What is a disability and is it diversity?
Discussion Guide

Discuss

1. Christa begins with a personal story about her father's loss of eyesight. Do you have a personal story related to disability? How has that story shaped the way you think about disability?

2. Christa explains the differences between the medical model of disability as anything that affects a major life activity, and the social model as the social, attitudinal, and environmental conditions that exclude. Why do these models exist in tension with one another? How do each contribute to fostering inclusion?

3. Christa encourages us to adopt a proactive mindset that begins with the question, "Is a specific ability required to participate?" This question reminds us to consider what is needed so that everyone can participate fully—captioning on films, awareness of food allergies, wheelchair accessible—and to plan accordingly. What are some other considerations that are not mentioned here?

4. Our campus can be a challenge for people with mobility impairments. Even with an increased number of designated parking spaces, people with disabilities have to negotiate stairs, curbs, uneven terrain, and obstacles caused by bikes, scooters, and construction. When you encounter a physical barrier on campus, you are encouraged to report it at: https://vt.edu/accessibility/barrier.html. What other actions might you take?

5. The slogan for the Disability Rights Movement is "Nothing about us without us." Think about these words. What does the slogan suggest to you about full inclusion that goes beyond the provision of accommodations and the application of universal design principles?

Learn more

Check out Virginia Tech's efforts at integrating accessibility across all realms of the university at: https://vt.edu/accessibility.html. The site includes a link to an interactive campus map that highlights accessible routes.

Become informed about the work of disabled activists and how they define themselves and their lived experiences.

This backgrounder gives a brief history of the Disability Rights Movement in the United States: https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/disability-rights-movement

The Disability Visibility Project is an online community dedicated to creating, sharing, and amplifying disability media and culture: https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/

DREAM (Disability Rights, Education Activism, and Mentoring) is a national organization for and by college students with disabilities: https://www.dreamcollegedisability.org/