Transcript: NCPN Conference Workshop

The Promise of Universal Design and its Application to Inclusive Work-Based Learning

>> LAURA GLENECK: Welcome and thank you for joining the workshop on the “The Promise of Universal Design and its Application to Inclusive Work-based Learning.” During this presentation, you're going to learn how Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, training for faculty and staff has increased success among students with disabilities at Onondaga Community College. You're also going to learn about an interactive inclusive career pathways tool that provides workforce professionals with resources to help people with disabilities achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency.

This workshop is being presented by the LEAD Center, which stands for Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities. And for those of you who may be new to the LEAD Center, we are a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policy Development Center. LEAD Center is led by Social Policy Research Associates and National Disability Institute and is funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the US Department of Labor.

I'm Laura Gleneck with LEAD Center, and I will be serving as your moderator, and it's really my pleasure to welcome our two presenters, Nancy Carr and Karen Fabrizio are joining us on Onondaga Community College.

Nancy Carr is the Director of Accessibility Resources and Testing Services. She is one of three co-founders of the Universal Design for Learning Academy. She's the Vice President of the Union at the Community College, and the Treasure of the New York State Disability Services Council, and Nancy wishes to thank the Office of Disability Employment Policy for the Pathways to Careers Grant, which incorporated the UDL Academy. And joining Nancy is Karen Fabrizio who is the Dean of Health and Community Services, and is responsible for the Schools of Health, Education and Public Safety, and Community Service. Previously Karen was an Associate Professor in the Health Information Technology program with the responsibility for face-to-face and online courses. Rose Warner, Senior Policy Advisor with the Office of Disability Employment Policy has also joined us and will provide some closing remarks. So, let's get started.

In this workshop, Nancy and Karen are going to show how Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, creates consistency and coursework, integrates adaptive technologies, and removes learning barriers for all students. And then I will highlight the Lead Center’s interactive online career pathways Tool. So, through this workshop, you will learn how Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, can benefit all students and contribute to student success, how Community College faculty see their course designed effectiveness and consistency improved by using UDL, and how UDL has removed learning barriers and effectively integrated technology. So, I'm now going to turn it over to Karen to provide a brief introduction to you Universal Design for Learning and the Onondaga Community College. Karen, I'll turn it over to you.

>> KAREN FABRIZIO: Wonderful. Thank you, Laura. Universal Design for Learning or UDL is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for. l people based on scientific insights on how humans learn. It makes learning accessible regardless of an individual's ability, disability, age, gender, or cultural and linguistic background. Designing inclusive instruction and services so learning and success are possible for all students is central to most every community college’s mission. Yet, it can be a complicated to achieve. Of all post-secondary students in the US, 20% have a disability. Onondaga Community College set out to ensure that it's students with disabilities are fully included. OCC integrated academic and career support to

students with disabilities, providing excellent work-based experiences for students and employers.

Onondaga Community College is a two-year college originally founded in 1961 with two locations, a 280-acre main campus in Syracuse, New York, and a nearby satellite location in Liverpool New York. The college operates under the State University of New York SUNY system and is locally sponsored by Onondaga County. I will now turn the presentation over to my colleague Nancy Carr.

>> NANCY CARR: Thank you, Karen. So, Universal Design for Learning, we approached it at OCC by the creation of a Learning Academy, as we call it. This began as a small project, when we got some funding for an original grant from the Autism Speaks Foundation. We noticed that we had an increased need for staff training. We were experiencing more students with disabilities, and increased diversity in our entire student body by ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status. And this is of course reflected in many community college settings. So, although we do attract students from out of Central New York, we also concentrate on our population here in Central New York, born and raised, where the poverty rate is currently one of the highest in the United States at around 30%, and our faculty, although subject matter experts may never have had pedagogy and actual teaching, or in issues of accessibility, disability, etc.

There are so many benefits to exploring and trying to incorporate UDL. It may reduce the number of accommodations; this is a real strength, I think. It allows for a common language and framework across subject matter for faculty.

It allows for principles to be used in all different types of classes, and we use our funding from ODEP, which we call the Onondaga Pathways to Careers, as the funding platform that incorporated our launching of this faculty and later staff training as well.

So, I'd like to recognize the team of three founding members. Dr. Chris Hromalik, he is still with us now, he has since earned his PhD, and he still teaches in the world languages department but he's spending more and more of his time in the UDL area. William Myhill was then loaned from Syracuse University. He was the Onondaga Pathways to Careers Project Director. He has since returned to SU. And myself, we all worked as a team together.

Here were our goals. Increase faculty knowledge and use of UDL; Increase faculty awareness of the disabilities of our students, the services and supports available to them. This was essential. Number three, guiding faculty in the design and development of a revision to their coursework that was based on UDL principles. And then again thanks to ODEP, provide sustainable training year to year to continue this effort.

So, I'm going to explain the program design. Now again if you were trying to incorporate something like this on your campus, there are many ways to start it that wouldn't be as intensive as this whole Academy, but we're sort of showing you what evolved here. So, we began with an intensive four-day Summer Academy, which included a pre- and post-test. A lot of evaluation was built into this, and that was another plus of having this project because we didn't always have the luxury of building and as much evaluation and some other projects. So, we were able to introduce the UDL to sign and have a number of exercises that allowed faculty to experiment with the principles to get comfortable with it in their own major in classes with a support group of each other, to be sort of a padre to go through the whole project together.

We also included a panel of students with disabilities who talked openly about their needs and what they valued in a classroom instructor, that was fascinating. We included subject matter on adaptive technology and different types of student accommodations. ODEP also gave us the fortune of being able to provide a thousand-dollars to those faculty that completed the summer four-day intensive section. And then if the faculty continued on and identify a unique individual project and work to complete that project, they were able to earn another thousand-dollar stipend.

So, in phase two working on the projects, after the original four-day, the length of this varied amongst the participants. Some, I'm proud to say are still working to this day and incorporate different components of UDL into their coursework. Once you begin this work, you become sort of passionate about it usually and it often continues on. Speakers and workshops were provided during the academic year sources of support and further education. And we encouraged our participants to share their projects with their departments, with each other, to speak at conferences, to consider publication. As I say, it still isn't really ending.

So, oh, when I think back on this pre-COVID, wow it was another world. So, we were able to offer this in the summer of 2016, 2017, and 2018 we had to academies, and 2019. The 2019 Academy we were very fortunate to have recorded. We've recently been able to complete editing on that, that was quite time intensive. We've had captions added to it. And we'll be providing that internally at this point in time. It may become more available to all at a later date.

So, another exciting time, we had a professional staff in the Academies of 2018 and 2019. So, then it diversified the audience even more, and the participants, as it was faculty and staff. In 2019 we decided to expand further, and we started inviting external post-secondary institutions that were interested in participating. So that year we added participants from Syracuse University, Skidmore College, Upstate Medical Center, and LeMoyne College sent seven participants, it sort of kept us on our toes, keeping up with our diversified audience.

We had wonderful keynote speakers who began and concluded the Academy, experts from around the United States, and we invited even the Syracuse community to attend those keynotes that they were interested in the subject matter for free. And many of those keynote speakers were authors and our participants received copies of the books that were written by the keynote speakers.

So, well, we've had over a hundred participants, including, give them a big salute, several of our own faculty that I'm very proud of who asked, and completed the academy twice. They would focus on different classes and materials that they needed that time and intensive support to modify. Professor Hromalik and Dr. Myhill also have an ongoing research project where they've analyzed the pre-test and post-test results for participants. They are proud to report that all participants demonstrated increases in the knowledge of UDL, and more critically, the application of UDL.

We were able to form a wonderful relationship with CAST in Boston. You too can form a relationship with CAST in Boston if you're interested, just Google them. They were one of our speakers who participated in the Summer Academy, came here. And then we were so fortunate again, it seems like another lifetime, but we were invited to present at their conference in Boston in the summer of 2018 at Harvard Law School. I sort of considered that a highlight of my career.

The steering committee has also since then, completed two articles. We have just been informed that the second one has been accepted as well for publication. So, we'll be sharing that information as soon as we can. UDL participants can register for a credential offered through CAST. There has been a recent increase more on UDL in higher education, and certainly since COVID. I would say that that's only impacted the entire United States education system. That's not an understatement by any means. Unfortunately, due to COVID, we were not able to offer the Academy in 2020.

We had extensive evaluation as I mentioned earlier, and so participant feedback helped us shape the evolution of the academies as we move forward from somewhere to summer, and we get robust feedback from all our participants from where our location was

to the quality of the food, different types of accommodations we need to provide within the framework of the academy itself. An example of this that some faculty didn't want to give up a whole week of their summer which I certainly don't blame them for. So, when we did offer that second Academy, we were able to give that on four Fridays. So, the people still felt they were enjoying their summer break.

Other components of evaluation included the fact that the participants gave feedback that they really enjoyed working in small groups and getting to know each other in a more personal level. Demonstrated their commitments to their field. They got free feedback on their projects, which provide motivation. I think that camaraderie has still continued on the campus to this day. People will reach out to each other that were UDL participants. And all have certainly enjoyed the technology components, and boy we didn't realize what we were getting ready for at that time as I look back on it, we've needed every tool, and then some, when we had to go virtual during COVID. So this camaraderie, as I say, was also crucial when we did have to go to remote. At least we had those relationships already set up, and we were able to use those in a virtual format. I'm going to turn it back to my colleague, Karen Fabrizio. Thank you so much.

>> KAREN FABRIZIO: Thank you, Nancy. So, this is a slide that contains a graphic of the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines and accessible version of the Guidelines is included in a separate handout that we will provide. I was fortunate to participate in one of the first academies, as a faculty member, and there are three pillars within the UDL framework, representing the different columns on the slide that we just showed you.

The first one is Engagement, and the goal is that we will encourage our students, our learners, to become purposeful and motivated and an example that we were able to incorporate into the course redesign is expansion of the assignment directions to include the purpose and a correlation of that assignment back to the course learning outcomes. Representation is the “what” of learning, and our goal is that our learners will become resourceful and knowledgeable.

There were several ways that we were encouraged to incorporate this, I happen to take and add content to my slides that included pictorial representations and graphics, videos, and all of those were implemented and added using the ADA standards and guidelines.

And then the last one is Action and Expression, the “how” of learning, and this was the most exciting part for me to work with. This is where we were able to engage with students on a whole different level. And one thing that I did within this scope, was to take larger projects that can be very intimidating to students, and we broke them down into smaller scaffolding parts so that students were not overwhelmed by a big project, were able to focus on a subset, receive qualitative and quantitative feedback before they went on to the second set.

We just want to point out to you that we do have links to the Guidelines from the Center for the applies special technology, along with additional resources. I will now turn this back to Laura, to discuss LEAD’s work on Inclusive Career Pathways. Thank you.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Great, thank you, Nancy, and Karen. So, this is the second part of the workshop where we're going to talk about the importance to the Office of Disability Employment Policy of Inclusive Career Pathways. It is one of three strategic areas of national

need identified by ODEP to help increase employment and economic advancement outcomes for people with disabilities, of all races, ethnicities, and identities.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity has a primary focus on creating career pathways for job seekers to achieve their desired employment goal, and to assist them in advancing economically. Inclusive Career Pathways are programs and approaches, designed to support people whose career options have been limited because they lack the academic and or technical skills necessary to complete the credentialing requirements of many key high-growth career opportunities.

So Universal Design for Learning, which Nancy and Karen just touched on helps to create inclusive work-based learning that provides a pathway for Inclusive Career Pathways. So that helps tie it all together.

The LEAD Center has developed and interactive online tool to provide workforce professionals with resources to help people with disabilities achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency. It contains curated best practices based on key focus areas and strategies that support the workforce system. And these are strategies and practices that promote inclusive workplace practices, through a diversity and inclusive lens.

The curated best practices are broken down into five key areas. Each area contains sub-topics. These five areas align with applicable six key career pathway elements, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and disability and employment best practices. And the five areas include Leveraging Partnerships and Collaboration where you will learn how to build effective community partnerships and collaborations across multiple service delivery to improve career pathway inclusion for marginalized groups, including individuals with disabilities. And the Engaging Businesses section, you will learn how to promote more active engagement with the business sector to identify the skills and support needed to grow in a career pathway, and how to increase inclusion of individuals and low- and moderate-income populations, including people with disabilities, and others who are underrepresented in a business leader tool.

Designing career-based learning, you'll learn how to provide diverse job-driven training opportunities, including work-based training approaches such as on-the-job training, registered apprenticeships, internships, and other paid work experience. In the Advancing Compliance and Inclusion section, you will learn about tools and resources to increase access to services and outcomes for all people. And finally, in the Serving Youth with Disability section, you will learn about tools and resources to help increase the participation of youth with disabilities and career pathway systems and programs.

So, let's look at an example of what types of resources you will find in the topic area Designing Career-Based Learning, and under the sub-topic Inclusive Career Pathways Design Strategies. This resource example is Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship. And it will say “this project highlights collaboration between employers and apprenticeship intermediary organizations to design inclusive apprenticeship programs that need employer talent needs and enable people with disabilities to gain credentials and skills to succeed in growing industries.” And this resource also highlights Designing Inclusive Apprenticeships - A Guide for Recruiting and Training Apprentices with Disabilities. And gives a little further description, “this guide provides tools to help recruit people with disabilities to join an apprenticeship program, seek information on best practices to launch an inclusive apprenticeship program, and search for best practices to make a program more accessible.” So, as you can see the resources that you'll find in the Inclusive Career Pathways Tool will include a brief description along with a hyperlink to the source.

The Inclusive Career Pathways Tool also includes frequently asked questions for each sub-topic area that fall within the five key areas. These Frequently Asked Questions are meant to highlight a resource or two in that area. And they are focusing on common questions that American Job Center staff may have. And they highlight a variety of different strategies, practices, target populations, and resource mediums. In other words, tools, websites, brief, resources, etc. that are available within the roadmap to give you a better idea of kind of what you might see.

So, this was an example of a frequently asked question, under the topic area Advancing Compliance and Inclusion, and under the sub-topic Strategies to Maximize Physical and Programmatic Accessibility, so first you’ll see the question, “how can we examine what new strategies can be integrated and our workforce programs and services to help expand our accessibility consistent with the vision of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity?” And then the question, the answer to the question, this self-paced e-Learning module provides tools and resources to support the professional development of frontline American jobs Center staff and effectively serving customers with disabilities. this module included scenarios to increase organizational learning on strategies to help maximize a seamless customer service experience under WIOA. So, by seeing this you will get a question. Again, it will refer you to a resource that is part of the curated resources in this section and give you a direct link to it.

Here is a link to the Inclusive Career Pathways Roadmap on the LEAD Center website. And now I'd like to introduce Rose Warner, Senior Policy Advisor with the Workforce Systems Policy Team of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, who's going to survive closing remarks on this important part of the LEAD Center’s work. Rose, I’ll turn it to you.

>> ROSE WARNER: Thank you so much, Laura. So, I think this is the perfect transition to my remarks because Laura just mentioned, the LEAD Center website. And in fact, we just did a complete overhaul of the LEAD website within the last six weeks or so. So, it's brand new. Perhaps you've been there before in the past, but I encourage you to go there now. We've rearranged our resources into three areas of focuses on the website that includes: Workforce Development, Financial Empowerment, and Employment Strategies.

So, I think the area of most interest to this audience would be the Employment Strategies because under that subheading, we do have that Roadmap to Inclusive Career Pathways that Laura described. We also have other areas of career pathways, so like apprenticeships for example, we do have a page on that with resources we've developed there. And we also have some customized employment works for veterans’ videos under there. It is November, it is the month that we recognize our veterans, of course we want to do that all year round but especially in November.

In speaking of veterans, we did a pilot just recently, to try to increase the number of veterans with disabilities that are going into apprenticeships. So, we worked very closely with our partners at Veterans Readiness Employment within the VA. And we've had some success with that and that is definitely an area of focus for us.

Another thing I want to mention is that national apprenticeship week is actually coming up. This will be from November 15th to 21st. I will also go ahead and mention, you know, speaking of November and veterans that you know these customers equipment works for veterans’ videos are really powerful. There was a veteran with disability whose name is Bob, and he was able to find customized employment working in minor league baseball. So, if you have a chance, I really encourage you to go ahead, check out the LEAD website, check out that video, check out the Career Pathways Roadmap.

So, at the beginning of this presentation Laura had mentioned that the LEAD Center has three strategic areas of national need. So, we really touched upon Career Pathways. The other two are Financial Literacy and Data Collection. I want to take a moment to talk about Financial Literacy because whenever an individual is, wherever an individual is at within their job path they need some financial literacy tools to help them make sure they stay on track, right. So, what we did to address that is developed the Secure Your Financial Future Toolkit. And we divided up the resources into five areas, it's Preparing for a Job, Starting a Job, Maintaining a Job, Changing or Losing a Job, and Retiring. So really no matter where you or individuals you may be serving are at in their career path, this financial literacy Toolkit can be very, very helpful and, and we know that within your career pathway financial literacy is important, so these things go really hand in hand.

So, I'm just going to conclude by thanking Nancy and Karen, so much for their presentation about Universal Design for Learning and also Laura for her insight on Inclusive Career Pathways. On behalf of ODEP and the Department of Labor, thank you for watching this webinar, and I will turn it back over to Laura.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Great, thank you for that Rose. And I think with all that you've heard about this is a great time to say well what is the LEAD Center website that Rose has been talking about. And there are a wonderful, as Rose was saying, as we heard from Nancy and Karen, a lot of things that you can find to really make work-based learning and learning in general, inclusive, and accessible.

We do encourage you to follow the LEAD Center and sign up for our newsletter. So, as you can see on this slide, it includes a link to the LEAD Center website. Rose just highlighted one of the sections but told you there's two more. So, we encourage you to follow those. And sign up to get more information and notifications. Here's some additional ways that you can connect with us, you can follow the LEAD Center via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Thank you for listening to the LEAD Center workshop that shared how Onondaga Community College is using Universal Design for Learning to increase success among students with disabilities.

We hope that through this presentation you have a better understanding of how Universal Design for Learning can remove learning barriers and benefit all students and contribute to student success. And that you will access the LEAD Center’s inclusive career pathways tools to find best practices strategies and resources to help people with disabilities achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency and learn other ways that we can support that. I too want to do what Rose said, thank you, Nancy, and Karen, for letting us learn through your experience at Onondaga Community College, and thank you all for joining us today.