

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 4 Episode 1

The UDL Faculty Learning Community (FLC)

00:02

Welcome to the rise teach learn podcast. I am Dr. Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State. And we are happy to make this resource available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Linn Gunderson. And she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience. Subscribe to our podcasts and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

00:34

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach Learn. I'm your host Jamie Gunderson. In the inaugural episode of our fourth season, we will explore plans for the design of a year-long faculty learning community focused on Universal Design for Learning. Here to share more information about this opportunity are Dr. Chiara Ferrari and Dr. Katie Mercurio. So, Chiara and Katie, thank you for being here.

00:58

Yeah. Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me. My name is Katie Mercurio, and I am an assistant professor of marketing in the College of Business. I've been here for four years, and I have had such a wonderful time getting to know everyone in faculty development. And the reason I am on this podcast is that last year I was the flex fellow and I did an assessment of how the flex modality of learning was working on campus. And for our UDL group, what I'm here to do is to do research about the impact of UDL on student learning over time.

01:39

My name is Chiara Ferrari. I am a professor in media arts design and technology. But I am also the Director of Faculty Development and I feel that I'm on this podcast a lot, but it is a way for me to share what we do in faculty development. So, I am happy to be a guest again, and have a conversation with Jamie and Katie.

02:01

Before we dive into learning more about this unique opportunity, I wanted to have Chiara share a little bit about how this faculty learning community aligns to the strategic priorities and initiatives through READI.

02:15

Sure. First of all, let me remind everyone what READI is. READI is a new hub for research in equity, antiracism, diversity and inclusion that will be housed in faculty development. We are launching it this year, we are finishing the website, so we will share it very soon with everyone. But this year, I will be working with Rachel Teasdale, the READI Coordinator and seven equity fellows and Jamie is one of the equity fellows to develop resources that go from curriculum design to better assessment, to

inclusive pedagogy to research that focuses on EDI and antiracist practices. And so, this is what READI will be able to offer the campus community other than literally being a hub to connect faculty, staff, students, administrators, everyone on campus with existing resources on EDI. We are incredibly excited to be launching READI and I hope that everyone will pay attention and read all the messages and communication that I will be sending out about READI including inviting you to events. But this specific faculty learning community is the first faculty learning community that will be offered through READI, through the hub. And how do they align? Well, UDL Universal Design for Learning is by definition, a method of pedagogy - actually goes beyond pedagogy – but, it's a concept that ensures that every user student, you name it can participate actively, in this case, in the learning process, universal design for learning. So, in this case, we're talking about learning. And I think that there's this misconception that initially UDL was simply discussed in relation to accessibility. And I think that it's a much broader framework to really discuss how learning can be inclusive, from the way students express themselves from the way students demonstrate their learning. And so it is really, I like the concept of universal because it implies that it's a method and a framework that allows everyone to find a successful way to learn, to demonstrate their learning, to grow, and to participate.

05:11

Chiara, I am so glad you brought up this idea of UDL being more than accessibility because this UDL FLC is really focused on not only, obviously, accessibility is always a focus of UDL, but we really want to target inclusivity. So, what does it feel like to be in an inclusive learning space? And how can we align our assessments, lessons activities, to support students from all backgrounds? And so this FLC is going to be unique in that it's not only year-long, but we're going to use some texts to ground us in this work. And so one of the texts that we're really excited about sharing is called *Equity by Design*. And we have outlined our UDL FLC sessions based on a lot of this work. So for example, in the first few sessions, participants will be looking at their syllabi, making sure that it's not only accessible, but it's also inclusive. Another thing that you can expect in this FLC is Katie and I are going to model UDL within our practices. So each session, we're going to assign it with UDL in mind. And then we're going to spend the last part of that session kind of recapping how we aligned what we did in the session to UDL. And so you'll also have that kind of modeled for you. And we can call that out and talk about it, so that you get a really good experience of immersion in Universal Design for Learning. One thing I think is really cool to mention is that this isn't just a UDL FLC, that faculty can come and kind of recreate a course, but we're actually focusing on how these FLCs impact our students and faculty on campus. So, I want to turn it over to Katie to talk a little bit more about research.

06:58

One of the most interesting things that I've noticed in my time here at Chico State is I have gained so much from the faculty learning communities. And I have tried to look at my own classes to see what the impact of those learning communities have been. But I think that we have not done a systematic job of tracking how students have done in our FLCs over time, and I think that's one of the most special things about this faculty learning community is to see what the impact is on our students within these classes that we're redesigning to have universal learning. So, one of the things that we're going to do is we're going to work with the faculty to see student outcomes and classes before they did the redesign, and during this year-long process, measure student outcomes throughout their learning over time, which is really fascinating. But as Jamie knows, and Chiara knows the thing I'm most excited about is also the

impact of on other faculty who are in the discipline. So, one of the things I've noticed is that a lot of times I go into these learning communities, and it's just me and my class and how it's doing. But I also talked to some of the other faculty in my department, and I want to share with them and have the faculty who are participating in this faculty learning community, share with other members of their own department, in their own colleges about what they're doing, and seeing if there is a larger impact on the campus community, by different faculty serving almost as ambassadors of this type of learning and sharing it with their colleagues. And that's one of the things I'm most excited about. And so, Jamie and I have planned a few special sharing events as part of this. So Jamie, do you want to talk about the two times that we're going to be sharing the work that we're doing with the campus community?

09:07

I am super geeking out about this! Yes. So in as Katie mentioned, we kind of structured this particular FLC to make sure that over the course of the year, folks, participants have the actual ability to sit down take the time to redesign their course. So, each session, we will kind of teach something we'll model some UDL. And we'll give you some resources. And then participants are going to go through and embed what we talked about implement what we talked about kind of revamp redesign. And so this culminates into really fun events. In December, we're going to have an inclusive and accessible syllabi showcase. So, participants in the FLC that first half of the year, we're going to just focus on taking a look at our syllabi to make sure they're accessible. But not only that, we also want to promote inclusivity and then we're also going to take a look at our assessments, assignments for our courses to make sure they're relevant and rigorous. And in that mid-session midway through the FLC, we're going to provide our participants a chance to share their inclusive and accessible syllabi and their rigorous and relevant assessments with people who may teach a like course in their department. So we're really excited about that. Hopefully, that will help spread the love or the knowledge for UDL. But the big, I guess, party at the end would be this course redesign symposium. And our vision for this is to allow our participants to take all the work that they did throughout the year long FLC in redesigning their assessments, their activities, their lessons, and share the UDL love or the knowledge about how we're implementing UDL on our campus.

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I am very excited about sharing the love, the sharing the FDEV love, both Katie and Jamie have been wonderful, incredibly enthusiastic ambassadors of Faculty Development. And I appreciated it really what you sent Katie that I can see two main benefits in this FLC and in general, in faculty learning communities, but general benefits of learning communities are precisely what both of you were mentioning that what we learn, as faculty as scholars, as teachers get to be shared. And so, we can learn from others. I remember when I was attending FLCs, that it was very interesting for me to hear perspectives from different colleagues in different disciplines that have very different teaching and learning approaches. It was very good for me to learn about solutions that colleagues had found that could help me find solutions for my classes. So, these exchange of ideas and experiences, with colleagues in different disciplines, from different approaches, is probably the greatest benefit that I would say, faculty learning communities can offer to faculty. Now, of course, I pride myself in trying to offer programs in faculty development that can truly help faculty grow, grow as scholars, grow as teachers, but also kind of really nourish as, as professionals. And so this, for me, is the first benefit that all FLCs should have. Now, the other part and this relates to what Katie was mentioned about

assessment, and it also relates to one of the priorities or the goals that READI, the READI hub has is to determine: is the professional development, are the professional opportunities that faculty go through, do they translate into more equitable learning for students? And so, this is the piece that we are missing, I do want to determine what is the impact that professional development on faculty has on student learning? Can we measure those connections? So, in other words, beyond benefits to the faculty that attend these faculty learning communities, do these program have benefits for the students in terms of better, more equitable, more inclusive learning? And I think this is the piece that we need to start measuring systematically. Because this way, we need to know what our target is. And if our target is better learning for students, then we need to plan and offer programs that ensure that students get better, more equitable, and more inclusive learning. And so, assessing this connection will help faculty development plan for the future, decide where funding goes, I mean, I want to be very honest that it we need to put our money where we can impact student learning. And so, this is a very interesting opportunity for me to start implementing systematic assessment of faculty development programs, as they relate and as they impact student success.

15:00

If you are interested in participating in this UDL FLC, the call is out and the application is linked within that call, you can take a look at some of the sessions and the topics to see if that fits your need. But again, the goal for this FLC is not only to spread the love with the knowledge, but also participants are really going to take time to redevelop a course, redesign it with UDL in mind. And so we're gonna just start from recognizing what you're already doing as instructors that aligns to UDL and building on that over the course of the year. So, we encourage you to apply, please be sure to get your application in by September 12. And again, if you're not able to join us, we have a lot of resources, UDL teaching guides and there's a whole bunch of information and resources included in those guides, check out our UDL podcasts on our *Rise Teach Learn* podcast webpage. So, if you want to start your journey in implementing universal design for learning, you can do that outside of the FLC. But we do encourage you to come hang with us, have some fun, redesign some courses and have some good conversations on good teaching.

And there you have it, folks. Today we explored the scope and sequence of the upcoming UDL FLC and I'd like to thank our guests Drs. Chiara Ferrari and Katie Mercurio, for their contributions to this episode, and their efforts to advance knowledge and implementation of UDL campus-wide. Please don't forget that you can access previous episodes of *Rise Teach Learn* as well as all of the resources associated with this and other episodes through our FDEV podcast web page. A big thank you to you for listening and until next time, we got this Wildcats.

16:45

We would like to thank the Mechoopda on whose traditional lands this podcast is being recorded. Without their support and continued positive presence in our community. We would be unable to afford the cultural and educational work that is at the heart of this recording. Thank you