JUSTIN WYLIE: G'day everybody. Welcome to our next session. This session, our presenter is Sarah Humphreys from the University of Sydney. Her topic today is Building Inclusive Learning Communities, the University of Sydney's Approach. So welcome, Sarah.

SARAH HUMPHREYS: Thank you very much. This is quite a short session, so I'm hoping to only talk for 15 minutes and give you five minutes of Q&A. But I also would like to start by acknowledging that we are meeting today on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, and that I work on the lands of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation in Sydney. I know, because of where I work, that the word "Gadi" means the grass tree, and so I was curious to see what Wurundjeri meant, and I learnt that "Wurun" means the manna gum, which I put an image in here, and "jeri", the grubs that our found in the roots of the gum tree. It's just interesting to explore the meaning of the words. So I'd like to pay my respects to the Elders, and of the Wurundjeri people, and any First Nations people joining us today.

So this quick presentation really is based around the question, how can we foster a university wide culture of intentionally designing for diversity? So when we talk about defining for diversity, this is the approach that the University of Sydney has taken to really explain UDL in a simple and easily digestible way. And so designing for diversity for us is this five step process that you can see here on the left where we encourage thinking about who are your learners; what are the goals you are trying to achieve; what are the barriers; what are the solutions to overcome those barriers; and then how are you going to evaluate and iterate?

So with that in mind, the learning communities that we've been building are on the right-hand side of the screen. And I want to walk you through these examples today. So we have a UDL chat and a coffee. We have a Canvas resource that is also an interactive site. We have a community of practice and we have barriers, professional learning opportunities.

So this is a bit of a I feel like I'm sharing my family photo album, really, here, but I wanted to get across this idea that building community really started from connecting with people and providing a safe space to start to practise and learn about the language that we use in UDL. I would also like to acknowledge Monique in the middle photograph here enjoying her coffee. This presentation was actually her idea. Unfortunately, Monique couldn't be with us today because she's had to go back to France to be with a family member who is not well, so a shout out to Monique for pulling this together.

But on the left of the screen you can see a group of happy smiling faces. You probably recognise a few of them today from presentations. But we started with UDL chat as an informal way to bring us together. And all of the colleagues that I work with in educational innovation in Sydney are very expert in their fields. And when you start to introduce universal design for learning, for many of us we're actually becoming learners again, and it can be quite uncomfortable.

So the idea here was just come along and have a chat every Monday morning, we'll use some UDL language, we'll talk about projects that are going on. And this went on for all of last year on a Monday at 10 a.m. You had the option to come along if you wanted to. Sometimes there was a large group of us. Sometimes there were only a couple of us.

But what I was able to see was how the confidence in the team's use of UDL language grew, and in the image on the far right you can see Kria writing on the walls of my office some UDL catch phrases, because why not just put it out there so everyone can see. The message she's writing there, "essential for some, beneficial for all". There are many other phrases there as well.

So we started really internally with our team. But we needed to look at how we can grow community across the whole university. And so UDL chat is a monthly 30 minute Zoom meeting. We meet the first Wednesday of every month. And this is an idea some of you might already be connected with UDL chat that Mindy Johnson runs in the States, but it was an idea that I stole from there. Again, when we started this over a year ago, it really was me, a few of my trusted EI colleagues, and a couple of academics who were already early adopters of UDL, joining to talk to each other. And it was a case of preaching to the converted, but we stuck with it.

We really do now have quite a community who joins us. Sam who presented earlier Sam is not here my colleague, Sam, now runs the UDL chat, and we have a program for the year, and this has really helped us reach a broader audience because we're able to let people know what we're going to talk about.

So some of the topics we discuss are flipped classrooms, building efficiency into LMS workflow, digital accessibility. That was one of our most recent presentations, and the screenshot on the right is from that UDL chat where we had our largest audience of 30 participants. A Canvas UDL redesign. Next month we've got UDL 3.0 update. Academic stress and UDL research. So that's Elizabeth Hitches from Griffith University who is actually in the online session today. We've invited her as an external guest speaker to come along. Tutor training in FASS. Using warm up tasks to prepare students for their final exam in engineering, and proactive teaching design for sensitive material in sexual health.

So you can see it's quite a wide variety of topics, but we've gone from educational designers speaking to educational designers, to now academics and professional staff speaking to a wider audience across the university. So that's been very successful for us.

And then the next community that we have I'm not sure if I'm going too fast or too slow I think this is probably all right we created a Canvas resource. And really, every member of my team has had some involvement in developing this site. And again, a shout out to Monique and Sam.

I'm going to play a little introductory video for you so that you can see what the site contains, because if you're not at the University of Sydney, unfortunately at the moment you can't access the site. The video will give you a sense of what it contains, but the QR code and the bit.ly link to teaching at Sydney is a blog which is a public facing site, and I've linked to the blogs that are specifically around designing for diversity and any of the UDL work that we've been doing. So some of the case studies that Ella referred to earlier today, and that you'll see a snippet of, you will be able to access from that QR code and bit.ly link.

So I'll hand over to myself who is going to talk to you about the Canvas site.

[Video]: Welcome to the Designing for Diversity Resource site. My name is Sarah Humphreys and I’d like to take you on a quick tour and show you how we have designed the site for you. The aim of the site is to inspire and support inclusive practices across the University of Sydney as we work together to achieve the aspirations of the 2032 Strategy. There are different ways for you to access the site depending on your needs, interests and the time you have available. If you’re looking for something practical to implement into your teaching straight away then the designing for diversity case studies and the resources for tutors might be what you are looking for. If you’re more interested in the theory underpinning inclusive design then take a look at the Universal Design for Learning framework. But for now let me introduce you to Designing for Diversity. So essentially what we’re proposing here is a practical way to talk about diversity with your colleagues and an efficient way to design more inclusive learning environments. Designing for Diversity is about being proactive, intentional and iterative. To see what this looks like in practice, scroll down and we’ve organised case studies in these four categories: assessment, activity, Canvas and learning space design. Make your choice and at the start of each of the categories we’ve included recommendations from students. When designing for diversity don’t be afraid to ask your students what they suggest. And then select a case study and here you can see how the academic has applied designing for diversity thinking to improve the way his students engage with their readings. We also make explicit links to the UDL guidelines and we include images, short videos, and links to articles if you’re looking for more information. Just before I finish I’m going to jump to the modules page and show you some options for connecting on a face-to-face level. Of course these links can also be accessed from the home page. So you might be interested to join us for a 30 minute UDL chat once a month on Zoom, a 30 minute consult, a 2 hour workshop or if you’re looking for a deeper engagement, collaborate with us on an Educational Design Accelerator. But if self-directed learning is more for you, follow the link to additional resources where we have collated resources from around Australia and overseas. Teaching@Sydney articles, other Canvas modules that relate to UDL, video interviews and conference presentations of your University of Sydney colleagues. And finally a link to our very own Designing for Diversity Cogniti agent, a chat bot that you can work with to support you design your inclusive practices. So I hope that you enjoy dipping in and out of this resource as we continue to grow and add our stories of success.

SARAH: So I hope you can see with that intro that we have thought very intentionally about the way we apply the three UDL principles to the design of the site for our users, while we are also teaching them about UDL. So there's lots of different ways to connect, to make sense of the information that's presented, and different ways to engage with us for support.

So the other community I wanted to talk about was the physical community of practice. So there were lots of ways for people to engage online, and last year we established our community of practice in person, and we met three times a week. And this was an opportunity to bring people together to share their stories. So very much like the feel of the Symposium today. What we're really trying to encourage here is people talking to each other across faculties, finding out the similarities in the challenges that they're dealing with, and the solutions that they're coming up with. As a way to really encourage people to come along and interact with each other sorry, the image on the left is the presentation style format. Somebody up the front speaking and people sitting listening. And then the image on the right, it's not as clear as it could be but I just wanted to remind myself that we got a budget for catering, and we were able to have some very nice afternoon tea and alcoholic beverages, and we had a very good turnout. So, you know, we'll do whatever it takes to bring people together.

But the community of practice is evolving this year as we're really trying to think about how can we make this a really effective community so it's not just come along and sit and listen to the sage on the stage. And Ella and Sam ran our first community of practice this semester with a different focus where participants were asked to come along with a practice challenge that you're experiencing and they brainstormed as they came into the room what their focus was. Ella put them into groups, and then they sat with colleagues facing the same issue to spend that hour and a half unpacking how they could address that challenge. That's another way that we're hoping to foster that sense of community and working together in implementing UDL.

We're a central team at the University of Sydney, and we offer a lot of professional learning, but these two, in particular, a two hour workshop on designing for diversity, and this is a way small groups can come together online and really learn about what does it mean when we talk about diversity. So we spend quite a bit of time talking about what are the challenges for your learners, and then starting to shift thinking towards, well, if that's what your students are finding as a challenge, how can you reframe that as a barrier in your environment? And I think often when you start to guide people through that thinking, what frustrates you with your I'll say learners, actually, because it's not always students, your adult learners that you're supporting what frustrates you with your learners, if you start to reframe that as a barrier in your environment, you suddenly have some control. You can make changes to the environment you create, not to the learners who come into your environment. So that's very much the focus for the designing for diversity workshop.

And then Ella, who's sitting over here, has introduced this new way of engaging. So the designing for diversity workshop is for academic and professional staff. The proactive design intensive is Ella's initiative that is pitched specifically for academics to come along and work for two full days to be supported through a process of intentional proactive design, but they need to come along with an idea of what they want to work on, so to have quite a clear idea of a plan that they want to put into effect, and then use that time collaboratively to evolve that plan so they can move into the next semester with their design already if not fully formed, partially formed.

So this one kicks off in two weeks' time. Ella, we haven't done this yet. So we're very excited to add this to our suite of communities.

So going back to that question that I posed right at the start, how do we foster a culture of designing for diversity across a whole institution? Really, it's by offering lots and lots of different ways for people to connect. And so far the communities that I've shared with you, we've been able to see that there is a common language that is evolving with people who are connecting with us. It's also a way to be very affirming of the practices that are already taking place. We're not telling people they're doing it wrong. It's an opportunity to say, "What you're doing here aligns really nicely with this checkpoint or this principle in UDL", and then we can build on it.

The process of connecting with people is an opportunity to challenge and shift thinking. We're offering choice and flexibility in how we learn about UDL. We're influencing others by sharing our stories. That's a big part of what we're doing Ella's presentation earlier today. We're developing a collaborative, problem solving approach to teaching and learning design, and we're creating opportunities for academic and professional staff to receive recognition and reward for their work.

I put a link to a really nice chapter from a book here from Liz Berquist who works in Baltimore. I've just completely forgotten the name of the university. You can Google this book. It's about UDL in higher education. This chapter, in particular, she talks about tapping into the principles of adult learning and how that aligns with UDL and communities of practice. So I recommend that as a resource.

If you're interested in finding out more about the way we've set up these communities, please reach out to you've met a lot of the team today but, again, I just wanted to particularly acknowledge Monique who couldn't be here today. And hopefully we've got a few minutes for Q&A.

JUSTIN: I think we've got just a couple of minutes. Can I say really quickly thank you, Sarah, because it's so interesting and useful to see inside what we don't normally see from another institution. Thank you for sharing that.

SARAH: If I can get that to be an open site, I will.

SPEAKER: Yeah. It's amazing what you all are doing. The professional development workshops, are they open to people outside of your institution?

SARAH: That's a very good question. No, haven't thought about that. Not yet, maybe should be the answer. Send me an email. Yes. Well, I mean, in all seriousness, if you haven't already connected with the ADCET community of practice that meets how often do we meet, every five weeks or six weeks or something please do. I mean, this family is growing, and it is so helpful to hear other people's stories. And I'm incredibly proud to have so many of my team here today sharing their journeys and the work that they're doing, and we're incredibly positive, but the impact we're having is still so small. We've got a really long way to go.

SPEAKER: That's probably the last comment of yours is a bit of a segue into my question. I was just thinking about buy in for the two-day intensive one, in particular. It's a lot to ask of academic staff who are always time poor. But I was going to ask you how much participation you've had, but I think this is the first one you're about to do. Has it been a hard sell to get people to come along?

SPEAKER: I don't know if there's anyone in the room here from UNSW, but it's actually based on a workshop that they run for a whole week there at UNSW called CDI. I forget what the acronym stands for. Course Design Institute. We are having the wonderful person who runs that come and help us run this because she really wants to spread it and share it along lots of institutions. So it's inspired by that, but in condensed form, because five days was too much buy in.

But we have had a lot of interest. A lot of academics have come through saying this is a great opportunity for them to put away dedicated time for innovating their courses for the following semester. So we had a very small amount that we were, like, willing to take in, but we have surpassed our expectations, basically. So it's been pretty good, but we'll see how it goes.

SPEAKER: Good to hear. Cool.

SARAH: I think the important thing there and even for us to get this off the ground our pitch was we're just offering different ways for people to engage with UDL. And for some people, a two-day intensive would not be their cup of tea. For others, it is exactly what they want at this point in time. So it's just part of our suite of offerings.

JUSTIN: Okay. I think time is up. So thank you, Sarah. If we can give Sarah a round of applause. Thank you.