Re-conceptualizing Disability in Higher Education
Using a Social Model Lens for Equity and Success

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URSINUS COLLEGE LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

Ursinus College respectfully acknowledges that our campus rests on Lenapehoking, the ancestral and spiritual homelands of the following five nations: Delaware Tribe of Indians, Delaware Nation, Eelūnaapèewii Lahkèewiit (Delaware Nation at Moraviantown), Stockbridge-Munsee Community, and Munsee-Delaware Nation (Ontario).

Our community carries names derived from the Lenape language - names holding spiritual and cultural meaning while also bearing the remembrance of the systematic removal of the Lenape people over 250 years ago by European colonial powers, whose legacy still reinforces and benefits from the Lenape’s disenfranchisement.

Ursinus College commits to collaboration, representation, and inclusion as we work together with the Lenape people to bring about healing and reconciliation between and among all our communities.
Nothing has ever been achieved by the person who says, “It can’t be done.”
- Eleanor Roosevelt
THE LEADERSHIP THAT MATTERS TO US

Heather Lobban-Viravong, PhD.
Transformative, Service-Oriented
Leads with: Integrity, Transparency, Honesty, & Love

Malala Yousafzai
Embodiment of youth activism:
courageous, loving, and unwavering
Because she made a fuss, Judy Heumann made everyone's life better.
LEARNING GOALS

• Understand the foundation of Ursinus’ leadership model and the connection to social model of disability
• Define models of disability in higher education
• Identity key features of implementation of social model of disability
• Review barriers to success and areas of success for implementation of social model
What are the concerns facing higher education when it comes to the success and persistence of students?
HISTORY OF DISABILITY
what we need to know
LAWS THAT GOVERN DISABILITY PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

• Section 504
• Title II of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act 1990)
• Updated ADAAA (Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008)

CREATED TO PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS
"To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered..." (ada.gov)
MODELS OF DISABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Social
Medical
Functional
What do you know about the Medical Model of Disability?
The Medical Model of Disability

Is housebound

Needs help and carers

Confined to a wheelchair

Has fits

Can't walk

Is sick

Can't get up steps

Looking for a cure

Can't walk

Can't see or hear

The problem is the Disabled person

This is a diagram of the traditional Medical Model of Disability, which the Social Model was developed to challenge.

What are the consequences of the Medical Model?

Students with disabilities may feel...

• Socially excluded
• Undervalued

**Let’s quickly recap about the state of higher education and what our students, staff, faculty are faced with**
What do you know about the Social Model of Disability?
The Social Model of Disability states that the oppression and exclusion people with impairments face is caused by the way society is run and organised.
Exclusion: “Fixing the Person”

• Specialist treatments
• Inaccessible spaces
• Different curriculum
• 1:1 supports
• Ableism

Inclusion: “Dismantling the Barriers”

• Integrating community wide supports
  • Accessible spaces
  • Standard but flexible curriculum
  • Distributing resources
  • Assuming capacity
Can we implement universal design and break barriers for students \textit{without} the social model?
KEY FEATURES OF SOCIAL MODEL WITHIN DISABILITY SERVICES

Intentional removal of barriers
• Attitudinal
• Environmental
• Institutional
• Communication
Dismantling Attitudinal Barriers

• Defining and discussing ableism
• Including disability focus during MLK Reflection Weeks
  • View disability as diversity/culture
• Discussing universal design in the classroom with faculty
  • Highlight faculty ‘champions’ of inclusive and equitable design
• Collaborating with key stakeholders: Sustainability & IT
  • Accessibility is part of everyone’s work
Dismantling Environmental Barriers

• Connection & collaboration with Facilities is KEY
• Decreased use of typical doorknobs
• Increased awareness of lighting
• Increased signage
• Collaborative and accessible classroom design (facilities, registrar, dean’s office)
  • Example: Worked closely with dean’s office during time of COVID; had outside tents; included options, fans, etc.
Dismantling Institutional Barriers

• Moved disability services under division of inclusion and community engagement
• Re-conceptualized documentation guidelines
  • AHEAD provides a model for a foundation
Dismantling Communication Barriers

• Microphones at all campus events; extra tech or event person to pass microphone
• Captioning
• Various ways to connect to build communication (virtual, in-person)
• Electronic versions of materials
• Training on writing succinctly (e.g., emails-limiting technical language and long sentences)
Our world lives in the medical model

We “need” proof (but the burden of proof is too high for some)

Deviance model of disability

Limited resources equals increased documentation

BARRIERS TO OUR SUCCESS
AREAS OF SUCCESS

Success Area #1
Being under the Division of Inclusion and Community Engagement has helped to position us to engage in intentional work

• Have support of vice president who also understands importance of social model of disability
Success Area #2

Faculty at Ursinus are experiencing (and embracing) the benefits of universal design

• Increased academic achievement for ALL students when moving to untimed exams (math professor)
• Increased flexibility when using collaborative notetaking and accessible access to information (e.g., recording and publishing class lecture)
Success Area # 3

Intentional collaboration is paying off

• Inclusive Design Navigators (Co-Chairs includes Director of Disability & Access, Associate Director of Research, Teaching, Learning Services, and Director of Institute for Inclusion and Equity)

• BASE events programming with Sustainability Director

Check us out during Workshop #3!
What are your key takeaways?
Resources/References

- https://www.ahead.org/about-ahead/about-overview/affiliates/connecticut/documentation
- Mole, 2012 Social Model and Universal Design
- Disability-Models-Article.pdf
- Applying the Social Model of Disability_A Phenomenology_of_Initi.pdf