

## Mellon Inclusive Teaching and Advising Grant: Towards Universal Inclusivity

The purpose of this proposal is to investigate and disseminate information on how to make all classrooms welcoming and inclusive of students with disabilities. As much as possible, we would like to create suggestions of ways to meet our individual faculty members' pedagogical goals, but in ways that do not single out students with disabilities. We would like to investigate ways that we could limit the need for accommodations which can feel burdensome to faculty and often require students with disabilities to reveal their disability to both faculty and classmates. Finally, we would like to develop suggestions for faculty that will enable them to incorporate the notion of disability as diversity within their course content.

During Phase One, we would explore readings and discussions of published literature on inclusivity of students with disabilities. We would reach out to disability advocate organizations and local Connecticut groups to ask for information they have created. We would then reach out to colleges and universities that have been recognized for their unique and creative approaches. At the end of Phase One, we would have collected information and policy suggestions.

For Phase Two, we would meet and consider which models fit best within the history, culture, structure, and goals of Trinity. We could send a brief survey to faculty asking them what challenges, suggestions, goals they have integrating students with disabilities into their classes. This could also include assessing current misunderstanding and bias towards disabilities.

Things to be considered in this phase might include:

- The current status of access to all classrooms, all social spaces, and common spaces.
- Design for students with sensory disabilities, such as programs for captioning all videos.
- Ways to limit the need for accommodations, such as reducing reliance on timed exams and turning, when appropriate, to other methods of assessment.
- Ways to limit the impact on students with chronic medical illness, including mental health, such as reducing the reliance on attendance as a mandatory part of a class.
- Ways to improve universal design in the classroom to allow for students with learning disabilities, autism, and dyslexia to succeed without specific individual accommodations.
- A college wide recording platform to allow for carefully recorded class sections that can then be edited by the professor or TA to remove the voices of other students in the classroom, can be accessed only by students with approved accommodations, and that will disappear after the semester ends.
- Create a specific suggested protocol for students who develop a medical illness, a disabling mental health condition, or a brain injury during the course of the semester. Note: A senior thesis student is currently researching faculty, coaches, and students' experiences of our current concussion protocol and these data will be incorporated.

Phase Three would include the option of a seminar where we share with faculty what we have learned, hosted on the Student Accessibility Resource Center webpage. It could also include the creation of a repository of suggestions, models, and examples of ways to change or structure the classroom to be more inclusive. Finally, it would include suggestions for discussing disability as a vital component of diversity in any classroom conversation. This would include an analysis of the social and cultural context in which our faculty currently work, to allow us to move away from pity, inspiration, etc. It would include clear identification of the many ways that voices of disabled students add to our classroom discussions and campus life. This would highlight the need to incorporate first-person accounts into any course that looks at disability from a medical or biological perspective.