

Transcript for Building an Inclusive Community: Embracing UDL and Accessibility (November 1, 2023)

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Presenters: Afsaneh Sharif and AC Deger

AFSANEH SHARIF:

Hi everyone, thank you for joining us for all who are here, as well as our online participants. Very excited to be here and share knowledge and exchange knowledge with you all. My name is, as Leva mentioned, Afsaneh, and I work with the Centre for Teaching Learning Technology at UBC with my colleague AC from Centre for Accessibility. Our presentation today is about building an inclusive community using UDL and accessibility.

First, I would like to acknowledge that we are both located and work at UBC Vancouver, which is located on the traditional ancestral and ceded territory of Musqueam people. I would also like to acknowledge that today we are at SFU Vancouver, which is located on traditional unceded territory of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. I would also like to acknowledge the global crisis that is impacting us one way or another. As our keynote speaker today mentioned, we are all connected. My prayers and thoughts are for those who are in war zones, displaced and worried about their house, home, countries, and loved ones.

Today's session, we are going to talk about UDL overall, Some of the guidelines and principles, importance of access, accessibility in higher education, as well as in our classroom programs. We will share some strategy and tips on how to integrate UDL and accessibility in our classrooms, as well as practices. We will have some time at the end for questions.

I would like to start with this quote from George Evans, who is an illustrator as well as a person who focuses on student learning and is very focused on teaching and learning through visuals, which says, "Every student can learn, just not on the same day or in the same way." Which highlights the need for inclusion and inclusivity in our higher education. That shows, acknowledged that our learners are different, coming from different backgrounds with different needs. And they need options, flexibility to be able to be engaged in the classroom.

As the title of our presentation talk, it's about inclusive community and what do we mean by inclusive community? According to UNESCO, "Inclusive community is one that embraces diversity and ensures equal access and participation for all." It's a place where everyone feels respected, valued, and also they feel a sense of belonging. That's our goal. That's what we try to promote within the UBC community. How can we work and focus on practices to be more inclusive so that we create an environment for all including staff, faculty members, as well as the students to feel a sense of belonging.

AC DEDGER:

So we are hoping to have relatively interactive components to our proceedings. They are not necessarily going to be quite as interactive as our proceeding wonderful panel was. You can jump around if you want to. In order to kind of maximize the ways of letting people participate. We're going to try and provide multiple platforms for multiple means of engagement. So if you would like to participate in our Slido poll, go to Slido.com The number is there, Number 93903577. It's not exactly an easy one to recall, but you can just type it in. You might be invited to when I try and launch the question from the next slide, you might not be. We will see what will happen with this plug in, but we will have a couple of Slido interactive points. We will also have an interactivity activity later on where we will have a couple of different ways to hopefully get some feedback from you. We'll also try soliciting from the audience directly, so whichever way you like to engage with us. We'd love to hear it. If you also feel like being quiet at this time and sort of reflecting and participating in your own way, writing in the kindly provided journal with our program guide, That's also amazing. For those of you joining us on the live stream, please feel free to jump in on the Slido. We will also have the option for you to join in later on through the means of an open Google Doc. We don't unfortunately have chat or breakout session capability in this session for those of us joining us on Zoom. But we would love for you to participate in ways that work for you. Thank you.

So when you hear the phrase UDL, what comes to mind? We would love to know what drew you to this session, particularly, because there are other amazing sessions happening at this time. Whether you're totally new to the concept, whether you're an old hand. We would love for you to go ahead and let us know what you think when you hear that word. We're also happy to have you just yell it out to us, All right. It should be up, but please feel free to chime in out loud. Does anybody have an immediate reaction to the phrase UDL they'd like to share as we get started? Yes. "Moodle design." Is that what you said? Moodle design. Anyone else?

PARTICIPANT:

Yes, I'm just somewhat vague about what it is, so I'm really curious about... Welcome, it can be vague, but hopefully it will be less so at the end of the session. Anyone else?

PARTICIPANT:

Universal design for learning.

AC:

That is definitely what the acronym stands for. Absolutely. Anybody else? [Inaudible] Yes, yes, definitely, absolutely. We've got slides about that. Anybody else? Yes, for sure. For teachers and learners, right? For everyone who's participating in this space. Yes. [Inaudible] Yes, absolutely. Exactly. That's right at the core of what we're hoping to do. Oh, yes. When you hear the phrase UDL, what comes to mind?

PARTICIPANT: Proactive success.

AC:

Yes, definitely. Rather than reactive, because that way we don't have to leave our students waiting. Yes.

PARTICIPANT: [Inaudible]

AC:

Yeah, Great points. And hopefully we will help you develop tools that will help with that pushback. Right. And we can all work toward building platforms that don't necessarily foreclose accessibility and universal design, just by the way that they are built.

PARTICIPANT:

I'd be curious to hear you talk about the word "universal," because immediately I think universal size fits all. I know we think diversity, and that's not right. I'd like to see what universal means.

AC:

Hopefully we can show you. I'm going to pass this back to you and you can take it away.

AFSANEH:

Thank you. I think they... Okay. Thank you all for just brainstorming and sharing some of the words. What is universal design for learning? Universal design for learning is set up principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal access or opportunity to learn. Now, UDL, Universal Design for Learning, started based on alignment of three conceptual topics. One was advancement in educational technology. Another one was architectural technology, or architectural design. And the other one was based on brain research. Three things were happening. Back in 1980, the Center for Applied Special Technology and Harvard University started exploring a universal design, which was an architectural term to see how they can use it in an instructional environment. That's how universal design for learning. Now in the next few slides, I'm going to get into it in more detail and discuss it.

What do we mean by universal design? Which was that architectural technology that I mentioned. It means that design of the products or environment that is accessible and can be understood, used by as many people as possible without a need for changes. What you mentioned, universal is not about sameness, it's not about a minority group or a specific group. Universal design is a good foundation or is a good design. For example, the sidewalk curve. It's not for only those who are in wheelchairs. It can be for those who are carrying a stroller. It's good for those who are carrying heavy stuff and so on. So it's the main or foundation of good things that actually is brought. What I'm trying to mention here is that sometimes sameness is not fairness or equity in a sense that if you ask all your students to write an essay and you feel that this is the expectation and this is going to be the same for all the individual in some contexts may not be what we call universal design for learning.

In order for you to understand this concept more, I thought that a table or analogy between these two would help you to understand the whole concept of universal design for learning. On the left hand, you see a universal design, which is for environment, physical environment, like this place. This theater that we are using. Universal design for learning is focused on instructional environments. Universal design talks about physical barriers. These stairs might be physical barriers for those who are in a wheelchair. Say we will have learning barriers that might exist in our classroom, in our instructional environment. Again, left hand side, we talk about universal design, which is a proactive design that a few of you mentioned, that is for physical space. And universal design for learning for our instructional environment. Similar to some of the things that you might consider, a building that doesn't have an elevator and hundreds of stairs. There are so many barriers. For them in order to make it accessible, it's time consuming and expensive to go and add those pieces. And same for our instructional material. If you have things that are not accessible to your students, and if you have some students that they need to be able to engage in your course, you need to remove those barriers that are already existing. It can be time consuming, expensive. I'll talk about those in more detail.

Another foundation that we talk about, UDL, and how universal design for learning was shaped. One was universal design, which was the architectural term. The second one was that the brain research, which talks about how we have three interrelated yet distinct learning networks in our brain. One is an effective network, which is about the "why" of learning. How students are engaged in our classroom. How they maintain or stay engaged throughout learning. Some students get excited, happy with the group work. Some students get scared. Some are excited to learn new things without any support. They need support, they need scaffolding and so on. Another one, recognition network. That part of our brain enables us to understand the patterns, to understand the words to be able, for example, author's tone or style can be through the recognition network. And the strategy network is the "how" learning. It's the part that enables us to plan and execute. Solving a math problem, writing an essay, plan and organize things. Those are all happening through that network and strategic network.

With all those, there are three main principles that you need to remember in UDL. I really like your comment. UDL, I want to emphasize, it's not something new. As we go through and explain the principle, you will notice that you say, I've done that in my classroom. Oh, I know about that. It's not something new. It's just for us to think that how we need to reflect and to see and make sure that we have that lens to see everyone engaged. To make sure that as much as possible we can make things more accessible and more inclusive for our participants and audience. These three principles, the first one is multiple means of engagement, which emphasize providing multiple options to get our students engaged. In the next few slides, I'm going to get into it in more deeper. Providing multiple means of recognition, which means that emphasis on presenting information in more than one way to your students. Then providing multiple means of action and expression is focused on giving your students, participants, more options to show you and demonstrate their knowledge. These three principles on representation, engagement, and actions are the main three principles of UDL, which we'll talk more about them in the next.

I want to talk about why we are focusing on UDL and why we thought that this would be a good session to talk about UDL, about inclusive community. Universal design for learning is not, as I say, a new framework. It's something that's been practised by all the educators. There was a project at UBC called Beyond COVID, which was bringing faculty, 100 faculty from both campuses, staff and students, together based on the experience that they had during COVID to see what happened. What did we learn? What we are envisioning for the next 20 years. This project with people's collaboration, we were talking about what worked well, what needs to be improved, and so on. One of the recommendations out of this was universal design for learning. Promoting it intentionally and focusing and getting to know. The other thing is that UBC Strategic Plan, Indigenous Strategic Plan and Inclusion Action Plan, and one of the main pillars of UBC Strategic Plan is about promoting inclusive community. UDL is the main point of UDL and the goal is providing options. Flexibility so that you can get everyone engaged throughout the process. Everyone feels a sense of belonging. That's why we are focusing and promoting UDL. One of the areas or channels to make UBC community more inclusive. Another reason is B.C. Digital Learning Strategy Report. How many of you are aware of it? If you don't know about B.C. Digital Learning Strategy Report, I would recommend you to Google it. Again. It's a collaboration among some of the post-secondary institutions with the Ministry of Post-Secondary and Future Skills to again focus on lessons learned to enhance the digital learning, online learning at provincial level, and promoting collaboration as well as enhancing digital learning for our province. The main goal is that we try to meet the needs of all learners and removing systemic barriers. Sometimes you might be in a place that you're not aware in your classroom. You may not know what kind of barriers might exist in your classroom. We are, through UDL practices, broadening our lenses and will be able to understand and identify some of those barriers that might exist in our classroom.

Systemic barriers, our policy, procedures, and practices that can exist in our work environment, in our classroom that prevent people to participate fully in an activity, or in a session, or to be able to use a service. It can be as simple as... Or when I say simple, it can be like unclear learning outcomes or it can be stairs where people are in a wheelchair. There are so many systemic barriers that might exist that you just need to look around and see what they are.

The next activity we would, if you can just introduce yourself to the person next to you and if you already know, start right away to see what kind of a systemic barriers you think exist in your faculty, in your practice, in your design, or in your department or unit. For 1 or 2 minutes, I would encourage you to talk. And for those who are online, you may just reflect on it, write it down, and then in 1 minute, we'll ask a few volunteers to share.

Thanks for all the discussions and seeing you're all engaged, I might just ask one or two volunteers to just share. What are the systemic barriers that might exist in your practice, in your teaching, in your classroom? If you want to share.

AC:

I have the mic, so I'll run over.

AFSANEH:

I know it's not comfortable to just talk about barriers that exist in your classroom or your practice.

PARTICIPANT:

I think student housing is becoming a big issue. I'm from Vancouver Community College. Ten years ago, I'd say that 60% of our students came from Vancouver. Now, 10% of my students come from Vancouver. They're coming from farther and farther up the Valley, so when they're having to be in class at 8:00, what time do they get up? We teach health, so when I need them in clinical at 6:30 in the morning, are they getting up at 4:00? Right. And that's creating some issues in terms of commuting and safety and how tired they are. There's some limitations to that because I can't keep pushing up the Valley to grab sites, because then I'm pushing into other college territories as well. Right. It's a challenging issue.

AFSANEH:

Yeah. A great point. Like financial challenges and affordability. Those are some of the things that our students feel, and they cannot fully participate. They are not there. Maybe by the time they get to the classroom they are exhausted by the commute and so on. Yeah. Anyone else? One more here.

PARTICIPANT:

I work at SFU. I think one of the issues that I've come across in the last 10 years at least, is special admissions, where we can consider students that don't fit the generic GPA or the generic admission criteria. I've been battling against this for years, and it's as clear as mud how we can actually move forward on special admissions.

AFSANEH:

Again, a great point. Thank you so much. It goes back to what this morning keynote speaker. There are so many policies and procedures that are existing in our institution, we need to re-evaluate them and to see whether each one of them is addressing all the needs of all our students and community members.

To share a few other systemic barriers. As I mentioned earlier, unclear learning outcomes can be systemic barriers for students sitting in your classroom. If they're doing an activity, and they don't know the relevance to overall program or course level objectives, that can be a barrier. One-way assessment. If you just ask your students and assess their knowledge to one way, that can be a barrier. As an example, we had great students participating in one of our online classrooms. And when it came to just seeing the result of their exam, she was failing most of the exam, which was a multiple choice way of evaluation or exam. So if it's one way after just seeing how a student was doing good, reaching out to the students, figure out that there was a cognitive issue that she had and she couldn't participate and do well in multiple-choice exams.

And I talk more about how to identify those things and how to remove those. Providing information in one way. Like if you have just text or no images or no video to share information or classroom that they don't have wheelchair access. Expensive textbooks, similar to housing, there are so many students. Based on the data, I would encourage you to go and look at the report that exists in your institution to see how many of your students are actually buying your textbooks and if it's affordable. Lack of transparency, again, and flexibility are some of the systemic barriers. I want to emphasize that looking at this, it might be you get overwhelmed by so many procedures, so many policies that might exist right now. I would encourage you to take small steps because they have a big impact. If you start adding one step towards more inclusive, it means that you're opening the door to more students. You're getting more students engaged in your classroom or in your practices.

Let's start with the first principle of UDL, which is providing multiple means of engagement. It means that find different options to make sure that your students are engaged in your classroom. In your event, even if you are a faculty developer, educational developer, and instructional designer, think about ways that you can engage your participants, your clients, your students throughout that teaching and learning experience.

Some of the barriers that exist in our for engagement are environmental barriers. Like if there's a loud noise outside and I'm talking and teaching or working, that might interfere. emotional barriers. Considering that although you're scheduled to do a presentation, to teach a classroom, it is important to acknowledge that you might have a bad day. And share that where you feel that it's needed. If you feel that you're not going to do what you do or you're not the person as usual. Cultural barriers. Again, tone, gesture. I used to use body language a lot. That's my culture from Iran. I use a lot. I know that early in my career people were saying that you use your fingers a lot. That got me not to be engaged and not participating. Now I'm comfortable explaining where, trying to manage everything and make sure that when I'm in meetings, talking with people, mention that as well. Language barrier. If you feel like the whole presentation or discussion or exam is in another language, that might also be a barrier. The psychological barrier. People with cognitive issues, dyslexia, autism, as well as physical barriers that might exist. These are just a few. I'm sure that just thinking about it, you might find many others that might exist.

Now when you think about barriers, I want you to think again. Small steps but big impact. Think about UDL. As you see all these tips and strategies for today, to think about that, I don't need to do everything I do based on what is needed? What are my priorities? What are the main barriers that are existing in my classroom, in my workplace environment, and so on? And to see what you can do with the current resources based on the time that you have and so on. What would be for me when I'm teaching, trying to navigate the classroom climate, just maybe by, just everybody doing, acknowledging what's happening and let me know if you don't feel comfortable. Reach out to me or discuss it at the beginning of the class with some of the rules. Making sure that students are included in any activity that is possible to get them engaged. Think about redesign. If after this session you feel, okay, what is one thing that I want to do?

For example, as we go through, you feel like, oh, I want to add more images now to my course syllabus, or I want to add an accessibility statement in my course syllabus. Think about that, what's needed. In some cases as we go through it, you feel that through a redesign or a small change in your course component in your practice, you can actually reduce the number of accommodations or changes that students need to go ask for some support.

Some of the strategies for multiple means of engagement are to give students options to do assignments, provide feedback. Use real world examples. Ask them, if you're asking them to write something, an essay about a particular concept. You might ask them to go and find something that is relevant to them. Give them options. Use technology for them the way that they get... If it's an online environment, how they get engaged with the content online or with their peers. Or if it's in the classroom. how they can do more collaborative and group activities and some of those technologies.

The second principle I want to talk about is multiple means of representation, which emphasize providing options and providing information in different ways. For example, as I earlier mentioned, not having only text to deliver messages to your students. I'll give you a few examples of how you can make your content more inclusive and more accessible.

One is describing your visuals and transcribing your media. If you are using an image in your cover point in your online classroom, make sure that there is an alternative text for that image. What do we mean by alternative text? Alternative text is that an image that if I ask you to close your eyes and tell me what is the message that you want your students to learn from that image, that would be alternative text. This is different from captions. This is a good example of the difference between caption and alternative text. Or if you have a video, making sure that it has a transcript. If you have illustration transcript, we've been talking about UDL, we've been talking about accessibility for years. In my experience, most of the time faculty members say, oh, I already have so, I have so much on my plate, I can't sit and add alternative text for images. And guess what? I've heard that AI is doing a great job, and I have tested a few providing good alternative texts in a short period of time.

Describing your hyperlinks and using headings. Rather than saying, "Click here for more information," describe click here. Find more information about UBC Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund on the TLF website. The reason is that if the link is broken, you can Google or search to find that information. Also use heading for those who are using assistive technology, they'll be able to see the order of the structure.

This one is also... I always ask people, can you read the number in the circle? One in eight men are colour blind. Many of them, they don't know that they are colour blind. What we're trying to use here is that do not use colour to convey information. You can use colour, but as long as you're not using it to convey information, that's okay. For example, if you say correct answers are in green, people who have colour blindness might just see one colour which shows on the right hand side. If you say, "click on the red button", they might have hard problems or

difficulties to find that red bottom. Think about the contrast of your materials online, colour contrast, as well as the use of the colour for conveying information.

Now I'll pass it to AC for starting an activity.

AC:

All right, thank you for joining us. And we are hoping now you can take some of the things you discussed in your groups, speaking about these systemic barriers you recognized in your own practice, some of the great examples provided by Afsaneh. And combine these together in a persona activity. We've got two persona activities. The first will kind of be a more guided quick tour through the concept, and then we will invite you for the second set of personas to break into halves essentially. We weren't necessarily planning on having three rows of people, but to kick things off, I'll say we will present you with a persona. In this case learner persona and an instructor persona, allowing you to get a brief snapshot of each person's experiences, what they're trying to do with their course in the case of the instructor, how they're trying to learn in the case of the student. Once you've had a chance to read through two different personas, we'll invite you to reflect on the personas, their experiences, and what they're trying to achieve. In the case of the instructor, trying to make sure the students are having a great experience and taking what they need from that course. In the case of the students, trying to make sure that they're able to fully engage and get what they need to progress in their chosen field, their chosen study, or their chosen career. We'll invite you to look at these, read, reflect, and then we'll come together to debrief.

So to demonstrate, I'm going to just gloss over these two. Invite folks to think through barriers that might be cropping up, both that are specific to our learner persona and there may be specific to that course design. The further how those two coming together might have specific barriers where a different course design might not present such barriers to the specific student. Or this specific student might have some specific challenges based on their lived experiences. To invite you to think this through, think of our learner persona here. She's hoping to become a pharmacist. I'm going to just give a little brief gloss of her experiences here. Living near campus in a shared apartment with two other students, as many of our students do, uses text-to-speech software. Are folks familiar with the functionality of text to speech? There are a variety of reasons folks might use it. It might not be specifically because of a visual impairment, but a lot of students do find it useful for that as well. Reading text while listening to the audio at the same time can really help students learn. This is true for her. She appreciates videos with transcripts and then she can follow along easily with the text. She finds it a little more difficult to follow videos with no captions or transcript. Longer videos are particularly frustrating, especially when no captions or transcripts are available. As mentioned, you know, there's that aspect two of maybe living in a shared group environment where there might not be as much privacy we might like, acoustics might be an issue. Being able to read at times can be really useful for students not just in these group experiences, but students who might be commuting on the bus and hoping to get through these assigned videos. Or even just students who might not have the instruction language as their first language and really like to be able to rely upon a

transcript to make sure they've really got an understanding of that text. Imagining this student taking this course work.

So survey course, and pharmaceutical science, as many instructors do, there's this desire to make sure that it's engaging, it's fresh, it's relevant. We're able to invite students to engage with concepts they'll encounter in their fields once they've graduated. This instructor would really like to supplement the course readings with short videos to demonstrate what these course concepts are like in the real world. This desire to make sure that it feels important, that it feels relevant, has led her to try and find videos that are from national news sites, from YouTube that are current, that are not necessarily things that have been put into a textbook resource guide that have been sitting around for a couple of different iterations and a couple of different editions of that textbook. Trying to select videos that support the theory, the practices, the concepts that students are currently studying. This class meets twice a week. It's hard sometimes, as we've mentioned, the students might be getting up and commuting long distances. To really get students engaged in the beginning of the class, this instructor's idea is let's kick things off with a video that'll bring people into conversation. That'll get people thinking. We'll find something that's timely, that's relevant, maybe it's happening right now. There are also two online synchronous sessions per week dedicated to student presentations and discussion. So thinking of a student who might use text to speech, who might also rely upon captions and transcripts to make sure they're really understanding the content and thinking about the desire to have spontaneous relevant on-this-day video, you can maybe think of some challenges that might present themselves. In many cases, major news sites are trying to become more accessible, to hold themselves to a higher standard where you can rely, to some extent, on captioning. It might be auto-generated, so there might be some bubbles, miscaptioned phrases, but there might be something to fall back upon. At the same time, in the classroom environment, if it might be hard for a student to pull that up on their own device, we can think through some ways where the instructor could meet those needs that they have for their teaching outcomes, where they really want to make sure students are engaged and ways that the student can still be engaged, even though they might have these sets of needs and preferences, right? And that might include, where possible, making the videos available a little bit in advance. 24 hours is not always quite enough, but it's better than right before class. Making sure that you're selecting videos that do have captions or transcripts available. Making sure those captions are turned on if you're showing videos in the class. And then making sure that the online synchronous sessions give those affordances that are needed to students who might need that captioning support. If the students are communicating via video, conferencing software, making sure captions are turned on. Ideally, when you have these scheduled online sessions, making sure that the video is available in advance so folks can read through with a transcript if they prefer. That doesn't even begin to cover all of the possibilities. But that's how we are inviting you to participate with this online persona activity.

We will show you another set of personas. We'd like you, as you're taking in the information about these two personas, to think of ways you might answer these questions. What barriers could exist for our learner (and for other learners)? What could the instructor do to reduce

potential barriers? How can we help learners advocate for their needs in ways that feel safe and make sure that they're heard? What supports and resources can we offer to the instructor? What exists, what's affordable, what's not too labor intensive, and what will work for all parties involved, student and teacher. If you'd like to participate in person, that's amazing. We were thinking that we might divide you in half so that folks on this side of the room closest to the door take on the learner persona and think, relate from that side. And that folks on this side, away from the door, would take on the instructor persona. Folks in the middle, do what they feel, but that's the bulk of you. What I would suggest is turning to your neighbours if that feels good talking through this scenario. If you'd rather work on your own. If you're a little bit talked out, that's also cool. The options there would be working through in that page provided in your guide there or joining us through the Google Doc link that is at the bottom of this slide page that's <https://tinyurl.com/UDLStudio23>. For folks online who would like to participate, that's an open Google Doc. It'll have the information repeated on that document, so introduce our learner persona.

Cedar is a first- year arts student, wide ranging interests, not yet sure what field of study will eventually be the major, but drawn to the idea of a career that lets him help people thrive. Very caring person, really drawn to the helping professions. Long commute to campus, as many of our students have. In this case about an hour and a half by transit, let's say. Cedar has some usable vision and uses a variety of assistive technologies, including screen reading software. If you're familiar with JAWS or NBDA, something like that. Cedar can read enlarged print and can see some high contrast images. But complex images can be a challenge to interpret. Think charts, scatter plots, things that are really complicated, have lots of small text. Even when these things are enlarged, they can still be difficult for Cedar to interpret. At times, Cedar does need to rely solely on the screen-reading software so that would mean it would be relying upon things that are specifically being translated through JAWS, text only, being read out loud. Cedar had a good working relationship with this K through 12 teachers, but because the jump to university can sometimes be a challenge. Cedar is now navigating university level course work for the first time, doesn't really have a lot of family support. And as a lot of our students experience at the university level, it can be a challenge to be responsible for figuring out how all of these large interlocking departments fit together exactly. How do you get your accommodations? How do you get your needs met? How do you talk to instructors who can seem really scary because you have to call them professor. How does any of this work? I think it's a big question for most first year students, and that's something Cedar is grappling with now.

Cedar is in Preet's course. Preet is teaching introductory psych as is the case. It's a large, popular course with multiple sections. Enrollment is quite large. This is a course with around 200 students. Three TAs, one very busy instructor. He tries to upload his lecture notes ahead of time, but likes to keep lecture topics fresh, incorporate current events as so many of us do, so sometimes finds himself updating his slide content the night before. I think some of us have been in the situation where we're updating the slide content while we're standing at the lectern. It happens sometimes. He'll sometimes even pull up an article or video during class

time. Students are often encouraged to give suggestions. Something might pop into his mind, he'll pull it up, try and keep the class engaged. Especially a class so big where it's hard to have any kind of discussion component. He feels the textbook content can be text heavy, dry, knows there's a lot of boring fundamental concepts involved. He's trying to keep his students engaged, trying to make things fun. He loves to incorporate lots of visual content to add interest to prompt engagement. If you ever have met an instructor who loves to put memes on their slides, this is Preet. He loves the means, just white impact font, pictures of cats with things on their heads. We all know the type. Short videos, in-class polls, anything he can think of that's really going to try to jazz up this required intro textbook. In addition to this, to encourage regular attendance, because it's easy for students to get lost in the sea of a big lecture hall, Preet likes to include graded pop quizzes and bonus assessments during class. Just to try and encourage people to show up, get a bonus point by answering the question or the quiz. Thinking of ways that Preet could teach in the style it feels comfortable, keeping his students engaged while also making sure that students like Cedar are getting their needs met and not feeling like they're left to struggle with content formatting and coursework that could be challenging for a variety of reasons.

We'd like to give you a couple of minutes just to work through this process. Again, if you'd like to work through it in text, please feel free to access the Google Doc. If you would like to work through it in partners in person, that's fantastic. We'll come together in a few minutes for a debrief,

AFSANEH:

And I know that 90 minutes is a long time, so if you want to stand up and join other Preet and Cedars, please do so and walk around so that you don't feel...

AC:

You are allowed to leave your seats. Please do so.

Together and ideally, if you feel like sharing, share with us. I'm going to go ahead and pull up the Google Doc. So we'll be able to see what people have typed in. And we have a very kind microphone runner who is ready, willing, and able. So let me go ahead and pull up the Google Doc. Hopefully the folks who are streaming, who feel like participating are able to access that Google Doc if they are so inclined. But talking through the situation with our folks in the auditorium, let's go ahead and start things off with Cedar. Who has some thoughts about barriers that might be experienced with this particular situation? I know you have some because I heard you all talking. There are a couple of folks in the back. I'm afraid to make you run all the way back up there. But, oh yes, I keep forgetting I have this microphone too. Thank you. Okay.

PARTICIPANT:

I was just thinking because Langara is a commuter campus that we have the long commute. We have lots of students who have that long commute. And then the bonus assessments and things

that students are doing to get extra points. Students feel badly when they miss out of that because they have another engagement or work, or a family obligation, or just because transit is messed up, they don't get to class on that day. Being at UBC, I am all too familiar with the 49 and sometimes it runs and how sometimes there are three full buses and you are not getting to campus on time. So that's a great point, especially if we're scheduling things for the start class to make sure people are there in their seats. Sometimes TransLink does not let you be there in your seat even when you left home with lots of time.

PARTICIPANT:

So mine is related to commute. But about the video material, so if you're on, if it's like text, maybe you can read in bus. But if it's a video, you need like maybe 20 gigabyte or 40 gigabyte of data. And it also eats battery a lot while watching videos, so maybe Cedar couldn't spend his time like, I don't know, redoing the materials, during his long, long commute.

AC:

Yeah, that's a great point. Data plans never have enough data in them. So students who want to get some of that homework done on the bus might not be able to, and students who are relying on some of those assistive technologies might not be able to run them as easily on their mobile devices, right? Some of them are really better when they're on a browser-based system that's on a laptop. And if you're trying to get your phone to read it to you, you might not be able to get the captions to sync up properly, if you even have enough data to play them at all. So those are great points. Any other thoughts people have on this half of the scenario? Okay, and just to kind of read through some things that were mentioned in our Google Doc. Difficulty accessing visual content, trouble interpreting complex images. As someone who works in alt format, I sometimes have the exciting job of figuring out image descriptions for things like memes. And it's a good time, we have fun, but we have definitely had a lot of back and forth on our alt format content team about how precisely one puts such a thing into words. So thinking about ways to convey images on a slide where images that are highly complex and decorative, or maybe marked as such, while also making sure that content, which is not necessarily critical to being tested upon successfully, but might be critical to feeling like you're participating in the course. How do we get that balance right, so that students are not having us explain in detail that a cat has got a pancake on its head, but making sure that students don't feel like they're missing out when a lot of their other classmates are having engagement with that visual component. I think there's somebody in a hat and a green shirt there in the corner. I think for the folks on Zoom.

PARTICIPANT:

Yeah, I was thinking more of the extensional crisis that Cedar might be going through because one of the details was that he had a lot of support in the K 12. Then all of a sudden it sounds like he's in a university, in a university, in a very large class, and it might be difficult for the instructor to pivot and accommodate him. And it also brings up a point about the difference between accommodation and universal design, possibly.

AC: Yeah, absolutely.

PARTICIPANT:

Yeah. That maybe there's some curriculum that is very difficult to put accommodations into as it is. Yeah. I was just thinking about Cedar's existential crisis of feeling like a lot of support when he was younger and then all of a sudden he's awash in a sea of people that aren't able to give him that kind of support.

AC:

Absolutely, especially in a larger university setting, right? Where students might be going from a school that's relatively small to a school that might have thousands of students. I know everyone's home institutions are different when it comes to the amount of support. But coming from a very large institution like UBC, I know, especially first years can sometimes struggle with the process of getting their accommodations, getting registered, getting set up with an advisor, figuring out how to let the instructors know what they need when they need it. Sometimes miscommunications between, you know, my employer, the Centre for Accessibility, and instructors, making sure instructors feel like they understand what the accommodations are. And I think especially for first years, as you say, who are like no one really teaches them how to navigate these things. They have to learn by osmosis. Or we hope that they read all the information that they're given when they're registering. But there is so much at orientation, we know, realistically that's almost impossible. And sometimes the orientation materials themselves are not super accessible to folks, right? So that struggle of making sure that especially in those first few semesters of class that students making that leap really do feel supported. You know, a lot of students I think, you know, regardless of their accommodations, do have, as you say, that existential crisis of I am now in a totally different environment and I don't know what to do. Okay. Yeah. Hello. Someone added on here too. Awareness of programs that can help. Absolutely. Right. So how much students know how we can reach out to them to let them know what exists, kind of what does exist at your home institution to support a learner like Cedar. Are there, you know, places to make sure people don't fall through the cracks? Do students know how to find them?

All right, Thinking now about our instructor persona, what are some things that our instructor could do? First, one has to think about how much training instructors get about these matters, right? As someone who made the leap from being an instructor to being staff, I can say that in graduate school, nobody told us anything about any of this. And all of a sudden we started getting letters from the Disability Resources Centre, and we weren't sure what to do about them. Maybe your experiences are similar. What are things that we can do to make sure Preet feels supported to reduce some of these barriers? Any team Preet folks feel like speaking up? It's hard to remember the microphone.

PARTICIPANT:

Facilities for teachers to create videos, videos which can be listened to on a phone. Even if you're standing on the subway or on the sky train or the bus as it's tossing you around on your

trip, but you can still listen to it. As cold of format as video is, I do some of my best learning with video. I much prefer to be in a room with a professor, but to be able to rewind four or five times if there's something I'm just not getting. I've had that experience, and at the end, I'm confident that I've absorbed everything. I think video is really important. And then when you talk about the instructor offering the class synchronously, two more times that week, I'm just going how many courses is that teacher teaching? And if there's a greater emphasis, and I know at SFU, we have facilities for people to record their lectures and then also audio description I think could help. Like I think if I was having a hard time seeing something and somebody said, "And there's a meme of a very frustrated cat with a pancake with syrup dripping off it on its head." And I'd go, "Oh, I got the idea." So I think those are things that are currently being used, but I think they're certainly not to be overlooked.

AC:

Yeah, absolutely. And finding where those resources might exist in home institutions so that you can refer instructors to them easily. Like I know UBC, where we're from is so large, I learn all the time that there are amazing resources that I don't know about. And I work in this part of UBC. So whether anyone's telling instructors, particularly sessional or adjunct instructors who might not have a lot of departmental engagement, might not know many people or who to ask about how to find such resources. Making sure that people know how to find that support, that they can really feel supported to share for students. As you say, considering things like adding descriptions to video, making sure that you're not just doing the good old point and wave technique when you're presenting your slides, but of talking through what's on the slide, making sure that if there's text on the slide, you're letting students know what that text says when it's key for learning. As you say, considering things like recording lectures that students can then watch asynchronously at home maybe with a quieter environment or assistive technologies that help them feel more supported. Or just with the ability to keep reviewing, rewinding, watching at the speed that feels right to them. I know in the wake of COVID, a lot of students have said they really appreciated that aspect of the hybrid or remote experience. Being able to go back and review that course content. And can we think through ways to make instructors feel supported when it comes to things like recording lectures or video? Because sometimes people feel uncomfortable about their intellectual property or about just the concern of being deep faked, right? How can we find ways to make instructors feel safe? Make students feel supported? Any other thoughts folks have? Oh, sorry. I'm being told I should stop talking about this specifically. I'm going to lead us back to our slides just to make sure we don't keep you here too too long. But I would love it if people get the chance to look through that Google Doc and see what else is there. Because I think there are a lot of great additions to it. Let me click on this to make it go in the right direction. Okay. And handing back over to Afsaneh.

AFSANEH:

Thank you so much,

AC

The reason for doing this activity was just giving you a sense of what kind of challenges you can have as an instructor in a classroom. And broadening your lens to see that what students might sit in your classroom. We gave you a few, one or two examples with visible disability. You might have students with mental health sitting in your classroom, with anxiety that you might not see. These are some of the options for you to think broader like when you come to the classroom. When you come to the work place environment to think about what you are doing, who you are working with, and what kind of challenges might exist on that day. So far, we cover two principles. One was multiple means of engagement. We just practise it. Give you different options to engage in an activity. Sometimes people like to participate in group activities, sometimes they don't. Sometimes they want to just write it down. Sometimes they want to speak up and talk about it. Giving different options for engagement. And the other one giving different options for information delivery.

The third one is multiple means of action and expression, which means giving different opportunities and options for your students to demonstrate their knowledge. That's the principles that emphasize and acknowledges that the students have different strengths and challenges when it comes to demonstrating their knowledge.

Examples of barriers that might exist in assessment, what we mentioned was single response mode. Like asking your students to write a research paper. Depending on the context or subject that you're teaching, think about if the main goal is for them to learn to write the paper, that might be it, and you might put it in a way that they have part A. Part B is scaffolding process. But if you just think that that's one way and you want to use that, think about the students who might have some of the difficulty. And it can be barriers for those with attention deficit disorder, those who are non-native English language, and other barriers that might exist with other types of learners. Another one would be, again, one form of exam. Think about what can be a barrier if you're only using multiple choice or you're asking students just to do an interview. Those are the things for us. Think about it. How you can provide more options. As long as giving students different options to deliver and show you that they achieve that outcome. That gives you a new lens to see how you can design your assessment.

Some of the strategy, as I mentioned earlier, is that providing options. For specific things that you want them to demonstrate their knowledge to you. Is it a paper? Can they do it in an interview? Can they do it in a podcast? Can they do it in an infographic? Audio? Think about those when you're asking students to demonstrate their knowledge, Another one would be providing choices. In some aspects, you might say that, well, rather than asking them to write about this topic, maybe I'll give them choices. Or maybe if I have a smaller number of students, ask them to share their topics with me first and then to see if that can be a good fit. If you want to have an activity, if it's a group activity, what is the main purpose? Is it possible for you to give them that option to do it in a group or alone? And answer question A or B. These are some of the examples of how you can provide options. And now give you students choices. I'm not saying which one is right or wrong, it's just think about who are your students, what kind of barriers they might have, or challenges. And think about how you can provide more options.

Now I pass it on to AC to talk more about accessibility.

AC

Thank you. If you just remind me the time, 13 minutes. Okay. [inaudible] Perfect. All right. So just to kind of give you a brief overview about how things are at our home institution when it comes to accessibility and support. And kind of maybe help you think through what accessibility and UDL could be like at your institution. Sort of let you know how we're working through it. One thing that we have learned through my time at UBC Centre for Accessibility is that the number of students we're supporting keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. The unfortunate thing is that our facilities don't. Even though we are currently hoping to move to a new building with more private exam space for folks who have exam accommodations. By the time we move in, we're still not going to have enough space for all of the students we have now. And they've told us that building is not opening until probably next year. So there's a lot of need out there, and it does seem to continue to expand. One thing we've also noticed is that while when we think about accessibility, we might think about those physical barriers, those elements of UDL that speak to physical impairment like mobility, issues with hearing, issues with vision. I would say the majority of our students have a mental health or anxiety or attention issue, sometimes alongside a physical or mobility issue. I would say the majority of our registered students do have that mental health component. When you're thinking through ways to reduce barriers, it's easy to take that low-hanging fruit of turn on captions, which yes, captions are amazing. And they're also great for folks who do have attention or cognitive or processing issues. Honestly, students like them, so even folks who don't need them tend to appreciate them. But there are also ways we can think through these barriers that don't focus specifically on those physical barriers or those technological barriers, As Afsaneh said, making sure you're not necessarily compelling students to have only one high stakes form of assessment unless it's absolutely critical to the content that you're teaching. Making sure that students have different ways to show you what they know, what they've learned. Allowing them to interact with the material in a way that works for them. To return to that idea of accommodations versus accessibility and how those two fit into the framework of UDL. As I think is probably the case for most other institutions, students have to register before they can access our services. Folks who don't meet the qualifications don't necessarily get the financial support that registered students do. We would love to provide captioning and interpretation services for students who need it regardless of the amount of documentation they're able to show us. But because of funding issues, we don't really have the authority to do it. While we can encourage instructors to turn on the captions and we can help them make sure their materials are accessible, we don't necessarily have the power to retroactively convert materials to a more accessible format. Even when we can, it tends to be very expensive and time consuming. Students who might need those formatted materials who do qualify for them might end up having to wait a while. Because once they get registered, they get their requests, they get their book lists from the instructor, their syllabus, they try and get their materials. They might still have to wait for us to convert them, and we can only work so fast. So by making sure that you're making your materials accessible from the start, you're helping to remove some of

those barriers. Barriers like registering with the CFA, which for a first year can be confusing. Barriers like not necessarily having the evaluation documentation, medical history that is needed to qualify for accommodations because that gets into the realm of the legal as opposed to the realm necessarily of the educational. So students who might not have been evaluated previously. Students who might be getting evaluated for an emergent condition. Students who are just on some of the really long wait lists that are an issue with provincial health care. Generally speaking, students who don't feel comfortable yet going to professionals and telling them about the issues that they're experiencing, these folks are able to register with us, so we're not able to get money to help them basically. When we think about ways to make sure that our course materials are accessible from the start, students who aren't yet registered with CFA can still benefit from having access to those accessible materials.

Returning to that concept, right? Accommodations will often address accessibility concerns, but they're specific to a given student. That student will meet with an accessibility advisor. That student has documentation from a medical team. That student has basically a list or the letter as students often refer to it, which is given to the instructors, lets the instructors know legally what has to be provided to that student because of their documented conditions. But accessibility goes beyond that, even for folks who don't necessarily meet those qualifications for folks who might have barriers that keep them from getting registered, making sure your content is accessible doesn't necessarily negate the need for accommodations. There will probably still be cases where folks might need a little extra support, but it does help reduce the amount of barriers in the way for students who are trying to access your materials. Since accommodations can perversely be difficult for students to access, if you design for accessibility, you can help students get around those limits of access, time, and cost. And ideally, your home institution might have resources that will help support you as instructors, that will help you as staff to support students. Everyone's institution looks a little bit different, but I really encourage folks to branch out. Try and meet folks who might be able to connect students and professors with resources that will be more supportive for them. But as instructors and as staff, one thing we can do is make sure that we are applying these principles of reducing barriers wherever we can in our daily practices. Whether that means designing course materials, whether that means the ways in which we're formatting assessments, whether that means making sure that our communications with each other are things that are not necessarily introducing barriers that don't need to be there.

Just to review, accessibility is not just for folks who maybe identify as disabled. It's not just for people who are using adaptive technologies or strategies explicitly. It's not even just for students, right? Many of our colleagues, whether or not they disclose it to us, may also have some form of disability or might benefit from things we might think of as accommodations. Accessibility really is for everyone. It also tends to make your life a lot easier when, as often happens in large institutions, you are told that the platform, the learning management system, the technologies that you are using get changed on you. Maybe you are now being asked to learn a whole new suite of software. Maybe your interfaces are going to a whole different format. If you're designing content that's accessible and multi- platform from the start, you're

not necessarily going to be quite so vulnerable to things like having to update all of your files or discovering that the PDFs that you're using are image based only. And you're going to have to rescan everything again because they're not in any way, shape, or form legible. And your OCR software will not turn your L's into Ls. They're all ones. By making sure that you are thinking about these content choices when you're creating your content, you then don't have to go through all of the retroactive headaches of trying to update things. If you can build that accessibility into your materials from the start, you end up saving yourself a lot of labour. You also end up future proofing your work in case you later have to upload it to a totally different system. That's a good way to make sure that you're not doing the same work twice or three times, or however many times the contracts change at your particular institution. Through the UDL project, we're helping to encourage our fellows to find these resources, connect them with those resources, and ideally, end up not only giving students a better experience, but saving some time and energy for our professors as well.

Just a couple of tips real quick for implementing accessibility. As we've spoken about, recognizing diverse needs, not just audio and video, but also cognitive, emotional, and financial. Gathering data on your learners. What we've seen in our experience at UBC might not be the experience you have at your home institution. If you're able to understand the demographics of your learners. It can be hard to do that through surveying students because they often get really sick of things like Qualtrics, but we try to get as much data as we can because we want to make sure that we're meeting their needs. Personalizing those learning experiences based on the data that you're gathering. Choosing accessible formats, offering choices where possible, making sure that text is selectable. Making sure that you're including alt text image descriptions, ensuring that your layout and navigation is clean, and simple, and logical, and functional. Making sure that you're staying consistent throughout when you're creating materials. I could talk about this for a really long time, but I think I only have about 4 minutes. We'll keep it short. Making sure that things are compatible with assistive technologies. There are often built-in text reader settings in things like Microsoft Office, and in Apple, either IOS or Mac. So you can go into the accessibility settings on your devices, play around with your content, play around your platforms, get a sense of how screen readers tend to handle that, and that will show you how you're doing. It's great to get feedback directly from people who are using those technologies on a regular basis. But you can get a feel, test things out, ideally with user input. Keep your resources updated and encourage self-advocacy. Make students feel comfortable. Talk about this with your colleagues. Talk about this with folks in your department. Just keep the conversation going wherever possible and provide clear instructions and timelines for your students, for your colleagues, and also for yourself. I'll skip over the slide and we can just go to questions. Yeah. Okay. I talked too long.

So what I think we should do is maybe not do Slido, but instead turn it back over to you and see if folks have any questions, responses, moments of feedback, complaints that I talked too fast, which are totally valid.

PARTICIPANT:

I would just recommend two resources, one is NNELS, which is the National Network for Library Equity Services. And the other one is APLN, which is a website that shows best practices in creating accessible learning places. Okay. The first NNELS, N-N-E-L-S, which is National Network for Equitable Library Services. The other one is APLN, which is Accessible Publishing Learning Network.

AC:

Yeah, APLN is great. I have a great love of NNELS because we used to work for them through our offices. Yeah, they are great resources. NNELS especially for things like audiobooks and APLN is also great for tips, tricks, resources that might help you make things more accessible. Any other? You would, Stephen. Okay, thank you.

STEPHEN:

I heard this from Thomas Tobin, who's UDL guru, "Develop a culture of assessment, "and that strikes me as in the context that he used it as very low-hanging fruit. That one of your bullet points said, "Gather data from students" and then you said, "It's difficult to get them to take the surveys." His point was that the whole climate in the classroom in the course should be about assessment. The instructor is assessing the learning, but he's also getting assessment as feedback from the students about did that assessment work for you? Like that. And at the end, there's hardly any need for a survey. You've been collecting that kind of information all along. That seems to me like to address issues with time and money too. That would be maybe a simpler way to, over time anyway, learn about ways to incorporate UDL.

AFSANEH:

Thank you. That's a great point. I think one of the things we mentioned is that perhaps right away when you get into your classroom, check the classroom climate as well as engaging your students. In many institutions, I've seen that the evaluation of the course is at the end of the, after finishing the final exam they have it. Maybe introduce something to engage a student in the middle of the course to get what they are doing, if the pace is good, if the activities are meaningful, and try to actually incorporate their feedback into our process. It's a very good point. Assess from the beginning, engaging students in different ways and evaluate everything.

LEVA:

Okay, let me say thank you very much to a Afsaneh and AC