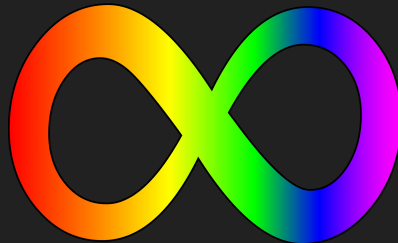


# Understanding Neurodiversity through an Equity Lens

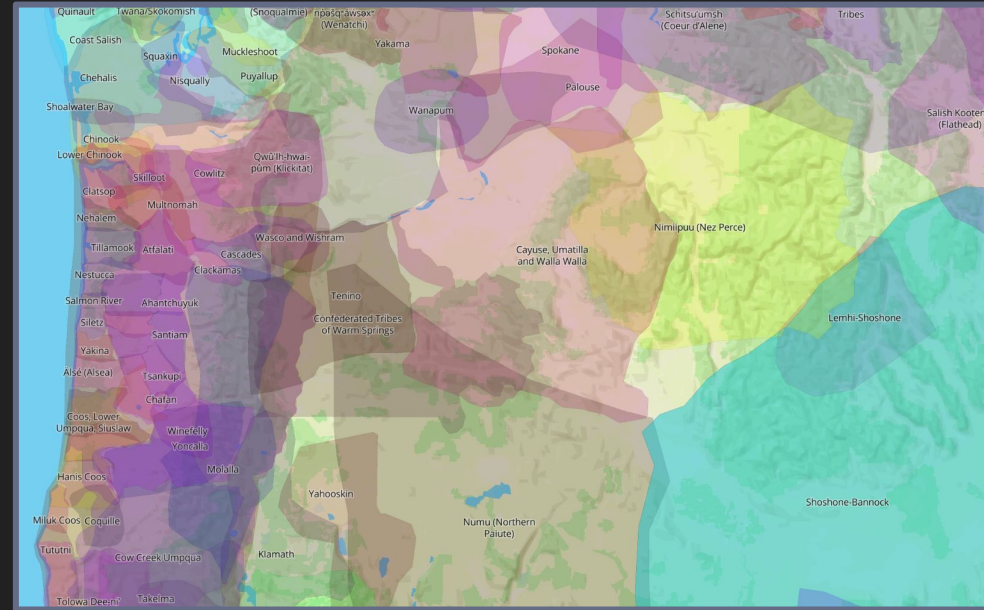
Dr. Alison Gash, Dr. Geovanna Rodriguez, Alex Newson and  
Spencer Brower



# Land Acknowledgement

The University of Oregon is located on Kalapuya Ilihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people. Following treaties between 1851 and 1855, Kalapuya people were dispossessed of their indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today, descendants are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon, and continue to make important contributions in their communities, at UO, and across the land we now refer to as Oregon.

[Native-Land.ca](http://Native-Land.ca)



Links:

[Programs & Services / Chifin Native Youth Center](#)

[Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde](#)  
[Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians](#)

# Agenda

- Introductions (3-5 min)
- Context within campus discussions (5 min)
- Lecture (20-30 min)
  - ◆ Review terms related to Neurodiversity and discuss what Neurodiversity Affirming Practices look like
  - ◆ Introduce Neurodiversity as an equity issue and connections to Intersectionality
  - ◆ Discuss what this looks like for students in the classroom and ways to make inclusive and equitable spaces
- Discussion (20 min)
  - ◆ Guided discussion based on presentation
  - ◆ Resources

# Learner Participation

You are encouraged to participate in any way you feel comfortable! Please use chat, raise your hand, use the reactions, stop and interrupt, or email us after the presentation.



There will be a poll at the beginning and end of this session to assess your knowledge, perceptions of the training, and inform future sessions!

# Introductions

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# Context within Campus Discussions

# Only Rule for Today: Be open to new possibilities!

You may already be familiar with or use the terms or ideas we will discuss today. Please be open to learn many new ideas today that drive you to question your current practice. That's okay! We are here to learn together.



# Review of Neurodivergent/Neurodiversity

## Neurodiversity

- the natural variation in behavior and mental processes. Consider it in a similar way as we might understand biological and sociocultural diversity. (Shmulsky et al., 2001; Armstrong 2015). We are all encapsulated within neurodiversity.

## Neurodivergent (ND)

- descriptive term for individuals who have cognitive profiles that fall outside the dominant discourse of neurocognitive functioning. Autism, ADHD, LD, OCD, etc all are examples of neurodivergence, but there are many more.

## Neurotypical (NT)

- refers to those whose neurocognitive functioning fits within the dominant societal standards.

This acknowledges the innate biological characteristics of individuals and the strengths and challenges they bring, as well as the idea that many challenges are exacerbated because of societal norms and expectations.

[Neuroqueer.com](https://neuroqueer.com) offers many excellent examples and nonexamples of these and other related terms.



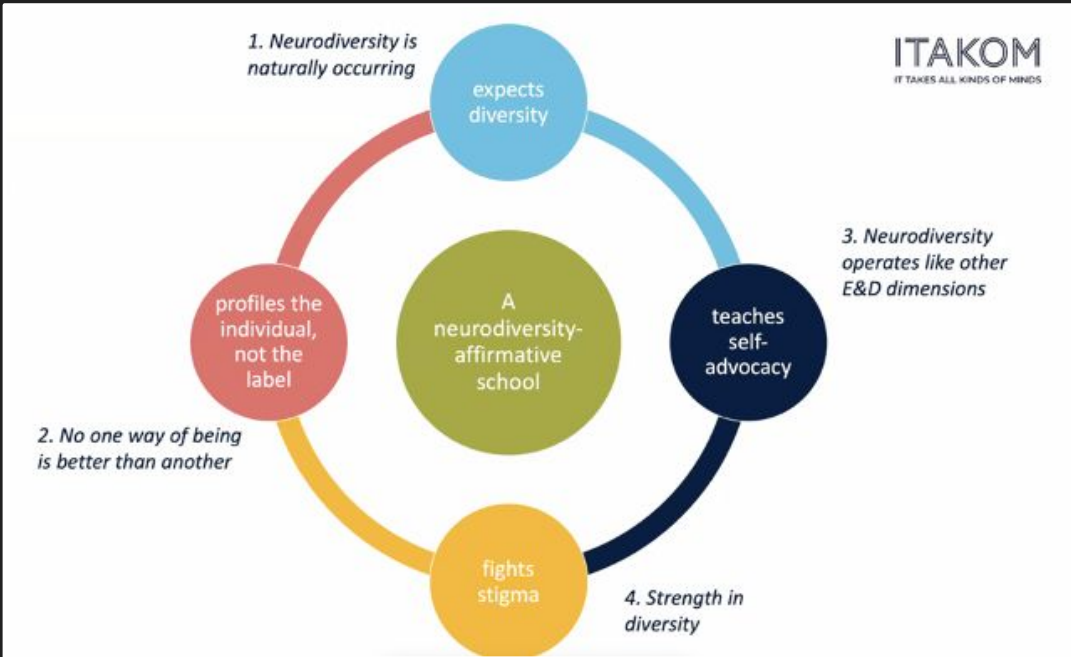


Neurodiversity requires a rethink of *how* and *why* things are done in school

*“ND is not a classificatory term dividing us from them. We are all Neurodiverse. We live on a Neurodiverse planet in which amoral nature generates endless genetic diversity, while we humans have evolved the capacity to make judgments about nature’s bounty. What **Neurodiversity brings us is a challenge to find a place for everyone and to distribute the bounty fairly.**”*

Singer: *Neurodiversity: its politics, not science!*  
February 2021, [Neurodiversity2.blogspot.com](https://neurodiversity2.blogspot.com)

*Based on example from Dr. Sue Fletcher-Watson: [CRAE Annual Lecture 2022: "Neurodiversity-affirmative education" Sue Fletcher-Watson \(16/03/2022\)](#)*



## Neurodiversity Paradigm

1. Neurodiversity is naturally occurring
2. No one way of being is better than another
3. Neurodiversity operates like other equity and diversity dimensions
4. Strength in diversity itself - collective not individual value

<https://itakom.org/>

# Neurodiverse Affirming

Neurodiverse Affirming Practices are:

- Strength based
- Individualized
- Mindful of support needs
- Built on relationships, empathy, and respect for neurodivergent individuals

Neurodiverse Affirming Practices:

- Reject ableism and assimilation
- Look at systems and environments rather than blaming individuals
- Promote choice and collaboration
- Assume competence
- Take an intersectional approach
- Listen to neurodivergent voices and perspectives

Examples include:

- Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBI)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Universal Design of Learning (UDL)
- Participatory Action Research (PAR)

# Intersectionality

## Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)

- Everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression
- Need to consider multiple marginalized identities that students hold and how that connects to the historical and current societal contexts

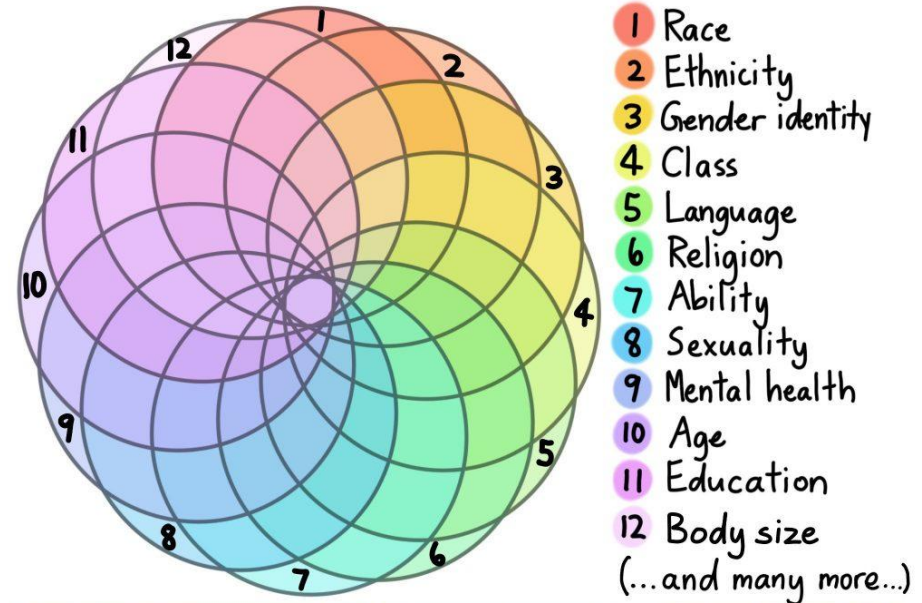
## Minority Stress Model (Meyer 2003)

- Stressors can be more salient for individuals with marginalized identities leading to mental health and physical health disparities

## Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 2014, Paris 2012, Waitoller & Thorius, 2016)

- Active stance towards empowerment and preserving/nurturing culture
- Posits disability as form of diversity that intertwines with other identities

# INTERSECTIONALITY



Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

@sylviaaduckworth

# Postsecondary Challenges for Neurodiverse Students

Transition to university and college life is a vulnerable period that presents social and mental health challenges

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** provides support to college students with disabilities
- Self-advocacy with professors can be further impacted by communication difficulties, understanding of “hidden curriculum,” perceived safety and trust, socio-cultural determinants, help-seeking behaviors, class size, etc...
- **Delaying disclosure of diagnosis or disability** has been linked to perceptions of educational support and social-emotional support (Cai & Richdale, 2016)

# Creating Inclusive and Responsive Classrooms

Students may experience challenges with self-advocacy, emotion regulation, adaptive skills, time management, and unexpected changes

Approaches to creating inclusive and responsive classrooms:

- Flexible and modified assignments
- Transparency about teaching practices and evaluations
- Creating safe and affirming spaces (respect for student disability identities)
- Respect for student choice and autonomy
- Representation and accountability
- Integrating voices and community perspectives

# Discussion Questions

- How do you address issues of neurodiversity when you are designing a class? How and when does it come up to you? (Geo)
- How do you/can you explicitly affirm and validate the multiple identities and learning needs of students in your classroom? Is this in your syllabus, instructional materials, communication, etc? Why or why not?(Alex)
- In what ways can you pre-correct yourself in order to create welcoming environments regardless of awareness of student identities? (Spencer)

# Resources

## Videos:

[Intersectionality & disability, ft Keri Gray, the Keri Gray Group #DisabilityDemandsJustic](#)

[CRAE Webinar Series: "What does it mean to teach about neurodiversity?" Alyssa M. Alcorn,](#)

[CRAE Annual Lecture 2022: "Neurodiversity-affirmative education" Sue Fletcher-Watson](#)

[Rethinking Normalcy and Disrupting Ableism in Schools with Dr. Priya Lalvani](#)

[Leveraging Autistic College Students' Possibilities in the Classroom and Beyond](#)

## Websites:

[What is Neurodiversity](#)

[GRRAND](#) - Group for Research in Relationships and Neurodiversity

[Welcome to the Center for Neurodiversity](#) - Rowan University

[Learning About Neurodiversity at School \(LEANS\) – DART](#)

## Social Media:

[Sonny Jane Wise \(@livedexperienceeducator\)](#)

[Becky Ellis \(@neuro\\_divers\)](#)

[V. Tisi \(@speechologist\)](#)

[Lauren Melissa Ellzey \(she/her\) \(@autiennele\)](#)

## Articles:

[Building Neurodiversity-Inclusive Postsecondary Campuses: Recommendations for Leaders in Higher Education | Autism in Adulthood](#)

[Project MUSE - An Exploration of Actionable Insights Regarding College Students with Autism: A Review of the Literature](#)

[Cross-pollinating culturally sustaining pedagogy and universal design for learning](#)

[Neurodiversity: An insider's perspective](#)

[Deficit, difference, or both? Autism and neurodiversity.](#)

[Challenging the ideology of normal in schools](#)



# Resources at University of Oregon

## Accessible Education Center

[Group Opportunities | Accessible Education Center](#)

[Student Voices Panel | Accessible Education Center](#)

[Universal Design for Learning | Accessible Education Center](#)

[Best Practices for Faculty | Accessible Education Center](#)

## Teaching Support and Innovation

[Accessible and Inclusive Design Workshop Series | Teaching Support and Innovation](#)

[Practitioner Guide | University of Oregon Provost](#)

[Student Success Toolkit | Teaching Support and Innovation](#)

# Survey Questions

## Pre- Questions

- How familiar are you with neurodiversity and the neurodiversity paradigm? (rating - familiar to not familiar)
- How familiar are you with intersectionality as it relates to neurodiversity? (rating - familiar to not familiar)
- In what ways do you view neurodiversity as an equity issue? (open ended)
- What strategies do you use in your practice to create welcoming and supportive environments for neurodiverse students? (open ended)
- What are you most looking forward to learning in this session? (open ended)
- We will be on Zoom for this initial session. What, if anything, would make this session more accessible for you? Feel free to share anything specific that would support your co-learning with us. (open ended)

## Post Questions

- How familiar are you with neurodiversity and the neurodiversity paradigm? (rating - familiar to not familiar)
- How familiar are you with intersectionality as it relates to neurodiversity? (rating - familiar to not familiar)
- What do you plan to start doing in your practice to create welcoming and supportive environments for neurodiverse students? (open ended)
- How are you planning to address equity through a neurodiverse lens in your classroom? (open ended)
- What systemic/individual barriers do you feel prevent you from utilizing an equity lens towards neurodiversity? (open ended)
- Do you have any further questions? What supports do you need to get started? What information do you still seek to feel confident in implementation? (open ended)