

Grad Student Credits CPD Programs, Equipment For Enriching His Life | CPD Blog

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Ten years ago, Bacon Nivison didn't know who he was. An accident had claimed his left leg and most of his memories. "I was sitting in front of the TV, not caring if it was on or off," he said. "I'd been an adventurer all my life. ... Now I was the guy who can't even walk across the street."

He was in that mental space when he heard of the Center for Persons with Disabilities' [Interdisciplinary Disability Awareness and Community-Engaged Learning](#) class—an experience that brings together students from a variety of fields and introduces them to disability studies. Nivison joined in, met then-instructor Gordon Richins, and began taking more of an active part in his own life. (Richins was another person who acquired major disabilities due to accident. He had written of his own dark period of adjustment before he became the positive but firm advocate so many of us at the CPD remember. He passed away in 2018.)

"At the time I was really breaking the ice of becoming semi-normal again," Nivison said. The class introduced him to the campus environment, and eventually he became a student on the Utah State University campus at large, outside of the IDASL program. He was on a new path: discovering the future Nivison. "I had no idea how stimulating and adventurous and exciting it could be... I used to make fun of people who went to college," he said. "I'm a whole new man."

He means that literally. With so much of his memory gone, he had had to learn about his former self—an active, engaged, outdoorsy man he can only partly remember.

Going back to school was a process, too. "With the professors and with the student body... at the beginning I didn't know who I was or what I wanted to do. I wasn't depressed, but I wasn't motivated either."

He started taking creative writing classes, wrote stories, and gained a new ambition: to use his prosthetic to walk, both at home and on campus. So he donated his wheelchair to the CPD's [Utah Assistive Technology Program](#). UATP helps connect people with the equipment they need, through loans, alternative financing and the re-purposing of old equipment.

At home, Nivison's walking plans worked. On campus it was harder. "I soon discovered I'm not gonna be walking. Not for long distances. It takes intense concentration to stay upright." That mental focus made it hard for him to talk to people. Eventually he went back to UATP, where he borrows a wheelchair for the days he is on campus.

"I'm a social animal," he said. "As I wheel around on campus I'm hearing, 'Bacon! Bacon!'" And because he doesn't have to worry about falling, he can stop and talk.

Nivison graduated in creative writing in 2017 and is slated to defend his Master of Folklore thesis this fall.