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Incorporating Ability and Disability into Curriculum and Community

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Incorporating Ability and Disability into Curriculum and Community

Keywords: Disability, Diversity, Inclusion, Collaboration, Accessibility.

The attached Powerpoint presentation was originally developed to support a 90-minute conference workshop. The structure and content places disability on a continuum with ability, imparted through visual art and curricular case studies developed by two U of C Department of Art faculty members: Dick Avern and Jennifer Eiserman.

An initial case study provides definitions for Disability Arts and imparts how three different U of C classes addressed ability and disability through curricular collaboration with the Calgary-based SPARK Disability Arts Festival. Outcomes have been redeveloped to offer strategies for post-secondary teaching faculty to modify their own curricula: enhancing diversity by connecting ability with disability. Consideration is also given to how to navigate the hurdles of institutionalized academic accommodations.

Three objectives are for teaching faculty to:

1. Make connections between ability and disability in the context of their own students.
2. Articulate how these relationships can be broached in sensitive and meaningful ways.
3. Develop at least one strategy for students they teach, to enhance inclusivity and diversity through curricula.

The case study community collaboration with SPARK Disability Arts Festival broached diversity and disability through classroom activities and field study, providing meaningful student experiences. Specifically, explorations of ability and disability occurred through three undergraduate courses: Two-Dimensional Fundamentals; Sculpture; and Advanced German. The first paired students with artists from the In-Definite Arts Society, a program for artists living with disability, in a collaborative drawing project. The second invited students to engage in studio based research reflecting on their own experiences of ability and disability. The third offered students the opportunity to reflect and write about work in the exhibition, thereby engaging with experiences of disability, both their own and that of others.

Although we often learn about students who are facing health and learning challenges through generic Academic Accommodation forms, important issues are often hidden. *Incorporating Ability and Disability into Curriculum and Community* provides functional approaches for addressing accessibility and inclusion, to ensure a safe and respectful community of learners for our students. This is a conversation that matters!