



The 2017 Accessibility Conference:
**Becoming a Catalyst
for Inclusion**
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Principles of Inclusivity: Leading an Institutional Culture Shift

Transcript from the 2017 Accessibility Conference

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SPEAKER:

Good morning. Welcome to our session this morning, 'Principles of Inclusivity: Leading an Institutional Culture Shift'. Our presenters this morning are Susan Grant and Susan Willsie, both from the University of Waterloo. If you could refer to yourself as Susie.

Susan Grant has been a member of University of Waterloo since 1980 and joined the team when the department was formed in 1986. She has been a part of the university student inclusivity programs. She strides to develop lifelong wellness and well-being. Susan Willsie has

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been a member of University of Waterloo inclusivity community since 1982. She aims to get a sense of harmony and good home and career life. She champions sensitivity in all areas.

SUSAN WILLISIE:

Thank you. I do have some handouts. I am Susan and this is Susie today to differentiate. She can hand out some handouts for you.

When we created the program, we thought of how crayons could represent accessibility. Go ahead.

SUSAN WILLISIE:

Absolutely. Children use them as identifiers. Let's hear from some others.

SPEAKER:

The colours are labelled.

SUSAN WILLISIE:

Yes.

SPEAKER:

You don't have to turn them on. You can just use them.

SUSAN WILLISIE:

Yes. So we have some workbooks. We will explain that you. Right on the introductory section, it says crayons are easily identified, relatable and easy to use. They are fun for many. They come in a wide variety of shapes and colours. Best of all, they are relatable. They are full of opportunity.

When we invite people at our sessions to think of what accessibility means at University of Waterloo, they are a great tool.

So we are not calling this a workbook because it isn't one. It's really just a reference for you. We will point out some items in it. We will also point out our super fancy pen that we give to participants. What is inside the pen is what the principles of inclusivity are and the history of the program. Please take some notes, I hope, and enjoy the fun of this program.

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So just in terms of a very brief history, University of Waterloo has practices that champion inclusivity in the department. In our program which Sue and I are members of, we offer a program in which we take and share a part of and we hope to share with you today.

In terms of the program, we recognised in 2009, a few years ago, but we needed to do something for our institution to discuss diversity in the population. So ideals that campus members should engage in became the conversation. What rose to the top of those conversations were ideas of sensitivity. It sounds like a given, but so often, while we're in conversation, we have to conduct them in sensitivity so that people can understand one another in a cross-cultural and sensitive community.

The principles were created as a result of the committee, and we brought in ideals to bring them to life. Because it's one thing to have pens and posters and given that university but it's another to use these workshops to talk about what they actually mean. Otherwise they become just the backdrop. So we have a series of workshops that goes to each one of the principles in a greater level of detail to raise people's awareness.

Obviously, support is integrative to any plan. People need to have an awareness of the goal. But as a result of the performance in 2015 by the team, we are very pleased with this.

In terms of the actual principles themselves, they are on the handout, so you don't have to take notes. I will read them out to you.

1. Acknowledge individuals are unique and particularly in the learning and work environment.
2. Respect each individual's right to present and express themselves relative to their religion, culture, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical and mental ability.
3. Promote inclusivity by reasonably adjusting procedures, activities and physical environments.
4. Focus on the capability of the individual without assumptions or labels.
5. Be inclusive in all forms of communication.
6. Serve with all sensitivity, respect and fairness.

Number three tends to generate some questions when we introduced these to people. We have a series of workshops packed into seven. The very first session, I will talk in a bit more detail in a moment. It focuses on what are the principles and what they mean.

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The idea of generating conversation because people say we shouldn't necessarily be adjusting the procedures. Often our answer is that this is a process that works for us, it started in 2009 when the new very little about what to do. It's historical and in the last two years we have done a lot to put in practice. Sue and I said maybe we need to have a chat about what the principles mean to us, or maybe not.

But the idea of having acknowledgement and awareness of each other and sensitivity is what we think we need to know. It is driving and moving opportunities forward for us and also bringing new opportunities going on.

So the learning objectives of our actual programs, again, what we have here is our experience that people come to the workshops and expect us to tell them what the principles are and how to start living them.

We do not view the principles in a way, not so black and white. We're more interested in, we're not trainers in organisational development. We are facilitators. The true opportunity of the workshops is to get people across campuses to come together and talk about what they are doing, what other departments and faculties are doing, having people come together and have the conversation is based on the activities and interactions we are doing. We are seeing what is possible within the realms of our universities.

This can obviously help us promote a culture of inclusivity in practice and that is because we are talking about the same things and following the same guiding principles to reach the same goal.

The last one there, developing mindfulness in our interactions, which is our goal.

Again, the University of Waterloo is a large institution. To try to move anything forward in this academic world can be a challenge at times. You are adding all these components into it and it only gets things to a bigger way, but adding our voice to this is our goal.

Our very first workshop is called Introduction to Inclusivity. I alluded to it earlier. Here I introduced the principles and what they actually mean. I use the metaphor of the bus tour. When you get on the bus, you do not necessarily know what the tour involves. So that is the first workshop.

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Then in workshop two, it is about understanding what inclusivity is, what it means. So we talk about bias and stereotypes.

The third one is called inclusive communication, is where we look at what communication styles and aim to improve them.

The fourth one, generational inclusivity, that's where we aim to include all members in the workplace, so for example baby boomers and so on, how we can incorporate them in the workplace and not see them as hindrance.

Workshop five, sexual orientation and gender identity, understanding those identities involved and the prospects and what they mean.

Accessible communities, accessibility and disability, invisible and visible. I think I repeated myself again.

And the last one is the capstone where we have a program to close the workshops. Obviously, workshop one and workshop seven, the capstone has to come last. It can take an organisation one year to complete or two years to complete, there is no specific timeline. You can take seven years to complete.

What I'm going to do is pass it over to Sue at this point and she will talk about what happens in each of our programs.

SUSAN GRANT:

Giving a window into workshops, we look at online as a learning medium for this type of concept. We think that bringing people together and having more facilitated discussions around inclusive practices and inclusive scenarios is the best priority for us.

Susie talked about having our employees, having inclusivity for the people that are working around the community, having an impact for those people that is being shaped in the program, meeting people that you might not meet every day.

Our sessions are very interactive. We take this from the lens of personal and safe. We want people to feel safe in their conversations, we want to protect people's rights and we say that

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we want people to share their experiences and bring up that vulnerability.

You will have a chance in the workshops to look at that in terms of what strengths I have in terms of inclusive practices and what are my blind spots in terms of inclusive goals.

Every workshop aligns to what the aim is for that interaction, what you want to put in practice for the session. So in the package we had about today, there is a list in terms of moving from inside, so from I know that, to action and putting it in practice.

We also have learning assistance programs where we can lend assistance to people, perhaps linking to TedX programs or online learning. Each program has that interactive component to it.

We will talk about skill sets going forward. This is the idea of the three skills for examining bias. The main learning underpinning the program is that we are all biased. It is based on our upbringing, who we are and our experiences. It is not necessarily about removing bias but bringing it to our awareness and to the conversation. It is a filter and lens that we can use to start solving problems and start moving to the principles.

The three skills for examining bias, which we will introduce it in understanding and in the introduction, this brought forward in understanding each of our workshops. So we will check assumptions, how we create new categories and consider multiple perspectives.

In terms of checking your assumptions, the joke we say is that you don't assume you are not judging. Once we challenge ourselves to think of what they may be, you can identify what they may be or what we may be thinking. So sometimes suspending judgement can be the first trigger.

I bring some scenarios for people in the first class and get people to write a challenge they have had with inclusivity or difference over the course of their career. Maybe something that has gone well that they could work through or something they may still have a challenge for.

Then we turn those into scenarios so people can use them that people have brought to light. Some of these are in some ways very vulnerable positions for people.

This is one I will share with as people go through their assumptions. "Your colleague comments

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I find it rude when you speak your own language. Everyone should speak only English."

That is a scenario someone has crafted for us and this is a lens that they have crafted for us. They have said I said this, it becomes a lens. So I will say that I said this. How will this influence someone's interaction with me when I say that they are rude? Am I assuming that they are doing this against me? And what information might I follow through on to check my assumptions? Then I would prepare myself for listening. This idea that I'm already understanding there are some assumptions. And then creating new categories. Asking myself questions to learn. I might ask myself, have attracted engage in conversation with these people? Why or why not? Am I assuming they cannot speak English? Why or why not? I might even understand more kinship, that we are naturally attracted people who are more like us.

If I was in the country where their first language was not English and I saw someone with the Canadian flag, I might go and sit beside them at the train station and start speaking to them in English. Would I then be rude or would I be doing something that is comfortable for me? This idea of creating new categories.

Then the last one is considering multiple perspectives. We are always rational from our own point of view. Think about other perspectives, consider the situation factors can act as though you don't have the bias and then remember that every person that these they are behaving rationally.

We have some walk through scenarios and as we go through quickly about this, it's not about the scenarios as much as the understanding we gain through them.

I will let Susan talk about this, this is a picture. How many people have done this before? OK, this idea of even breaking down the idea of equality or equal, that at first everyone has equal sizes of boxes to stand on. Their conversation might be further about the position of individuals and then how we might change the environment that individuals have.

These visuals are very helpful in terms of learning that. I will turn to Susan to also give you a window into an activity called 'What I Need'.

SUSAN WILLISIE:

Thank you. We will fly through this faster than I thought. Just being mindful of time.

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So what we do in this workshop activity is we invite all the participants to come to the front of the room and give their ideas based on the theme of what I need. Something that resonates them about that statement. Then we step back, read the next statement and so forth.

I will replicate it in a brief way with you today. I will read out some statements with you and let me know if you agree or disagree with that statement. Use some kind of gesture as I read them out.

Again, please indicate if:

I need to say good morning and socialise before starting my work. Thank you.

I need to get to work and to my activities and socialise before starting my work.

I will invite you to look around and doing this.

I need to have flexible work schedule. Thank you.

I need to get to know people and ask them questions.

I need to send free environment.

Any time in the day to pray.

I need an elevator to access upper floors.

I need gender neutral washrooms.

I need people to know that my age does not influence my skills.

I need to know that the environment is inclusive in order to feel included.

Thank you.

When we debrief it, we ask people to do is share what you noticed about the responses people shared with you. When we're in the circle, we take half steps to make sure people feel

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included.

And the very important part in the phrase is 'I need'. And it is something that you need, not just want. A funny example we use at the end is that "I need ice cream." And it's funny that a lot of people jump up and say they do. And actually, one of my colleagues does need that.

And it's true. A lot of people like ice cream. Who doesn't like ice cream? And my colleague Ann does not like ice cream. So what this raises is the idea that what people need and do not need does not make them difficult.

So, back to Sue. Thank you.

SUSAN GRANT:

We are tying it back to programs such as this not being broad reaching. They are indicators and catalysts to move us towards a vision of integrating, and a robust environment where everyone can be included, an attractive environment for our students and staff.

We will start to have a conversation about how to drive a culture of growth. It is capturing individuals with different needs that can bring that information forwards. We need creativity. We need people to be exceptional listeners. It is the listener that is most innovative because they understand that those needs of people that are individuals.

We can raise awareness of non-typical problems. Even one person moving forwards and engaging them on their dialogue about how they access services may open up more opportunities.

Building institutional mindfulness, being present, so stepping back from just the reactive service provider to someone that is really in the moment with what someone needs, maybe even feeling what that student or faculty staff member is experiencing.

We are also trying to remove barriers. Some of the barriers are the attitudinal barriers. It's not until you have a reflective response or understanding it through a different lens that it has that impact.

In our policies, having a lens, we have one participant from a program look at job applications or advertisers for masculine and feminine words. Saying, we try to attract more males at the

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university? There is the United Nations 'She' program. So really exploring about all the ways we are human.

And creating institutional partnerships, how we can bring forward partnerships and think about how we can bring forward more inclusive practices in higher education.

In the handout, I can refer to what we have provided here. There is a checklist of where to start as an individual, contributing community member. You can navigate that for yourself in terms of some ideas. It's basically reflective questions you can ask yourself.

And then if you turn the page, we have two next steps. One is that you do have an inclusivity program. The other is you don't have an inclusivity program. So those two are for you.

And then turning to page one more time, there is an 'inclusivity in action' page. We thought, in terms of mindful practices, how can you, for this afternoon and tomorrow, bring self-awareness and mindfulness in your everyday actions and behaviours?

Maybe identify some things you are doing that you want to continue doing, so your strengths and how you can talk to people about those inclusive practices.

I will give you a minute or two to circle or star those inclusive actions and practices, and some goals that you would like to be incorporating and practising. I will give you a minute to do that.

Does anyone need more time? To capture something.

In terms of one of the quotes that we use is this idea that if you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.

All of us have these ideas or new information that comes forward, everyone has a lens that makes a difference. We are really straining to maintain that difference and uniqueness and understanding of each and every one for us in the program.

We are going to open it up for questions you might have about our program. I think we have about 4 minutes.

SPEAKER:

Good morning, my name is Danny Flemming, from Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

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Congratulations for your presentation. I'm wondering if your workshop is for agriculture as well? And how would your principles apply here and what would they be?

SUSAN GRANT:

OK, I will start with the last part of the question, about what the principles would be. This was a broad, cross-campus program. We did not use the students for this. We used the faculty and staff members. We started with a few members and then brought it out forwards. We had our consultative members, and then we had our smaller programs for the wider community.

We had our department heads at the University of Waterloo and then the different faculties that are funded differently, depending on where they are sitting. So the departments are funded differently from faculty staff. I hope that answered the question.

No other questions? OK. Thank you very much.

SPEAKER:

Thank you, 'Supremes', for your presentation.

SUSAN GRANT:

Thank you.

SUSAN WILLISIE:

Thank you.

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