

# FACULTY MATTERS

VIEWS AND NEWS OF DOUGLAS COLLEGE FACULTY ASSOCIATION MEMBERS  
NUMBER 25, WINTER 2026

## Major victory for academic freedom

**Major victory for academic freedom and freedom of expression as Langara instructor reinstated**



FEDERATION OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATORS OF BC  
PRESS RELEASE, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

PHOTO: CAUT

*FPSE is the provincial voice of 10,000 faculty and staff at our 18 member locals at BC's universities, colleges, institutes, and private-sector institutions.*



FEDERATION OF  
POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATORS OF BC

The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE) is pleased to announce that Dr. Natalie Knight has been reinstated to her position at Langara College effective January 26, 2024, pursuant to an arbitration award issued by Arbitrator Randy Noonan. Dr. Knight's employment had been terminated for cause by the College after she made controversial remarks in support of Palestinian resistance.

**“We have secured a critical victory in overturning an unjust termination that was tainted by ministerial interference.”**

“We have secured a critical victory in overturning an unjust termination that was tainted by ministerial interference. Langara abused its power and acted impulsively while ignoring key principles of natural justice and procedural fairness when it terminated Dr. Knight's employment,” said Michael Conlon, Executive Director of FPSE. “Langara had a duty to resist online intimidation and the well-orchestrated campaign to have Dr. Knight fired. It had a prime opportunity to uphold the principles of freedom of expression and academic freedom, and it failed to do so,” contended Conlon.

As was widely reported in the media, Dr. Knight was put on paid leave pending an investigation by the College into remarks she had made at a

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# DCFA

DOUGLAS COLLEGE  
FACULTY ASSOCIATION

**FACULTY MATTERS**  
Number 25, Winter 2026

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rally on October 28, 2023, regarding the war in Gaza. After an exhaustive investigative process, including consideration of a thorough, thoughtful internal report by the College's Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Advisory Committee that rigorously examined these matters in the context of Langara's policies on academic freedom and the Charter right to freedom of expression, the College found that Dr. Knight had not violated any Langara policy. On January 18, 2024, Dr. Knight was reinstated without discipline under the collective agreement.

## The Langara Faculty Association grieved the termination of Dr. Knight's employment and the violation of her rights under the collective agreement, the Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Langara College Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression.

On January 23, 2024, Dr. Knight participated in a lawful demonstration and informed participants that she had been reinstated to her role without any discipline under the collective agreement, both of which were factually correct statements. Dr. Knight also made comments related to the ongoing war in Gaza. Selina Robinson, then Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and a consistent critic of Dr. Knight, subsequently abused her position to publicly advocate for Dr. Knight's termination.

Approximately 72 hours after that demonstration, and without a comprehensive investigation or due process, Dr. Knight was terminated for cause on January 26, 2024. Langara President Paula Burns announced the termination to the Langara community, the media, and the public prior to providing a written letter of termination to Dr. Knight.

The Langara Faculty Association (LFA) grieved the termination of Dr. Knight's employment and the violation of her rights under the collective agreement, the Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Langara College Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression. Following mediation between the parties, Arbitrator Noonan issued his award on November 19, 2025.

"I am grateful that this troubling episode in Langara's history has come to a close," said LFA President Pauline Greaves. "I understand many in our community were hurt and offended by what Dr. Knight said. But collegial dialogue and tolerance for views we don't like are the bedrock of a robust, engaged academic environment. Dr. Knight should never have been fired, and an injustice has been corrected," emphasized Greaves.

FPSE was joined by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), our national partners, in denouncing the termination of Dr. Knight's employment. CAUT took particular note that Dr. Knight's employment was terminated despite the finding of the College's own Committee on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression that Dr. Knight had not violated any aspect of Langara's policies or the collective agreement. Langara acted only after Minister Robinson called for Dr. Knight's termination. At the time, FPSE and CAUT consequently called for Minister Robinson to resign, and shortly thereafter, she did resign from her position as Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills.

"The College's conduct and public statements cast a pall over the right to engage in pro-Palestinian speech," said CAUT Executive Director David Robinson. "The Minister's intrusion into this case was an outrageous violation of Dr. Knight's rights to academic freedom and freedom of expression. The Minister's inappropriate remarks also made a mockery of the separation between government and post-secondary institutions. We are very pleased that Dr. Knight has been vindicated, and this case should serve as a cautionary tale for any institution that meekly bows to external pressure and shirks

its duty to protect academic freedom and freedom of expression," asserted Robinson.

## "The Minister's intrusion into this case was an outrageous violation of Dr. Knight's rights to academic freedom and freedom of expression."

Langara College was initially guided by its excellent Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression. As this painful episode draws to a close, FPSE and the LFA are looking forward to a renewed commitment to the principles set out in the Statement.

"I am tremendously grateful for the support of FPSE, CAUT, and my local union, the LFA. My case is an important testimony to the collective power of unions to protect workers against the arbitrary actions of employers," said Dr. Natalie Knight. "I share this victory with everyone who has faced intimidation or threats to their livelihood for speaking out about the ongoing war in Gaza. Looking forward, it is my hope that this case will serve to protect those who continue to express solidarity with the more-than-77-year Palestinian struggle for national self-determination," concluded Knight.

## References

For more information, please see the following documents:

[Arbitration award issued by Arbitrator Randy Noonan](#) (November 19, 2025)

[FPSE Statement on Resignation of Selina Robinson](#) (February 5, 2024)

[FPSE Calls for Immediate Resignation of the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills](#) (February 1, 2024)

[CAUT calls for B.C. minister's resignation over political interference](#) (February 1, 2024)

[Joint FPSE-Langara Faculty Association Statement on Member Termination](#) (January 26, 2024)

[Report of the Langara College Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Advisory Committee](#) (November 14, 2023)

[Langara College Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and](#)

# Individual vs. supplemental professional development funds: What's the difference?

SHELLEY WEISSER, DCFA

Over the winter break, you may have been browsing professional development (PD) activities and come across the perfect opportunity. Perhaps a conference is beckoning you or a course caught your eye that will help you present your lessons with technological flair. You look at your options for funding. Individual funds, supplemental funds... What's the difference? Which should you apply for?

## INDIVIDUAL PD FUNDS

As laid out in Article 9 of the Collective Agreement, PD time and funds are allocated to faculty, allowing them to maintain currency in subject matter, instructional processes, technological developments, learning materials, library holdings and professional skills and competencies *relevant to their position with the college*. Note the final words of that description. When requesting your PD funds, you will have to provide a rationale for their use. To facilitate a smooth request process, ensure that there is a clear description of how the PD activity will be of value to your role at Douglas college.

## ACCESSING INDIVIDUAL PD FUNDS

Each April, the college releases PD funds based on your projected workload. Every full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty member receives \$1000 in individual funds each year, which is prorated for those faculty with less than full-time teaching loads. Contract faculty accrue individual funds at the start of each semester they teach. Your Faculty PD Committee is responsible for recording and disbursement of these funds, whether that be in individual funds or general faculty pools. They will also track your funds as any unspent money is carried forward to the following fiscal year. While some faculties pool PD funds, this is voluntary and faculty have the right to individually accumulate PD money.

All faculty can request their individual PD funds by submitting both the *Faculty Professional Development*

*Application Form* and an *Expense Claim Form*, along with receipts and supporting documents to your PD committee. They will make recommendations for authorization to the dean. While deans do have the right to withhold authorization, they cannot unreasonably do so. Regular faculty can apply at any time, but contract faculty must submit their claims and receive reimbursement during their period of employment. All forms and additional information can be found on DC Connect.

## SUPPLEMENTAL PD FUNDS

Each year the college distributes \$240,000 to faculties proportional to their regular faculty FTE generation, based on the previous year's workload reconciliation. Every September, the responsible administrator will advise regular faculty members of the total funds available for the academic year. While the types of activities eligible for supplemental PD funds are comparable to those for individual PD funds, these activities must demonstrate a *tangible benefit to students*. To facilitate a smooth request process, ensure that there is a clear description of the value that the PD activity will offer to your students at the college.

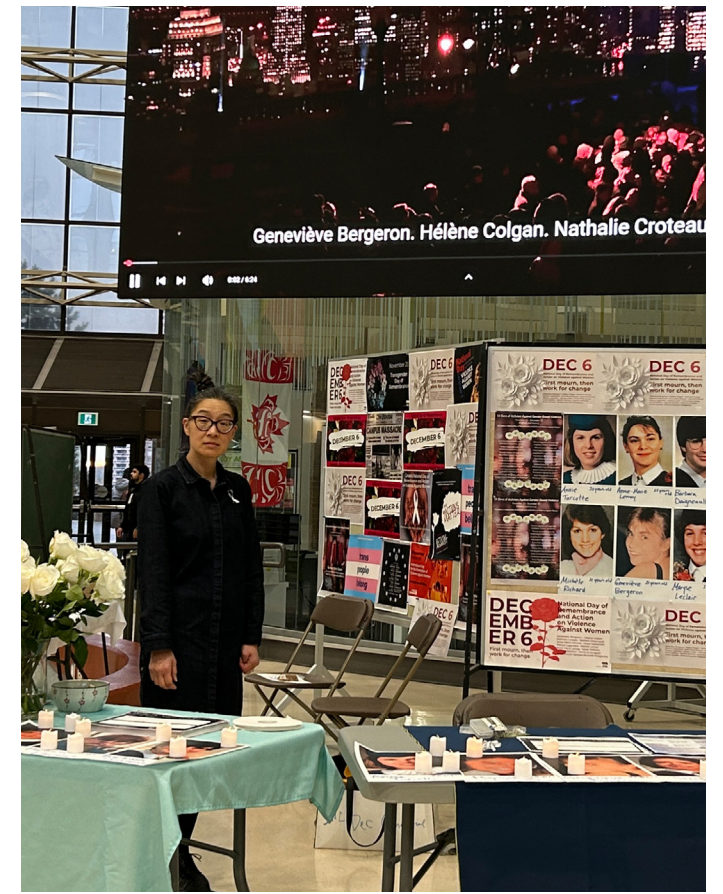
## ACCESSING SUPPLEMENTAL PD FUNDS

Regular faculty members can apply for supplemental PD funds once per academic year, provided that the first \$200 is from their personal PD funds and that the application does not exceed \$4000. Any costs over \$4000 would have to be taken from their individual PD funds. The Faculty PD Committee accepts applications for supplemental PD Funds beginning September 1st of each academic year. Applications that meet the requirements will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Funds awarded must be spent prior to the end of the same academic year (i.e., by the following August 31st). Applicants should complete the *Faculty Supplemental PD Application Form* and other information available on DC Connect.

## WHICH PD FUNDS SHOULD YOU REQUEST?

When considering whether to request individual or supplemental PD funds, please note that unused supplemental PD funds are carried over only for one year before being clawed back by the college. Conversely, individual PD funds do not have this limit. If your chosen PD activity shows a tangible benefit to students, depleting the supplemental PD funds first will allow faculty to keep individual PD funds for their intended use long term. Faculty can then accumulate individual funds for a pricier activity later. Since supplemental funds are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, if applications are unsuccessful, faculty can then decide if they would like to use their individual funds instead. Any questions can be directed to your PD committee, responsible administrator, or the DCFA. ■

## DCFA Status of Women Committee: National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women



PHOTOS COURTESY K.TRAINOR



## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Noëlle Phillips

### My Non-Dry January: Good Beer and Personal Wellness

Personal reflection by **Noëlle Phillips**  
Faculty of Language, Literature, and Performing Arts

As we all step into the uncharted territory of another new year, many of us have noble aspirations for improving our mental, physical or spiritual state. Maybe you're planning to work out five mornings a week or meditate every day or reduce your mindless social media scrolling. Some of us are promising ourselves we'll say "No" more often. Or perhaps, like so many, you're beginning the year with Dry January or committing to an overall reduction in sugar, caffeine or some other vice in 2026.

Such New Year ambitions are part of a larger life goal: that of wellness. Within the paradigm of wellness, our drive for change isn't **really** about weight loss, making more time in our day, advancement at work, looking younger, etc. It's about finding a sense of balance and contentment while still enjoying life's pleasures. I've often thought about the role of beer in that balance—or at least, in my version of that balance.

This may seem ridiculous. No one **needs** beer to enjoy a happy, healthy life. Indeed, cutting out alcohol entirely has many proven health benefits. Like its very appealing cousin, sugar, alcohol has essentially no nutritional value and plenty of negative side effects. North American culture has gone from alcohol prohibition in the early twentieth century, to heavy drinking in the early twenty-first century, and back towards less drinking now, in 2026. The younger generation doesn't drink nearly as much as their predecessors (although they vape and use pot significantly more). Why would I even consider beer part of wellness?

As a beer historian, a beer judge, and a Certified Cicerone (that's like a sommelier but for beer), my perspective on beer is unique, and it's broadened my view of what wellness can mean for me. The global

history of beer is rich. It stretches from ancient Egypt and Sumeria, to the Roman Empire, through the Middle Ages. It includes not just Europe but also African and Asian countries, which have their versions of ale. There was an explosion of growth as Britain's colonial project captured a quarter of the globe (the IPA was invented because of England's East India Company), and then by the early twentieth century beer transformed into a bland, modern, industrialized product, until small batch, independently made "craft beer," first called "micro-brew," emerged in the 1980s.

Beer has been with us almost from humanity's beginning. Barley was first domesticated in the Middle East around 8000 BCE, although alcoholic drinks made (intentionally or not) from fermented grains, fruit or honey and airborne yeasts were consumed by both humans and animals even before that. It's been our close friend since we first figured out how agriculture works; researchers suspect that beer was first discovered when damp grain intended for bread, or even bread itself, was accidentally left to germinate. Nicknamed liquid bread, low-alcohol beer sustained monks during their fasting and nursing mothers in their exhaustion. It provided an important career opportunity for many medieval women—known as alewives—who could brew ale and sell it in their local communities. It has been used to greet guests, cement deals, grieve those lost in battle and even perform the Christian Eucharist—standing in for the wine that represents Christ's blood. Made with or without hops, it can be sweet, sour, bitter and in rare cases salty (hello, German **gose!**). Its potential flavours surpass those of wine. If your beer experience has been limited to Budweiser or Molson, you're missing out.

For me, part of wellness means enjoying the pleasures of my senses: watching a sunset, finding somewhere I can actually hear birdsong, smelling and sipping a strong



PHOTO COURTESY N. PHILLIPS

coffee first thing in the morning, crawling into newly washed soft sheets and falling asleep before 10 p.m. Making opportunities to create and consume good food—food with fresh, vibrant flavours or a meal that's warm and comforting—is part of what embodies wellness for me. The more rushed I am in my meals, the more I feel mentally and physically off. Taking time to taste, to savour, is so important.

In my study of beer, slow, thoughtful tasting has always been my habit; I smell, sip, take notes, and sip again (I've never been one for "crushing" beers anyway). So it's not surprising that beer has enhanced my enjoyment of food, and vice versa. When I'm taking time to put together a meal, an appropriately chosen beer will brighten all the flavours—and the food, in turn, will draw out the best features of the beer. Beer has almost infinite flexibility when it comes to food pairing. Roast venison should be served with a rich German **doppelbock**. A creamy Fettuccine Alfredo with herbal garnishes pairs beautifully with a hop-forward and assertively bitter American IPA. Roast beef will complement a smooth, toasty English brown ale. Pizza goes perfectly with a sharp German Pilsner. And of course, mussels with a

Belgian **witbier** is a glorious combination.

Beer has expanded my palate and the pleasures of taste. After a deep sniff of a beer, I take my first sip, and it's the most exciting one; after a couple seconds, the combination of tastes (usually sweet and bitter) unfurls across my mouth in their own unique configuration. It's like colours emerging on my palate. So many factors influence how these flavours appear: the type of malt used, its roasting time, the chemical composition of the water, the hop varieties and at what stage they're added, the strain of yeast and the temperatures used during the mash and fermentation. This is why I love craft beer: unlike macro beer (your Buds and your Molsons), there are often slight inconsistencies during the brewing process. Each batch of beer has its own personality, even within the same style category. A slight tweak of temperature or change to the timing of hop additions or a different location where the barley was grown—any of these can bring out something different in the final product.

The uniqueness of craft beer also means it's something that I'm willing to support with my wallet. The BC craft



PHOTO COURTESY N. PHILLIPS

beer industry, whose heyday was around 2013–2014 when the provincial government allowed breweries to open tasting rooms, is currently in a moment of crisis. Economic inflation, draconian liquor laws, shifting drinking habits (everyone's getting White Claws or vapes instead) and high rental costs are pushing small breweries out of business. The BCGEU strike in the fall of 2025 pinched this hard-hit industry even more, since restaurants could not legally purchase alcohol directly from breweries. After the rapid expansion of this industry in the 2010s, which took all of us to heady and optimistic heights, the current shrinking feels dire. However, I have great hopes that this reduction might create increased stability and quality in the craft beer community. Less racing to make the highest alcohol hazy milkshake IPA and more careful thought put into brewing lower ABV offerings and less flashy, more traditional styles. A basic well-brewed Pilsner can give far more tasting pleasure than a big in-your-face beer made to be marketed.

I will always respect anyone's choice not to consume alcohol, regardless of their reasons. For some, beer will never be a positive inclusion in their lives. For me, however, mindful and moderate beer-drinking enhances my life, just as some of my other "unhealthy" choices do—the single cookie I enjoy with my morning coffee, a slice of strawberry layer cake on a sunny day, the salty,

buttery popcorn I eat while my kids and I watch a movie, my nightly ice cream sandwich paired with a cup of tea. I don't have a beer every day. But when I do have one, I savour every sip and talk about the experience with whomever I'm sharing it (usually my husband or my beer-nerd friends). The value of these treats goes far beyond nutritional components; it's about mental, emotional and social wellness. For me, a good beer (and dessert, and buttered popcorn, and caffeine) contributes to a balanced, content life, and in purchasing beer from local craft breweries, I'm supporting our province's struggling small businesses. I'm not a Dry January gal, but this is my version of wellness. ■



PHOTO COURTESY N. PHILLIPS

## The Hidden Complexities of Notetaking: Why a Seemingly Basic Skill Deserves Faculty Attention

Colin Cheng, Accessibility Services

*In higher education, we invest significant time and resources into refining curricula, assessments and instructional strategies. Yet one of the most fundamental mechanisms through which learning occurs—student notetaking—often remains largely invisible in course design.*

From the front of the classroom, notetaking can appear straightforward: students listen, write, and later review what they've written. But research and classroom experience tell a more complicated story. Moreover, for many learners, especially those with disabilities, the act of taking notes presents challenges that can become a barrier to learning itself.

Understanding the complexity of notetaking is not about lowering standards or reducing rigour. It is about recognizing how instructional design either supports or undermines students' ability to engage cognitively with course content.

### Notetaking Is Not Transcription: It Is Cognitive Work

Notetaking is frequently mistaken for a mechanical task—capturing information for later use. In reality it is a cognitively demanding process that requires learners simultaneously to undertake the following tasks: listen and interpret spoken information, identify what is important, integrate new ideas with prior knowledge, physically record information and monitor comprehension in real time.

Educational psychology describes this process as encoding: the mental work of constructing meaning. Students who can paraphrase, organize and annotate information during a lecture are actively learning, not simply recording. Schema theory further explains that new knowledge is not stored in isolation; it is integrated into existing mental frameworks shaped by prior

experience. When students are forced into verbatim transcription—or when notetaking breaks down entirely—this encoding process is disrupted.

**Students who can paraphrase, organize and annotate information during a lecture are actively learning, not simply recording.**

### The Disability Dilemma

But what happens when the very act of notetaking becomes a barrier rather than a bridge to learning?

For students with disabilities, effective notetaking can feel like an impossible task. Some motor challenges make the physical act of writing difficult or impossible. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students may miss verbal content. Those with learning disabilities often struggle with processing speed. Neurodiverse students may miss implied meanings. And anyone dealing with ADHD, anxiety, depression or chronic pain faces attention challenges that fragment their notes—and their learning.

The instinctive response? Provide accommodations: Audio recordings. Volunteer notetakers. Access to slides. Problem solved, right?

Not quite.

### Why Accommodations Aren't Enough

Here's the uncomfortable truth that gets missed often: While accommodations can provide meaningful support, they frequently sidestep the deeper purpose of notetaking. Handing a student someone else's notes

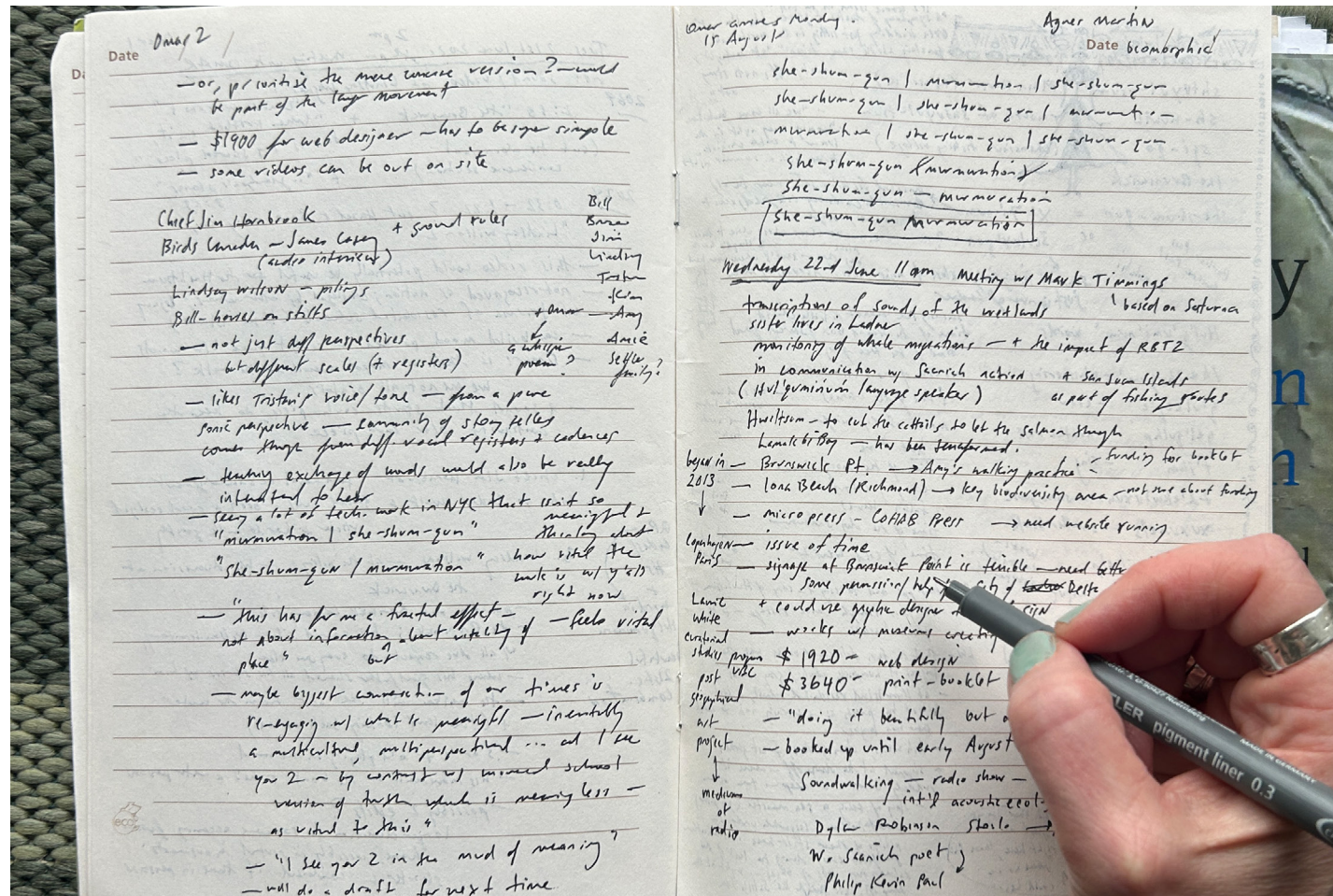


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might give them a record of what was said, but it robs them of the encoding process—that critical cognitive work that transforms information into understanding.

Consider the current landscape of notetaking accommodations. Audio recordings? They capture words but miss visual information. Volunteer notetakers? Only 5 to 20 per cent of requests get filled. Paid access aides? These are often students from completely different fields who provide verbatim transcripts without context. Imagine a music student taking notes for a calculus class—the results may be technically complete but fundamentally unhelpful.

Experiencing a calculus lecture without seeing the equations is like listening to an action movie with your eyes closed—you'll get the dialogue but miss all the action.

## Enter Universal Design for Learning

What if, instead of treating notetaking challenges as

individual problems requiring individual solutions, we redesigned the learning environment itself?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) borrows from architecture—think curb cuts that help wheelchair users but also benefit parents with strollers, delivery workers and anyone with luggage. The genius? When we design for accessibility, everyone benefits.

Video captions help students who are deaf, yes, but also international students still mastering English and anyone studying in a noisy coffee shop. A student doesn't have to be "disabled" to benefit from inclusive design.

## Seven Strategies that Change Everything

Ready to transform your classroom? Here are research-backed strategies that support everyone:

### 1. PROVIDE CONTENT OUTLINES

Just as any good presentation has a roadmap, lectures need clear structures. Outlines help students follow

along, anticipate what's coming and reorient when they lose focus.

### 2. CREATE GUIDED NOTES

Handouts with strategic blanks force active engagement with key concepts while eliminating the pressure to capture every word. Students focus on understanding, not transcription.

### 3. VISUALIZE COMPLEX IDEAS

Venn diagrams, mind maps, tree charts, timelines—graphics transform abstract concepts into concrete visual relationships that stick in memory.

### 4. EMBRACE COLLABORATIVE NOTETAKING

Set up a shared Google Doc for each class. Rotate the primary notetaker role. Let students build on one another's observations to create a living wiki of collective understanding.

### 5. SUMMARIZE AT THE END

Ending each class with a summary helps transition information from short-term to long-term memory.

### 6. BUILD IN Q&A TIME

Answering questions addresses confusion in real time, preventing small misunderstandings from becoming major knowledge gaps.

### 7. TEACH NOTETAKING SKILLS

Not everyone arrives at college knowing how to take effective notes. Workshops on different notetaking styles help students discover what works for their unique learning style.

## The Rising Tide Effect

As accommodations rise and budgets tighten across institutions, we're at a crossroads. We can keep treating notetaking challenges as individual deficits requiring separate solutions, or we can reimagine teaching practices that benefit everyone.

The question to ask yourself as an educator is "Who benefits from this approach and who might be excluded?" If the answer is "everyone benefits" and "no one is

excluded," you've likely hit on a UDL approach.

A rising tide lifts all boats, the saying goes. When we design learning environments that work for students experiencing the greatest challenges, we create spaces where all students thrive. The pen—or keyboard, or stylus—truly is mightier than we thought. We just need to ensure that everyone can wield it effectively.

The goal isn't to eliminate accommodations entirely; they'll always have a place. But perhaps we can envision a future where thoughtful teaching practices reduce the need for accommodations to be the default solution to every learning struggle. After all, good pedagogy benefits everyone.

NOTE: An AI tool was used to edit and shorten this article.



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