

Generative and Essential: Understanding the Role of Disability Studies in Creating More Accessible Learning Experiences and Assessments in Multimodal Writing Sabbatical Report

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Introduction

Purpose

The primary purpose of my sabbatical was to conduct research that would allow me to improve the experiences of students with disabilities in first year Writing classes which now require multimodal composition.

Integrating the needs of students with a wide range of disabilities into curriculum development, pedagogy, and assessment tools is becoming increasingly vital in the contemporary classroom. In their preface to *Embodied Rhetorics*, James Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson write, “one powerful reason why college professors, and especially compositionists who teach first-year students, should be interested in becoming more theoretically informed about disability is that they will have increasing numbers of disabled students in their classrooms” (ix).

While Lane does not collect demographic data directly around student disabilities, IR reports that 6% of our currently enrolled credit students officially utilize CAR’s services. Since we also know that some students with disabilities choose not to self-disclose their disability and/or to work directly with CAR for accommodations, it is likely that the actual percentage of our total student body who self-identify as having a disability, and whose educational experiences may therefore be impacted by that disability, is significantly higher than 6%. This likelihood is reinforced by national demographic statistics, as well. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) states on their [“Students with Disabilities”](#) page that “Nineteen percent of undergraduates in 2015–16 reported having a disability.” This is a dramatic increase from the 11 percent of undergraduates who had reported a disability in 2010-11, according to NCES data in their [“Characteristics and Outcomes of Students with Disabilities”](#) report. Based on this data, it seems likely that this number will continue to rise, especially at community colleges.

Given this increase in the percentage of students with disabilities--now nearly 1 in 5 students in the classroom *reporting a disability* according to the NCES data-- it seemed increasingly pressing to become more “theoretically informed about disability” so that I can better serve this demographic of students through the learning opportunities and assessments in my classroom.

Goals

How might we also transform environments so instead of erasing disability we can value it, allow it to be seen and experienced as generative and essential to meaning, instead of as essentially negative and negatable? --Jay Timothy Dolmage, Disability Rhetoric

The primary goal of my sabbatical, directly related to and inspired by the Dolmage quote above, was to understand the role of Disability Studies and the experiences of students served by Disability Service offices in order to create more accessible learning experiences and assessment processes/tools in Writing courses that integrated multimodal writing tasks.

As multimodal texts emerged at the heart of first-year Writing classes in light of the [2014 revisions](#) the WPA made to their recommended first-year Writing outcomes, I became increasingly aware that, while I can work to create accessible materials for my courses using concepts from Universal Design, it is much more difficult to craft multimodal assignments that ensure the *learning experiences* students have and the *assessment tools* I use to measure their learning are effective across a wide range of student abilities. Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Brenda Jo Brueggeman write in their introduction to *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*, “Writing is hard work; writing well is even harder. Add a disability to that and the work can easily become unmanageable, especially if students must do it all on their own” (8). In order to prevent students from doing “it all on their own,” I felt that I needed to enhance my own knowledge of Disabilities Studies and increase my understanding of the experiences of students with disabilities in the contemporary multimodal Writing classroom. I hoped that this would enable me to ensure that the learning experiences I’m creating for students in multimodal assignments and the assessment tools I’m using to measure their learning are as inclusive, fair, and equitable as possible.

Multimodal assignments can be especially challenging to students with disabilities because they require students to communicate in multiple modes simultaneously and effectively. Not only does composing in multiple modes present extra challenges to many students with disabilities who may find communicating effectively in some modes arduous, but it also makes it more difficult in some cases to help a student navigate these challenges because faculty must assess how well different modes of communication are working together. Often in Writing assignments designed to be inclusive, one option students are given is choosing to communicate their ideas in an alternate mode from strictly written text. For example, a deaf student whose first language is ASL may choose to include graphs and charts to communicate data rather than presenting the data in written sentences because they might be struggling with finding the appropriate words in academic English to summarize the data. However, in a multimodal text, the student may be required to use *both* written and visual modes simultaneously to communicate this information, and also assessed on their ability to effectively use *both* to create a single, cohesive text that effectively communicates to its intended audience.

A secondary goal of my sabbatical was both professional and deeply personal--to challenge my own ideas and conceptions about students/people with disabilities. The deeply ableist structures of the cultural/social/religious contexts of my upbringing, as well as of the institutions in which I was educated, have impacted the way I perceive people who have both visible and invisible disabilities. While I have been working to unpack my conscious biases toward students/people with disabilities for most of my teaching career, I have done so largely when and where these biases have intersected with my larger areas of interest and specialization such as queer studies, CRT, and intersectionality, thus allowing my biases to be challenged largely only within my own "comfort zones." I was also aware that many of the biases that I had about students/people with disabilities were so deeply ingrained in my understanding of the world that they were still dangerously in the realm of unconscious biases. Therefore I was not even able to identify them or how they might impact how I interact with, teach, and assess students with disabilities. While this was initially a secondary goal, I actually realized over the course of the sabbatical that the primary goal I listed above was not possible without a willingness to better understand and challenge my own ideas and concepts about students/people with disabilities.

Objectives

I had a range of objectives for this project both during and after the sabbatical term as outlined below.

During the Sabbatical

- Gain a deeper understanding of Disability Studies and its impact on the teaching of Writing through conducting a literature review.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of community college students with disabilities on the challenges of multimodal writing by administering surveys to students at a range of community colleges who are served by Disability Services to gather information about their experiences.
- Gain a deeper understanding of approaches to multimodal curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment that have been effective for students with disabilities by conducting interviews with Disability Services staff from a variety of community colleges
- Develop a list of guidelines for crafting multimodal Writing assignments and assessment approaches/tools based on my research that can be effective for a broad range of students, especially those with disabilities.

Post-Sabbatical

- Develop more equitable and inclusive multimodal assignments and assessment tools for all of my Writing courses.

- Share the knowledge gained in my sabbatical with colleagues in a Sabbatical report, Writing Program FPD workshops, and perhaps CCPD workshops.

Process and Changes

The original process that I had envisioned was a combination of secondary and primary research. My primary research was intended to gather information directly from students served by Disability Services Offices at community colleges that operate under the quarter system through the use of student surveys. I also planned to interview one or more of the staff members from the Disability Services office at each institution that participated in the research. Both the interviews and surveys were voluntary. The surveys were also anonymous, and the interviews confidential. As part of my preparation to engage in my primary research I sought and received IRB approval for both the surveys and the interviews.

My original goal within my primary research was to work with at least nine colleges. Having restricted my research to community colleges who work in the quarter system and teach academic Writing classes created its own challenges, but I felt it was vital to put these parameters in place in order to really be able to apply what I learned in my primary research to my own context at Lane. Community colleges differ in important ways from universities, and I feel the quarter system creates a series of unique challenges not present in the semester system, especially in terms of teaching Writing classes--an idea with which most Disability Services staff I interviewed agreed.

My planning research allowed me to identify a total of thirty seven potential community colleges in the U.S. which met my criteria. Since most Disability Services staff were not in their offices due to Covid, I relied on email to communicate. I reached out in one email to all colleges and then reached out with a second email a few weeks later to any colleges who did not reply at all to my initial email. In the end, I had seven colleges who initially committed to participating in both the interviews and the surveys prior to the start of the project. However, due to staffing shortages and changes that happened between our initial communication in Summer 2021 and the start of the research in Fall 2021, one college was forced to withdraw totally from the project. Another college participated in staff interviews, but due to an administrative change at the college that impacted institutional research, the college withdrew their approval/support for the survey the day before it was scheduled to be sent out to students. So, in the end, I got to interview Disability Services staff from six colleges and five colleges were able to distribute surveys to their students.

By far the most challenging part of this research was the student surveys. Collecting data from student surveys is always challenging in my experience. However, because the sabbatical occurred during the context of Covid and remote/distant learning, there were many more challenges than I or the Disability Services staff I worked with anticipated. It is not surprising then that there was uneven student survey participation across the five participating schools. One school had zero student respondents, one

school had a single respondent, one had two respondents, one had twelve respondents, and another had thirty. So while I found the information from individual student survey responses are quite valuable and important to my own growth, knowledge, and learning as a faculty member, limited student participation impacts the potential usefulness of the data collected.

The interview process was much more successful. I got to interview at least one staff member from each Disability Services office, and for several, I was given the opportunity to interview two people. I emailed all participants the questions in advance of the interview, so in many cases interviewees had actual data and statistics ready to share with me in response to some questions. I found the interviews to be really eye-opening. As is often the case with support services, students more frequently share their disability-related experiences openly and honestly with the staff of the Disability Services office than they do with individual faculty or in research studies. I think this is especially true for students with disabilities because until recently people with disabilities were kept out of higher education, except as objects *to be studied* by those who were non-disabled. The Disability Services staff were thus able to share perspectives with me in their interviews that did not exist in secondary sources and, in some cases, even in the student survey results from their schools.

The secondary research was intended to provide me with a context for Disability Studies and its trajectory over time. While I had previously read along the edges of some Disability Studies theory when it overlapped with my other areas of focus/interest, I did not have a clear sense of the current ideas, practices, and applications of Disability Studies or of the development of the field. I felt I needed this context to more fully understand the results of my primary research as well as to better serve students with disabilities.

My secondary research process went mostly as planned. Going into my sabbatical I wanted to familiarize myself with some of the key tenets of Disability Studies (DS) in order to better understand the academic study of disability over time, as well as the experiences of people with disabilities in academia and beyond. Given that I had almost no background in DS at the start of my sabbatical, it was important to me to engage with texts authored by some of the more prominent DS scholars as well as texts viewed as being formative to the field. These factors heavily impacted the [final reading list](#) I compiled for my secondary research. I chose to focus on books by authors who were mentioned frequently in the preliminary research I conducted to compose my sabbatical proposal as well as anthologies of essays that were either considered key in the field and/or were focused on topics within DS that intersected with the disciplines of Composition and Rhetoric.

Before engaging with my secondary sources, I developed three inquiry questions that I hoped to answer during my research. These questions were as follows:

- How has the field of Disability Studies developed and changed over time?
- Where/how does Disability Studies overlap with the fields of Composition and Rhetoric?

- How can Disabilities Studies inform my work with students?

I did make one significant change in my approach to the literature review as a result of what I learned from the secondary sources. This change, which I talk about in more detail in the introduction to my literature review, was making the decision to push back against one of the common conventions of the genre. In most literature reviews direct quotes from individual authors are used sparingly if at all. But in the literature review I composed at the end of my sabbatical I chose to frequently include direct quotes from the authors of my secondary sources.

Results and Outcomes

Survey Results

Given the difficulties of administering and getting students to participate in the survey which resulted in a very limited number of student participants at all but one institution, I decided to focus on what I might be able to learn from the combined student responses across institutions rather than looking at results from individual institutions. I have made the full aggregate survey results available in both [visual format](#) or [text format](#).

My main takeaways from the student survey data include:

- A majority of students who replied to the survey (75%) report that multimodal assignments have contributed to their learning in college. Given that we are now required to assign and assess multimodal assignments in first year Writing classes, I found this statistic to be reassuring in the sense that it indicates that such assignments often support student learning in both Writing classes and beyond and help prepare students for the kinds of assignments and projects they will encounter in their coursework in other disciplines.
- While the discipline with the highest reported percentage of multimodal assignments was Writing, as I'd expected, I was pleasantly surprised to see that students reported that multimodal assignments were given across nearly all disciplines. Given that first year Writing classes are in part intended to help prepare students for assignments/projects they will encounter across their college careers, the reports of wide-spread use of multimodal assignments across disciplines suggests that the multimodal requirements in first year Writing classes align with larger college expectations for students.
- While I had expected to see significant percentages of students required or permitted to use the Linguistic/Alphabetic and Visual modes in multimodal assignments, students reported that Aural, Gestural, and Spatial modes were also significantly engaged in their multimodal assignments, with students indicating that all three of those modes were required or permitted in more than 35% of their multimodal assignments. This reinforces the importance of encouraging students to familiarize themselves with communicating through as many modes as possible in their first-year Writing courses.
- I was surprised to see that the majority of student respondents (55.6%) had been assigned seven or more multimodal assignments at the time they completed the

survey. Given that most students attending community college are likely to only be in their first or second year of college classes, I was not expecting students to have such extensive experience with completing multimodal assignments. Only three (6.7%) students reported not having been asked to complete any multimodal assignments to date in their college courses. This survey result reinforced the alignment of the multimodal requirement in first-year Writing with expectations of students beyond our Writing classes. Students' extensive experience with multimodal assignments also increased the relevance of their responses to other questions in the survey that focused on the intersection between multimodal assignments and their learning.

Interviews

My main takeaways from the interviews I conducted with Disability Services staff include:

- The Medical Model of disability is one that continues to be pervasive on college campuses, especially in terms of the ways that faculty view students with disabilities. The attachment to this model, especially among faculty, tends to persist even as Disability Services offices strive to transition their services away from a basis in the Medical Model toward a basis in the Social Model.
- While most Disability Services offices have already or are in the midst of moving away from the Medical Model toward a Social Model of disability in their approach to services, this transition is often complicated. One complication is, as noted above, the pervasiveness of faculty relying on the Medical Model to frame their understanding of disability and accommodations. Another factor is that institutional responsibility to comply to ADA, which is rooted in the Medical Model and providing reasonable, individual accommodations, can make it difficult in both a practical and legal sense to shift away from the Medical Model toward the Social Model. This is in large part because the Social Model views disability as resulting from social and institutional structures rather than from individual medical diagnoses and impairments, and therefore requires institutions to think beyond individual accommodations to support students with disabilities. One additional factor that complicates this shift is how deeply embedded the language of the Medical Model is in many of the documents, policies, and procedures used by colleges and Disability Services offices. Several Disability Services staff I interviewed mentioned the difficulty of wading through this language and trying to ensure that the college's policies and procedures, as well as the language for their office's internal documents, are not continuing to evoke the Medical Model.
- Covid significantly impacted the types of accommodations that students need and also, in most cases, increased the number of students seeking accommodations. However, this increased need has not necessarily been met with an increase in staff/resources in Disability Services offices, making it increasingly difficult for Disability Services offices to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are being met. This increase in need has often also not been met with a willingness of institutions to consider and address the institutional barriers that exist for many or all students with disabilities.

- Disability is often not considered as part of DEI initiatives on college campuses. This makes it more difficult for students with disabilities to find belonging and community in college and can also reinforce the message that college is not a place they should be or in which they can succeed. It also often makes it difficult for Disability Services office staff to advocate for students in DEI spaces/initiatives on their campuses, which are often the places where conversations about how to identify and address institutional barriers take place.

Recommended Practices

Based on the information gathered in the survey, my interviews with Disability Services staff, and my secondary research, I compiled [a list](#) of recommended practices for developing multimodal assignments as well as for the development of assessment tools and overall course assessment.

Syllabus Statement

As I processed what I was learning during my sabbatical, I realized that I needed to craft a new, more inviting syllabus statement for students with disabilities. The first thing I rethought was the title of the statement. My former language had been “Accommodation Statement.” I can now see that this title is in alignment with the Medical Model and, in light of what I had learned in my research, I realized that alone could alienate many students with disabilities who enrolled in my classes, especially those who may have invisible and/or undisclosed disabilities. I changed the title to “Access for All Students.” Additionally I revised the wording of the statement in an attempt to make it clear that I saw it as *my* responsibility to work with *all* of my students to ensure that my classes are as accessible as possible, rather than the responsibility lying solely with the student to “prove” they needed accommodations in my courses and then to seek them. As I worked to revise the language in my statement, I experienced the tension that had been noted in many of my interviews with Disability Services staff between the necessity to include the compliance language required by ADA, while still trying to strike a welcoming tone that made it clear that I was willing to work with students beyond the low bar of legal compliance. My current syllabus statement is as follows:

Access for All Students

I believe that doing my best to make courses accessible to all students is part of my responsibility as a faculty member. I will work with you and the Center for Accessible Resources (CAR), as appropriate, to ensure this course is accessible for you. If you need support or assistance because of a disability, you may be eligible for academic accommodations through the Center for Accessible Resources (CAR). **To request assistance or accommodations related to disability, contact the CAR** at (541) 463-5150 (voice), 711 (TTY), or AccessibleResources@lanecc.edu (email). If you feel you may need extra support in this course, please schedule an appointment to meet with me as early in the term as possible. Meeting individually with students to discuss your needs and/or accommodations allows me to figure out how to best collaborate with you

to provide you with support and connect you with the resources you will need to be successful.

Literature Review

I crafted a [literature review](#) based on my secondary research that reflected what I learned from engaging with DS scholarship.

Personal Reflection

Context

If we are to disrupt ableist thinking and practices, we must first reflect upon ourselves. No matter how deeply committed we are to inclusive ideals, we live within a culture where ableism seems right and natural. We are all susceptible to thinking and acting in ableist ways--no matter how informed we think that we are.
--Jane W. Valle and David T. Conner, *Rethinking Disability*

This sabbatical impacted me more than I could have ever imagined. While I intentionally chose a focus that would challenge me not only academically and professionally, but also personally, the personal impacts were deep and complex. In fact, I am writing this report long after I had planned to, as it took me months after the completion of my sabbatical to feel ready to try to process and articulate what I learned during this project.

While at the start of this sabbatical I realized that as someone who had been raised and educated in ableist culture I was prone to ableist ideas and held both conscious and unconscious biases about people with disabilities, I could not have even begun to predict how deeply my own experiences, background, and education had ingrained ableist ideas in every aspect of my worldview, and, by extension, my pedagogical practices. The depth of my ableist worldview was an emotional and humbling realization during this research. But also a vital one.

At the start of this sabbatical I identified as temporarily able-bodied. One of the first and most personal ideas that was directly challenged by my sabbatical research was this identity marker. I have been wearing prescription glasses since I was eight--well after I actually needed them--and I am unable to function without my glasses due to severe nearsightedness that makes even the most basic tasks nearly impossible without the aid of my corrective lenses. In addition to having severely impaired vision, I have also navigated depression and anxiety for most of my life, sometimes at a level of severity that impacts my everyday functioning. But I had never, prior to doing the research for this sabbatical, allowed myself to recognize that I might indeed be "disabled" as a result of either of these factors. I also realized that this lack of awareness is likely a result of the way I was socialized to think about disability as a child.

I was raised in an impoverished, deeply religious community that highly valued manual labor and viewed idleness as being quite literally evil--the devils' hands at work as they

say. My community also largely understood any form of disability, especially physical ones that might prevent you from being able to engage in manual labor, as some sort of divine punishment for sins committed, which I am now aware aligns with the moral/religious model of disability. In my community your worth was determined by your ability to produce, be industrious, and push your physical body to the limit--all things that were also necessary for basic survival in this context. The only explanation viewed as logical for having a body that was unable to participate in manual labor was God's wrath-- His desire for you to suffer, be ostracized from your community, and ultimately to die because you lacked the ability to engage in the work that was necessary for survival.

Mental illnesses were also viewed as a punishment and a result of God's wrath in my childhood community. However, unlike physical disabilities which were quite difficult to hide in most contexts in a community committed to manual labor, mental illness was hidden whenever possible and, when it could not be hidden, rarely acknowledged formally. It was almost as though people believed that if you named mental illness it might somehow become contagious and also "infect" you. Generally if mental illness was spoken about at all it was through the lens of inspiration porn to laud someone as being exceptional for succeeding by "overcoming" their mental illness. These inspirational exceptions were always explained as being a direct result of God's forgiveness that resulted from the deep devotion of the mentally ill individual and/or the prayers for healing their community offered on their behalf.

While I physically and spiritually left this context decades ago and have worked hard to grow, learn, and develop as a person and professional, one thing I quickly realized during this sabbatical was how firmly and unconsciously my understanding of disability continued to be rooted in the mentality that surrounded me as a child. This was true despite the learning and experiences in which I'd engaged in my adult life and my liberal political leanings. As Sins Invalid writes in the Foreword to *Skin, Tooth, and Bone*, "Many who identify as progressive or Left have yet to root out their own ableism... These ableist beliefs defy reality testing, but they persist" (5). I also began to realize the many ways in which the medical model of disability that surrounded me as a student, person, and professional in the years since I'd left my hometown could be easily made to align with the views of disability prevalent in my childhood community, thus allowing me to unconsciously reinforce those ideas and the way they caused me to view people and students with disabilities.

Becoming cognizant of these connections during my sabbatical was wildly uncomfortable and humbling, both personally and professionally. On a personal level I was made to rethink some of my own identity markers and the ways in which I had previously insisted on continuing to see myself as temporarily able-bodied even in the face of both physical and mental health conditions that impact my everyday life, and the obstacles created by societal structures and views of these conditions that I have had to navigate. On a professional level I was forced to reflect on and own the harm I had likely done across my career to students with disabilities as a result of a combination of my unconscious biases and the Medical Model that framed most of the approaches I was

trained and encouraged to take in “accommodating” students with disabilities in my classes. In many cases I had actually enacted this harm while fully believing that my approach was supporting students and their learning.

Impacts on My Work

Engaging in this sabbatical has already had significant impacts in my work at Lane and will continue to do so well into the future. I made a few immediate changes to my syllabi upon returning to campus. As mentioned earlier, one change was that I revised my syllabus statement and reframed it as “Access for All Students.” I also made two significant changes to my grading approach that were largely informed by what I learned in this sabbatical.

The first change is that I eliminated all grades that were associated with participation, in-class activities, peer response, and attendance. My research indicated that these are the areas that most often have negative impacts on the grades and successful completion of courses for students with disabilities for a variety of reasons, including the impact that disabilities can have on a student’s ability to regularly attend class and effectively engage in a classroom space and activities that are likely to be framed by ableist assumptions and architecture/design. These are also the areas in which a faculty member’s own biases are most likely to impact how they perceive, and thus grade, the quality of students’ work and engagement. During the time I was working on my sabbatical I also happened to have attended several webinars and conferences online that featured Joe Feldman talking about his book [Grading for Equity](#). Feldman’s ideas helped me to clearly see that assigning grades for participation, in-class activities, and attendance resulted in students earning grades that did not accurately reflect their learning or progress toward the course goals. This reinforced the idea that came up in conversations with Disability Services staff that sometimes students with disabilities cannot earn passing grades in courses even when they feel they have met the course goals because of the impacts of their disabilities. In my classes students’ grades are now earned exclusively through assignments and tasks that can be completed outside of class time with extra support as needed and are graded using rubrics whose criteria are linked directly back to the course goals. These rubrics also clearly state the expectations of performance for each level of achievement, which some Disability Services staff I interviewed noted that students with cognitive or learning disabilities often find especially important in guiding their learning.

The second change that I made was instituting a minimum grading policy. This change was also informed by a combination of what I learned during my sabbatical about the experiences of students with disabilities as well as points raised by Feldman about the reality that the 100-point grading system is skewed toward failure, with the majority of points devoted to failing grades. As I talked to Disability Services staff and engaged with Disability Studies Theory, it became clear that completion at both the course and degree level is less frequent for students with disabilities than those without. One barrier to completion is that often a student misses a single assignment or test due to the impact of their disability on their daily life, and the resulting zero that they receive on that assignment makes them unable to bring their overall grade back up to a passing level,

even if they have actually met the course goals through completion of their other assignments. Feldman also makes similar observations about the general student population being unable to recover from a single missed assignment/test in a course. Since student's grades in my courses are now calculated solely based on their progress toward course goals, instating a minimum grading policy will help to mitigate the impact of one missed assignment, while still ensuring that students who earn passing overall grades in the course have indeed met the course goals. The current minimum grading policy on my syllabus is as follows:

Minimum Grading

Overview: In an attempt to make grading more equitable and focused on student success rather than failure, this class will follow a minimum grading practice. This means that the lowest possible score you can earn on an assignment that is submitted but does not meet assignment expectations is 55%, and assignments that are not submitted will receive a minimum "F" grade of 45% in the grade book.

Rationale: On a 100 point scale, the range of 0-59 points is generally considered an "F" grade, while grades A-D are collectively represented by just 40 points (60-100 points). This unfairly skews the grading system toward failure rather than success by making passing grades only 40% of the grading scale and failing grades 60% of the scale. It also often ensures that if a student misses one assignment in the course, earning a score of 0 points for that assignment, they will not be able to earn a passing overall grade, even if they achieve the stated course goals. This minimum grading practice represents an attempt to ensure that overall grades more accurately reflect what you have learned in the course and are focused on success rather than failure.

My sabbatical also prompted me to make some adjustments to my Late Work Policy. While I had never subjected students needing to use the Late Work Policy to any grade deduction or required students to explain why they needed an extension, the wording of my policy had not previously stated these things explicitly. Also the specific amount of time that students would be granted for extensions was not clearly stated in the previous version of the policy, although I have always given standard 24-48 hour extensions for late work. My research made it clear that it is important and helpful for students to know this information up front rather than finding out only when they need an extension. In the past, my Late Work Policy had not also had minimum grading as a back-up if students still could not complete the work for credit even with a deadline

extension¹. The current wording of my Late Work Policy is as follows, with the changes resulting from my sabbatical represented in italics:

Late Work

If you cannot submit work on time for any reason, please use this policy to request an extension. Only late work that follows all steps of the procedure below will be accepted for credit.

1. If there is a reason you cannot submit the final draft of an assignment by the due date/time, please contact me via email as soon as possible to request an extension on the deadline. *You do not need to disclose the reason that you need an extension unless you wish to do so.* The extension request must be made no later than the end of the day on which the assignment was due.
2. I will respond to your email and provide you with a new due date/time as a deadline. *In most cases you will be granted a 24 hour extension on the original due date/time. In the case of longer assignments, you may be granted a 48 hour extension from the original due date/time.*
3. Submit your assignment correctly on Moodle by the new due date/time. *Late assignments submitted using this policy are eligible for up to full credit, as there is no grade deduction for late work.*

In addition to the changes I have already made to my syllabus and teaching and assessment practices, I plan to keep making additional changes to my pedagogy over the coming academic year and beyond. One of these ongoing efforts will be to increase my intentionality around designing courses that are increasingly accessible to all of my students.

The most liberating thing my sabbatical helped me to understand on a professional level is that Universal Design (UD) is an aspiration and a process, not a destination. This makes engaging in the practice of UD to feel less intimidating and also helped me to see the value in even the small changes we might make to a course at one time. So many of the UD conversations I'd been witness to and part of prior to my sabbatical, as well as accessibility software I've worked with in platforms such as Moodle, framed UD in a way that made it feel to me like a destination or checklist. This seemed to imply that courses should be rebuilt to be fully accessible to everyone all at once using a UD model. Given how embedded ableism is in our culture and the reality that entire file

¹ I feel it is important to note that my classes are built using a scaffolded project model, so students must complete the work in the order it is assigned for specific assignments to be meaningful and help students achieve the course goals they are designed to assess. Also each assignment is designed to create the foundation for the next assignment, so students are less likely to be successful on later assignments if they don't complete earlier assignments in a timely manner. I offer extensions of 24-48 hours because it isn't possible for me to give students lengthy extensions for deadlines on individual assignments without causing students to fall significantly behind on all remaining work in the course and compromising their ability to meet the course goals and successfully complete the course.

formats such as PDFs cannot be made easily accessible, the idea of using UD in this context felt overwhelming, and it seemed that failure was the only possible outcome.

The realization that UD isn't a destination but rather a journey/process has inspired me to make continual improvements to my teaching practices, assignment design, assessments, and Moodle pages and class documents each time I teach a course. Understanding UD as a process will allow me to focus on revising specific assignments or sections of a course at a time, which will provide me with a way to focus my energy/efforts on areas that seem most problematic for students. This targeted approach will also allow me to more clearly assess which changes I've made are actually improving students' experiences and which ones might not be working as well as I'd hoped. As Margaret Price writes, "We must try, think, query, flex, observe, listen, and try again. And when we are too tired, we must be willing to let it go for a while. Access is not going to happen overnight" (101). Price goes on to offer what for me is perhaps the most important reminder on my own UD journey, "I cannot anticipate the needs and styles of every student who will walk into my classroom. Nor can I become a fundamentally different kind of teacher than I am" (102). But what I can do is commit to the UD journey.

I always tell my students when they begin their research that if they are fully engaging in an inquiry process that their research will change their understanding of the topic at hand and often take them on unexpected journeys that will transform their previous relationship to their chosen topic. This sabbatical was one of the most significant examples of inquiry transforming my relationship to a topic that I have ever experienced. It reminded me how humbling and terrifying genuine inquiry can be as it pushes up against and reveals previously unconscious biases you hold about a topic. This reminder helps me relate more easily to my students and the emotions they may be experiencing as they embark on college-level inquiry in my Writing classes as novices. The longer I teach the more disconnected I become from my own undergraduate experiences through both time and experience. Having a vivid reminder of the intense emotions that can accompany allowing inquiry to transform your understanding of a topic has increased my empathy for students engaged in their own inquiry processes in my courses. It has also made me realize that I need to build more opportunities into my classes, especially Writing 122, for students to process their learning as they are conducting their research. This will help create a space for them to work through what their research is revealing to them and the ways in which the knowledge they are gaining may be challenging their previous understanding of and relationship to their topic.

Impacts on My Division

It is clear from the student survey results that community college students are already being asked to engage in multimodal assignments in all of the disciplines that fall within the Arts and Humanities Division, and I know from my previous work as the college's Core Learning Outcomes Coordinator that many of my division colleagues assign multimodal assignments in their courses at Lane. The results of my sabbatical research and the [list of recommended practices](#) for multimodal assignments based on my

research I spoke about above can help guide not only Writing faculty, but faculty across the Arts and Humanities to craft multimodal assignments that are accessible to more students and provide rich learning experiences for students with disabilities.

I can also see potential for increased collaboration between Writing faculty and faculty in other disciplines in my division to work together to craft multimodal assignments for students in a range of classes. Because we are such a large and diverse Division, we are composed of many disciplines, and each of our disciplines tends to focus more heavily on different modes. For example, Writing and Literature faculty are most often focused on alphabetic/linguistic mode. Communication studies often focus more on aural and gestural modes, Music on aural mode, Drama on spatial and gestural modes, and Fine Arts on visual and spatial modes. So collaboration across the division in crafting multimodal assignments could result in more effective learning experiences for our students by allowing us to share assignment ideas as well as the struggles we have seen students face within the modes where each of our disciplines tend to focus.

Such collaboration could also help strengthen ongoing efforts of some faculty toward an increase in writing across the curriculum in our division through the development of multimodal assignments. It may also encourage Writing faculty to think about the now-required multimodal assignments in our Writing classes in more creative ways and encourage us to consider how what we are doing in our Writing classes might align with work our colleagues across the division are asking students to complete in their other courses.

Impacts on College

One of the things that became clear to me in my research is the degree to which disability is often overlooked, ignored, or actively excluded from DEI conversations. Lauren Shallish notes that “[a]s colleges and universities have acknowledged the category of disability as the result of hard-fought civil rights campaigns and federal legislation, the close proximity to medicalized discourses has kept this category apart from other work that has been designed to address diversity in higher education” (28).

The exclusion of disability from diversity-focused work can often mask the ableism that is embedded within the structures of our college, disallowing us the opportunity to see and address the obstacles created by this ableism. As Dolamage notes, “The programs and initiatives that are developed in the name of diversity and inclusion do not yet deliver tangible means of addressing the ableism inherent in higher education” (26). Excluding disability from our DEI conversations works to further exclude those with disabilities from our classrooms, institution, and community. This results not only in harmful effects for those with disabilities, but is also a loss for all of us, as the knowledge, skills, and experiences of people with disabilities are excluded from our collective work, hampering DEI efforts. I realized throughout my sabbatical the degree to which I have also been guilty of not actively considering and including the ideas, needs, and perspectives of people with disabilities and/or the patterns of institutional ableism when engaging in DEI work.

As a long-standing member of Lane's Diversity Council, since returning from sabbatical I have already begun trying to find ways to ensure that the perspectives, needs, and ideas of people with disabilities are included in our Council conversations as well as in larger DEI-related projects such as CCPD and the Equity Lens. More directly and consistently engaging the ideas and perspectives of those with disabilities in our DEI work could be transformative for the college, especially as the number of students with disabilities enrolled in college is steadily increasing. For as Sean Zdenek writes, "When we leave out disabled people and disabled perspectives... we reinscribe the assumption that only nondisabled people matter, that disability is marginal" (13). As Lane works to respond to the ever-changing needs of the community which we serve we must embrace the experiences and perspectives of students, staff, and community members with disabilities as part of our conversations around diversity. Kim and Aquino assert that "viewing disability as a characteristic of diversity and examining how it intersects with other diversity memberships may not only share revealing information related to the potential salience of diversity identities, but also elucidate the role of disability in overall identity development, self-perception, and success in college" (xii). Doing so will also help the college more deeply align to its Core Value of Diversity.

Impacts on Discipline

Given that multimodal assignments are now a core component of first year Writing classes, the results of my sabbatical research are deeply relevant to my discipline. It was actually the changes made by my discipline to the WPA's first year Writing outcomes that prompted my desire to take this sabbatical. Even beyond first year writing, the discipline of Composition is increasingly moving toward a focus on multimodality.

While it is clear from the results of the student survey that multimodal assignments are indeed being assigned across a wide range of disciplines and that students do find multimodal assignments valuable to their learning experiences, it is also clear that many students with disabilities may find multimodal assignments more challenging to complete. I think we need to conduct further research within the discipline to more fully understand the nuances and complexities of how students with disabilities are engaging with and learning from multimodal assignments. I see this sabbatical as a starting point to further inquiry in my discipline about how multimodal assignments can be made more accessible to students with disabilities in order to foster their learning and how our assessment tools can be crafted to more accurately assess the learning of all students engaged in multimodal assignments and projects.

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Compiled List of Documents Linked Within Report

- [Sabbatical Final Reading List](#)
- [Student Survey Results in Visual Format](#)
- [Student Survey Results in Text Format](#)
- [Recommended Practices](#)
- [Sabbatical Literature Review](#)