



DISABILITY & UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

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Elizabeth McLain, 24 October 2019

LANGUAGE ABOUT DISABILITY

- **Person-First Language** (person with a disability)
 - **From the ARC:** “People-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person.”
- **Identity-First Language** (disabled person)
 - **From Autistic Hoya:** “Yet, when we say “Autistic person,” we recognize, affirm, and validate an individual's identity as an Autistic person.[...]Ultimately, we are accepting that the individual is different from non-Autistic people--and that that's not a tragedy, and we are showing that we are not afraid or ashamed to recognize that difference.”
- **Good Rule: Mirror the individual's terminology!**
 - Don't tell a disabled person how to refer to themselves or their community.

AM I DISABLED?

- **This is entirely up to the individual!**
 - You can have accommodations without identifying as disabled.
 - Some communities embrace the label, and some reject it (ex., the Deaf/HOH community and Little People communities vary)
 - You do not have to publicly identify as disabled, and you do not have to disclose disabilities to the world.
- **My Identities:** I am a multiply disabled person. I am autistic (and therefore neurodivergent), and I have chronic health disabilities that include mobility challenges. I also have a history of PTSD. My disabilities are primarily invisible, but some have become visible since Fall 2016.
- **AVOID EUPHEMISMS! #SayTheWord [Disability is not a bad word!]**

WHAT IS DISABILITY?

- “An individual with a **disability is defined by the ADA** as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.”
- “**Major life activities** include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.”
- Categories of disability shift culturally, historically, and technologically: **access** to glasses, medications, transportation infrastructure affect how disabled someone is (or is perceived to be)

MODELS OF DISABILITY

Medical Model

- Disability as a **biological deficit**
- **Essentialism**
- “Problem” is located in the **Individual’s** body/mind
- “Solution” is to **fix** the individual’s body/mind (**cure ideology**)
- Impairment: physical or psychological lack or loss of function

Social Model

- Disability is produced in relation to the **environment**
- **Constructionism**
- “Problem” is located in the **inaccessibly-built environment**
- “Solution” is to **eliminate social and structural barriers**, improve **access** for all types of bodies/minds

SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY



Disability: socially produced barriers that prevent full participation in society of people with impairments.



Environments are built to favor some bodies/minds over others



“...disability is not bodily insufficiency, but instead arises from the interaction of physical differences with an environment” – Garland-Thomson



Does not deny pain, illness, and impairment, or argue against medical treatment; but focus is on addressing barriers.

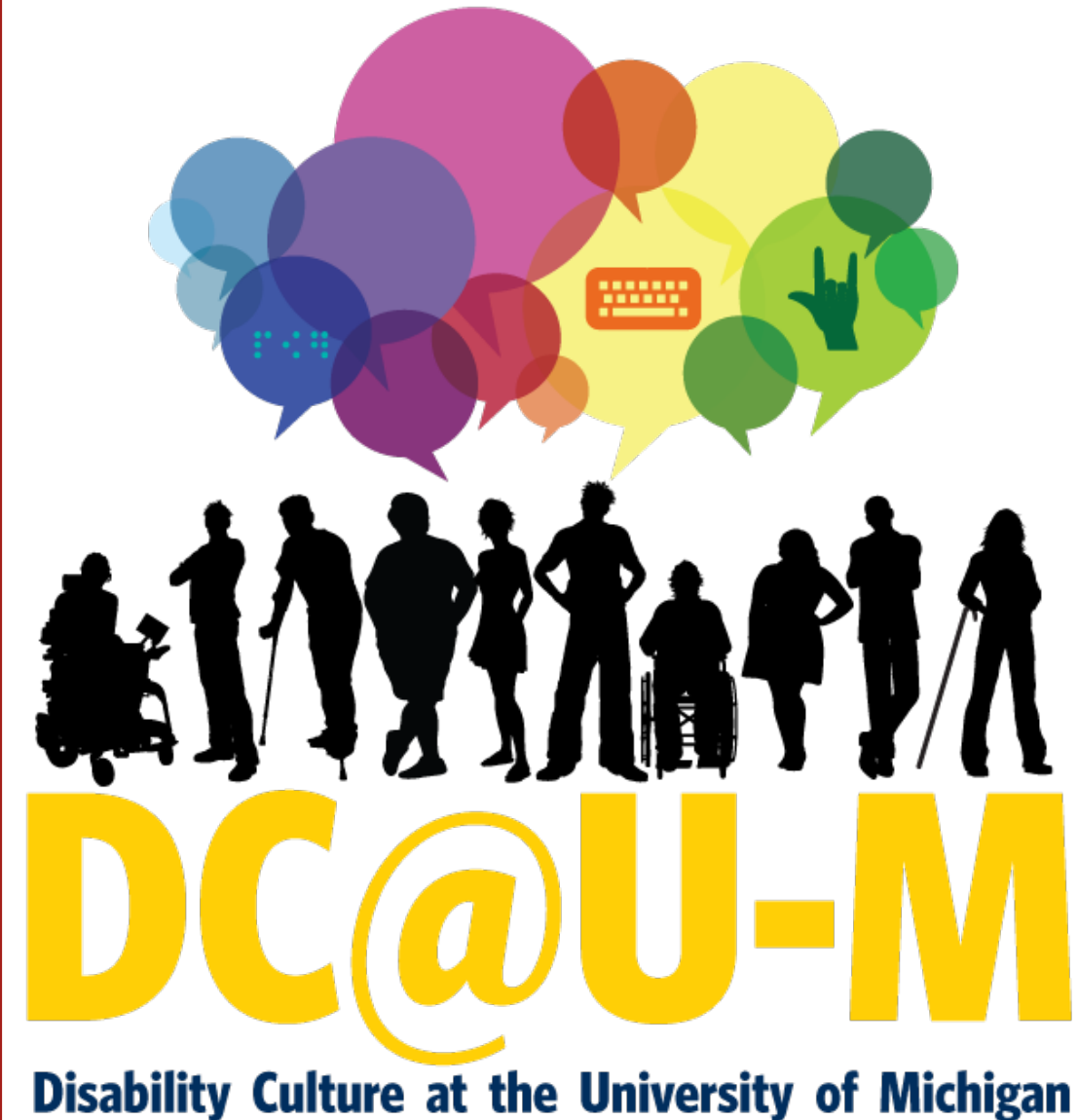


Social barriers include: inaccessible buildings, services, language, communication; prejudice, discrimination; institutional exclusion



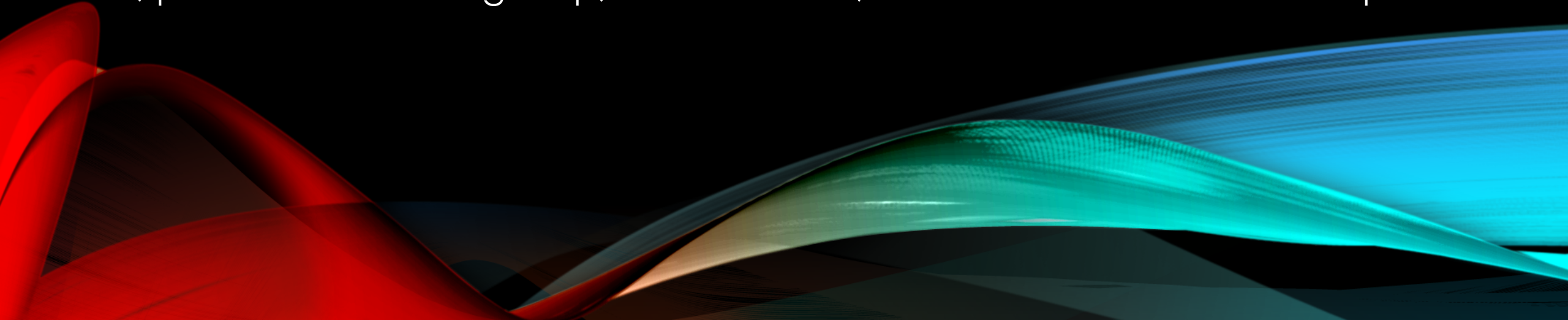
DISABILITY IS:

- A **System** for interpreting bodily difference
- A **Relationship** between bodies and their social environments
- A **Set of Practices** that produce able-bodied [not-yet-disabled] and disabled people
- A Shared **Culture** and **Identity**
- **DIVERSITY**, a valuable perspective for your classrooms, your departments, your scholarly activities, and your creative work



BRIEF BREAK: QUESTIONS?

Feel Free to write questions on Index Cards & Hand them to Rikki!
Also, please feel free to get up, move around, and be comfortable in the space.



WHAT IS ACCESS?

“the power, opportunity, permission, or right to come near or into contact with someone or something” – Bess Williamson

“Accessibility is **less a checklist than an interface, less a set of tools than a system, less a badge than a mode of relations**. Thus, feeling confident that you’ve “achieved” access might be the clearest indication that you’ve fallen short. Access, for me a metric in the success of my teaching and my research, is **an unfolding interrogation**. Like an asymptotic line approaching its axis, we can move closer to access in clear ways but perhaps never sense it as a complete entity.”

– Kevin Gotkin

ACCOMMODATIONS: RETROFITS!

- **Diagnosis:** Does the student have a specific diagnosis yet?
 - Will SSD recognize that diagnosis?
- **Financial Cost:** Paperwork requires visits, diagnostic tests, transportation, health insurance, lost time from school & work....
- **Disabilities can come on suddenly or change quickly!**
 - The student may have been fine up until now
 - Policy requires faculty to have 2 weeks notice before accommodations go into effect
- **Do the standard accommodations even help this student?**
 - Bureaucracy rather than Creativity

SO... WHAT CAN WE DO?



Be understanding
that the process
can take time



Support the student
while they are getting
accommodations



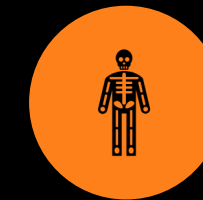
Try to **put them
into practice** as
soon as possible



Ask the student
what they think
will work for them



THE STUDENT IS **NEVER**
REQUIRED TO DISCLOSE
DISABILITIES TO YOU!



Can **you change
the environment**
so difference is
less disabling?

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

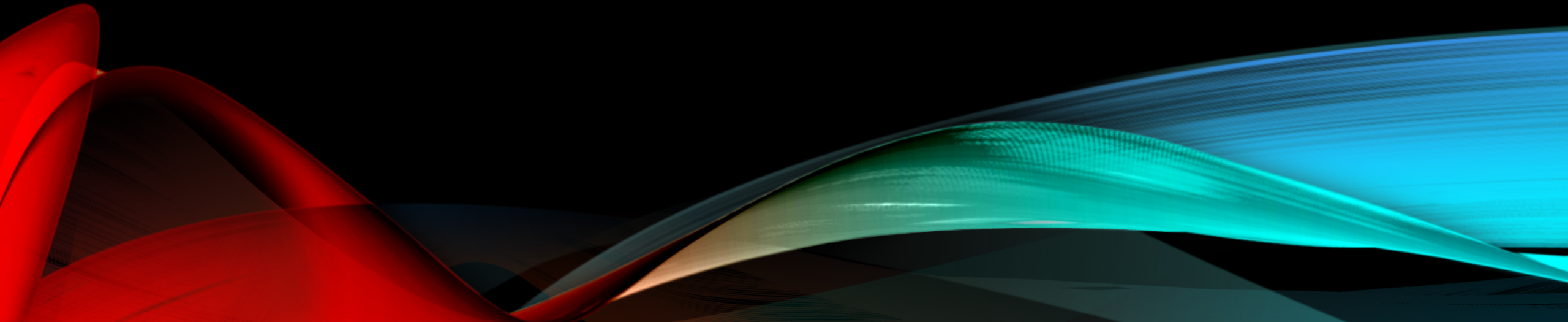


UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

- NEVER A CHECKLIST: Universal Design for Learning is a continuous process, there is always something to learn and improve, always ways you can listen
- Co-Creation of Course, Curriculum, Environment: Your students need to feel empowered to communicate their needs and struggles to you
- **Multiple means of representation:** to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- **Multiple means of expression:** to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- **Multiple means of engagement:** to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation.

BRAINSTORMING: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE FOR US IN THE PERFORMING ARTS?

How are we inadvertently excluding students? How do we keep them from fully participating? How can we design our courses to include them from the beginning?





FINAL THOUGHTS: DISABILITY INCLUSION

“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our societies; it is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone.”

-Diane Richler, Past-President of Inclusion International

“Inclusion without power or leadership is tokenism.”

“Our crip bodies are gifts, brilliant, fierce, skilled, valuable. Assets that teach us things that are relevant and vital to ourselves, our communities, our movements, the whole goddamn planet.”

-Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha



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