DARLENE MCLENNAN: Okay. I might make a start. So thank you and welcome, everybody. My name is Darlene McLennan and I'm the Manager of the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, or ADCET for short. I'm a white woman in my mid 50s with grey‑brown hair with glasses. I'm wearing a bright orange shirt. My pronouns are she/her.

This webinar is being captioned. To activate the captions, click on the CC button in your tool bar. We also have captions available in the browser. We're now adding that to the chat box if you'd like to access those through the browser.

Today I'm in Geelong and I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin nation and pay respects to Elders past and present. I would like to acknowledge the memory of the honourable ancestors.

I also want to acknowledge all the countries participating in this meeting, and also acknowledge their Elders and their ancestors and their legacy to us, and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People participating in the webinar. I'd like to invite you to add to the chat on which country you are in today.

Okay. Today's webinar, The Disability Officer, a linchpin on the UD Campus presented by Dr Patricia McCarthy and Dr Mary Quirke. Apologies from Conor McGuckin who is unwell today so won't be joining us. Today we're going to explore the professional role of the disability officer and consider how universal design transforms not just the world of students, but also the world of the disability officer.

We really appreciate that they're joining us. It's only 7.30 where they are today in the morning, and I also want to show my appreciation to everybody who is joining us today because I know that this time is a difficult time for many people in the eastern states, as most of you probably would have liked to have gone home by now or may be joining us from home.

I am very fortunate. I'm at my mum's today, so I've kind of put a roast in the oven and got that cooking while the webinar is happening, so hopefully I can walk out and have dinner with my mum afterwards.

Just a few other housekeeping details. This webinar will be captioned by Sharon from Bradley Reporting, and it is recorded. The recording will be available on ADCET in the coming days. If you have any technical difficulties you can email us at admin@adcet.edu.au. Mary and Patricia will talk for around 45, 50 minutes or so and we'll have 10 minutes at the end for questions.

Throughout the presentation, we encourage you to chat with each other or in the chat box and with us. Please choose all participants and attendees so that we all see the chat. But if you have a question for Mary or Patricia, please add that to the Q&A box. That's where I'll read the questions from. We've enabled upvoting so you can vote for your favourite questions. Those will be the ones I ask earlier on.

Now I'll hand over to the wonderful Patricia and then we'll hear from Mary. Thank you both. We really appreciate you guzzling down your coffee and joining us so early.

PATRICIA MCCARTHY: Thank you very much, Darlene. Thank you for the invitation to come and present to all of you today. I know it's late in the day for some of you, early for us. Okay.

So Darlene has given the title, and "linchpin" mightn't be a word that everyone uses, but it's a person or thing that is central to an organisation, for example, so that's why we're talking about the disability officer in relation to that. Mary, can you go to the next slide, please. Thank you.

Okay. So just before I hand over to Mary to introduce herself, I suppose I just want to say that I'm Patricia McCarthy. I work in the School of Education in Trinity College, Dublin. Our presentation today will involve a PowerPoint and slides, and there will be some images, and we will speak to images where necessary, and those that we don't speak to are purely decorative.

I do a lot of work in relation to underrepresented cohorts of students, particularly in relation to inclusion within education and society. Mary, would you like to say hello?

MARY QUIRKE: Thank you, Patricia. My name is Mary Quirke. I'm currently a Research Fellow in Trinity College, Dublin in the School of Education. My background in the most part is working in the nongovernment organisation sector advocating for students and graduates with disabilities. I've worked here at AHEAD in Ireland for 15 years under other organisations prior to that doing such work. Thanks, Patricia.

PATRICIA: Thank you. Maybe move on to the next slide. Thank you. Okay. So I suppose today the challenge is as disability officers, where do you believe or do we believe inclusion in learning starts and stops? I suppose the solution is to design a shared appreciation of inclusion for all across the UD campus.

Just to give a little bit of background in relation to the publication, I suppose, that we will be referring to today, it was published in 2016, I believe. So I suppose in some ways, you know, you could say that this might be a little dated but, you know, as we speak today we will tease some of that out.

The important part in relation to this publication, I believe, was that there was really, I suppose, three people or organisations involved in this. There was Mary as part of an NGO organisation that she just mentioned there, AHEAD, who were asked to do this publication. There was myself, as a disabled graduate who was asked to contribute and, you know, bring my expertise to this. And then we also included the Disability Officer Network here in Ireland, which is DON.

Really, I suppose, that showed, even at that point, that we were, you know, looking at things from all viewpoints, which is really essential when you consider UD and UDL. And, I think, it wouldn't have been one of the first times such ‑ something like this was done in this sort of way.

Now, at this point I think we're going to run the poll and Mary is also going to just ask the questions and explain. Mary.

MARY: Okay. Thank you, Patricia. The first question, just to kind of, I suppose, wake us up and to wind you all down there, you at the end of your day, the first question was just to ask: is the role of the disability officer still relevant on a UDL campus? What's your gut telling you? There's possibly no right or wrong answers here. We'd like to hear what you think.

The second question is: does the role of the disability officer need to change on a universally designed campus? Again, a yes or no question.

The third question: does a disability officer just work with students with disabilities?

If you wouldn't mind just taking a few moments to tick what you think might be the case and we'll keep going. We'll check in with your answers very soon.

PATRICIA: If you want to just put a thumbs up in ‑ if the poll isn't working for someone, if you just want to put a thumbs up or a thumbs down in the chat box, you can do that as well. We might just continue maybe for a minute and we can stop it then. Sorry, I don't know where I'm at. Sorry. I can't now see the screen. I don't know what I did.

MARY: Sorry, excuse me.

PATRICIA: Can you reshare by any chance, Mary? Sorry. That's fine. I think I might have hit something by mistake. Okay. So I suppose, really, because they were just yes or no, we can stop the poll probably now. Okay. We'll move on to the next slide, Mary. Thank you very much.

Okay. So it was just in relation to higher education, you know, today. I suppose while we might be talking primarily about it in relation to an Irish context, this is happening globally in many instances. And I suppose, you know, what has changed in higher education and, I suppose, you know, there is an expanding post‑compulsory education and opportunities for diversity of students including those with disability.

The factors that have influenced and are continuing to influence this is in relation to legislation, which is underpinned by the concept of inclusion, and the implementation at an international and national level of policies that, you know, have really focused on access for underrepresented groups, again including those with disabilities.

In Ireland, I suppose, we have what's called the DARE scheme which has been very successful. We can come back to that in a while if people want to know more about it. And I suppose that has really enabled more disabled people to access higher education. And I would have been one of those that benefitted from that and I'll come back to that in a while as well.

I suppose there's been significant change in supports available to students with disabilities, and I suppose even how those supports are delivered to students, and that has contributed to change as well. And, as I said, this is happening at an international level as well as a national level. Next slide, please, Mary. Thank you.

Okay. I'm going to briefly tell you a little bit about myself, I suppose. Traditionally in Ireland those with disabilities, you know, up till comparatively recently were educated in segregated education systems, and often these segregated systems, i.e., myself am registered blind, and at the time I needed to learn through the medium of Braille because I suppose technology wasn't as advanced as it is today, and therefore there was only one school for those that were blind and vision impaired for girls, there was a separate one for boys in the Republic of Ireland.

I travelled over 250 kilometres from home and family in the 1970s in order that I could have an education. I suppose I was amongst the first cohort in the school I attended to sit station examinations and that was in the 1980s. There was no expectation or very little expectation at that point that I would, or my peers would go on to higher education. You know, we were encouraged to take up, you know, quite specific jobs and, you know, that was it. There was no ‑ it wasn't considered "normal" for people like me to go on to higher education.

The coincidental thing here is actually myself and Mary come from the same area in Cork where my family lived, and if I hadn't a disability, chances are I would have attended the same school as Mary. I'd have been a little ahead of her because of age but I would have been at the same school.

Over a decade after leaving compulsory education for me, I returned to education and undertook a degree followed by a Masters and, I suppose, 15 years after returning to education I completed my Doctorate. And, I suppose, why I'm saying this is, you know, these opportunities to go to higher education for me is as a result of the changing attitudes and the changing policies within an Irish context. Next slide, please, Mary.

MARY: Okay. Thank you, Patricia. What we wanted to say and share is while Patricia obviously had a particular experience for education that was contrary to my own, issues for inclusion persist today. I'm going to take you through these images from left to right across this slide. The top left image is a picture of a protest of immigrants' rights or human rights. The next picture is a child with a physical disability in a wheelchair sitting in a classroom. The next picture third over on the right is children from many different countries who are in a kindergarten school waving their flags.

The next one, fourth on the right, is not typical or usual in Ireland but is something that made me smile is a picture of school gates with "boys" engraved in the concrete in case anyone would want to change their mind and wish to attend school there. Again, a very segregationist attitude. I should give a bit of background there. When I say boys and girls were education together, the subject choice on offering, things like higher level maths and science subjects varied considerably between boys and girls schools and so would have limited future possibilities.

On the bottom left would be a picture of technology being used in the classroom and there is a growing recognition that there is a digital literacy problem. Also, in relation to the next picture on the right, it is, again, something that is of concern across a lot of higher education campuses and second level schools which is safe schools for all, which is in relation to consent and everybody feeling safe in school.

In Ireland in particular, there can be quite a strong religious ethos in a lot of schools, and the third picture on the right is a group of young girls making their holy communion. The final picture is a picture from 2003 from a boys school in Ireland. The reason this image is there is not to point to any particular image, but if you were to stand back and look at it, it just looks like a collage of everyone looking the same. All pale, all have dark hair. There is no difference evident in that picture.

These issues are still in our news today. So while they mightn't be pertinent or particularly focused on disability, it is the same attitude that keeps disability separate in our schools and in our colleges and across our society. It's that attitude, I suppose, that Patricia would have been pointing to when she said she had to go away to school 250 kilometres away. Back to you, Patricia.

PATRICIA: Okay. Sorry. I think this one is still yours, Mary.

MARY: Sorry, excuse me. So I suppose what we wanted you to stop and think about, because we're just looking at the results on the board here, which I'm also going to share with Patricia, is, is the role of the disability officer still relevant in UDL campus? 100 per cent responded yes. We should give a background. When we did that disability officer role document, there was a thinking at the time that we need to really be working ourselves out of a job. Which prompted us to think, what do you mean work ourselves out of a job? Maybe it's a different job. Does the role of the disability officer need to change to respond to change on the UDL campus? 100 per cent said yes ‑ sorry, 75% ‑ I'll get that in a few minutes there from Darlene. Then does the disability officer just work with students with a disability? 75% said no.

What we wanted you to stop and think about was in relation to, I suppose, Patricia's story and, you know, while we consider some of the inclusion/exclusion challenges that are there today, we want you to stop and think about what worked well back then when Patricia was in school that would not work today?

Also, maybe pop it in the chat, just a reflection. What do you think works well that would not work back then? So, again, if what worked well back then that would not work now, and what works well now that would not work then. So back to you, Patricia.

PATRICIA: Thank you.

MARY: So having had deeper consideration as to who our thinking matters for, we now consider the environment we work in. It's very important for us to stop and think about the students we're engaging with because change continues and there is still challenges. Inherently, what we're trying to address is that there is assumptions there and it is the attitudes and assumptions that we actually need to work with.

There is an assumption that because of impairment, learners with disabilities inevitably have more learning needs than their peers. That is cultural and it is something that Patricia will talk a little bit more to as we move forward. It is something that still makes itself known today.

Past thinking continues to influence inclusion in education, and particularly when we're adopting either special education or inclusion education approaches, and this is well documented across the literature. Which brings us on to universal design.

PATRICIA: We will be talking about universal design for learning in a moment, but we always start with, you know, looking at universal design because we feel that, really, this is ‑ and it is where everything started, and the concept of the universal design was first proposed by Ron Mace in 1985. Now, Ron Mace was an architect. As well as being an architect he was a wheelchair user. So he had lived experience of the challenges of, you know, navigating built environments as a disabled person.

Okay. And I suppose the important thing to say here is we believe that universal design is for everybody, not just those with disability. It works for everyone.

UD is an approach that sets about creating inclusive thinking in the design of buildings, number one, as well as products and services. So it crosses all of those things so that they can be accessed by the greatest number of people possible from the outset.

Now, in saying that, we always qualify this by going on and saying this does not mean that on occasions somebody with a disability will require something in addition to this. Next slide, please, Mary.

Okay. So under universal design there are seven principles. And, I suppose, these are ‑ you know, the seven principles are a set of guidelines that help designers read user‑friendly and effective products. So we're just going to briefly ‑ or I'm just going to briefly go through the seven principles. And the first of these is equitable use, which ensures that everyone can use the product, regardless of their ability or disability.

Principle 2 is flexibility in use. So the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences. So it also means that an individual can change ‑ when we say, for example, the colour on the screen which is something I do occasionally is my preference so I can do ‑ it's something that's built into the technology so it can be done easily and it doesn't interfere with anybody else.

I suppose the third one is simple and intuitive use. So the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or concentration level. So it makes it ‑ you know, it's a situation whereby if it's easy to use you're not constantly feeling frustrated, because often things, if they're too complicated people, you know, are frustrated by it and then it doesn't become a positive learning experience or a positive experience for them, even just trying to navigate around a building. You know, it shouldn't be complicated. Making something too complicated isn't positive for anyone.

I suppose perceptible information ‑ and this is really important. The design ‑ necessary information and infective for users. So that everyone can access the information in a way that is suitable for them. You know, it's easy read, the material is available in a number of different ways without actually having to do anything particular for your ‑ you know, to make it accessible for yourself.

Tolerance for error. This is one that Mary and myself often refer to. I think we like to understand it. And I suppose it's so that users can recover from errors easily without severe consequences. So that, you know, we can all make an error but that it's not ‑ it doesn't impact negatively on a long‑term basis. Often, and I feel anyway, you know, many of us learn by our mistakes, and anyone that says that they don't make a mistake, I think, great. You know, I regularly make mistakes and it's that we don't want it to have a negative impact for others. But an appreciation that it is okay, you know, to make a mistake. That we're not all perfect on our first attempt.

The sixth principle is low physical effort so that the design can be used efficiently and comfortably with minimal physical effort, so that, you know, people are not exhausted by going through a process before they ever get to undertake whatever they're going to or attempting to do.

And the last one is size and space for approach and use. Users can interact with the product comfortably and efficiently so that, you know, if you're using a piece of equipment, that it's easy, you're not having to overstretch or things like that. And I suppose they're really important principles to consider when you're thinking about UD. Mary, do you want to add anything there before we move on?

MARY: Yeah. I think the key thing about ‑ and many people feel they might know universal design ‑ it's very good to revisit them, because Mace, as a physical architect, brought an awful lot of knowledge when he came up with the seven principles. He, as a person with a disability, was thinking about a universality approach in relation to design, and he also brought a lot of his design thinking to the table, where he was taking a considered approach, stopping and plan, plan, plan, research before you do something.

As the universal design principles have been adopted and evolved ‑ I might move to the next slide, Patricia ‑ I think the greatest challenge sometimes for people, certainly on this side of the world, is around, you know, what does this universality looks like. There tends to be this growing tension of, maybe we're leaving disability behind and we shouldn't, being one, and the other, maybe our focus, where the focus becomes overly on the universal element of it.

The second piece is where the focus becomes overly concerned with the design and always looking for the new and maybe not asking ourselves what's simple, what's effective, what has always worked well and how do we keep it working well? So, you know, what we would say is this approach really is all about a disability plus everybody else.

In Ireland disability is enshrined in our legislation. So it's about stopping to think about, you know, what works for people with disabilities, that would also work for others? What do we have to do in order to meet our legislative commitments here in Ireland so that we're not discriminating? Because as people embrace universal design, it becomes overly focused on the greatest diversity of students and less so on the disability, we could very quickly slip to the past as well.

So, again, just before we go to our inclusive triangle, giving a nod back to the results of the polls. Is the role of the disability officer still relevant at the UD campus? 100 per cent responded yes. Interestingly, in Norway they felt maybe we need to evolve that role and they actually shifted the role whereby it was people within faculty started to take on a lot of the brief in relation to carrying out these assessments and engaging with students. I'm not saying that's right everywhere but it was interesting that it was a system that they believed would work for them.

Certainly in Ireland, does the role of a disability officer need to respond to universal design change in university/campus? Again, 100 per cent yes. We would have found here in Ireland that the disability officers, yes, they did agree that they also needed to adapt and adapt, which we will share some of learning with you later on.

One of the things Patricia and I did was work with the further education and training sector in Ireland because they also wanted to adopt a UDL strategy. We worked on the triangle that you can see on the screen in front of you which illustrate a tiered support within an inclusive education environment. It's not the first inclusive triangle that was designed, and we did acknowledge in our publication some of the others that were there before us.

But what was interesting and what I'll remind you of ‑ and many of you may have seen this already ‑ is that the bottom layer of the triangle for universal design was for the majority of students. Again, disability plus. It was where all students, including those with a disability, could optimise their learning experience.

Level two was students with similar needs being grouped together. Level 3 was an individual accommodation where it was a tangible thing that made the difference. And level 4 was where it was, again, an individual accommodation where it was a person aide that made the difference. Whilst we would often find, when we look at this inclusive triangle, is that there tends to be a shift towards the bottom, but those students with similar needs.

We haven't stopped to think about what does that look like on a contemporary UDL campus? And what does that mean for our disability officer as they engage with that? Because if we continue to treat students with similar needs the way we always did, are we really evolving in relation to UDL?

So very often what we do is we go to the literature to see, well, what is the empirical evidence there? How can we prove it? How do we know to be true, you know, and what is it that we can use to back up our thinking and learning?

Patricia and I, when we did a literature review, while there has been many other literature reviews done in relation to this since, we found, first and foremost, universal design is a design process. It comes from design principles. An awful lot of our thinking in education comes from psychological concepts or pedagogical concepts but it is interesting to stop and think about the design process and how it relates to things we do.

UDL and UD is an approach. It is something that you think about almost as you begin to do something and continue to do so. UDL is a practice. We would go as far as saying, yes, it's something that you act on but it's something that you do again and again and again. It's almost as if you're always at the beginning.

UDL was developed in the main for teachers and pedagogical practices in America, which suggests that there's going to be cultural influences. It was designed for a specific education system. It was designed for a specific cohort of students. I suppose if we think back to that design process, and I was to suggest to any one of you on here this evening that you were going to design a new kitchen, you know, you mightn't always look to another country and think, "Well, that's going to work for me", or you mightn't even necessarily look to another state.

A design process suggests that you have to stand back and think about it in terms of what's going to work for you in the first instance.

UDL is a relatively new phenomena. UD did have its origin in the 1980s. When you think about inclusive theory and inclusion on campus, it is a relatively new phenomena. One of the things we do draw from ‑ and it was one of the reasons ‑ and Patricia highlighted this ‑ that we brought three elements to the table when we were looking at the disability officer role document, is that it's multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. UD was multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary and UDL, when they developed it in the states with Rose and Meyer, was also multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. They sat people down and they started to think about what works best in this scenario.

Before we advance, we just wanted to frame it in terms of four pillars ‑ ‑

DARLENE: Sorry to just interrupt you for a minute. As you're reading you're fastening up. I might encourage you to slow down to give the Captioner a minute to catch up.

MARY: Sorry, excuse me. That's my southern Irish way, I suppose. It's kicked in and apologies to all. We speak very fast. The first pillar on the left would be a rights‑based approach. What we did find, and just to preface this again, when we looked at the literature and we looked at the practice, having brought all the disability officers in Ireland together and having worked with them, and again this contributed to chapter 4 in a book that we recently published, we stopped to think, "Well, okay, what are the four key components for a disability officer on a UDL campus?"

The first one was that it's a rights‑based approach to inclusion of people with disabilities, both in education and employment. That's quite important and we'll come back to that.

The second one is that it's a move to position teaching and learning within the UD and UDL framework. The disability officer in Ireland traditionally was very much engaged with sitting down and doing an assessment with a student around campus, advising them what they might need and then a report would go into faculty and they would adapt and adopt accordingly. But the UDL and UD on campus meant that that position was shifting.

The third pillar was that it required a collaborative approach. There needed to be key strategic partnerships beyond the lecture role and actually beyond the disability office also. The fourth pillar was that there was an incorporation of the new principles, incorporation of the new UD and UDL principles demanded a new engagement from the disability officer.

So Patricia will introduce you to the four positions that we identified at the time for the disability officer on the UDL campus.

PATRICIA: Okay. So I'm just going to read through them first and then I will speak to some of them and Mary will speak to others. Okay. So the position 1 is to influence campus policy to positively impact on the inclusion of students with disabilities. And I suppose just to state here, while we may not mention students with disabilities in each of these positions, it was understood that students with disabilities were central to all of these positions. So whether or not they're explicitly mentioned in all of them, it is implicit in them.

As was the second position was to ensure that the growing population, that being those with disabilities, will have the optimal learning experience by ensuring that the environment is designed in an inclusive manner.

The third position was to encourage and advocate for the adoption of UD and UDL across the campus, and the fourth position was to become the go‑to expert for staff and those that required necessary and ongoing supports. Okay. Next slide, please, Mary. Okay.

I'm just going to speak a little bit more to some of these positions. In relation to position 1, this meant that disability officers are encouraged to engage with national and international policies, and they do ‑ and this is really significant for disability officers here ‑ by providing information as necessary.

So all of these are ways in which they can, you know, ensure that position 1 is actually implemented. By influencing key decision‑makers ‑ and this is really important because disability officers often have, you know, connections across campus, and, you know, we all know that particular people are very relevant in relation to making changes across campus and by advocating for the rights of students with disabilities, and that is central to everything, by developing key strategic relationships.

That's really important, because if universal design for learning on the campus is to actually occur, we need key relationships and we need all to be involved in the process, not just the disability officer.

In relation to position 2, disability officers, they have their finger on the pulse in relation to disability issues and things like that by being cognisant of participation rates and the increased diversity of those demands. So really, as I was looking at the participation rates and those coming through the system that will be coming into campuses or on to campuses, it's really important that they have a good knowledge of that by continuing to contribute to collection of data.

Data, as we all know, is really important, so that it supports UD and UDL development. Research underpins a lot of what changes are made by utilising the needs assessment process to drive and redesign provision. And, again, like Mary spoke about this, needs assessments, some of those assessments, you know, can vary, but a lot of the supports that come out of them are beneficial to many, by maintaining a level of disability expertise so that all on campus can access that information, because we all need a go‑to person. Okay. I'm going to hand over to Mary now.

MARY: Okay. The third position that we identified was to encourage and advocate for the adoption of UDL on campus. When we were looking at this back in 2016, UDL was, I suppose, a lot knew about it but in terms of enacting it and kind of implementing it across a culture and the practice of campuses, it was quite new, and it was seen contrary to what was seen in the States, whereas it was second level, I suppose, that was being implemented much more than higher ed. We would have found in Ireland ‑ a lot of European partners in relation to this as well ‑ was that it was on the higher ed campuses with a disability officer driving it that it was, you know, very much becoming key to the success of students' disabilities and becoming central to the inclusion agenda.

So the disability officer, by adopting such an approach, was becoming the cornerstone of the campus for all things UD and UDL. And it also meant that they could find a place under the UDL framework in terms of where and how they were going to enact things, as I mentioned about thinking back to that inclusion triangle and the bottom layer of the triangle that was about universality. That was where they could consider how they would have input in terms of the design of the environment, the design of libraries, stopping to think about the very environment that students with disabilities were going to be engaging in.

They considered work placements, professional work placements, lab work, and more recently have even stopped to think about, you know, getting engaged in how do students feel like they belonged, clubs and societies. It was shifting curriculum and assessments.

They were building knowledge and expertise through developing and engaging with national and international partnerships. I suppose really looking outward saying, "What are other jurisdictions doing? What else works well there?"

The fourth position was that they became the go‑to expert for staff and those that required necessary add‑on supports. They ensured the needs assessment process was understood by both the learner and also others that engaged with it, as well as academic staff would engage with it. But as I said, increasingly there were others that needed to stop and consider what was in that document, maybe library staff, technology staff, et cetera.

So they acted as a conduit between both staff and students. And I suppose it very much helped to broker the arrangements that were going on. They kept up to date with developments in the teaching and learning and disability fields.

That fourth position continues to shift, because what we see here in Ireland is that the teaching and learning departments in the in‑house universities have very much adopted the UDL piece in relation to curriculum and assessment but the disability officer still has a role in relation to that.

So what we wanted to do, because we've done a lot of talking, was to just for a moment have some fun and ask you to think of yourself as a Jedi because ‑ I'm sharing now with you I'm a bit of a Star Wars nut ‑ but in terms of thinking about inclusion. Princess Leia had a nice quote in Star Wars and it was where she said "to save our galaxy, we need to open the door for different perspectives. Welcome them to a seat at the table, embrace them, actively listen in order to understand, and then take action."

So in terms of all of you in your positions, it's to stop and think, you know, yes, you may have been familiar with universal design and universal design for learning before you engaged with Patricia and I this evening, but in terms of what we've shared with you, where do you think you could take it too next? What is it you need to do in order to save this agenda of inclusion so that more and more students with disabilities can actually optimise their experience on campus?

How is it that they feel welcomed? How do we embrace them? And how do we take action to ensure this happens?

We want to point you towards also a book that Patricia and I, together with our colleague Conor McGuckin, developed in relation to all of the learning in this space. And it really did emanate from this work that we did. It is called Adopting a UDL Attitude Within Academia. It is about understanding and practising inclusion across the higher education campus.

We invited colleagues to give vignettes in terms of how it works within their area. A librarian has given input. John Harding, our colleague, disability officer from Cambridge University has talked about how it's influencing policy on his campus, and there are many others who talk about university practices, and such like. We've secured a voucher if anybody wants to purchase the book. It will give you a nice 20% off, which is most generous, and I know it will be shared afterwards as well.

As we wind up, I suppose I would just highlight, before we go into reflection and take questions and answers, that some of the future considerations in relation to UD and UDL campuses on this side of the world would be, first and foremost, there is an expanding audience even within disability engaging on campus. Students with intellectual disabilities. It's a growing population on our campuses, which is great to see, but there's also a growing focus on intersectionality of people with ‑ you know, that people with disabilities, in terms of they are ‑ they're not all the same and in terms of stopping to think about designing for environments where they're allowed to be themselves also.

Recognition of prior learning and widening access. We would find on this side of the world there's still a large number who have, I suppose, like Patricia's story, have come through an alternative route and have had quite different previous educational experiences and certification to access higher education. Stopping to think about that and how do we recognise that prior learning?

In terms of advocating for resources, there's always attention that UDL would suggest we need less resources, when, in fact, it means that we need to use our resources differently. And then, of course, we have the advent of technology and artificial intelligence and virtual reality being used in our learning environments and stopping to think about how students with disabilities are included in all that.

So our reflection that we're going to share with you this evening ‑ and even if it's whether you want to engage in it now or think about it afterwards ‑ it is evening there, and we hope the sun is shining, and you're planning an evening trip to the beach. You're going with four friends, each with different hopes for the trip. You plan to go on the bus, have a swim and then come home late in the evening after a meal.

We've all done this. But then one friend shares they get bus sick, they don't like to go on the bus. Another shares, however, they're a poor car passenger. A third doesn't like to swim and wants to opt out of that activity. And finally, one friend must return a bit earlier due to family commitments.

But the idea of this is that it's a group activity and to refocus on rekindling relationships. Already we're having a lot of asks before you have even left. So it's just to stop and think about what is happening here and what solutions do you propose? The reason Patricia and I wanted to share this reflection is to say that we do this every day in our daily lives. We engage with a diversity of people every day. We accommodate every day. We redesign every day. We stop and think about how we're approaching things every day. We don't always get it right and sometimes it's frowned at that we learn in order to go forward. Would you like to come in here, Patricia?

PATRICIA: No, yeah. I agree with everything you've been saying. Sorry. I had to mute myself because my dog decided to overrun, so sorry. Yeah, you know, as Mary said, like, we do this and ‑ well, I suppose the important thing to realise is actually, you know, we need to do this sort of thing intentionally, and it's all when we're within, you know, on campus and things like that we actually need to constantly consider what we're doing, why we're doing it, how we're doing it, and who we need to engage with.

Just following up on one of the things I saw in the chat box in relation to how to ensure that more disabled people, for example, are involved in ensuring that actually the processes that are implemented across campus are suitable for them, because often decisions are made without consultation with them and without them being central to the conversation. And I suppose what has happened over the years or until comparatively recently is that people with disabilities are not at the decision‑making table.

So I suppose it is considering those things and ensuring that when we are planning that actually we're consulting and listening, authentically listening to all concerned.

MARY: Yes, Patricia. And another thing, reverting back to the beginning of the presentation as we prepared this slideshow for today, and we stopped to think about how is that disability officer role even being challenged again, and is there another position? One of the dilemmas that is arising in relation to staff are post‑graduate students and researchers with disabilities on campus and, you know, where does that sit? Where somebody is no longer a student but now is a staff member with a disability. And it's sometimes brought up that, yes, the disability officer should be supporting HR, human resources, and others might say, "Well, no, that's not entirely appropriate."

And there is little tension. Certainly that's something that's evolving on this side of the world also because this is a new population that is coming in and rightfully taking their place. It's a shift of power, actually, because it was often seen that the hierarchy was, you know, that we're here to assist the student and it was a top‑down approach. Whereas now, increasingly, it's possible that the person with a disability is on staff and maybe things need to be considered with regard to that. Have you anything to finally say, Patricia?

PATRICIA: No. What you've just said there is really important and, again, it's how the disability officer works with HR to ensure that those needs are met in the best possible way. I think that's it. Open to questions.

DARLENE: Okay. Thank you, both. That's fabulous. We've had a couple of questions come in. That's fabulous and we often get more engagement in the chat but I think this late evening maybe we're all starting to wane and you guys are revving up but thank you so much. It was really wonderful. I really recommend people getting the book. That's how I came across Mary and Patricia, I purchased the book, and I'm very excited the disability practitioner's role was included in that book and that's a great chapter.

So, Patricia, you spoke about one of the questions that was asked in regards to how can we ensure that lived experience is part of the critical conversations that we have. And someone said ‑ Mary, maybe your reflections ‑ what can we do more across the sector around ensuring lived experience is a key point or probably pivotal in the conversation, but also do you have any other ideas on how we can keep the conversations going?

MARY: Yeah. I think that the challenge, when I go back, was ‑ or it's become a challenge. I think the beauty when we go back to 2016 when the UDL was considered all new and shiny and it was kind of a new approach and, yes, it was adopted and embraced.

I think there tends to be a little bit of what's called UDL fatigue entering now. Certainly our greatest challenge on this side of the world would be, first of all, what I alluded to when I said that universal focus, that it's either on some campuses seen to be the approach purely for people with disabilities and not everybody else, because there's so many other approaches, including trauma‑informed approaches, et cetera, that have been pushed out there, and a lot of the staff and support staff feel quite fatigued by this, and which approach am I aligning myself to here?

Equally, on other campuses, the push is that it's for a universality of students. So much so that the student with a disability can sometimes feel lost. I think it came up there in the commentary. Somebody said, people then almost overcorrect or look for complications, solutions and get themselves tied up in knots.

The disability officer has so much experience and has seen change before and it's going to continue to see change. For many disability officers they engage with the first students on campus. They introduced, you know, how to accommodate certain disabilities for the first time in some courses.

Certainly in Ireland, initially when students with disabilities came to college, they were very much in the arts and humanities‑based courses. It was as they engaged in professional courses, such as teaching, medicine and nursing, and there were professional internships, there were very real challenges of roles. UDL did have to facilitate conversations around those challenges.

It's learning how to use that as a framework. As Conor, our colleague, would often say, as a yardstick, not as a box ticked, not as UDL'd it. It's that constant. I think that's why the UD seven principles that Patricia went into really do help that, because UDL really, to be honest with you, looks at curriculum and assessment. This is why we tease this out in the book. There is so much more that happens on college campuses in relation to learning. Learning happens outside of the lecture hall in so many spaces. We really do need to stop and think about that if we're really going to start designing for inclusion in an authentic way.

It's early in the morning here. I hope I answered that question. I feel I should be at lunchtime answering such a question with such quality. Patricia might be able to come in there.

DARLENE: James has responded to Leanne just talking about we have a Disability Action and Inclusion Plan, or Disability Action Plan that our Human Rights Commission encourages organisations. Some states have mandated that. It's probably a good way to look at some way of ensuring that staff with disability and people with disability are at the table with those conversations, which is great.

Another question we got was what does the transition to ‑ with the transition to this role for the disability officers and then students expecting individual adjustments still, like we've kind of got that ‑ kind of in that ‑ you know, that thing where you actually kind of support a student into a course and the Lecturer is doing great in UD and UDL design, and so forth. But there's still an expectation from the individual saying, "But I want adjustments", but you kind of say, "But you don't need adjustments because it's already built into the course."

Has much come up in Ireland around that? Saying it very quickly because we've only got a minute left.

MARY: Do you want to take that, Patricia, or will I?

PATRICIA: There's two sides to this because sometimes it is, you know, the Lecturer has implemented UDL but that doesn't mean necessarily all the needs of the individual has been met. And while sometimes they still expect it or that's what it appears, they may actually feel that they are not, you know, being able to ‑ UDL isn't sufficient for all people, and I suppose that's why we have the triangle piece as well because there will always be a necessity for some people to have additional add‑on supports. Do you want to add, Mary?

MARY: Yeah. I just popped into the chat because I'm conscious of time. UDL never eliminates the need for add‑on help. As much as I like to use the legislative system as a stick but, you know, if you ever find yourself in front of a judge being accused of leaving somebody out or discriminating on this side of the world, I do know that buy "I've UDL'd it". It really still comes back to due process and consideration and that needs assessment. That needs assessment is always going to be so important, in terms of really stopping to think about the environment the student is going into and their particular needs.

Patricia is right. UDL does not negate that need for add on accommodation. If a student comes forward and raises their hand saying, "I've got a difficulty", I would have often said, "Are there others with difficulties? How many others?" Because that obviously can point to maybe one challenge, but if a student ‑ and we have seen it in our work ‑ you know, comes forward and says, "I have a difficulty", it could be that they're the first deaf student who happens to be taking a nursing program in that college. There could be assumptions made about what they can and can't do. So we're re‑educating the system as we go forward.

PATRICIA: That gets more complicated when they're required to do placements and things like that as part of their course work. So I think that's really important to look at that as well.

DARLENE: All right. Well, I'm going to have to wrap up. There's a couple of other great questions I would have liked to have got to, but I'll have a chat to Mary and Patricia and see if we can put some answers in the content.

Thank you. I've been very fortunate to have a couple of conversations with Patricia and Mary, and it's always great to find kindred spirits across the way. Thank you so much for your time and sharing your learnings and your experiences with us tonight. Just a plug, we do have a Universal Design for Learning Symposium. I hope you all heard about it. It's happening on the 12th of June in Melbourne and also online. The links will be going into the chat as we speak.

We also have our Accessibility in Action Awards now open. Please nominate a team or individual. For this year, we also have an award in the name of Trevor Allan as well, one of our esteemed colleagues.

Thank you, everybody, for joining us. Well done for those on the eastern side of the state to be here late. Thank you to the people of WA who turned up. It's fabulous we get to have these conversations and I'm really looking forward to continuing them. Thank you, both, thank you everybody for joining us. Have a great night or have a great day. Take care.

MARY: Thank you.

PATRICIA: Thank you.