I can't process information quickly. Academic life is often very quick thinking and quick responding, and that's one of the hallmarks, right, of our sharpness.

And so I slow down my expectations for students, and I tell them, that not everybody is a quick thinker, not everybody can respond quickly to polls. So I would, in that situation, think about multiple ways in. Again, it's different things for different people.

Works for 90% of your class, or at least 90% say it works for them, or will push themselves to be able to do it, but if you gave them a choice, about doing it during class or doing it the next day, how many would choose to do it the next day? Right?

And that may be because they got really drunk the night before and their brains are kinda foggy, or it may be people with executive functioning processing issues that, for whom the expectation, or for folks with anxiety, the expectation of doing something on the spot just shuts them down.

And so, that's how I would do it; multiple ways in to get the same 10%, or, think about different things that people could do to get that 10% that don't create alternates, but make it a choice.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

I would say that there are some faculty, when they're using those types of in-class quiz type assessments that, sometimes what they'll do is they'll say, "Over the course of the semester, we're gonna do this 10 times. We're only gonna count seven of them," right, and so at least a bunch of times you can be, a doctor's appointment, you can just be hungover that day and that's fine, and I also like the idea of multiple ways of engaging, and so maybe, you know, there's an alternate form and people can choose.

You know, I'm gonna answer in the class, or I'm gonna offer some sort of a reflection that's you know, 250 words and I submit it later on. Or like, you think about some other types of activities so that there's still, you know, it's still connected to the content and what's going on in the class but there's different ways of engaging.

Byron Sheldrick:

Good questions. Over here.

Questioner:

First, I'm just gonna say, we can chat after. I use Count View instead of Top Hat, and didn't give them any credit for using it in class, and it allows for basic critic discussions using an online form in class that you, I couldn't monitor it during class, you need TA's for that, to make sure that it stays on topic.

But essentially, you can pose questions to students, students can pose questions to you, it uses only a first name, or like a safe, "I'm Top Hat guy," or whatever. So it's anonymous, I can tell who they are using the link, and I didn't give them any credit for it, but every time we had a break, for synthesis or group activity, I opened it, for open discussion questions and then I'd summarize the answers and go through them in a group, so it was anonymous.

They didn't have to speak, and I didn't give them any credit for it, and I thought nobody's gonna use this, and in fact they loved it, they mentioned it in the reviews, and lots of people asked me things they never would have had the guts to ask me, like, "Do you know how much this textbook costs? Why aren't there copies in the library?" And things that I doubt they would've said in front of 150 people, so it's--

Byron Sheldrick:

Right.

Questioner:

We can use it for free and you can still do polling. So, and you can track all the metrics of their engagement, so that's another one that might be helpful and a bit more flexible.

The question I had, was around midterm accommodations, knowing how many students, particularly even in fourth year, especially sometimes there aren't midterms, have lots of impeding demands in life,

what, are there cons from an inclusion perspective that I might not have thought of around having a CourseLink open window period where people can do it within a 24 hour period, over CourseLink, digitally, within a reasonable amount of time?

It's a pretty flexible format, but that way, they can do it when and where they need to do it, they don't have to identify as needing inclusion, they can have extra time if they need to do it in SAS because they need someone to read it to them, like, is that, is there anything I've missed, that doing it online rather than in class would, right? I just don't wanna, if there's something I couldn't think of, like, they all have computers, right? I just don't wanna penalize them.

Deborah Stienstra:

So their computers are usually already adapted for them.

Questioner:

Yeah.

Deborah Stienstra:

So, I mean, there are lots of folks who are blind, or visually impaired, or folks with learning disabilities who have their software already built into their computers, so right, like it's getting to recognize what do they need in their environment to be able to, so it sounds like to me, that--

Questioner:

I'm gonna try it.

Deborah Stienstra:

A day, yeah.

Barry Praamsa-Townshend:

CourseLink, one of the good things about CourseLink is it also has some built in accessibility features so students can adjust the contrast and the size of text, and that helps them with accessibility. The only thing that you would wanna keep in the back of your mind is, what do you do about the student who is ill, over that 24 hour period, so--

Questioner:

Different window.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

Different window--

Questioner:

Magically, there'll be a different window, you contact IT and it just opens. That's from DE experience, so okay, that's it.

Byron Sheldrick:

So just on that point, I, the last time I taught, last time I taught a big intro class I did that, I moved all of my tests and quizzes, my midterm, into the online format. It was brilliant, you know in the sense that I didn't lose a class for 50 minutes of students sitting there doing a test.

I was able to open, you know, I did it over, you know, five days, you have this many hours to do it in, or this much time. Students who needed accommodations, because they had time and a half, or whatever, could approach me, I could just set them as a different time window.

It was easy, I could keep track of that. They felt far less uncomfortable about having to come and go and, come to me and write in my office on a different day, or go to the Exam Centre.

And if students missed it, I could just open it up again, right, you know, and it was, as long as it was within, you know, I said over the week, you have five days, and you login sometime over this five day period and do it which meant that for most people, if they had a cold, or whatever, there were a couple people who needed it the following week or something like that, but it was fine, and it really worked very well.

Deborah Stienstra:

The one piece, I would say is, we need to figure out, I think, increased flexibility for some graduate students, so I think we're doing this well, with, through CourseLink, but I think graduate students have not benefited from our thoughtfulness around inclusion and practices. So, can I do a plug?

Byron Sheldrick:

Sure.

Deborah Stienstra:

Okay, so our centre, The Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being is bringing in a graduate student with disabilities from St. Mary's University. Her name is Julianne Ackerverny, she's blind and hard of hearing.

And she's gonna be talking about inclusive research practices from her Master's thesis work and her thirty years of experience in the disability community in Nova Scotia. It's October 12th from 12:00 to 1:30 in, Rozanski, is that the right?

Byron Sheldrick:

Yeah.

Deborah Stienstra:

Okay, 108. So I have 10 copies here about our centre, but it has this on it and I'm sure Chris can send it around too, right?

Byron Sheldrick:

Absolutely.

Deborah Stienstra:

So, okay?

Byron Sheldrick:

That sounds wonderful.

Deborah Stienstra:

And we'd love to have you there. We'd love to have this number of people there.

Marinette Fargo:

Sorry--

Byron Sheldrick:

Other questions. Oh, you wanted to--

Marinette Fargo:

I just wanted to circle around 'cause I think there's a second part of your question--

Byron Sheldrick:

Oh that's right.

Marinette Fargo:

That didn't get answered, and you were asking about videotaping your lectures or providing them after the lecture, and I think that's a really great learning tool, especially for a lot of the learning disabled students because they need the refresher, they need the time to listen to it when there's no distractions.

And I know from working in Accessibility Services that a lot of students do record the lectures and then they go back and take what they need when they're not in that time-pressured environment, so I think that's great that you're thinking about that. It is a challenge, because there's a lot involved with creating a video.

I would suggest maybe considering a podcast. Now, if you're gonna do a podcast, you also wanna make sure you have a transcript, and I'm happy to connect with you after because we have, you know, easy peasy ways to do that, we can talk about it.

But you could talk with classroom tech support about borrowing some of their equipment and using that to attempt a podcast. You know, even if you a student that's, I don't know if you can connect with your students that way, but if you have a student that's technically inclined, you could ask them for some assistance and try your first podcast, see how that goes.

I do know that we had some issues with the microphones in the classroom. So I used to work with a lotta students who would say, "I tried to record, I tried to sit close to the professor, but I keep hearing the, you know, the clacking of the keyboards, and I can't get a good recording because I have to get the prof to wear the mic."

And sometimes the prof are wearing three, four, five different mics for the students who had their own auditory systems. And so, by creating a podcast on your own, you're going to have that isolated sound, it's gonna be good quality, and everybody in the class is gonna benefit.

Questioner:

So is this at the same time that I am lecturing? I'm trying to avoid duplicating my efforts.

Marinette Fargo:

Yeah, so I'm saying, just record it, just like we're doing today.

Questioner:

So, when I lecture at U of T, are we, allow students to put their cellphones on the desk in front of where I am lecturing, and so they get that straight-up recording. I suppose I could ask them for a copy of it, but is that the sort of thing--

Marinette Fargo:

It's, well, that's good. It's better than not, but it isn't a good recording. I've worked with a lot of students trying to find a really good solution and I know from them bringing back their audio, and us going through and, you know, using Audacity and trying to equalize it, and change it, and take out all the background noise, that, it's not a good quality.

And so especially for people who need that, direct non-distracting sound, and in a room with 200 students, you know that it's a challenge, so, I would suggest trying the podcast route.

Byron Sheldrick:

Yeah, it's a good idea.

Questioner:

And Teaching Support Services would help me do that?

Marinette Fargo:

They have equipment that you can get from them to give it a try.

Questioner:

So, I think what I'm getting at is, if we're going, if you have lecturers who want to do this, who is there to make that work, especially for people who are community sessionals, and have a full time business outside of it. So I'm looking for, who do I coordinate with to make it seamless for me and the students.

Byron Sheldrick:

So, I would suggest that if you wanna do something like that, I mean, especially as a sessional, because it's harder to access some of the services, you should talk to your Chair about trying to connect you then with Teaching Support Services to do that.

And I, my experience with Teaching Support Services is they'd be pleased to try and help, and if you don't know who to talk to there, like, the Chair should be, your Chair should be able to help you, or your Undergrad Coordinator for the department. Whichever, I think, that's the way to do it.

Marinette Fargo:

And by going to them, the more people that do make that request, then we're going to get the support here. That's how I got here, right? There's a need on campus, and it is, it's just overwhelming, but if

enough people are being mindful of it and using the resource, we can make it work. So I think, kudos for checking it out.

Byron Sheldrick:

Yeah, awesome. We gotta couple more questions. So, Carol first, and then Kate.

Carol:

I just wanted to add to the testing online, that giving students more than one attempt really alleviates a lot of stress, and now, part of it, I mean, I've only done multiple choice online, and I randomize, like, so I would have to do at least three or four questions for every question, in order to be able to randomize, but, I think it works, it works well and so giving them more than one attempt, at the same--

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

So, just for the recording, the suggestion there was that there's a lot of value in giving students a second attempt to write a quiz, and that there's some useful tool when you're creating online quizzes to randomize the answers and randomize the questions, and that helps to make it not feel like you're doing exactly the same thing the next time you're going through--

Deborah Stienstra:

And I would add to that, that well, Carol's given the example of multiple choice exams, I think there are lots of other features that we can think of as developmental exercises. They can be writing exercises, they can be summaries, and people can, I'm, you can begin with an idea, move to an outline, move to a, annotate a bibliography.

Right, like, and so it's not necessarily repeating the activity but deepening the activity, and that, a way of developmental teaching, rather than goal-based teaching, really shifts the tenor of the classroom for, especially folks with anxiety, because it says to them, "You don't always have to meet the mark, right now, we're gonna work with you to get ya to your best spot."

Byron Sheldrick:

Great, so Kate.

Kate:

I was gonna share, in terms of low effort recordings, PowerPoint also has a function where you can record audio that goes along with your slides and I've done that, basically in lecture prep.

So it's like my practice, that I'm reading, I'm narrating my lecture, and then I'm ready to step into the classroom and actually teach, so it's very time-efficient, and easy, and then when somebody hits play, it just automatically times itself, so that's been a good reverse, and the audio quality has been fairly kind.

And I also wanted to share, Barry mentioned, for example, how people learn how to work in groups; there's some excellent resources on campus. I've had someone from the library come in and do group building exercises and helping people to find their schedules and to set rules.

And, on that point I wanted to suggest that, an excellent outcome from this session would be if we could start to catalog resources that all of us seem to know where-- I would really appreciate that.

Questioner:

I'm just wondering what people are doing in terms of preventing cheating when there's online.

I've done online quizzes, but I'm nervous about moving to like a whole midterm, when I know in my class of 600 that they sit in groups and do the quizzes and they, sometimes they just get the person who they deem the smartest to do everybody's quiz.

Are there ways to avoid that, kinda, does anyone have the magic solution?

Byron Sheldrick:

Does anyone wanna weigh in on that one?

Questioner:

Paula, I just got rid of multiple choice 'cause that's totally crazy.

I just got rid of multiple choice and I have them submit their answer by Dropbox and use Turnitin, so that even if they do it in groups, I'll know if two were very identical in their written approach, and it gives flexibility in the way they answer things, but it doesn't help if you're, that might not be the solution for multiple choice type answer.

Questioner:

Just to follow up, I know they caught people who are doing fake peer-reviews on their own papers by looking at the submission time. So, you got eight people that submit all within 30 seconds, and I think Dropbox-- Or CourseLink shows those submission times.

You could just do a sort by time and if you have any concerns, you could see it that way.

Questioner:

I just wanted to ask, the podcast issue, just wondering in terms of the support of the university, do you say record this podcast yourself; is the university hosting it, or how would the hosting part of the podcast; would it be through CourseLink or another service--

Marinette Fargo:

I would say CourseLink. Yeah, I would say CourseLink, yeah. I just wanted to also follow up. I think it was Kate, that you were talking about the services, and just as a, I don't know how many of you know about e-reserve here in the library, but they have a really great support, anything that you put on course reserve here, they make sure that it's fully accessible, and that it's copyright compliance, and students definitely benefit from any electronic text, so keep that in mind and you'll be covered both bases.

Byron Sheldrick:

Any other questions?

Deborah Stienstra:

What's the timeline, on that?

Marinette Fargo:

It's very quick.

Deborah Stienstra:

No, I mean like, do you have to give it a, because I know to get AODA compliant documents from text-based documents, it often takes time, and so when our blind students come, you know they ask in the middle of summer for--

Marinette Fargo:

Right, so if you are asking for it to be put on reserve, you, and it can also be turned over semester over semester, but you just put in the request of the exact readings you need, they get the content, they scan it, they work with the accessibility tools, and they post it up.

So, it's really a great system that they've developed.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

Is it usually seven days?

Marinette Fargo:

Yeah, you should have it submitted seven days in advance, which is much faster than--

Deborah Stienstra:

The three months ahead of time.

Marinette Fargo:

Yeah, if students are getting textbooks and things like that from publishers, we need to leave six to eight weeks, but when we're talking about in-house, it's pretty quick.

Byron Sheldrick:

We're almost out of time. Carol, I see you have one more question.

Carol:

Just adding that the library has lots of advice and their streaming services for closed captioning et cetera, so they can tell you how to find out if it's there and, et cetera.

So they have a workshop at, in the summer of our bath but, I would encourage more workshops like that because that was very useful.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

Would you want more strategy? So this is one I just heard about this morning, I'm sorry I don't know the prof or the course, but there's a course this semester where they've given every student in the class two pieces of paper; one that is a two-day late pass, and one that's a five-day late pass.

They can attach it to any assignment they want, they can put them together and get seven days, but everybody in the class has essentially, the opportunity to go once, two days past, once seven days past-- Or five days past, or put together in once seven days past.

Deborah Stienstra:

That's a good idea.

Barry Praamsma-Townshend:

And you don't really have to provide an explanation, you just attach it to your assignment.

Byron Sheldrick:

That's a good idea. I used to do that all the time. I'd say to everyone, you know, you have up to one week extension, and you can break it up however you want. I'm always disorganized, so I could never keep track of who used it. So, everyone got extensions all the time, 'cause, that's just me.

I'm revealing far more about myself than I intended at this session. So, we're just about outta time, so I wanna thank our panelists, and please join me in thanking them.

I think you gave us all a lot to think about, and some really, and the audience members as well, a lot of really important tips and ideas about how we can make our teaching more inclusive, and as a result, better, right, more effective.

In terms of the Hub, one of the things, and Kate, you mentioned this in terms of resources, you may notice we're recording this. We're actually going to, all of our lunch-and-learns are going to be podcasts, and they will be available on the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences website.

We're actually working on having a separate website for the Hub For Teaching & Learning Excellence, and these events, these podcasts will be available there. We're also collecting, and trying to amass a library of teaching resources, of the sort that Kate was referring to, and those will also be accessible through, and available through the website.

So what we're trying to do is build that availability of information, tips, best practices, ideas, experiments and things like this, so that we can all have access to that. So that's coming.

In terms of, just a few additional thank-you's, in addition to our amazing panelists, I do wanna shout at, give a shout-out to the members of the advisory group for the Hub. And this is a growing group, so it's, but this is who's there now.

And I hope I don't miss anyone, so, Carol Dauda from Political Science, who's over there, Kate Parizeau from Geography, Lindsey Thomson, who's from the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, Dale Ackerman from Open Education, who's not here today, Tricia Van Rhijn from Family Relations & Applied Nutrition, Mavis Morton from Sociology and Anthropology, and we've just put out a call for a student representative, so we're also gonna have a graduate student in, and an undergraduate student, who are also part of the advisory group.

The other thing, is to say that we're also supported and we have members of our staff as well, so Chris Donaldson, who's at the back and who did great work organizing this, and Meredith Warner who's our, who also is staffed in the Dean's office working on graduate programs, and Jamie Campbell, my assistant, who also did great work trying to organize this and helping make this a reality.

So these are the people that are working on this. We also are going to, so stay tuned. There's lots of exciting things coming, so stay tuned. One of the things, and because there's all such a great engaged group here, we're gonna put out a call for fellows of the Hub, so teaching fellows.

So, if you're interested in teaching and learning, you can become associated with the Hub as fellows, and that's part of the notion of creating a community of practice, around the notion of teaching and learning excellence.

And one of the things, I think a subtext to all of this, is that we want our college, we want our faculty, we want our graduate students to all be recognized for the excellent and exceptional work we do around teaching and learning, and for the commitment that I think all of you have shown even by being here today.

So this is part of that building of a community of people who are engaged by teaching and learning and committed to it.

So, I'd encourage you all, and you don't necessarily have to be a CSAHS member, I see people from some of our other colleges here, to be a fellow, or to be associated with the Hub, and I would welcome and encourage people to do that, and that's just a way to sort of become associated with the Hub and with our activities, and so that we're not just, I don't want the Hub just be the advisory group, it needs to be a community, and so this is one of the ways of trying to build that.

I'm just gonna end by saying that there's a few other exciting announcements coming in the future that, unfort-- I'm not at liberty to say one of them yet. Oh, I want to! Anyway, so but there are some good things happening and it's gonna be very exciting and I wanna thank you once again for coming to this, our first event. Thank you so much.

[End of transcript]