

LILY BOND: Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining this webinar entitled Strategies for Getting Administrative and Faculty Buy-in for UDL. I'm Lily Bond from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. I'm thrilled to be joined by Tom Tobin, who is the coordinator of learning technologies in the Center for Teaching and Learning at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. He has about 45 minutes for his presentation, and we'll follow that with 15 minutes for Q&A. And with that, I'm going to hand it off to Tom, who has a great presentation prepared for you.

THOMAS TOBIN: Thank you very much, Lily. And I'd like to thank 3Play Media for hosting me today, and the Online Learning Consortium as well. Let me get my screen shared over here.

I want to talk with everybody about what are some of the strategies for getting administrators and faculty members to actually buy into Universal Design for Learning? In other words, how do we get everyone actually to use it? One of the challenges at many campuses is that, when we hold training for accessibility or Universal Design for Learning, the same people show up. It's the same 10% of faculty members who are already invested in accessibility and working with learners with disabilities.

So let me tell you a story to start us off. This is Katie. Katie was a student here at Northeastern Illinois University. And how I know Katie is last year, a faculty member came to me in our Center for Teaching and Learning and said, Tom, I have a student whom I know is cheating, but I can't figure out how.

I talked with the faculty member, and he showed me some of Katie's work for one of his education courses. And it was a little incoherent. It didn't really have topic sentences. It wasn't filled with details, evidence, and examples. It was poor writing.

And then the faculty member showed me one of Katie's more recent essays for that same educational theory course. It was brilliantly written. It had topic sentences. There was evidence being used correctly, strong arguments being made. It was night and day between the first paper that I saw and the second one from Katie.

And the faculty member said, I know she's cheating. Nobody improves this much in that short span of time. But I can't figure out how.

I asked the faculty member, have you run this through our plagiarism checker, Turnitin? He

said, yes, and it comes back as original. Have you gone to your favorite search engine, like Google or Bing, and just put in some sentences to see if they match? He said, yes, I tried that. He said, I also just asked my colleagues, does this sound like any professional writer that you know? And they all said no. But there's no way that she could improve that much in that short an amount of time. Can you help me?

Well, I started thinking, first, yeah, I can probably help this faculty member. And I also was thinking, if this is a new way that students are being academically dishonest, if this is a new way to cheat that isn't being caught by something like Turnitin or the traditional methods that we use, boy, this could be some research that I could do. I could get a conference paper out of this, or maybe an article in a journal. So I had all these visions of what I was going to do with this particular case of cheating.

But, true to my usual methods, the first thing I did was I contacted Katie. I got her on the telephone. And I said, hi, my name Tom. I work with faculty members at our institution on their teaching. And can you tell me a little bit about the work you've been doing in this professor's course?

Katie told me a very different story. She told me that she had wanted to be an elementary school teacher ever since she was a little girl herself. And all through high school, she was earning good grades. And once she got into college, things went south really quickly.

She had so much trouble that many of her faculty members took her aside and said, maybe college isn't right for you. Maybe you're not cut out to be a teacher. And this made Katie really sad. In fact, she was on academic probation and she was very close to being kicked out of the university.

Then, in desperation, she went to the folks in our Learning Support Center. They have writing tutors there. They have academic subject tutors. And although our tutors are not trained psychologists, trained psychiatrists-- they're not diagnosticians or clinicians of any kind-- what they figured out very quickly was that when they asked Katie to talk about the assignments that she was doing, she could do so. She could talk about how she wanted to respond. She was able to string together ideas from the reading that she had done.

But when they asked her to sit down at a keyboard or they gave her a paper and pen, then things didn't go so well. What was in Katie's mind came out her mouth just fine, but what was

in Katie's mind didn't come out her fingertips very well.

Now, Katie was never diagnosed with any disability or didn't have a piece of paper that said, please give me time and a half on tests. Our folks at the Learning Support Center hooked her up with some software called Dragon Naturally Speaking. They put Katie into a headset and microphone, helped her train the software. And for her next papers in her classes, she used that in order to speak out what she wanted to say, and then it was transferred over into a Microsoft Word document.

This was the reason that Katie's work had improved so much-- not that she was cheating, but that she had finally figured out a way to be able to have a level playing field when it came to writing her assignments. I said that Katie was a student at our institution. I'm very glad to report that she is now a fifth grade social studies teacher in the Schaumburg school district outside of Chicago. And she enjoys what she's doing very much.

So let's think for a minute about people with disabilities, Universal Design for Learning, and how we can get that buy-in. What you see on the screen is a screenshot from the original *Star Wars* movie from 1977. And in all of these original *Star Wars* movies and in the one that just came out, Han Solo, who is not pictured, talks about one line. He says, "I got a bad feeling about this."

So if you take a minute, in the chat feature, think about faculty members' experience. If you're a faculty member yourself or if you support faculty members, think about their experience when students come to them with requests for accommodations. They have that piece of paper that says, I need time and a half on the tests. I need the software to read the questions out loud to me. I need a human being in the room just in case I have questions, you name it.

So we all know how faculty members should feel in that instance. How should they respond? Yes, I'll set that up for you. Thank you very much for letting me know. But how do faculty members often actually feel? Key that into the chat. Take a couple of seconds and just key in, what are those feelings that come up there?

LILY BOND: So Tom, a bunch of answers are coming in. Frustration, burdened, dread, overwhelmed, what a pain, this is more work, overburdened, more work, resentful, all along those lines.

THOMAS TOBIN: Yep. And that's actually, if we think about the feelings that come in there, Obi-Wan Kenobi in the *Star Wars* movie says, "Luke, trust your feelings." And this is one of the reasons why,

when we have Universal Design for Learning activities, training, and efforts at our campuses, that we get the same 10% of faculty members who come for those training efforts.

Because most people's experience with students with disabilities has a negative emotional valence. And the psychologists talk about valence in terms of, how is an experience strongly positive or strongly negative? Now, we all know that Universal Design for Learning is a design tool. And we all know that it's not the same as making specific accommodations for people with disabilities.

At the same time, most faculty members have had the experience of doing accommodations. And the same kinds of emotions that are associated with those interactions-- frustration, overwhelmed, confusion, feeling, as Darth Vader mentions, (DARTH VADER IMPRESSION) "Release your anger." People can get mad about that because, typically, it means more work for the faculty member. It's work that the faculty member didn't see coming. It almost never happens before the semester. Usually, it's a student coming up with a piece of paper at the end of the first week or the second week. And it's work that is focused only on that particular student.

So faculty members, no matter how they actually respond-- and I imagine most of us respond in a supportive way to requests for specific accommodations like time and a half on a test. No matter that we respond well, the feelings that we associate with those interactions are almost universally negative ones.

So what I'd like to do is I'd like to posit a few radical rethinkings about Universal Design for Learning. And in order to do that, we should listen to Yoda, who says, (YODA IMPRESSION) "No different! Only different in your mind. You must unlearn what you have learned." And when Yoda is talking about unlearning what Luke Skywalker has learned, we can do the same thing.

Now, I have to apologize to everybody on the webinar because I started this session in the way that you thought I probably would start the session. I talked about Katie, a student with a disability. I talked about how we were able to accommodate her disability. I talked about the success that she's had. This is how most Universal Design for Learning training is couched, presented to faculty members, and trained to faculty members.

This, I'll suggest, is not the right way to go about it. Let's completely switch our thinking. Those of you who are good with foreign languages will know how to pronounce the name of my fictional friend who teaches film noir and 1940s detective fiction. And his name is Read Moore-

Bux. Now, I've completely made up Reed. He is an amalgam of a lot of different people whom I know.

But let's get in the mindset with Reed. Reed teaches detective fiction. So think about the 1940s and '50s. Think about *The Thin Man* and *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Think about darkness and rain and murder and suspects and large amounts of cash and people in trenchcoats and fedoras, curvy ladies, femme fatales, drinking, smoking, vice, gambling. You have the mindset now. Think about it with me here.

So this is what Reed wants his students to be able to do. Like most of us who teach, we want our students to get so enthused about the subject matter that they go home and they can't wait to crack open the books, like this student reading under the covers, looking at the comic book versions of some of the pieces of literature that Reed is asking the students to study, going to find movie clips on YouTube, and just getting immersed in the subject, figuring out how studying detective fiction can have an impact in the rest of his students' studies and careers. So what Reed wants students to do is he really wants them to catch on fire about the subject matter that he's teaching.

So what do Reed's students actually do? Well, he teaches a lot of adult learners, and they're on the bus going to and from work, to and from their family responsibilities. When they can, they try to do the required readings for their courses on their Kindles, or on their phones, or on their mobile devices. They have 3G connections maybe, and all they can do is get the text. So what actually happens is life intrudes for most of our students. And I imagine this is the case at most of your institutions as well.

Now, Reed is thinking about recasting his course for his mobile learners. He wants to teach his course online, and he also wants to give a bunch of media and other resources for his students in order to help them to be able to study better.

But he has a bit of a nightmare. He thinks, I've never taught an online course before. So maybe I'm going to need to have video chat open all the time, and my Twitter account, and my email account, and the learning management system, and-- wait a minute. Is he buying stuff on the internet? Yeah, OK. He's got some social media open over here. He's got all of his resources open.

And that's kind of his nightmare, is that he's going to be virtually chained to the keyboard 24 hours a day. When his students send him messages at 1 o'clock in the morning because that's

when they're actually working on the course, that he should be responding by 1:05 AM.

So in that chat feature as well, let's help Reed connect to his students who are on their mobile devices. Everybody has a smartphone or some other kind of internet connected devices these days. In fact, if I'm remembering correctly, the latest study that came out from Educause pegged it at 86% of college students have a smartphone.

So what's one strategy that Reed could do to supplement or even replace his face to face teaching? Share a sentence or two in that chat panel. And if you can make it specific to film noir or detective fiction from the 1940s, all the better. But if not, think about the courses that you teach or the courses that you help to support with teaching. And in that chat window, if you would key in just a couple of sentences. Give you a couple of minutes here. And I'll ask Lily to report on what she's seeing so far.

LILY BOND:

Thanks, Tom. A few people are already typing in. One person says Group Me app. Someone says podcast, mobile teaching app that includes chat and video, post readings in a PDF format, place notes online for students to read, discussion boards, use video clips in the LMS, watch a film noir on YouTube, provide the materials electronically, collaborate, treasure hunt. Just a ton of answers here, but that seems to cover a lot of the topics.

THOMAS TOBIN:

Fantastic. Thank you, Lily, and thank you everybody for sharing those. I really like the idea of the treasure hunt or scavenger hunt, trying to go find resources that are out there online, using group tools, podcasts, PDFs, discussions, videos, posting notes online. So if we break down Reed's task into what's one thing he could do, I think everybody's got a good idea about what Reed can accomplish.

And that's one of those radical rethinkings that I want to talk about. Let's shift our mindset away from disability and toward access generally. So if we help Reed-- if we think about Universal Design for Learning, we usually talk about UDL in the way that the folks at CAST, the Center for Applied Special Technology in Boston, have come up with it. So that's Anne Meyer and David Rose, the founders of CAST. They came up with those three areas of Universal Design for Learning.

Many of you on the webinar will be familiar with those. Having multiple means of engaging learners, keeping them self regulated. Having multiple means of representing information. We're all familiar with the idea that if we have videos, we should have transcripts and/or

captions. If we have audios, we should have a transcript of those audio files. If we give content in a text-based version, we should also have some other kind of media or another way of representing that information.

And the third part you're familiar with is multiple ways of learners expressing their actions or their action choices. So if I'm asking students to give a report, I might ask them to write a three page essay. But I also might give them the option to turn the selfie camera on their mobile phones to good use and give me a three or four minute video report as well, just like what Katie did on her own, building those interactions into a course.

When we talk about those three different levels of Universal Design for Learning with many faculty members and administrators, the response can be that we think about the whole course. And we think of all the interactions that we do within a particular course. And then we despair because that's a lot of work-- actually retrofitting a course where maybe there are some narrated PowerPoint slides, maybe there are some PDF lecture notes, there are podcasts, there are little video clips that the faculty member has made to help students out. There could be tens or hundreds of those things just in one unit. And when we multiply that by the many, many units that we have in a class, and when we multiply that by how many courses each of us teach as faculty members, that's too much work. And we end up not doing anything because we hit that analysis paralysis, as the psychologists like to call it.

So what I'd like to do is rethink Universal Design for Learning as a very simple plus-one mindset. If we talk about Universal Design for Learning in plus-one language, if you have something in one format, give at least one other format, and then go to something else. We don't have to do absolutely every single kind of alternative when we're presenting information.

And I'll talk about this more as we go along. Because the hold on a minute from the skeptics in the room is, well, I thought that Universal Design for Learning just had to deal with people with disabilities. And, as we heard earlier, many faculty members hold this mindset because of their interactions with specific accommodation requests from people with disabilities. So they conflate UDL with accessibility and accommodation requests, and that makes a nonstarter right out of the gate.

So what I'd like to argue is we should talk about Universal Design for Learning as meaning access no matter why. So imagine the single mother who has to put her children to bed at 10 o'clock but still wants to watch your professor's videos. If there are no captions or transcripts,

she's out of luck after 10 o'clock. If there are transcripts or captions, she can turn the sound down and follow along with those video clips and still get the same experience of the course materials as everybody else.

Think about the active duty deployed military learner who is overseas in a limited bandwidth environment, who maybe can't watch the videos but can download the text alternatives, who maybe can't do the interactive exercises but who can download the Microsoft Word or PDF worksheet. Think about the folks on the sports team on the bus going to an away game. Their mobile phones have maybe not the best connection when they're going over hill and dale and going down into valleys where there is very poor connection. They too will benefit from being able to study while they're on the bus. Actually, never mind that last example. I don't know of any sports team who's ever studied on the bus, so forget that. Forget that one.

But there's a few strategies for getting those administrative and faculty buy-in. Shift our mindset away from just talking about people with disabilities and toward access generally. Notice that talking about people's mobile phones, that has very little emotional valence, positive or negative. And talk about Universal Design for Learning in plus-one language.

I was talking with Sam Johnston-- she's a research scientist at CAST-- recently. And she said something that really struck a chord with me. She said that "we want a situation that's good for everybody. Part of it is thinking about what has to happen at the level of design that makes accommodation less necessary."

And this is actually probably the hardest conversation that I have with faculty members at my own institution. And that is to say, Universal Design for Learning does require a good bit of planning, thought, and work ahead of time. And by putting in the work on the front end, we can then save ourselves a lot of effort, and our students a lot of effort, on the back end.

We will reduce the number of times that people have to come to us for specific disability accommodations. We will also reduce the 700 e-mails that we get when our students get confused, or need to have something explained a different way, or get things wrong on the test, or lose their place and don't know where they should be in a particular course.

So remember Reed? Reed is going to make a video. And so he wants to make sure that that video gives access to learning to the broadest possible number of his students.

Here's my last radical rethinking. If that first rethinking was let's shift our mindset and broaden

it out away from disability and toward access generally, and if my second radical rethinking was let's talk about UDL in plus-one language rather than giving the whole thing all at once, and then allowing faculty members to choose where they go in terms of making those Universal Design for Learning choices. The last thing that I want to suggest is, let's stop training faculty members on UDL-- now, not altogether.

At the same time, let's train our folks in IT, the people in our media services departments, the folks in our teaching and learning centers. Of course we've got experts in our disability services offices, the folks in student services. Train those folks who are actually doing the work of design.

If you asked, 30 years ago, who designs courses at the university, the answer would be largely the faculty members do that. Today, when you ask, who designs courses at a university, any college or university will tell you, it takes a village. We have a team of people. We have a multimedia person, a web designer. We have a course designer. We have a teaching and learning staff member. We have the faculty member who's the subject expert.

So when we start thinking about putting things into a fixed format, whether that's a video, whether it's a PowerPoint presentation, whether it's a multimedia presentation, or something that utilizes specialized software, those are the opportunities for us to train the people who are actually doing the work in Universal Design for Learning. That way, when a faculty member comes to the media services department and says, hey, media services people, I've heard about this flipped classroom thing. I want to do some lecture captures so I can start trying out the flipped classroom. The response is, oh, yeah. Awesome. We can help you do that. And we'll help you with the captions too, because that's just how we do business.

Making Universal Design for Learning just part of the landscape of course design does two good things. First, it takes the burden off of individual faculty members to have to be able to do captioning themselves, to have to be able to know all of the ins and outs of Universal Design for Learning. And it also does another good thing. It means that design processes across your campus start becoming more robust, start becoming more regular, and your students are going to see, oh, any course that I take from this institution, I've got choices about how I get my information, how I give my information. And my professors are there to encourage me, help keep me on track, and help keep me self regulated.

So those are good advantages to moving away from training faculty members. Yeah, we'll still

train them if they ask, and we'll still offer training. But moving our focus toward training the people who are actually doing the design work.

Real quick, I want to go through five strategies for adopting Universal Design for Learning at your campus. And these build on the plus-one model and the three part model of the different domains that CAST has put together-- multiple means of representing information, multiple means of keeping learners engaged, and multiple means of allowing learners to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

So the first strategy is the one that we are already all probably doing-- start with text. What this means is if you put a script together or you have notes or you start with some text-based content, you automatically have an alternate version for when you create a quick video based on that, or you do a podcast based on it.

Now, there is an asterisk to starting with text. Some people don't like text. Some people like to step up in front of the camera and just go, and then they'll do the transcript later. Let them do that. At the same time, throughout all of your processes of design, starting with text is a good foundational way to go.

That second strategy-- make some alternatives. And this is where plus one thinking comes in really handy. Here we have a professor in her lab who is looking at a screen on her computer that contains the research that she has just published. And we have two students in the lab who are videotaping her looking at her screen and talking about her research. And we have one of the students giving the thumbs up because we can take that research and turn that into a PDF for accessibility purposes.

We can also take the content from the video and turn that into a series of still images with text that goes along with them. For folks who have processing challenges, it's a much easier thing to be able to look at a series of still images then to decode video information. By the way, that's true not just for people with disabilities, but for most of us. That's why comic books are really effective.

If strategy one was start with text and strategy two was make alternatives, strategy three is let them do it their way. This goes back to CAST's multiple ways of demonstrating skill and knowledge. So the example I talked about earlier, ask your students to give you a three page paper or allow them to do a podcast with audio, or have them make a video and submit that.

This gets us back to two underlying, fundamental assumptions about the design of the interactions that we're asking our students to do. Faculty members often ask me, well, how can I grade a video and a three page paper? They're not the same. That's when we start talking about getting back to measurable objectives for the assignment. If the objectives for the assignment are the same in both cases, you should be able to spot evidence of meeting the objectives well, poorly, or not at all in any kind of assignment that students give you.

So where you can offer choice, it's always in your best interest to do so. Offering those choices is not always an option, though. Consider I teach business writing courses. And for some strange reason, we still teach students how to write memos. You know memos-- double spaced, one inch margins, Times New Roman, 12 point font, date, to, from, subject. Don't put a salutation. Don't sign it. You remember how to do a business memo. Now, the end goal of writing a business memo is to produce a written document. And so if I ask my students to do a podcast about their memo, that would not fulfill the objectives for that assignment because the format is the assignment in that case.

So in terms of getting faculty buy-in here, we can talk to faculty members and our design staff and think through the process by which students accomplish the end goal. Are there steps in that process where we can provide them with choices? So even when they're writing a business memo, I might suggest that students could write a draft or they could do an audio podcast as a draft. Speak their topic sentences. Speak their evidence, details, and examples, just like Katie had done in our opening example.

So strategy one was start with text. Strategy two was make some alternatives. Strategy three, let them do it their way. Strategy four is go step by step. Allow folks to chunk up the content in their courses.

Professors are actually really good at doing this. We do this in our face to face environments a lot. We ask learners to get some information and then respond, get some more information and then do an action, get some information and then take a test or a quiz. You've probably heard of the 10 to 2 rule, that for every 10 minutes of getting information, there should be about two minutes of doing something or responding.

And so chunking up the information into smaller bits means that it's, A, easier to make those bits accessible under that plus-one idea. And B, it means that by design, learners have a template, a road map, a path to follow. Do this, then that, then the other thing, then the next

thing.

So strategy one was start with text. Strategy two was make some alternatives. Strategy three, let them do it their way. Strategy four was go step by step. And strategy five is let's set content free. And I mean free in two different ways.

The first way free is free from the clock. By hosting materials for our courses and our other interactions with students in an online environment, in a place that's accessible 24/7, we no longer have to be in the same place with our students in order for them to be able to interact with us and the materials. What's nice about that is students can look at things over and over. Repetition really helps when people are studying, and it also helps with students with disabilities as well.

Also set content free from format. Now, this is changing. At the same time, it's not completely changed yet. We're in an environment now where, if you think about the mobile phone that you're carrying in your pocket, if I posted a narrated PowerPoint slide deck and you were trying to look at that on your phone, some people's phones do have a reader application for that, but most people's don't. And if I were a faculty member and I was teaching a math course, and I was using specialized software like SPSS or Maple, and I posted one of those files online for you to take a look at, you definitely could not do that on your mobile device.

What's really nice is there's screen recording software like Jing, Screener. There's audio recording software like VoiceThread that outputs information in a format that's just a movie file, things you can host on Vimeo or YouTube. And by posting on those places, all you need is an internet browser or the free YouTube player, for instance. And everybody's got that on their phones.

So even if you're demonstrating something in Maple or SPSS, or PowerPoint, by doing a screen recording of all of those materials, all of those processes, and then hosting the movie files up online, you've just made it more accessible. What's really nice is now you can also associate captions with those. And those captions can be searchable, which means that even your students who don't have disabilities can search for keywords from the interactions that they're experiencing, all the things that you're posting out for your students. And then they can use those as study tools.

So if we check in with Reed really quickly here toward the end, if Reed was making his video, he'll probably want to use these five methods-- starting with text, making alternatives, using

that plus-one thinking, demonstrating each course objective in an alternate way for students, offering them choices, breaking things up into their separate components, chunking the material, and allowing people to see and share interactions with free or low cost tools, especially screen recordings and videos.

With that in mind, these are those three radical shifts that I talked about for Universal Design for Learning buy-in. And these really work well. If we shift our conversation away from disability and toward access for everyone and technology.

Now, I have to say a word about this one because if you think back to the 1990s, there were people in wheelchairs, on crutches, with mobility issues standing outside public libraries, post offices, city halls, colleges and universities with picket signs saying, your stairs won't let us in. And the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act went a long way toward changing the built environment.

These days, we ride our bicycles over the curb cuts. We push our shopping carts, our baby strollers over them. When we move into new houses, we're able to get our couches through the doors. And we don't think, boy, thank you, people with disabilities. We just think, this is the way it is. And everybody benefits from that fight that was started by advocates for people with disabilities and is largely now won.

I don't want to suggest that the fight for Universal Design for Learning and accessibility for people with disabilities in higher education is anywhere near a fight that's been won. I do want to say, though, that by shifting our conversation toward access and technology, we can remove that negative immediate reaction that many people have, and we're more likely to see better and broader buy-in.

The same thing when we shift to that plus one UDL mindset. It can be daunting to think about the thousands of things we would have to do to make quote, unquote, "perfect" Universal Design for Learning in our courses. We don't want to get perfect. We want to get good enough.

This is where I talk to faculty members and developers and ask three pertinent questions. Where are the places in this course that you've been teaching for a long time that students always get something wrong on the test? Where are the places where students always have a million questions? And where are the places where students need things explained to them in more than one way? Those are the UDL hotspots in your course. And if you adopt a plus-one

strategy just to address those, then you are going a long way toward good Universal Design for Learning.

And the third radical suggestion to shift is shift away from training faculty members, although we still do it. But train the support staff and administrators at your institution on Universal Design for Learning so that UDL is just in the water. It's just how we do business.

So we should also listen to Yoda now, where he says, (YODA IMPRESSION) "No more training you require. Already know you that which you need." And with that blessing from Yoda, I want to tell you one last story.

Over the winter, I was walking up with my wife to go get our groceries at our local grocery store. And I stopped. And I took a picture. And my wife turned around and said, what did you stop for? And I said, look.

Now, oftentimes, the need to make changes is not always this obvious. There's the cart return in the disabled parking spot. So I took the picture, hopped on Twitter, and sent a message to the grocery store chain. Dear, @nameofgrocerystorechain, and I just said not cool.

Now, here's the power of social media. Five minutes later, before I had even gotten my cart and started shopping, my phone buzzed. And it was the grocery store chain saying, hey, @ThomasJTobin. Indeed, not cool. We're calling the store manager, and we'll get this fixed right now. So definitely, the power of social media, and a fantastic shot here as well.

Of course, when I came out, they had moved the cart corral and someone had taken up that parking spot. But you'll notice that they moved the corral into the part with the stripes on the pavement so the person couldn't really open their door. [SIGHS]

So we take progress and not perfection. We take change an increment at a time. And that's the message that I love to give to all of the faculty members and the staff who support them at my institution and yours. We're not aiming for perfection overnight. We should have a plan to be able to apply Universal Design for Learning in the places where it makes the greatest impact. And we should also continue with our plans to be able to support people with disabilities with specific accommodations where they're necessary.

So if you've enjoyed this presentation, I just want to put in a plug. I also consult in areas that typically tend to scare faculty members, like academic integrity, accessibility, copyright in

higher education, and evaluation of teaching practices. There is my website.

But right now, I'd like to turn it back over to Lily and hear your questions. And also, if you'd care to, in the question tool, if you want to talk about what your takeaways are from our time today. What's one thing that you're going to either underline as I'm already doing it and it's important? Or what's one thing that's new for you that you're going to try and do on your campus?

So thank you, everybody. And I'll turn it back over to Lily. Please have at it. We have some time for questions. And I appreciate everybody coming on the webinar today. And thank you to 3Play Media.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Tom. That was a fabulous presentation. And I have to say your Yoda impression is phenomenal. We were getting a kick out of that on our end.

THOMAS TOBIN: Awesome. I wish my Darth Vader impression were better too. So thank you.

LILY BOND: As Tom said, we have a fair amount of time for Q&A. I want to encourage people to type your questions into the Questions window of the control panel. Throughout the Q&A section, we'll be checking that and asking questions as they arise.

As we're compiling the first questions, I just wanted to let people know that we do have a fair number of upcoming webinars on accessibility. The next one is in mid-February. And that one is about resolving Department of Justice and Office for Civil Rights complaints about inaccessible IT. We have some great speakers who have been through it and have some great lessons to share.

So with that, Tom, there are a bunch of questions. One of them is, how do you let faculty know about the resources for UDL and access that are available to them?

THOMAS TOBIN: Good question. One of the ways that we changed how we do that is we used to hold workshops and do webinars and lots of things like we're doing right now. We would ask faculty members to come if they were interested in the topic of accessibility or working with students with disabilities.

What we did was we did two important shifts, and they relate to two of those three shifts that I talked about in the session. One of them was we stopped talking directly about students with disabilities and folded that accessibility conversation into a conversation about just general

access.

If you give a workshop on your campus that is how to reach out to students with disabilities, you will get the same people who show up over and over again, and it's probably the same 10% of your faculty. There was a recent study done that says that most folks who are interested in Universal Design for Learning tend to be in the College of Education, or they tend to have personal experience with people with disabilities, or they've had training in the past on it.

So what we did was we had workshops on how to reach your students on their mobile phones. In this era of budget cuts and a focus on student retention, persistence, and satisfaction, we held workshops on increase your student retention by reaching out to your students on their mobile devices. People packed those ones.

The other shift that we employed was how do we get faculty members to figure out that these options were available to them? We didn't tell the faculty members. We told the folks in our IT department. We told the folks in our web design department. We told the folks in our media services area about good Universal Design for Learning practices. And then when faculty members would go to those areas for help, they'd go to the web design area and say hey, can you help me redesign some of the things for my course? I want to support my face to face course with multimedia.

Well, our web designers said, awesome. We can help you with responsive design, where we'll make a web page that will resize itself and look good on a tiny little screen, like on your phone, on a tablet sized screen, and on a full PC screen as well. And so a lot of the tactics-- those five things that we talked about-- starting with text, making alternatives, letting people do it their way, setting content free, and the like-- all of those things we trained our support staffers. And they're the ones who started spreading the message to faculty members.

And what we found was now when we asked our faculty members, what do you know about Universal Design for Learning? It's a collaborative effort. Faculty members say, oh yes. I worked with so-and-so in the media services area and we developed this. And that collaborative effort means that faculty members who these days probably have more committees to work on, have more responsibilities, and have less time to do those in, they're much more likely to try out that upfront work that is required for UDL if they have partners to do it with. So good question.

LILY BOND: Great. Thanks, Tom. Someone has a question kind of along the same lines. But a bunch of people have been asking, even without accommodations requests, there's still the issue of faculty questioning why they need to add another format. They've been using the materials for years and it's been fine, so why do they need another format? How do we shift the paradigm for those professors?

THOMAS TOBIN: I hear that question an awful lot. I hear the question of, well, I've never had a student with a disability in my classes, so why should I do extra work if no one's asking me to do it? And this is where the impetus of budgets, student retention, and gaining new students comes into play.

One of our biggest motivators has been the recent budget challenges for our state universities. We've had a lot of folks who-- fewer adjuncts are being hired back. We're trying to protect instruction, but I know faculty members are getting laid off these days. And that focuses one's mind on, how can I keep the students whom I've already got?

And it means that the conversation that we used to have, which was, well, you don't know that you haven't had students with disabilities, because some of them won't speak up. Some of them won't self identify. It's not like in the K-12 environment where people with disabilities have to have some advocacy by law. We move away from that and we shift the conversation toward, how can we keep the students that you have on day one and keep them around for the final examination?

And we've also shifted the conversation away from, here is what the law says you must do. Caption everything, and do alternate things for this. And here's what ADA says. We know that that's the case. We draw a bright line, sort of our line in the sand. And we say, for every single course that we offer, we are going to ask the faculty members to identify those places where students have problems, where students always get things wrong on the tests and quizzes, and where students always need things explained in more than one way. And those are the places where we're going to work with faculty members to increase the access to different ways of saying that information.

It's actually a faculty advantage conversation. We say, where are the places where you get 700 of the same e-mail from students where they get confused? And faculty members say, oh yes. That's a headache. That's a pain. And then we say things like, we can help you take that pain away. Do this small bit of work upfront, and you won't get the 700 e-mails. And by and large, that's true.

I will also say that's also probably the hardest part of spreading Universal Design for Learning throughout a campus is the "why should I do the work upfront" argument. So I'd be happy to talk with anybody after the webinar is over with.

LILY BOND: That's a great point, Tom. There are a lot of questions about support staff. Some people are asking, how do we shift more onto staff to support the faculty? And other people are asking, what if support staff just isn't a part of our culture? Do you have any ideas about that?

THOMAS TOBIN: Those are related questions, and good ones to tie together. In instances where you're working at a small institution where maybe there's one support staff person, or maybe it's just you, the faculty member, one of the things that you can do is to create faculty communities of practice, especially at smaller institutions. I started my career at a two-year college where there was just one multimedia/web/design/instructional technology person.

And the faculty members there created communities of practice where all the people who taught a certain course or in a certain program would design the materials for a given course together. And then they would give each other permission to use those materials. And by doing collective design and focusing on one step at a time through the progression of courses in a program, they were able, in three or four years, to be able to touch every single course that they taught, have input from everybody who was an expert, and come away with more broadly accessible content.

The same thing if you have support staffers who are already overworked or already overtaxed, which is the case in a lot of places. There aren't just magically new resources to take on new work. The challenge there is to get buy-in from your senior leaders. And this is where, when you sit down with a college president, a provost, a dean, these are the folks whom you can make the argument to in terms of student retention, student persistence, student satisfaction. So that they will authorize yes, let's focus on this as a project, not as ongoing things. But let's just do a pilot that has a defined beginning and a defined end. And once we're done with it, let's take a look at the impact of it.

Nine times out of 10, those pilot projects where people adopt Universal Design for Learning and implement them, those programs see greater student retention-- in other words, students stay with the program from course to course. Greater student persistence-- the students are there on day one and more of them are there to take the final exam. And greater student satisfaction. So your graduates become your evangelists and recommend people to come into

the front end of your program as well. So two really good questions there.

LILY BOND:

Thanks, Tom. Great answers. Someone has a good question here. At my institution, we are required for accreditation to indicate the demand hours or assigned time for each part of the course, including assignments. Do you have any suggestions about how to go about considering alternative assignments when that is such an important consideration? For example, how do you assess how long making a video should take in comparison to writing a paper?

THOMAS TOBIN:

Absolutely. One of the things that I like doing in those instances is where accreditors, either the regional accreditors or your subject matter accreditors, are asking for time estimates. I like the 1.5 rule that the folks at Columbia University in New York City came up with, which is ask the faculty member himself or herself to actually do the assignment. So in my business writing course, for example, if I'm asking students to write a three page paper, I will write that three page paper. And then I will multiply the amount of time that it took me by 1 and 1/2. So if it took me an hour, I'll give my students 90 minutes, and that's my estimate.

Now, that's a real back of the envelope rule of thumb kind of a thing. And the same thing for alternative assignments. If I'm asking students to write that three page paper, they should have a thesis and at least five pieces of evidence that they go into detail about. I'll actually turn on the selfie camera on my phone and speak out that text, and see how long that takes me to do. And then we also do the time estimate at one and a half for the students as well.

It's a really nice back of the envelope way to do that. And I'd encourage everybody-- I don't have time to give a much deeper answer. But there is a much deeper answer there, and I'd be happy to share that with folks. There's been some research done on those time studies.

LILY BOND:

Thanks, Tom. Someone else is asking, do you have any strategies for ensuring that courses maintain best practices in UDL over time?

THOMAS TOBIN:

One of the nice things about Universal Design for Learning is that it is an iterative or cyclical process. So if you think about it as a spiral, we start looking at where are there opportunities to do Universal Design for Learning practices? Then we implement a few of them. We actually teach the course. And then when it comes to that time of the year again or that time of the semester again, we see the impact that those Universal Design for Learning things have done for us. And then we take a look and see where else we can do.

So in terms of refreshing a course over time, Universal Design for Learning is not a process that we do, and then it's all there and all perfect and all done, and then we have to wait three years or so to pull the course back into the shop and put the hood up and take a look at the engine.

Universal Design for Learning is best served in small increments. So if the legal requirement for accessibility is do everything, we know that we can't do everything all at once. So for Universal Design for Learning, we select, where are the places where we think it's going to give us the greatest impact? And we focus on those places first. And then when we come back around the spiral to the same place again, then we look at the places where it's going to give us the next best impact, and the next, and the next, and the next. And it becomes part of our iterative design process.

That also means that we start looking at our courses not as static artifacts. We start looking at courses as living and breathing conversations. And that means that over time, the folks who are on those redesign teams, they're doing little bits at a time instead of taking one thing into consideration, opening up the whole course, and then tinkering with the whole thing. So I'd encourage everybody to adopt that a few things at a time, but do it constantly way of approaching it.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Tom. I think we have time for about one more question. Someone asked, what if there's a type of technology that faculty wants to use, like an Adobe Flash quiz, but it is not compatible with universal design principles?

THOMAS TOBIN: One of the challenges with technology is that it is changing all the time. If you had asked this question back in 1999 or 2000, all we had was Flash quizzes. And the challenge there was, in terms of accessibility, it wasn't really available to people with disabilities because there wasn't a way that a screen reader could get into that information.

So if you have content or interactions that are using technology that isn't accessible, there's a right answer and there's a practical answer. The right answer is, please stop using it or find another alternative that does allow you access for the greatest number of people. The practical answer is if you have something in Flash and it's not one of those places where your students always have questions, where your students always get things wrong on the test or the quiz, where your students always send you the 700 emails, that might be lower on the priority list than doing Universal Design for Learning on some of the other kinds of materials in

your course.

Now, that being said if you do look at some of the interactive elements in your course-- and Flash is a good example of a lot of interactions. By the way, hold your textbook companies responsible for updating their materials. Chances are if you have Flash content in your course, it was created by some professional organization. It wasn't just coded by Joe coder who's out there giving out Flash stuff for educational purposes. If you can trace it back to your textbook publisher, then hold them accountable and ask them to give you an updated or more accessible version.

And the same thing goes for things that you find out there on the internet and you want to use. Make sure that you're using a process for vetting things that are new. And for things that are existing, see if you can find alternatives. But if you can't and it's a decision of "I'm going to tear out my hair trying to find or create an alternative" versus "I can actually do the work of creating alternatives for these other places," then you make that choice yourself. So excellent question to end on.

LILY BOND: Thanks so much, Tom. Great responses. Before we wrap up, some people are asking if you would be comfortable sharing the research you've mentioned on retention and success improvements. If you have that available, I could easily add that to the follow-up e-mail with the recording.

THOMAS TOBIN: Sure thing. I'll definitely point that out for everybody in the follow-up.

LILY BOND: Great. Thank you. And Tom, thank you so much for just a really engaging and valuable presentation. People really loved everything you had to say and were really appreciative of it. So thank you so much for joining us and doing this presentation today.

THOMAS TOBIN: Awesome. You're welcome. Thank you to 3Play Media, and to our facilitator, Lily Bond, and our behind-the-scenes person, Emily Griffin. So I appreciate it, and I look forward to talking with everybody and continuing this conversation. Take care.

LILY BOND: Great. Thank you. And everyone, we'll send out an email tomorrow with that link to view the recording. And I hope everyone has a great day. Bye.