

Bridging Dialogues: Podcasting with TIA

[00:00:00] Hi,

[00:00:01] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** Liz. It is so wonderful to talk to you. I'm very excited to share out some of the things that we've been discussing this week after getting to know each other about five days ago. But I wanted to start by having you introduce yourself on the show and tell us a little bit about your pathway to becoming an educational developer and what your current work situation center is like.

[00:00:26] **Liz Norrell:** So I'm Liz Norrell, and I am at the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, where I started last July, and I came into this role after spending about Almost two decades teaching in a variety of different contexts, including as a roving adjunct, teaching out of my trunk for about a decade.

[00:00:48] And then I had a couple of one year gigs, and then I had a tenure track role at a community college in Tennessee. My background is in political science, but when I went back to graduate school the first I knew it was because I wanted to teach and I was in a, my, my undergraduate degrees in journalism, I should say that.

[00:01:08] And so I went into a master's degree of journalism and because I knew my goal was to teach in journalism, they often ask you to do a secondary concentration and I did a secondary concentration in educational technology in 1999 and 2000. So ed tech then was very different and everyone in my program was like, why?

[00:01:29] That is not what most people in a journalism master's degree would want to do. And I just always thought if I'm going to teach, I should probably know something about teaching, which apparently is not a common way of thinking in the academy. I would learn that later. So anyway, the point is. I like to think that what I'm doing now is a through line back to 20 years ago when I first knew that I wanted to teach in a university setting.

[00:01:56] So I joined CETL in July of 2023. I was very excited to do because it's a rock star team at Ole Miss. Josh Eiler, Emily Pitsdonoho, and Derek Brough are incredible. And Bob Cummings, who is our Kind of umbrella

supervisor is also doing incredible work. And so I just feel really lucky and I'm glad to be here with you today.

[00:02:21] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** We are so thrilled to have you. You shared a little bit about your backstory. I want to just dive into that a little bit. You said you spent 10 years adjuncting from your trunk. What did that look like? And what is, what has that experience taught you that you now bring into your role, leading change at an institution like

[00:02:40] University of Mississippi?

[00:02:42] **Liz Norrell:** Being an adjunct was simultaneously the most fun and the hardest work I've ever done, and it was fun because I really did feel like I was almost like Self employed college professor because I never really knew anyone on a campus except for the department head who gave me a class, and I would show up and I would teach my class and I would leave, but I had the opportunity to meet so many students and.

[00:03:13] Teach a lot, which was exciting in that I got to experiment with a lot of different ways of teaching, class design, structures, assignments, etc. I really loved it and I honestly I think at any point during that decade of adjuncting, I would have been delighted to have a full time teaching job, but I was never upset that I didn't have one just because I really felt like I had much more control over my schedule than I had ever had.

[00:03:46] And I worked in a corporate job before I did that, before I went back to grad school and started teaching. I should also say that. The only reason I was able to do that kind of lifestyle for so long is that I also had a part time job teaching for Kaplan Test Prep, most of which I did online, and that was the bulk of my income.

[00:04:09] And so the adjuncting never would have been sustainable for me, being a single adult. If I hadn't had a really steady and solid part time job throughout that. But I would teach anywhere from four to, in one terrible semester, ten classes at a time. That was also the semester, by the way, that my gallbladder gave out, and I don't think the two things are Of course it was!

[00:04:36] Of course it was. Unrelated. Clearly my body said, look, Liz, you have reached the limit. You cannot teach this much. But I never, ever regretted saying yes to a class because I just love teaching so much. I had the opportunity to teach at every kind of institution from, community college to large, R1 and R2 [00:05:00] schools.

[00:05:00] I taught I've taught the gamut, and I think that more than anything has really helped me get to where I am in my career now, because I've seen that students are students no matter where you are. And we like to think that there's some sort of difference between a community college student and an R1 or a liberal arts college student.

[00:05:23] And there may be some cultural, background differences. And they're still not sure that they're equipped to be successful in college when they walk in as freshmen and they still struggle with how to balance the demands of being their own kind of executive director of their life, like they've all come out of systems where they had more help and that transition is hard.

[00:05:49] So I think it's really allowed me to meet students where they are, regardless of the context. In a way that some people who maybe go straight into a, an R1, especially a flagship or a liberal arts college or private school, they might assume more of students who show up and then be Perhaps surprised or even a little disappointed.

[00:06:12] And I've just never had that because I know that everyone who shows up on a college campus is going to have some things in common and I feel really well equipped to talk about that with other faculty and to help those students myself.

[00:06:27] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** How does

[00:06:27] that perspective apply to faculty at all these different institutions?

[00:06:33] Faculty or faculty everywhere? Are there important distinctions for our work as educational developers that you have found hold up or help you to be more effective with the ones you work with at your institution?

[00:06:47] **Liz Norrell:** Working at these different kinds of institutions has helped me see that there can be big cultural differences among faculty.

[00:06:55] But I think the thing that my background has allowed me to see perhaps more than someone who had not spent that much time adjuncting is that The part time faculty often feel very excluded and it takes a lot of effort, a lot of intentionality to find ways to invite them in a way that feels genuinely welcoming and not performative or perfunctory.

[00:07:24] And we know that The majority of our classes are now taught by contingent faculty. They are doing the lion's share of the teaching work on our

campuses, and yet they are often very hard for centers to reach and to engage with in effective ways. And, I'm still pretty new at Ole Miss, and I'm still figuring out how to do that well.

[00:07:48] I don't want to pretend that I have answers. But I think my background has given me a sensitivity to that, that can be really helpful. And so when I'm meeting with people in the departments that I liaise with, I'm always asking about their part time faculty. How are they included? Do they get engaged? Are there ways that we can be supportive of them in addition to the full time folks?

[00:08:10] Because as being in an R1 means that the faculty on our campus are not exclusively, but largely. Operating in a system that does not incentivize time and attention spent on great teaching. They are rewarded primarily for their research output. And again, that's not true for everybody. We have teaching track faculty.

[00:08:32] But, when I go to my own discipline of political science and I say, Hey, how can I be supportive of your faculty? They look at me like we know we're great teachers because our students tell us we are. So I don't think we need anything. And that may be true, but they're also not really in a system that creates the incentive structure to think more rigorously about the teaching that they're doing.

[00:08:58] Beyond just, are our students happy? If so, then proceed, because, we are rewarded for our research. I'm rambling here, but I think, to, to your point,

[00:09:08] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** I wouldn't call this rambling. I think this is really important stuff that you're sharing insight. Go on.

[00:09:13] **Liz Norrell:** I really believe that centers can get a lot of traction with our contingent faculty who are doing, again, the lion's share of the teaching on our campuses, but it's really hard, and it requires a lot of work and a lot of intentionality, a lot of outreach, a lot of relationship building, and ultimately, I think that's what the work of a center for teaching is.

[00:09:37] It's relationship building, just like I think the work of teaching is relationship building.

[00:09:44] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** That's such an important conversation. Recently, I was, maybe it was reading Mary Wright's book about how many

centers offer programming specifically for adjunct faculty or contingent faculty, and it was a surprisingly low number.

[00:09:59] And it [00:10:00] made me reflect on how we support those faculty here at Auburn University. I realized, for good intentioned reasons, I was just saying, all faculty are invited. But when I reflect on my experience as, an instructor or contingent faculty, if it didn't say, Non tenured track faculty, too, are included, or whatever the role was that I really identified with.

[00:10:24] I did not feel like that was an explicit invitation, and in fact, I felt the opposite. That if it said faculty, what they really meant, the subtext was, the tenured faculty That are, and there were a lot of reasons I was taking that subtext. It was, we get a lot of messages from a lot of different areas, explicit and implicit, in those roles.

[00:10:45] And I think, centers doing a better job of more explicitly engaging and naming those faculty that they want to participate might be a good, simple, low hanging fruit step. Or at least that's what I was reflecting on. I don't know if you have other More insightful and engaging strategies. I think it's such an important topic.

[00:11:05] **Liz Norrell:** It is, and I can just share an experience that I had very early in my career as an adjunct. At the very first place that I adjuncted, that has really shaped how I think about including part time faculty. The very first job I had was at Richland College, which was part of the Dallas County Texas system.

[00:11:27] And I was I, before I got enough graduate hours in political science, I taught there what we would now call a learning support writing class. So basically the, for students who were not college ready in writing, I would teach one of the classes in that sequence. And at Richland, they would pay adjuncts 50 on a Saturday to come and do a professional development workshop.

[00:11:52] And they would also feed us breakfast and lunch. And I signed up for every one of those that I possibly could, because I needed money, but also I wanted to learn. And it was very competitive. They usually had about 40 slots, and they would fill up within two hours of it being opened for registration.

[00:12:11] And I learned so much. And they would have. their faculty, their full time faculty, come and teach a workshop on something that they felt like they did really well. And so I got to meet full time faculty. It was a system that

rewarded full time faculty's teaching knowledge, so it identified and rewarded expertise, and I'm sure they got paid too.

[00:12:32] And then I got to meet other contingent faculty on a Saturday for three hours in the morning. This was an incredible model and one that I've never seen at any other institution that I've ever worked at. And it's something that I just think there was so much intentionality there around building community among full time and part time faculty and around very clear messaging that we value your time and we value you being the best teacher you can be.

[00:13:03] And that was That's something that I think about all the time as, a model for how could we do something like that. And I'm not saying that I've ever worked somewhere where we've managed to figure it out. I spent about seven years at a community college in Tennessee, as I mentioned.

[00:13:19] And we were always told that we were not allowed to pay adjunct faculty to come and do a workshop like that. Like the payment rules were not, would not allow for that, and so we were never able to get that off the ground. And I was just giving ideas to our teaching center. I didn't even work there, but this is who's teaching our classes.

[00:13:38] We, we need to invest in them. So it's something that I would love to see more centers think about and try to incorporate. Ah, that's so

[00:13:50] powerful. I'm gonna, I'm gonna start working on that here, but it's

[00:13:56] great how

[00:13:56] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** it goes. Yeah, but it's, the scheduling, the thought that goes into it, how they're, bringing in folks from the community, not as experts, but as somebody who has a practical expertise.

[00:14:08] This works well for me. Maybe you want to learn. That's so rich.

[00:14:13] **Liz Norrell:** I have, I still have. All of the little workbooks that I got from those, all the handouts, because they were just so helpful and so timely and Yeah, that was a great introduction to what faculty development could look like, and I'm fortunate that I had it in that very first exposure to teaching.

[00:14:37] I will say, where I am now at Ole Miss, we invite everyone to all of our events, like anyone who's affiliated with the university can sign up for almost everything that we do. And we do have a lot of part time. instructors who

come because a lot of our part time instructors at Ole Miss are also Full time staff members.

[00:14:59] [00:15:00] And so they seem, at least from what I can tell, to feel included when we ask them or give them an opportunity to come to an event. So we get especially our kind of first year experience class for freshmen a lot of those classes are taught by staff members and they come to a lot of our events and are excited to do I know we still have. We'll always have room to do better in that way but I'm encouraged that, at least from what I can tell so far, the culture seems to include are contingent faculty in the definition of faculty.

[00:15:37] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** You've had a lot of practical experience in the classroom then. Now you're in an educational development role.

[00:15:42] And you've also taken on another role in our field. In July, I believe, you became an associate editor for our flagship journal, To Improve the Academy. And I wanted to ask you about that. Why did you respond to the call? What did you hope to get out of it? What are you getting out of it?

[00:16:02] **Liz Norrell:** Yeah, I saw the call in January, February of last year, and they were asking for applicants for associate editor and for contributing editor.

[00:16:13] And the contributing editor would be, basically raising your hand and saying, I'm willing to do a little bit of training, a little bit of professional learning around how to be a good reviewer, and then review four to five articles a year. And I thought. That sounds about right, because I'm, I know at this point I had no, I knew that I was going to be starting this job in the summer at Ole Miss, and I thought this will pair really well, because one of the things I was hired at Ole Miss to do was to help faculty engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

[00:16:44] So being, Affiliated with a journal that's doing this kind of work felt really natural for me. So I applied to be a contributing editor, as did many other people, and apparently exactly zero people volunteered to be an associate editor. So the editors of the journal reached out to me and said, we think you would actually make a really good associate editor.

[00:17:06] Would you consider applying for that? And I thought, who am I? Like I've literally never worked in a center and I never would have put my name forward for that on my own because I just didn't feel like I had the expertise, but

they thought I did. So I applied, I went through the process. I got offered the position.

[00:17:25] I completely love this work, and I think it has been a wonderful addition to the work that I do in our Center for Teaching, because I get to see research as it's on the cutting edge of that. I get to, to improve the academy, we take a very supportive mentoring posture to our authors and our reviewers.

[00:17:49] And we are always trying to make the research that gets submitted to us the best it can be, even if it's not going in our journal. So especially if we have to turn away an article, we are going to invest a lot of time Thinking about what are the things that would make this manuscript stronger?

[00:18:07] And if it's not a good fit in the mission and scope for TIA, what other journals out there might be a good fit? So we invest a lot of time in that because we think that. That's part of our ethos as a journal, as an organ, as an organization. But we also recognize that we are in a position where we can influence what the culture around peer review can become within our discipline, within our part of higher education.

[00:18:32] And hopefully that will filter out to other parts of higher education because I think we all know about, the. The stereotypes about reviewer two and, what peer review is like and we have some of the same challenges that other journals do, but we also really care deeply about supporting one another and creating strong relationships in addition to.

[00:18:54] Really strong research. So I have loved it and I love the people I work with and I think everyone who's listening to this should consider whether TIA might be a good fit for them just to get to work with really smart people, read really interesting research and create these incredible relationships with authors and reviewers in the field around what does it mean to do really evidence based research.

[00:19:25] Meaningful work in centers for teaching and educational development. I have loved it and consider this an open invitation to anyone who might want to get more involved. We would love to have you. We will find a place for you. Is there always

[00:19:40] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** a call in early spring or does it vary? If folks are listening.

[00:19:43] We

[00:19:44] **Liz Norrell:** are, yeah I, it's changing a little bit. We're proposing with our editorial board some changes to our editorial team structure. The current structure was set up when the journal moved in house. [00:20:00] And has been in place for a few years, but once the editors who put that in place, Michael Palmer and Lindsey Wheeler, once they moved on, we have seen how the structure might need to be a little bit more nimble for different people.

[00:20:15] And so we are trying to create an editorial team structure that allows multiple points of entry. And exit. For example, right now, there's an expectation that if you come on as an associate editor, you'll be an associate editor for two years, then you'll be an editor for two years, and then you'll join the board.

[00:20:35] And that trajectory might look great, but for someone who's never really worked in a journal, you might get into it and realize this is not what I want to do with my time. I do not want to be the editor of this journal. And so we want to create a structure that is flexible enough to allow people to make that choice or even stay in an associate editor role for longer without feeling like they have to become like the editor.

[00:20:57] And we're changing that, but I do expect that we'll be recruiting new associate or maybe even a newly created assistant editor position this spring to start in the summer. And we would love to get A couple, three, maybe, really strong people, by which I mean people who are curious and who have the bandwidth to invest.

[00:21:22] We will teach you what you need to know. You don't need to be long time seasoned experts. This is a really great way to introduce yourself to the field of educational development because you will have the mentorship of those of us who've been doing it, but also you'll get to meet lots and lots of people in the field, and there's

[00:21:39] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** another exciting project in the works to improve the academy. Would you like to tell our listeners about

[00:21:46] **Liz Norrell:** that? And this is why we're here. So one of the things that we want to do as a team along with my colleagues, Marina Smithman and Megan Robertson, the three of us are really eager to amplify the research that's happening in the journal and invite you conversation and different voices into the educational development stuff that we're doing, the work that we're doing.

[00:22:11] And so one of the ideas we had, and I'm really excited that Centering Centers is willing to partner with us on this, is to do some podcast interviews with the authors who are publishing in the journal. And so we are hoping with our current issue, which just came out a couple of months ago to go to some of those authors with new articles out to have a short conversation about their research, what they did, how it started, how they found their co authors, how they got it to publication, what the process was like, what they're working on next, and have those be episodes that appear in this feed alongside Centering Centers because it's very much aligned.

[00:22:53] It's part of the same mission of the Centering Centers podcast, and eventually we imagine that there might even be a place in the journal for pieces from the podcast. So one of the new article types that we hope to launch this year is called Conversations, and when I think of this, I think of that chapter in Teaching to Transgress, where bell hooks is having this conversation, right?

[00:23:18] But the idea is that we would take an episode from the podcast and get the transcript and edit it down to some gems and publish that in the journal with an invitation for people to go and listen to the full interview on the podcast. So this is a way that we think we can really leverage the digital part here of the podcast and the open resource scholarship that we're doing in the journal in a way that will hopefully again broaden the audience and bring in some new voices that we might not have previously been able to see in the pages of the journal.

[00:23:56] So we are so excited about launching this year.

[00:24:00] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** We, yes, absolutely. Same. And I think, for our mission on the Centering Centers podcast has really been to elevate voices across the pod network, but using the medium of podcasting as it is uniquely positioned to elevate emerging voices and different aspects of scholarly conversation that don't necessarily fit into a traditional peer review type publication or conference session.

[00:24:29] It's a third space, if you will, for these conversations to happen. And there's been so much wonderful research about the backstage of educational development. And that's, one of the Guiding metaphors for a lot of the work and the conversations we try to hold here, which is to get beyond the things that are on people's CVs and really tell.

[00:24:52] The linking story, the pathways to where you got, where you are, and like you shared that wonderful experience as [00:25:00] an adjunct faculty

member. Who knows what kinds of legs that anecdote will have as folks like myself think, Oh, Saturday, why not? It just gets us thinking about things in a quicker takeaway kind of spirit.

[00:25:13] Then, of course, the educational research to improve the academy shares is. That shifts our whole strategic planning and how we approach, one off workshops, for example, moving away from those into more long programming type things. Some of those big picture takeaways. But It's such a great experiment to look at how these authors who are going to be sharing traditional peer reviewed scholarship, how they'll talk about it in this less formal, we'll get the dirt behind the data or whatever.

[00:25:47] the stories are.

[00:25:50] **Liz Norrell:** Yeah. And I, as I was saying earlier, I think talking about what the study found, what the conclusions are, what the takeaways are, and how other people can use them. That's interesting. And we'll talk about that, but I'm really interested in, as you said, looking at the backstage of how peer reviewed scholarship gets into a journal, because there are lots of people in the field, I think who might look at a journal's, output and say that's nice, but that article has 12 co authors and I don't know two people and how am I ever going to be able to do that?

[00:26:25] And so learning how this comes about and how you can build a research program in educational development, that's the stuff that I really want to use these episodes for, because I think it will help more people envision themselves as TIA authors or reviewers and think about how. We can build the relationships that allow us to do this really interesting, collaborative research work.

[00:26:50] That's my hope, is, yeah, the research is important. You can read that in the journal. We'll talk about it. But I want to know, like, how did you get here? I think

[00:27:00] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** it's, for a field like ours, where nobody's really native to digital development as a discipline, we all have to learn How the conversations happen in the scholarship and having them in a less structured way can be really powerful and entertaining.

[00:27:16] It's a different kind of, a different take on the research. Yeah, so we're super excited about that. We've also, Centering Centers, over the years, we have been trying to find different ways to engage different voices from the POD

network. Recently, I sent out on the POD listserv an invitation, three different links for three different forms.

[00:27:37] One, inviting feedback on the podcast. One, inviting nominations for guests or topics that folks want to hear about. And the other, inviting folks who want to participate in the creation and shaping of the podcast. Whether that's, being a guest or sharing perspective, creating an episode, hosting an episode.

[00:27:56] We really want this to be a platform where folks feel invited to share their story or, lead a conversation. So if that's something that interests folks who are listening, we give the email at the start of the episode dri@podnetwork.org. We're also happy to have you engaged with those forms and provide feedback through there.

[00:28:17] So if there are things, directions that you wanna see this show take, we'd be excited to hear from you. Yeah. So I wanted to I mentioned this to you before we started recording, so it's time now. In our first episode of the year, we had Diane Boyd talking about an exercise Brene Brown gives to folks that asks them to whittle down their values to just two values, and two values that inform and shape who you are, how you operate, your goals.

[00:28:48] I think we can probably guess some of them just given the stories and the experiences that you have shared, but we want to hear from you. What are two values, if you had to boil it down, that really communicate who you are in this work and in the world?

[00:29:04] **Liz Norrell:** Thankfully, I have just finished writing a book and it's in the editorial process, yes, and so I can answer this because I spent a lot of time thinking about what do I want to talk about in this book, and the two things that I think are probably most important to my work, whether that be in educational development or in teaching or really anything, is relationship centered.

[00:29:30] I think relationships are the engine that create transformation, and along with that, For relationships to work, I would say authenticity. My, my partner is a math professor at a liberal arts college. And he and I agree on very little, almost nothing about teaching. But that's because we are very different people in the classroom.

[00:29:56] And so the things that I do would never work for him. [00:30:00] Because they would not feel authentic. They would feel like he was acting and it would not create any kind of meaningful relationships. So whenever I'm giving

workshops or talking to faculty and they say what do I do if, the answer is here are some ideas, but you have to choose something that feels authentic to you because otherwise students are going to know from a mile away that this is you.

[00:30:22] Doing something that is not in keeping with who you are. Relationships and authenticity. And I just want to say, authenticity is hard because we know that there are identities that are not as safe in the classroom. And so I talk about that a lot in my manuscript and maybe we'll talk about that some sometime in the future.

[00:30:41] But being as authentic as it feels safe to be. That's what I would say. You are not going to be You can be the same person in the classroom as you are with your friends on a Friday night at your favorite restaurant or bar of choice. I am! And that's good. That's good, right? You can be a version of that person, right?

[00:31:04] But you're not unfiltered. You're not talking about What your mom did that made you mad, or, why your dog keeps getting into things they shouldn't, right? That's not appropriate in the classroom, always. But you still want to be who you are at your core with your students. And when we try to don a persona that's not authentic, then it just creates a wall between us and our students that impedes learning.

[00:31:33] Because we can't, this is the argument in my book, we can't be as present to our students because we're too busy monitoring our presentation of ourselves. And I know you're a fan of Irving Goffin, as I am, and anyway, more about that later, but those are the two values I would say, relationships and authenticity.

[00:31:51] I

[00:31:52] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** love that. I've loved getting to start a new working relationship with you, you're a very authentic person.

[00:31:59] **Liz Norrell:** Yeah, I try to be.

[00:32:01] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** That's wonderful. And will you share with us the name of your book that's coming out, if people are interested?

[00:32:07] **Liz Norrell:** Yes it's with the University of Oklahoma Press, it's in the series that's edited by James Lang and Michelle Miller, and it's called The

Present Professor, and we have a subtitle that's official as of I think last week, and the subtitle is The Authenticity and Transformational Teaching.

[00:32:25] Got that

[00:32:25] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** value in the title. Well done. Yes.

[00:32:30] **Liz Norrell:** We spent a lot of time on the subtitle, but the present professor has been the working title for a long time. And I just love it because I think it really communicates what the book is trying to do, which is help faculty be more present in the classroom by being more authentic and teaching from their identity in a way that feels very grounded.

[00:32:48] And again, as authentic as it feels. psychologically safe to me. Also a gift,

[00:32:55] **Lindsay Doukopoulos:** right? A present. Yeah. We have loved getting to talk to you today. Very excited about moving forward and hearing, some of the authors that you're working with from To Improve the Academy and digging into whatever kinds of new territory await with that new thread of episodes that we're going to be launching here in the next couple months.

[00:33:18]

[00:33:18] **Liz Norrell:** Thanks, and let me just say if anyone is interested in learning more about the journal and how you might be able to get involved you can go to our website. It's linked from the POD Network website, and you can get in touch with any of us if you find me on social media or wherever, you're welcome to email me.

[00:33:34] We, we have a really great and very collaborative and supportive team. I love working with them, and we would love to add. Really dynamic and curious folks to the team. So reach out anytime if you want to get involved.