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Inclusive Pedagogy for Neurodivergent College Students

ACS
ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE SOUTH



AGENDA: 2:00-3:15 PM

- Welcome (5 min)
- Overview and Introduction to Inclusive Pedagogy (10 min)
- Considering Our Students (5 min)
- Quick Wins: Best Strategies (10 min)
- Breakout Group Discussion (25 min)
- Q & A (15 min)

Who I am

Neurodivergent



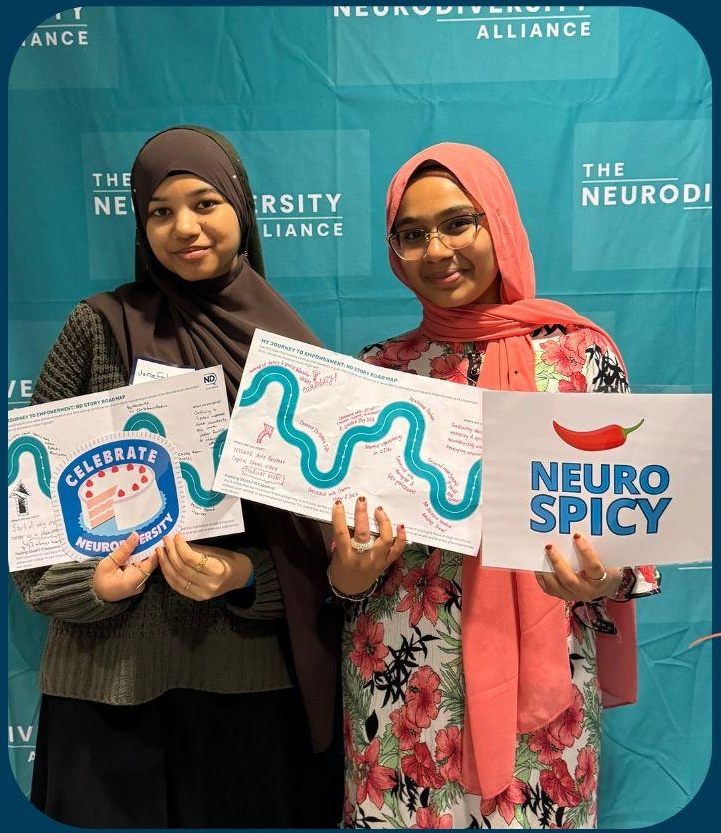
Carly
Priest

Carly Priest

National Program Director

- Neurodivergent
- Former Program Participant
- Former Educator
- Directs The ND Alliance's six national programs

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Neurodiversity Alliance Clubs

The nation's largest network of school-based neurodiversity clubs for college, graduate, and high school students.

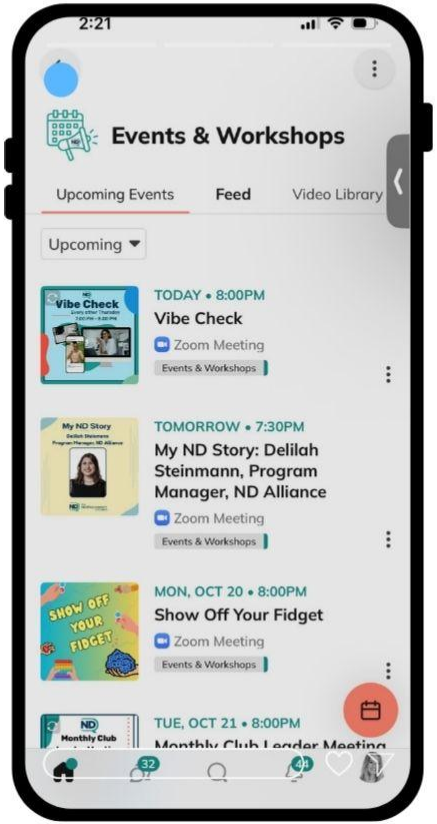
Get your club started today by registering with The ND Alliance!

The ND Alliance App & Online Platform

Online peer-to-peer network with community building events, resources, support, exclusive internship and scholarship opportunities, and more!

- Completely free to join
- ND resources and virtual programming for students 16-26

TheNDalliance.org/register →



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Scholarship applications are now open!

LEADING DISABILITY EMPLOYER



The ND Alliance is a Leading Disability Employer

The NOD Leading Disability Employer Seal honors companies setting the standard for disability inclusion.

NOD celebrates forward-thinking employers embracing disability inclusion as a business imperative and embedding proven practices to unlock talent, strengthen culture, and deliver results.

What is Inclusive Pedagogy?

Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching and learning approach that enhances instruction for all students by considering the universal and varying learning needs of each student.

Forms of Neurodivergence

that are common in our students

Dyslexia & Dysgraphia
Reading & Writing

Dyscalculia
Numbers & Math

Aphasia & Stuttering
Speech & Language

Autism
Social & Interpersonal

ADHD
Attention, Focus & Energy



Processing
Visual, Auditory & Sensory

Executive Functioning
Memory & Organization

Non-Verbal
Expressions, Cues & Tone

Others
Learning & Cognition





Considering Our Students

There are a lot of assumptions about our students that are inherent to the design of higher education in general.

Many are positive: competence, potential, value

But the design of higher education often assumes knowledge of unwritten rules and specific vernacular, don't have jobs, learn in similarly dominant ways, and feel/ know they belong.



As you designing learning or campus experience for students, you may already be considering how...

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- First-Generation
- Less socioeconomic access or advantage
- Pre-college exposure to academic rigor
- Socialized experiences of growing up Gen-Z

Intersect with and influence the experiences of your students in different ways

There are many pre-postsecondary experiences that influence student experience of success and thriving in college.

Are you considering:

- Age of diagnosis or if diagnosis is acquired prior to college?
- Attending In-State vs. Out of State?
- Primarily White Institution Status?
- Percieved affluence of the student body?
- Disclosure to school and use of accommodations
- Student support network to access resources?

Systemic biases in healthcare and cultural misconceptions about who can and cannot be neurodivergent contribute to delays in ND diagnosis, especially for:

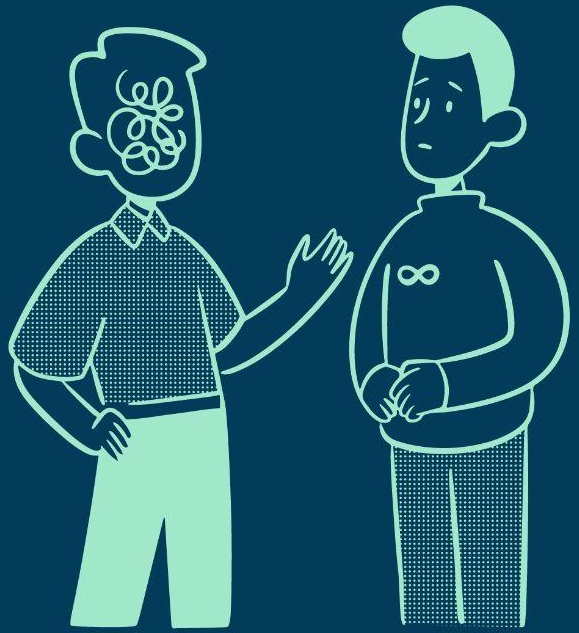
- **Students of color, especially black and brown students**
- **Girls or students assigned female at birth**
- **Students with less access to private wealth**

Stereotype threat:

The psychological pressure an individual internalizes in performance situations, when they are aware of a negative stereotype associated with their identity and that situation.

How does representation in your faculty reflect the diversity of students in your classes?

Neurodivergent/Disabled students, students of color at PWIs, and first-generation students report:



- **More concerns about being judged negatively and stereotyped based on identity**
- **Higher levels of uncertainty about their belonging at school and among peers**
- **Lower feelings of belonging overall at school and among peers [1]**
- **Higher levels of stress**

[1] Bonnette, R., Abramovich, S., Decker, A., & Fabiano, G. A. (2023). Building belonging for multiply marginalized neurodivergent students in STEM higher education. Proceedings of the International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS 2023), 870-873. https://repository.isls.org/bitstream/1/10346/1/ICLS2023_870-873.pdf

Hughes, D. (n.d.). The difference in the Black student experience at an HBCU versus a PWI [Review of the article Doing race in different places: Black racial cohesion on Black and White college campuses, by K. L. Bentley-Edwards & C. Chapman-Hilliard]. Race, Research & Policy Portal. Retrieved November 12, 2026, from https://rrapp.spia.princeton.edu/the-difference-in-the-black-student-experience-at-an-hbcu-versus-a-pwi/

“I’m not incapable of understanding it, you just have to present it to me in a different way.”

“If they knew what I’m hiding or masking, would they still think I should be here?”

Multiple Frameworks Underscore Inclusive Pedagogy:

1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
2. Active Learning Opportunities
3. Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) Framework



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible, inclusive, and challenging for every learner.

Ultimately, the goal of UDL is to support learner agency, the capacity to actively participate in making choices in service of learning goals.

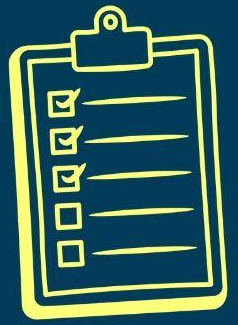
Don’t make assumptions about what skills our students walk in the door with as they transition to college and beyond.

Teaching soft skills, like communication and organization, is key!

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Sensory Overload

Social Interactions



Executive Functioning



Communication



Active Learning

Active learning is any pedagogical approach that engages students in meaningful activities and experiences to promote their involvement in the learning process.

Students might discuss concepts with peers, solve problems in class, or apply knowledge to real-world situations.

UCLA Teaching and Learning Center. (2025, October). Active learning. University of California, Los Angeles. https://teaching.ucla.edu/resources/teaching-guides/active-learning/

Watkins, C., Carnell, E., & Lodge, C. (2007). Effective Learning in Classrooms. London: Sage. p. 71
http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446211472

Active Learning Includes:

Watkins, Lodge, and Carnell (2007)

1. **Behavioral processes** that involve students in actively using and creating materials
2. **Cognitive activities** where students engage in actively thinking and constructing new meanings
3. **Social activities** wherein students collaborate with others as collaborators and resources.

UCLA Teaching and Learning Center. (2025, October). Active learning. University of California, Los Angeles. https://teaching.ucla.edu/resources/teaching-guides/active-learning/

Watkins, C., Carnell, E., & Lodge, C. (2007). Effective Learning in Classrooms. London: Sage. p. 71
http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446211472

Active Learning Resources:

UCLA Teaching & Learning Center

CRLT CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON LEARNING & TEACHING
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) Framework for Design

TILT Framework

First developed by Dr. Mary-Ann Winkelmes. Its best-known study, published in 2016 with the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), drew on data from about 1,800 students at seven Minority-Serving Institutions during 2014–2015, which showed that transparently designed assignments improved:

- Academic confidence
- Sense of belonging
- Awareness of their mastery of the skills that employers value most when hiring.

While the benefits for all students in the aggregate who received more transparency were statistically significant, the benefits for first-generation, low income and underrepresented students were greater, with a medium-to-large sized magnitude of effect.

Winkelmes, M.-A. (2015). Recent findings: Transparency in learning and teaching in higher education. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/Provost-TILT-ResearchSummary.pdf

Three areas of academic work to consider with students before they begin:

1. The work's purpose (including the knowledge students will gain, the skills they will practice, and the lifelong value of those to students).
2. Tasks associated with the work.
3. Criteria for evaluating the work's success, with examples of varied quality.

Winkelmes, M.-A. (2025). How Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) supports academic development. TILT Higher Ed. https://bdl2jezatgadvbda.public.blob.vercel-storage.com/pdf/How%20TILT%20Supports%20Academic%20Development.pdf

Use the TILT framework to develop transparent and clear assignments.

- Neurodivergent students consistently report that clear expectations help them to succeed and that they struggle with unclear or vague assignments (Hubrig and Barritt 2024; Stachowiak 2021).

- UNLV Studies showed that introducing just two TILT-designed assignments significantly improved student performance. Gains were greater for underserved students. For example, the mean retention gain for the group of 361 low-income students who received transparent instruction in their first year was 19.74% greater than the rest of their cohort after one year, and 19.52% greater than the rest of their cohort after 2 years (TILT Survey, 2015-2017; UNLV Data Warehouse, 2018).

Winkelmes, M.-A. (2015). Recent findings: Transparency in learning and teaching in higher education. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/Provost-TILT-ResearchSummary.pdf

TILT for student feedback: Leverage your institutional proximity to students in the liberal arts tradition

1. Write a positive or true statement to establish credibility, foster student's receptiveness, including:
    a. Goals of the assigned work that the student approached
    b. Strengths of the work
    c. Specific example(s) to offer evidence of the above statement(s)
    d. Comparison to the student's previous work that identifies a point of improvement or a pattern of error they corrected
2. Suggest strategies for improvement (1 or 2, prioritized, that student can apply to the next assignment)
    a. Specific examples (citing sections / page numbers / URLs / figure numbers / formulas from the students' work)
    b. Questions to push the student's thinking further
3. Optional: Identify a pattern of error in the students' work or a process that the student can control. Cite an authoritative reference that the student can access to learn how to correct the pattern.

Template for Pedagogically Useful Feedback on Students' Work



Quick Wins:

Establish Routine and Predictability in your Course

This helps students focus on the course learning goals, rather than on trying to understand implicit expectations.

- At the beginning of each class period, review an agenda and introduce the key ideas or elements of the day so that students can appropriately set their expectations.
- Begin and end class on time and build a sense of predictability throughout the semester, so students know what to expect in your course.
- If you'll be altering the course format for something like a field trip or special activity, preview this in advance

Brown University. (n.d.). Supporting neurodivergent students in the classroom. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved February 19, 2025, from https://sheridan.brown.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching/supporting-neurodivergent-students-classroom

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Provide structure and transparency in your course, particularly around assignments.

- Many neurodivergent students need high amounts of structure to be successful
- Using scaffolded assignments that break the components of the task into smaller parts can lessen the amount of executive function that students need to be successful.
  (Stachowiak 2021).

Brown University. (n.d.). Supporting neurodivergent students in the classroom. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved February 19, 2025, from https://sheridan.brown.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching/supporting-neurodivergent-students-classroom

Explain or model your expert thinking to the entire class

- Neurodivergent students report that their learning is enhanced when the instructor explains and models expert thinking in the field
- You can do this by working through a problem in front of the class, providing detailed examples, or by engaging in design alongside your students.
- This transparency helps students to see concretely how the discipline functions & gives them an idea of how to do it themselves. (Pfeifer et al. 2023).

Brown University. (n.d.). Supporting neurodivergent students in the classroom. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved February 19, 2025, from https://sheridan.brown.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching/supporting-neurodivergent-students-classroom

When using group work have clearly defined roles that students can opt in to.

- Providing defined roles can make the social tasks associated with group work easier.
- By allowing students to choose their roles, neurodivergent students who may struggle with reading aloud or writing can identify a role that works best for them

(Pfeifer et al. 2023).

Brown University. (n.d.). Supporting neurodivergent students in the classroom. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved February 19, 2025, from https://sheridan.brown.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching/supporting-neurodivergent-students-classroom



Breakout Group Activity 25 min

This activity is 25 minutes long

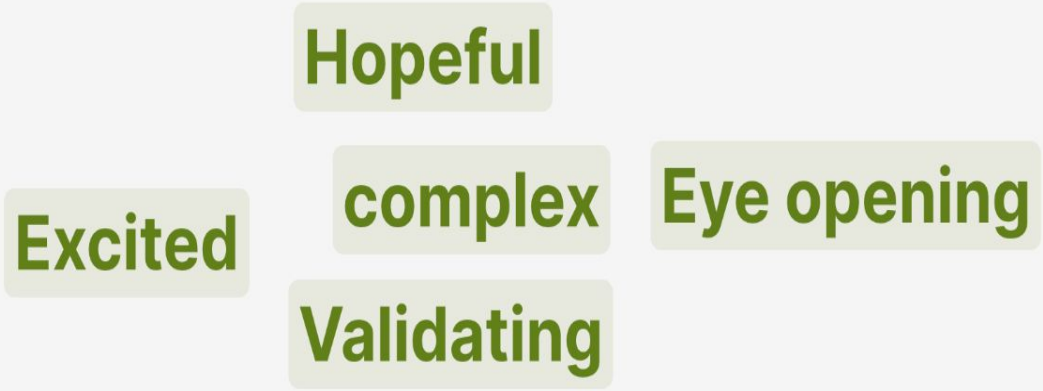
In this activity, you will work in breakout groups of about 4 people.

- You'll reflect on your current teaching practices independently
- You'll discuss your reflections as a group
- You'll create a group slide using a template

We will then do a quick share out with one brave group (time permitting)

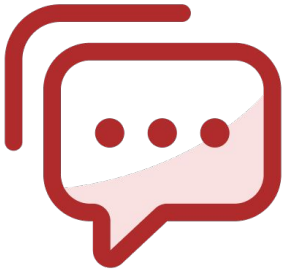
Join at
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In a word, describe how you feel about incorporating inclusive pedagogy into your professional practice



Q & A

Do not edit
How to change the design



Audience Q&A

Presenting with animations, GIFs or speaker notes? Enable our Chrome extension

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Inclusive Pedagogy Workshop Evaluation Survey

Thank you for your participation in the workshop!

Please scan the QR code or use the link below to take the workshop evaluation survey.

https://links.asu.edu/PedagogyEvalSurvey

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.
Responses are anonymous.

This session is part of a broader ACS initiative to support neurodivergent learners, made possible through generous support from the ECMC Foundation.