

CPD Presenters Highlight Disability As Diversity | CPD Blog

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Three presenters at Utah State University's "Disrupt" 2019 Inclusive Excellence Symposium will emphasize disability as a diversity issue. All three are from the Center for Persons with Disabilities. Here is a look at their presentations:

Disability 101

Executive Director Matthew Wappett and Policy Director Sachin Pavithran.

Dr. Wappett and Dr. Pavithran will discuss the importance of recognizing disability as a key element of diversity in American culture.

The experience of being disabled is one of the most common elements of the human experience, and almost everyone will experience disability (either temporary or permanent) at some point in their life. In fact, the disabled population is the only minority group that anyone can join at any time, and yet people with disabilities still struggle to be included in diversity initiatives on our campus and in Utah in general.

More and more people with disabilities are living, learning, and working on our campus and in our communities, and it is important to understand how their experience can be used to strengthen and enhance our efforts in creating more inclusive and diverse communities.

There is an assumption that disability is a medical diagnosis, instead of an element of identity like race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. This presentation will investigate how disability adheres to traditional minority models of politics and the intersection of disability with civil rights legislation. It will highlight the similarities between the experience of being disabled in America with that of other diverse groups. The overall intent is to demonstrate that the experience and universality of disability can be an important element of understanding diversity and creating more inclusive classrooms, campuses, and communities.

Making Invisible Disabilities Visible

Social Media Specialist Storee Powell.

Invisible disability brings on not only the struggles of the disability itself, but also the burden of having to prove disability to others, the microaggressions of toxic positivity culture, and inaccessible public spaces.

Around 20 percent of college students report having a disability. Many more do not disclose because of fear. Disability is diversity, whether it is autism or hearing loss, a genetic condition or chronic pain. The stigma and/or oversight that invisibly disabled people encounter in classrooms and workplaces can make learning, participation and job performance incredibly challenging. Well-meaning questions, jokes or invitations can become hurtful and overwhelming – causing isolation, feelings of inadequacy and even fear for physical safety.

USU can create an atmosphere of inclusion for its invisibly-disabled community, and empower them to achieve their best through empathy training and disability awareness.

Disrupting Barriers to Inclusive Education Practices

Amy DeBruler and Dennis Kholer of Aggies Elevated.

This session will engage students, staff, and faculty in an interdisciplinary training to break down barriers in inclusive education practices. As a community we can empower students with disabilities through the use of reflection and discussion. We will explore evidence-based teaching strategies and discuss how to implement these practices at Utah State University.

Poster Presentation

Watch for work from Andrés Brown and Ty Aller of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities National Training Center on fostering mental health wellness in students of color. While transitioning to college can be difficult for most students, students of color encounter added concerns in their pursuit of higher education, especially in predominantly white institutions. This poster aims to empower students of color to build resilience through tools designed by people of color for people of color.

To View The Presentations

Registration to the event is now full, but selected sessions, including the one led by Wappett and Pavithran, are available via AggieCast. Visit the [registration page](#) for more information.