

Bonus! Episode 8: Season Recap and Fall Preview

Season 1, Episode 8

The L&S Exchange Podcast

David Macasaet: Campus stirs with the sounds of summer.

Heat, water, road construction.

They surprise us like old friends at our doorstep. “I would like to get a brat please.” We can hardly believe our eyes because of their long absence. Summer's intensity and abundance of possibilities seem like the perfect reasons to reflect on where we've been so far, to share episode highlights and feedback, and whether you're a returning or first-time listener, we want to say thank you and...

Welcome to the L&S Exchange, a podcast about teaching and learning in the College of Letters and Science at UW-Madison. This season we seek to understand the many dimensions of inclusive teaching in higher education. What are the key ideas that make up inclusive teaching? How do we advance the inclusivity goals of the College of Letters and Science?

I am David Macasaet. Join me and my colleagues from the L&S Instructional Design Collaborative as we explore different aspects of inclusive teaching, feature interviews with instructors, and provide practical advice for educators. We began the season featuring L&S Dean Eric Wilcots.

Erik Wilcots: We do not have a homogeneous student body. Right? We have a large student body, um, 8,600 freshmen. We have a student body that is coming from almost every county in the state. Most states in the country. I forget how many different countries are represented in our student body. We've got students who are coming from a wide range of backgrounds.

We have students for whom this is the most diverse place they have seen. We have students for whom this is the least diverse place they have seen. Right. All of those students are walking into our classroom. Right? All of the students are here to get a world-class education. We have to make sure that our teaching allows all of the students to be successful. The reason it's important is because of the students that we have.

David Macasaet: Next, professor John Dunne helped us understand the relationship between wellbeing and inclusive teaching. We're still seeing

John Dunne: We're still seeing increases. And these are really dramatic increases in anxiety and depression and other mental health issues among our undergraduates to the point where campuses just can't keep up.

They can't hire enough, you know, enough therapists or others who can support students and students are sometimes really in crisis, actually. So what we want is something that enables students to manage those issues and to actually live well and for that to be part of their education. Part of the mental health crisis we see and part of the difficulties that students face is a sense in which their lives are kind of fragmentary, can be very fragmentary on campus, and there can be a sense of not really belonging.

And this has led then to this emphasis on belonging and something that we're going to be really doing more and more on, especially with my colleagues at the Center for Healthy Minds.

David Macasaet: Dr. Tony Chambers shared some of the principles of belonging,

Tony Chambers: And it's fairly simple. It's people who feel like there's somebody who has their best interest in mind, particularly somebody that's of value to them. If we're talking about students, it's an adult or a person that they hold in high esteem, caring about them and demonstrating that care.

It's also providing spaces and opportunities for students to see themselves and hear their thoughts reflected back to them in all kind of spaces, whether it's curricular or co-curricular. And at some level, it's about a critical mass, because if you don't see yourself daily in very organic spaces and not—you don't have to work too hard to see somebody that sort of reflects you, reflects back to you yourself, it's hard to believe that you are in the right place, right?

So the critical mass, the reflecting back, the creating opportunities and experiences for students to share their voice and see themselves. Right. It's the demonstration of care by folks who you hold in fairly high esteem. In most cases for students, it would mean faculty and/or people in the student services or student affairs arena as well as peers.

So that's - when we think about belonging, that's how one constructs a sense of belonging.

David Macasaet: From the Department of Communication Arts, Dr. Lori Kido Lopez helped us define inclusive teaching by sharing some of her personal experiences in the classroom.

Lori Kido Lopez: So what do I think it is? I would say that there's an everyday cultural component where I try to be intentional about my choices at a micro level. So that's like the language I use, the examples I give, the way I treat my students. Just the kind of

kindness and generosity I try to bring to the classroom. Doing all of that with a wide range of student identities and backgrounds in mind. I just am always trying to take time to explain and contextualize as much as possible so that no matter where students are coming from, the class feels like it's geared toward them.

But I would also say that there's a structural component to inclusive teaching. So I do a ton of work before the semester even begins, so that the DNA of the class is also designed with an eye toward equity and accessibility. So that has to do with how I design the learning goals, the way that I scaffold assignments, the time that we take to move through concepts, the way I structure each class period in sequence, things like that.

David Macasaet: Professor Christy Clark-Pujara explained how she fosters an environment that's conducive to inclusive classroom discussions.

Christy Clark-Pujara: I have a terminology note, and the first thing I say about my terminology note is it's already outdated, right? Like this is a continual work in progress that I can show you a syllabus, and sometimes students ask to see it from 10 years ago, and my terminology note looks radically different than it does today because I'm always working on this. I'm always updating this and I am always learning. And the classes I teach, we talk a lot about race, we talk a lot about gender, we talk a lot about sex, and so a lot of the terminology I give them is around that.

What's the difference between Black and African American? African-American is actually a very specific term. It refers to people of African descent who trace their heritage back to those captured in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the United States. So we wouldn't call a Black person from Peru or Cuba or Jamaica an African-American, but Black is a more universal term, right?

And so just explaining the terminology for them and letting them know that it is a continual process, that I do not have all the answers. This is not complete. This is something that I change and flex as I know better.

David Macasaet: Bringing us up to date, Professor of Political Science and the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning John Zumbrunnen provided clarity and insight about the role of free speech in the classroom.

John Zumbrunnen: If I open space in my classroom for the discussion of an issue on which there's a difference of opinion, that no student should face negative consequences for sharing their opinion, right? That to me is what free speech means in the context of a classroom.

Other sort of considerations that I think shape how we ought to be thinking about free speech in the classroom. One is that free speech is, on the one hand, an incredibly

important constitutional principle. It's also something that is a practice that we engage in with one another.

So if we think, not in constitutional terms about free speech, but if we're thinking a little bit more about frank speech and the idea that speech is something that we engage in with one another publicly. If we think about it that way, that free speech is something we do with other people, then we're thinking about skills and competencies in free speech. What's it mean to do that well with another person? It means that we have got to have, alongside our ability to speak freely, we've gotta have the ability and the competence to listen.

I'm a political scientist. I think it's really important that people understand the constitutional principle of free speech. For the purposes of the classroom, it's really important to think about what it means for that to be a practice that we engage in with one another for the purpose of learning together.

David Macasaet: Each episode, we host an Aftershow that brings members of the Instructional Design Collaborative, the campus community, and you, our listeners, together, where we raise questions, surface key ideas, and continue the conversation.

And that's certainly true for today's retrospective. With me today are:

Molly Harris: Molly Harris,

Laura Schmidli: Laura Schmidli,

Jonathan Klein: and Jonathan Klein.

David Macasaet: From what we've heard so far, what stands out to you about the Exchange Podcast?

Laura Schmidli: I took a little bit of time to listen back to some pieces of some of the earlier episodes and really appreciated actually thinking about belonging more. It's something that I first connected with in hearing Tony Chambers speak. One of the things he talked about was students having an adult that they respect and appreciate and value, who demonstrates care for them. And then I think with some of the other folks that we had the chance to talk to this season, they were able to show, this is how I do that, this is how I am that adult for the students in my classroom to make them feel like they belong.

Jonathan Klein: Similarly, a thread that I was picking up on is the concept of vulnerability and what that really means. So in a little bit of self-reflection, my personal attempt at vulnerability is probably a little bit more self-deprecating. It's almost getting in the territory of disparaging yourself, and I'm not sure that that's like the healthiest thing to

model if you're trying to be vulnerable in a really authentic way. So I think John Zumbrunnen and Christy Clark-Pujara both gave us some examples of what vulnerability means to them in a way that's a little bit more concrete. And so it's really about connection, authenticity, and creating that kind of community type of feel that is productive for learning.

Laura Schmidli: After listening to many of the episodes, I keep returning to this example of the warm demander that comes from, I believe, Zaretta Hammond, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. It may have come from someone before her, too. I'm not exactly sure, but there is this great image that I keep actually up on my office wall that has four quadrants and I find when I'm teaching, there's one of those quadrants I tend towards more often than I would—I have to kind of actively pull myself up into that warm demander quadrant instead.

One of the sort of mistakes I see myself making sometimes I think relates back to vulnerability. You know, it's great to be warm and open and transparent with your students, but only if it serves a purpose.

David Macasaet: One thing I have started doing is using the Healthy Minds program app. And even in the brief time doing it, I'm recognizing that the way I had dealt with anxiety and depression in myself was just to ignore it. Like push it down, push through. And I don't think that that's really a healthy way to deal with anxiety and depression. And part of that is coming through using the app and learning about the neuroscience.

So I would really recommend checking that out. It's wonderfully done and I think could be beneficial both for instructors individually, but it could grow into some sort of contemplative practice that you incorporate in your teaching somehow.

Molly Harris: Something that I've really come to appreciate through the process of recording all of these podcast episodes and participating in the interviews and then listening to them after they're released, is the value of stories for learning really, as a way to approach learning. So I think as a student, I have the tendency—and I think of myself still as a student, even though I'm not formally in school—but I have the tendency to want to really acquire knowledge and get all of the facts and have concrete definitions.

But I found that the guests we've talked to are so compelling because they have their own personal take on different topics. They have their own personal experiences, and that's a way that I've really come to embrace more the complexity of human interactions. And there's a way you can connect to individuals through these stories.

So I've been really thinking about how to bring stories into other parts of my life, how to listen better, and then also how can we share stories with others.

David Macasaet: And coming up this season, we're working on stories about the first day of class. Associate Professor Ralph Grunewald from the Department of English and the Center for Law, Society and Justice shares his experience preparing for the first day.

Ralph Grunewald: So at the beginning, I'm not thinking about content. It's very important, especially for criminal justice related topics that are controversial, to connect and bond with my students. So what I'm thinking, how can I best present as early and as quickly as possible like the person underneath the professor?

David Macasaet: Later this season history professor Cindy I-Fen Cheng gives her personal take on the Inside Higher Ed article titled Encouraging Inclusivity Without Sacrificing Ourselves.

Christy I-Fen Cheng: I would say that my journey to, I guess, this inclusive teaching probably actually begins when I was an undergrad and I took my very first Asian-American Studies course. This was the first time when I saw the term Asian-American women. I was like, is that who I am? And that class changed me, mostly because it gave me a vocabulary and a language to figure out myself, my family within US society and history. It gave me a way to—a language to make sense.

David Macasaet: And we meet with Janet Batzli on the inclusive legacy of the Biocore program.

Janet Batzli: I was at the Teaching and Learning symposium and heard what Professor Cohen had to say and it just resonated so much, and I just think about the Biocore program having its own situation and the way it's structured. But then sitting in this larger institution with all of the resources and the network and the research and opportunities for students. It's a starting point and it's a nucleus. It's a home for students to come back to. And then, they branch out.

David Macasaet: We hope you've enjoyed this look back and brief preview of the Exchange Podcast, and we very much hope that you're inspired to listen to one or more of the full episodes. The Exchange is brought to you by L&S Teaching and Learning Administration, and is produced by the L&S Instructional Design Collaborative.

We record this podcast on the UW-Madison campus in Van Hise Hall, which sits atop a ridge overlooking Lake Mendota. It's a beautiful spot and has a deeper significance because everything that resides here rests atop ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop since time immemorial.