



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

MEETING OF MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY'S DISABILITY INCLUSION GROUP

Thursday, May 18th, 2017

9:30 – 11:30 am

Genesis Boardroom, Bruneau Centre for Research and Innovation, Memorial University

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

- 1) **Ailsa Craig** will share her draft letter to Memorial units/departments (inquiring about course content relating to disability inclusion) with the group for feedback;
- 2) **Barbara Neis** will ask Amanda at SafetyNet to set up a dedicated webpage for DIG-MUN, where any open-access resources shared by team members can be posted;
- 3) **Emily Christy** will send Chrissy Vincent a description of the community cohesion research project she is working on in partnership with the Disability Policy Office, to be circulated to the group;
- 4) **Tina Hickey and Kathy Hawkins** will distribute information to the group on their upcoming open-enrolment disability confidence session;
- 5) **Yirong Qin** will, upon receiving permission from her program director, send Chrissy Vincent a copy of her recent work-term report on the individualized funding model, to be circulated to the group;
- 6) **Barbara Neis and Chrissy Vincent** will add a preamble to the existing draft terms of reference document and share it with the group via e-mail for suggestions and feedback; and
- 7) **Ailsa Craig, Kathy Hawkins, Catherine Shortall, Emily Christy, Jason Geary, Peter Cornish, and Tina Hickey** will work together to begin planning a series of public webinar presentations/discussions with the theme "Conversations on Inclusion".

This document briefly summarizes the discussions that took place at the third meeting of Memorial University's Disability Inclusion Group (DIG-MUN), held on May 18th, 2017. The meeting was chaired and facilitated by Barbara Neis (NL Provincial Co-Lead for the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy). The following is a complete list of attendees, presented in alphabetical order by surname:

- Emily Christy (Executive Director, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL)
- Peter Cornish (Director, Student Wellness and Counselling Centre, MUN)
- Ailsa Craig (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, MUN)
- Jason Geary (Teaching Consultant, Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, MUN)
- Kathy Hawkins (Manager of Employer Supports and Services, Empower NL)
- Tina Hickey (Employment Equity Officer, Department of Human Resources, MUN)
- Barbara Neis (NL Provincial Co-Lead, CRWDP)



- Yirong Qin (Master's Student, Applied Psychological Science)
- Catherine Shortall (Program Policy Development Specialist, Disability Policy Office, Gov. of NL)
- Kathy Skinner (Academic Program Administrator, Glenn Roy Blundon Centre, MUN)
- Chrissy Vincent (NL Provincial Coordinator, CRWDP)

WELCOME, REVIEW/APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting opened with a brief welcome from Barbara Neis, NL Provincial Co-Lead for the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP), and a review of the meeting's agenda. The draft agenda was approved with no changes.

The review and approval of the agenda was followed by a quick round of introductions for the benefit of those who were new to DIG-MUN. We were very pleased to welcome two new individuals who had not attended either of the group's two previous meetings: 1) Peter Cornish, Director of Memorial University's Student Wellness and Counselling Centre; and 2) Yirong Qin, a Master's student in the Applied Psychological Science program who is conducting research in partnership with the Government of NL's Disability Policy Office.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Once all attendees had an opportunity to briefly introduce themselves, the meeting proceeded to a review of the notes and action items from the previous DIG-MUN meeting on November 25th, 2016:

ACTION ITEM #1: Ailsa Craig will share her draft letter to Memorial units/departments (inquiring about course content relating to disability inclusion) with the group for feedback.

STATUS: The draft letter has not yet been shared, but Ailsa has renewed her commitment to do so before the next DIG-MUN meeting.

ACTION ITEM #2: Chrissy Vincent will look into the possibility of setting up a dedicated DIG-MUN e-mail address (perhaps inclusion@mun.ca).

STATUS: The e-mail address (inclusion@mun.ca) has been set up and is ready to be used. It was suggested that perhaps a dedicated DIG-MUN webpage might also be a good idea, as it would provide a place for any open-access resources shared by group members to be posted online and easily downloaded by others. Barbara Neis committed to ask Amanda at SafetyNet to set up such a webpage. ***(NEW ACTION: Barbara Neis will ask Amanda at SafetyNet to set up a dedicated webpage for DIG-MUN, where any open-access resources shared by team members can be posted.)***

ACTION ITEM #3: Barbara Neis will follow up with Tina Hickey in the Department of HR about possibly providing a virtual connection to the Susan Scott-Parker session, and Chrissy Vincent will re-send the event information to Lorna Payne at Grenfell.

STATUS: This was addressed and the option of a virtual connection was offered, but in the end, there were no remote participants who wished to avail of it.



ACTION ITEM #4: Chrissy Vincent will re-circulate the document she compiled listing Disability Studies programs at Canadian universities to DIG-MUN members.

STATUS: The document was re-circulated to the group, and was also picked up and shared nationally by the national CRWDP office.

ACTION ITEM #5: Chrissy Vincent will re-circulate the accessibility plan for Carleton University to DIG-MUN members.

STATUS: The accessibility plan was re-circulated to the group.

ACTION ITEM #6: Ailsa Craig will work together with a small group of DIG-MUN members to begin the planning process for a mapping workshop, with a goal of early to mid-March for the event.

STATUS: The mapping workshop did not occur. It was suggested that perhaps a better approach might be to instead plan a series of public webinar presentations/discussions with a general theme of "Conversations on Inclusion", which could then culminate in a one-day forum-style event. This concept was discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

ACTION ITEM #7: Lorna Payne will try to find an agenda (or similar information) for the Grenfell accessibility event and share it with the group.

STATUS: There was no real agenda for the event, but Lorna did share a document with the group that contained some relevant notes.

ACTION ITEM #8: Chrissy Vincent will send Angie Clarke (at the Marine Institute) an invitation to join DIG-MUN.

STATUS: Angie Clarke was invited to join DIG-MUN, and she accepted that invitation.

ACTION ITEM #9: Barbara Neis will put together a draft terms of reference document and share it with the group for suggestions and feedback.

STATUS: The draft terms of reference document was created and circulated, and suggestions/feedback were solicited from attendees later in the meeting.

OTHER UPDATES AND COMMENTS FROM GROUP MEMBERS

Following the review of action items from the previous meeting, the floor was opened to meeting attendees for any other updates, news, or comments that they might like to share.

- ***Ailsa Craig*** reported that she has just finished teaching the very first slot of her newly developed Special Topics Course in the Sociology of Disability (Sociology 3311). There were no pre-requisites for the course, and it was administered partially in the classroom and partially online. Students



were offered plenty of choice in terms of their evaluation, which is part of universal design theory for course syllabi, and it seemed to work well – offering students these choices did not change the overall spread of marks for the course. One aspect of the course that was particularly enjoyed and appreciated by students was the series of guest speakers from community organizations who came in and presented to the class, one of whom was DIG-MUN member Kathy Hawkins. Overall, Ailsa felt that the course was successful, and hopes to regularize and also develop it as an online offering.

- **Emily Christy** reported that COD-NL are currently partnering with the Government of NL's Disability Policy Office on a new community cohesion research project. The aim of the project is to collect baseline information on sense of community among persons with disabilities, and they are planning to conduct a series of interviews and focus groups across all five geographical areas of the province. They are now in the process of trying to recruit a university researcher to partner with them in order to carry out these interviews and focus groups, and it was suggested that distributing the project description to the DIG-MUN listserv might potentially help them in their search. **(ACTION: Emily Christy will send Chrissy Vincent a description of the community cohesion research project she is working on in partnership with the Disability Policy Office, to be circulated to the group.)**
- **Tina Hickey** reported that the Department of Human Resources is currently in the process of developing a brand new Employment Equity and Diversity Plan. The “plan for the plan” should be submitted this coming October, with a goal of October 2018 for the plan itself to be completed. To help them in developing a strong and comprehensive plan, they are now conducting some background research into how equity and diversity are being addressed by other institutions in other provinces. Tina also reported that she and Kathy Hawkins are working together to offer an open-enrolment disability confidence session at Memorial University within the coming months, and would like to distribute information about it through the DIG-MUN listserv to potentially boost attendance. **(ACTION: Tina Hickey and Kathy Hawkins will distribute information to the group on their upcoming open-enrolment disability confidence session.)**
- **Jason Geary** reported that although he does sit on the advisory board for students with disabilities, they have not met since our last DIG-MUN meeting. He was, however, asked to undertake a project to develop a new policy and procedure that would allow students who struggle with language learning to more easily waive the foreign language requirement for arts degrees. Even though it was always technically possible for students to do this, it used to be necessary for them to go through a Committee on Undergraduate Studies (CUGS) special case committee in order to do so. The new procedure, which has just recently been approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences faculty council, is more straightforward, is published in the university calendar, and is better publicized.
- **Kathy Skinner** reported that the Blundon Centre is currently piloting Clockwork – an online test-booking system that would allow students to register for special test accommodations on their computers. This is the first step toward the Centre's longer-term goal of moving away from paper-based systems. She also mentioned that there is a review in progress of all the programs that are run by the Centre, but she has not been privy to any recent updates with regard to what's been happening with the review. She does know that there will be some changes made to the Centre's physical space, but is unsure of the exact nature of those changes.



- **Peter Cornish** reported that renovations are currently underway to combine the Student Health Clinic with the Student Wellness and Counseling Centre, so that both are housed in the same space with a common waiting area. Part of the justification for this change is theoretical in nature – it's rooted in the idea that health should be dealt with in a holistic manner, encompassing all aspects of both physical and mental health. The approach also provides some practical benefits, as it means that students who are seeking mental health services will be indistinguishable from those seeking physical health services, which helps protect personal privacy. The vision for the merged clinic's new waiting area is that it will be a welcoming place that can double as a study space, and will even integrate some gaming technology for mental health support funded by the Autism Society. Additionally, Peter mentioned that Student Life is now in the process of creating a new position for an education officer focused on accessibility for students with disabilities. The position will be advertised in the near future, and should be filled by August.
- **Kathy Hawkins** reported that Empower is currently partnering with the Government of NL's Disability Policy Office in conjunction with Susan Scott Parker (an international expert in working with businesses on disability issues) to use technology in order to link her with local businesses here in NL. Kathy has also been involved in a national initiative focused on mapping disability organizations in both Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario. Finally, she and others at Empower have been working to ensure that the upcoming local festivals being held as part of the Canada 150 celebrations are properly accessible.
- **Catherine Shortall** reported that the Government of NL's Disability Policy Office is in the process of developing a new model of individualized funding for supports for persons with disabilities. This means that rather than couching supports within formalized programs, power and control will be given to each individual to build a set of supports that meets their individual needs and will stay with them throughout the lifespan. Furthermore, assessment will no longer be medically-based, but instead more broadly focused on each individual's needs and desires for how they wish to participate in their communities. They are planning to first pilot the new individualized funding approach with a cohort of approximately 20-30 people, with a public commitment to having the program implemented by 2018. In addition, they have made a public commitment to pass accessibility legislation by 2018, which should work in tandem with the federal accessibility legislation already in place.
- **Yirong Qin** reported that for her last work term, she worked with Catherine Shortall and the Disability Policy Office to conduct an extensive literature review to help inform the development of the new individualized funding model for Newfoundland and Labrador. This term, she is again working with Catherine and the Disability Policy Office to conduct interviews with disability service users regarding their satisfaction, which should help inform the development of model prototypes. It was suggested that Yirong's work-term report from the previous term might be a valuable resource that would be of interest to many DIG-MUN members. Yirong agreed to ask her program director for permission to share it, and to pass it along to Chrissy Vincent to circulate if that permission was granted. **(ACTION: Yirong Qin will, upon receiving permission from her program director, send Chrissy Vincent a copy of her recent work-term report on the individualized funding model, to be circulated to the group.)**



COORDINATOR TRANSITION (FROM FULL-TIME TO PART-TIME)

Barbara Neis provided meeting attendees with an update on the configuration of the CRWDP Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Coordinator position, which is occupied by Chrissy Vincent and helps provide support for DIG-MUN's operations. That position was always intended to be a part-time one (10 hours per week), but up until now it had comprised one portion of a full-time SafetyNet position, with approximately one-quarter to one-third of Chrissy's time being spent on CRWDP coordination activities and the rest of her time being devoted to other projects as needed. Recently, however, the SafetyNet Centre has encountered financial difficulties and no longer has enough resources to fund the non-CRWDP portion of Chrissy's position. As a result, Chrissy is now a part-time employee who is only present in the office for 10 hours per week. She works a full day (9:00 to 5:00) on Tuesdays, and in the morning (9:00 to 12:00) on Thursdays. As long as the CRWDP initiative passes mid-term review, this arrangement should remain stable for the remainder of the project and little should change with regard to coordination support for DIG-MUN.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

One of the action items from the previous DIG-MUN meeting was for **Barbara Neis** to put together a draft terms of reference document and share it with the group for suggestions and feedback. That document was drafted and shared with DIG-MUN members prior to this meeting, and the floor was opened up for meeting attendees to provide any comments, feedback, or suggestions they might have for expanding or improving the draft document.

There was general agreement among attendees that the current draft articulated the group's mandate in an accurate and nicely worded manner. The sole suggestion was that it might be useful to add a preamble to it, which could serve to introduce the group, further highlight Memorial University's role as not only an educator but also an employer, and mention Memorial's core value of diversity inclusion. Barbara Neis and Chrissy Vincent agreed that they would draft a preamble, then share the new version of the document with the group for further feedback. **(ACTION: Barbara Neis and Chrissy Vincent will add a preamble to the existing draft terms of reference document and share it with the group via e-mail for suggestions and feedback.)**

DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE STEERING COMMITTEE

During this portion of the meeting, attendees were asked to share their thoughts on whether DIG-MUN should have a smaller executive/steering committee to keep its activities on track, or if the structure should just remain loose. There was agreement among meeting attendees that at this point, there is no need for a general executive/steering committee. Attendees did, however, agree that it would be useful to have a smaller planning committee for the series of public webinars on disability inclusion that was being proposed. This led into a more detailed discussion of what that series might look like.

Peter Cornish mentioned that the Student Wellness and Counselling Centre's step-care model (which is based on community participation in the care system) has been getting a lot of positive attention outside of Memorial, and he would be happy to offer a presentation on that. Someone also mentioned that it would be interesting for Yirong to present her research on the individualized funding model that



she has been conducting with the Disability Policy Office, for Ailsa to present on the development and delivery of her Disability Studies course, and for Tina Hickey and Kathy Hawkins to present on the work that they've been doing to boost disability confidence at Memorial. Barbara Neis suggested that she would like to add a "disabled at work" lens, since this issue in particular is often over-looked, as is work-related mental health.

Overall, there seemed to be ample ideas for presentations to form this series, and much interest in the concept. Ailsa Craig, Kathy Hawkins, Catherine Shortall, Emily Christy, Jason Geary, Peter Cornish, and Tina Hickey all volunteered to be part of the planning committee for the webinar series, and a suggestion was made to seek funding for it from the Memorial University's Office of Public Engagement. ***(ACTION: Ailsa Craig, Kathy Hawkins, Catherine Shortall, Emily Christy, Jason Geary, Peter Cornish, and Tina Hickey will work together to begin planning a series of public webinar presentations/discussions with the theme "Conversations on Inclusion".)***

STUDENT STIPEND OPPORTUNITY

Prior to the meeting's wrap-up, attendees were reminded that the NL CRWDP cluster is still in the process of recruiting a graduate student to take advantage of the stipend funding that is available to us for the 2017-2018 academic year. (We have a total of three years' worth of student stipend funding remaining.) Attendees were asked to pass the word along to any graduate students who they think might be interested in applying.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS, WRAP-UP

There were no additional comments from participants during the meeting's wrap-up.