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Transcription Douglas Campbell, Mount Allison University

Introduction: A video in which Douglas Campbell, Professor at Mount Allison University, talks about how universal design for learning has changed the way he does student assessment in his courses.

How did you accommodate a student with a disability in your class?

I'd had a number of students with disabilities in multiple classes over the years and I used a student with disabilities requesting accommodations to think about assessments more generally. We have this very odd, idiosyncratic system where we load a hundred people into a gym and we give them a common test and they write for three hours and somehow that scores whether they understand the material. It was never a good system—its only real value was that, for better or for worse, everybody had the same experience and so you could say, "whatever it means, everybody went through it," but as a larger and larger fraction of my classes were seeking accommodations for various reasons, I was getting up in some cases to 5, 10 % of the class that was no longer writing the so-called standardized exam. I didn't like the standardized exam and it wasn't even standard, so what was left? So I spoke to Anne Comfort here in the Meighen Centre and decided that rather than having specific accommodations for any one student, I would offer a menu of assessment options to the entire class, so that the class could choose to write a traditional mid-term, or choose to do a term paper, or choose to do a presentation in class, or choose to do all three and see which came out best. I felt more comfortable with that as a more equitable and perhaps realistic method of assessing whether or not students had grasped the material.

How was the experience from your perspective?

In the past, I had many specific accommodations—extra time, scribes, large print, quiet room, time of day—many, many different, individually specific accommodations, and I'm sure each one had some validity, but what really brought it home to me was that I had a large class and I had several students who had been diagnosed as having various learning issues, and then I had a student who clearly had a learning issue but had not been diagnosed and would not admit it and was not doing very well in the class. I actually spoke to him a couple of times and said, "Look, should we arrange some accommodation?" "No, I want to be the same as everybody else." That really brought into focus that there was no common basis anymore, and so OK, let's give that up—it was never a good system, I'm going to leave it behind. So, now, any accommodation that I offer is open to anyone in the class. If someone needs to take a long time and do it as a take-home in a computer-based quiz, if that's an option for that student, it's an option for everybody else as well, and some of them choose it and some of them don't. So far the students like it—I haven't had any complaints. [There is] a little bit of confusion sometimes—students need to get used to the idea that they can do one thing or another or try both and see which is better. My thinking there is that it wouldn't really be equitable if someone wrote one assessment, did very badly and then did very well on another, well how is that different than some student who didn't write one assessment at all and then did well on another? It's best out of whatever options there are.

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What would you say to a colleague who will have a student with a disability in his or her class?

Standardized exams are over. The Human Rights Commissions have said that you can't order everybody to write a standardized exam if they have documented evidence, they don't have to write a standardized exam, so get over it, it's gone. And, I think we shouldn't be thinking so much about accommodating any specific person as offering a range of options for people to choose from because *de facto*, that's what they have the right to, so we may as well make it up front.