

Ep. 071: Building a Relationship-Rich Campus

Podcast: <https://ProDev.illinoisstate.edu/podcast/2021/ep071.shtml>

Connections can make all the difference when it comes to student success. Evidence shows that authentic learning, and authentic assessment of learning, can be achieved more successfully when there's a rapport between teacher and learner, between learners, and between learners and what they need to learn. But how do you pull that off? In January, hundreds of instructors, support staff, and graduate students will come together (both physically and virtually) to search for answers.

In this episode, CTLT director Dr. Jennifer Friberg and faculty developer Dr. Dana Karraker join Jim to discuss the upcoming 2022 University-Wide Teaching & Learning Symposium. The theme-- Listen, Encourage, Inspire, Challenge: Building a Relationship-Rich Campus. Learn about the unique perspectives represented by this year's two keynote presenters and how this year's event will blend the best of both online and face-to-face modalities.

The Symposium is free for all ISU faculty, staff, and graduate students. [Register](#) for the event by December 17, 2021.

Transcript

JIM: Hi there. I'm Jim.

JEN: I'm Jen.

DANA: And I'm Dana.

JIM: Let's Talk Teaching. Welcome to Let's Talk Teaching a podcast from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology here at Illinois State University.

JIM: Listen, encourage, inspire, challenge. These are all words that we use when we talk about teaching and student learning on our campus here at Illinois State. And it's also part of our theme for the 2022 University-Wide Teaching and Learning Symposium and to talk to me about this annual event that we're very excited about. Joining me is our director, Dr. Jennifer Friberg. Hi, Jen.

JEN: Hi, Jim.

JIM: And also my colleague, Dr. Dana Karraker, who is our coordinator for events, but also for our programming team now, here at CTLT. We keep talking on our pokey little podcast here about the extraordinary year or two years that we've had dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic, and whatnot. And that certainly impacted how we have put on our symposium. I'd like to talk a little bit quickly about our theme today, and how that's been kind of informed over the last by what has happened over the last few years why we chose that theme for this year.

DANA: So building a relationship rich campus, we have learned over the past year and a half or more, the importance of relationships, as our teaching contexts have, have, shifted. We don't have that person in person connection. But our students still need it, it's

important to learning. And we've learned that we need to develop these relationships. So, we decided to focus our symposium theme on building relationships, and creating learning environments where students can succeed.

JIM: And so, the need became more apparent over the course of the pandemic. But of course, we're being very forward looking with this. The idea is, if we never go back to remote learning again, and let's all hope that doesn't happen. If we never go back to that sort of emergency situation, again, it's still important to build these relationships, right?

DANA: Oh, absolutely. And we have always known this, it's something that we've done. But now we know that we can do it in different contexts, and we don't know what the future holds. So, you know, our teaching and learning context may change for any of a number of reasons and to be able to be flexible, and, and, and change with the times, we've learned a few things that we can take with us. So having that conversation at the symposium we felt was an important thing to do.

JIM: So, Jen, what does a relationship between an instructor and a student look like? What does a rich relationship look like?

JEN: I guess from my perspective; it starts with mutual respect. You know, as instructors, we want to respect the fact that our students are human beings that have all kinds of things happening in and around their lives, just like we do as instructors, and, and, you know, navigating the, the teaching and learning context with that in mind that need to, you know, respect each other's, you know, roles in in the class and the course itself, but also, you know, trying to develop ways in which communication and interaction and just the, the nature of the interactions between teachers and learners can reflect that, that human dimension of who we are outside of the classroom as well. And we can bring in then, ways in which to enrich, to overuse the word rich there in one sentence, to make to make the experience within a course better for everyone.

DANA: And I just want to add to that, too, that in order for students to be successful, and we define success at ISU in a number of different ways, but one way is to keep students here and complete their degrees and reach their goals. Everybody on campus staff, faculty, course, instructors, administrators, anyone who interacts with students in any way can have an impact on student success. So, Jen talked about the relationships in the classroom, and mutual respect, but they're also some very small in the moment types of things that help develop relationships and help with student success, all the way up to that very formal mentoring. Relationship to so there's an array of relationships that can occur on campus.

JIM: So as often when we're talking about our annual symposium, this is actually a big topic. And I'm really excited this year that we've been able to once again invite. Call it to call for proposals. And so, we have a lot of our colleagues from across campus who are going to be contributing by doing presentations, either panel discussions or individual presentations or posters. In order to facilitate that we've kind of have a sort of a dual nature to this event in terms of how we're gathering in the in the spaces in which

we're gathering. So, Dana, can you talk a little bit about how we've decided to structure the day.

DANA: So, one thing we've learned from our year in virtual learning is that our technology can really afford us some ways to interact. So, our morning will be obvious Zoom. So that allowed us to bring into keynoters, the keynoters will do workshops and present in the morning. And then we also asked some of our presenters if they would be interested in doing virtual presentations, and we do have some of those happening in the morning as well. But we also know we like that in person getting together. So, the afternoon we'll meet at Milner and have concurrent sessions in the afternoon. And then we're ending the day with our reception and poster session.

JIM: And that's kind of our large face to face kind of gathering time, this time around, because we're not doing lunch for various logistic reasons and whatnot. So, people will have a break in the day where they can go, grab a bite to eat, or, you know, run to the dry cleaner, or whatever, whatever you need to do during that that portion of the day. We should also mention, by the way, because this is another tradition of when we do this symposium podcast that I always forget to mention when the symposium is until the very end of the podcast. So, the symposium is Wednesday, January 5. This year, and a run all throughout the day. Really quickly, though, when we're talking about that reception and the poster session at the end of the day. Jen, we also need to mention that there's another special event happening at that point.

JEN: Absolutely. So, the University Teaching Committee is in the process of finalizing selections for this year's outstanding university teaching award winners. And so, we'll have five different award categories and a slate of some really talented, excellent instructors and faculty to celebrate. And we want to do that as part of the the reception at the end of the symposium on January 5, I'll get it in there again for you, Jim. But so, we actually will be moving from Millner to the bone center into the atrium that admissions uses, they were kind enough to share their space with us. And so, we have a lovely physical space to display the posters of our colleagues here at ISU and to, you know, have a nice recognition for our Teaching Award winners.

JIM: So that's kind of the nuts and bolts of the date. Let's dive back into what people are going to get out of it by coming and participating in the day. So, the gist of what we're exploring with the theme. So, Dana, do you want to talk a little bit about who we're bringing in to help us explore this, we have a couple different perspectives, right?

DANA: We do so we have invited keynoters to come and talk with faculty. So, they will be doing a short keynote presentation and then doing a workshop to do some hands on work thinking about some of the ideas that they're sharing. Our two keynoters one is Peter Felton, who is the Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching at Elon University. And he wrote a book that a couple of our learning communities have been reading this semester. And his book is called Relationship Rich Education, How Connections Drive Success in College. And then we have also invited David Renninger, who is the Director of Academic Integrity Programs at the University of Mary Washington, he is coming to talk about authentic learning and assessment and its connection to academic integrity. So that's part of that challenge part of our four

words in our title of our symposium. So, offering challenging, authentic academic integrity. For those who are keynoters.

JEN: I just want to toss in just a little, a little tidbit that I think is important to note. You know the, the Teaching and Learning Symposium here at ISU has a rich history, it's been offered, I think more than 20 times if my math is accurate. And I think that says an awful lot about an institution that they can sustain interest in in a Teaching and Learning Symposium and grow it over time. And one of the things that has been great to watch since I have come to campus and started as Cross Chair for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and now working with CTLT as their Interim Director, is that there's been increasingly, you know, attention paid to the need to anchor what we do in the classroom to evidence. So, extant research that's already been published in various disciplinary or cross disciplinary journals about pedagogy. And you know, the folks who are planning this this symposium, Dana and her team and everybody around it, has really embraced this idea of saying, you know, we need to bring in speakers and topics that there's ample research to support the, the, the, truthiness behind what, what, these individuals are bringing to us. And, you know, there are some people who might think that building relationships with students is not as important as content. And there's evidence that both of these individuals are keynoters will talk about that says, it might be hard to teach content without building relationships with your students in some form or fashion. And so, you know, this is not a feel good topic. This this is a topic that actually is very evidence informed. And it is a theme that is evidence informed. And it's, it's, one that I think will be really delightful to explore together in January.

JIM: Indeed. And, you know, I think one of the reasons why the symposium has been a success every year is because it allows us to renew the relationships that we have with our colleagues on campus, as well, which is, which is a little bit different than the than how we're using relationship in the context of teaching and learning. And yet, it's still important to be able to come together and have that discussion together, right? We should mention that even though the technology is now there, we're not actually recording these sessions, they won't be available afterwards, we want to make sure first of all, that people feel comfortable and have an open discussion. But we also want people to be present in the moment, because that's when the magic kind of happens at the symposium. So, the online sessions, you can only see them live online at the time and the face to face sessions, you have to be there to in order to participate in those. And we make registration really easy as we usually do. So, we'll talk about that in a moment, too. But do we have any other final thoughts of what people can do to kind of prepare, get in the right mental space to come to the symposium this year?

DANA: I think the timing of the symposium is, is, it facilitates that preparation piece. So, you know, that's the, it's right before the semester starts. People are, you know, they're wrapping up their, their, long break, and getting ready thinking forward into the first week of school, which starts the next week. So come prepared to think about how you want to start off your semester, think about, reflect on, what this last semester was like, because, you know, it, it was, it was challenging, but also wonderful to be back in person and returning to the post pandemic world, whatever that is. So just, you know,

be in that that frame of mind where you're ready to plan for your new semester, based on what you've learned from the past semester,

JEN: I'd like to just give a nod to the fact that we're trying really hard to provide a comfortable and secure symposium. And we recognize that there are some people who are very much more comfortable yet still, in a virtual environment and coming together is not something that they're ready for. Or looking to do even, you know, looking into the future. I know, there's always uncertainties, and there's always questions out there. And so, you know, we would invite people to participate in the symposium to within and you know, within their comfort level. And if there are folks who don't wish to come to the face to face, but are interested in the topics that are going to be talked about, I would encourage you to reach out to the presenters ask for resources or information, reach out to us at CTLT we can do the same and help you learn more about the topics that that are being presented in the afternoon and, you know, extend anything that that would be helpful to you in that context. But you know, equally so there are people who really are seeking to be together like Dana said, and so you know, we're trying to balance everyone's preferences and needs and, and so I think part of getting ready for symposium is knowing where your comfort level is operating within it and you know, asking us for anything that would be helpful to aid your participation in our event.

DANA: Just also knowing that the symposium conversation isn't a one and done thing. We often use our symposium as a launching point for programming throughout the spring, summer and even into the following fall. So, it's a starting point.

JIM: And it's a good starting point. And so, you can get started well, the symposium itself, the 2022 University-Wide Teaching and Learning Symposium is Wednesday, January 5 on campus and online here at Illinois State University. Registration we ask you to register by Friday, December 17. So that's actually coming up fairly soon. Go to our website, CTLT.IllinoisState.edu. It's the first thing the big splashy image you're going to see on the page. So, Dana, Jen, thank you so much.

JEN: Thank you.

DANA: Thanks, Jim.

JEN: Thanks, Dana.

JIM: And that's all the time we have for this episode of Let's Talk Teaching. Again, find out more about our symposium and about our podcast, go to our website. CTLT.IllinoisState.edu. For Dr Dana Karraker for Dr Jennifer Friburg and for all my colleagues here at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology until we talk again. Happy teaching.