**Michelle Pacansky-Brock Interview**

Learn about the power of humanizing online learning.

**AS** [00:00:00] For today's podcast. It's a pleasure to have Dr. Michelle Pacansky-Brock. Michelle is a noted leader in higher education with expertise in online teaching course design and faculty development. Her work has helped online instructors across the nation and beyond understand how to craft relevant, humanized online learning experiences that support the diverse needs of college students. She's the author of Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies and has received national recognition for her excellence in teaching and faculty development from the Online Learning Consortium. Currently, Michelle is faculty mentor, online teaching and learning with the Foothill-De Anza Community College District. In her role, she coordinates professional development in support of equitable online teaching and learning for @ONE, known as Online Network for Educators and has led a California Learning Lab grant project that is scaling humanized online teaching across California and researching its impact on STEM students from minoritized communities. Welcome to the Student Success Podcast, Michelle.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:01:01] Thanks for having me, Al.

**AS** [00:01:03] So I'd like to start all podcast episodes asking if the guests wouldn'twq12 mind sharing a story, a hobby, perhaps a special talent, anything that's outside of work. Would you mind sharing something?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:01:20] I would not mind at all. And what I'm going to share may sound a little nontraditional, but it's where my mind went to when I think about what we're talking about today and kind of stories from my life. 16 years ago, I had open heart surgery. When I had that surgery, it was not anticipated to happen. And I was teaching full time and I had a three year old and a five year old at home. And it was at a time when technology was very different from what it is today. So this is part of the story. This is a time before social media. So there was no Facebook, there was no YouTube, there was no Twitter, there was the Internet, but it was a very different type of Internet than the type of connectivity and experience that we think about today with going online. So there I am with this news that I'm I need open heart surgery. And I was inundated with, you know, lots of data and information. And I was very fortunate to have good health care and a very supportive family and friends. But this is the interesting part. I found myself every night going on my laptop and I would just sit there and I would search and I would search and I didn't, I don't even know what I was doing. I bet like there was something in me, there was a void. There was clearly a void that needed to be filled. And I can remember finding a website that brought together people who were waiting to have their valve replaced. I stumbled upon that website and I was immediately pulled in and I found people who had been through my procedure, who had survived it. I found people who were about to have the surgery. I found other people like me. And then it was really this one person that I connected with. It was a woman who lived in Australia who was about my age and who also had small kids and was preparing. She was kind of on deck, so to speak, for surgery as well. And it was that connection with her that really resonated with me. And over the years, as I look back at that time and it's been a long time and I obviously think about it for a lot of reasons today still, but I learned so much from that experience. I learned so much about how finding others you can relate to that can relate to you, really influences the way you feel about a situation And the way you feel about a situation influences your behavior and how you do. And as a teacher, I think that's really something that resonated with me without even me realizing it. But, you know, Al, I know you're, you know, you're very much committed to this idea of, you know, continuous learning. Right. And so I think, you know, as a as an educator, learning from life and applying that to our practice is a really important thing to do. So, yeah, I guess that's the story that I that I wanted to share a little bit about because I think it'll overlap a lot with what we talk about today.

**AS** [00:04:49] Oh, thank you for sharing that. Yeah. When we have these kinds of life experiences, when our and it comes to our health too, sometimes we can, even though we have family, that supporter us, still, many of them may not know how it feels, what we have, exactly. There's still a feeling of loneliness. And the same way, I think, teaching can be a very lonely profession.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:05:15] Yeah, I think that's true.

**AS** [00:05:17] And I find that what you mentioned earlier, how you were able to find a community and you were able to connect with people that do what you do, but you were able to have this setting, are able to connect online. Did it help you get through it?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:05:31] It absolutely did. It meant the world to me. And coming out of the surgery, going back online and seeing my friend who was online looking for me, you know, has anyone seen Michelle? How is she doing? Like knowing that she was there and cared about me really did make a difference. And I think the other dimension of it that for me was impactful was, you know, I was a young woman going into open heart surgery and most patients are significantly older. And I can only speak, you know, 16 years ago. I hope this has changed, but a lot of, most of the research was conducted on men kind of being in that that marginalized group. Of course, you know me. I'm a, you can't see me folks listening, but I am white, I am cisgender, I am able bodied. So having that experience as kind of existing in the margins and understanding how that how that felt, I think was also very important and impactful.

**AS** [00:06:38] You know, I read an article the other month, it fascinates me, but at the same time it disappointed me. And you know what? I've become so disappointed in just the health care system in general, there are lack of processes. I've seen them almost killed family members because of their lack of processes. And even then the way they conduct research. I learned recently that a lot of the medications that women take, that we all take, were based on research that were done on men.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:07:08] Don't even get me started.

**AS** [00:07:09] Zero women. We could do a totally, another podcast on this alone. But I think, thank you for sharing your story, because I think that key takeaway of community and being able to connect with others who are sharing a similar experience makes, it just really helps. And then I'm sure, Are you still friends? Do you still chat?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:07:34] You know, we lost touch over the years, sadly. The site kind of went away and it was it's, you know, since so many other social spaces emerged and I went back and looked for her and we we just lost touch. So.

**AS** [00:07:49] Got it. Got it. You've been working on a project the last four years on humanizing online STEM. Can you please unpack what that project's been all about?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:07:59] It's been amazing. It's been, it's work that I'm so proud of and so excited about. And I think it's really important for me to acknowledge that it didn't start four years ago. It actually started more like 20 years ago. And it's got the fingerprints of hundreds and hundreds of people on the ideas. I started teaching online about 20 years ago, and in those early days, I could really sense the disconnect between me and my students that really mattered to me as a teacher. I didn't like it, and I was always very curious about what could be done to overcome that. And I could only imagine that my students felt the same way making changes in my teaching, like bringing in audio, recording my announcements in audio, instead of just writing them and giving my students the choice to listen and seeing the impact that had and just understanding that the way we construct our learning environment online, the tools that we use and the way we intentionally create an experience for students asynchronously online really makes a difference. Over the years, I started doing professional development for @ONE, which is the role that I'm partially, the role that I'm in now professionally. But I started with @ONE, I think it was about 17 years ago, I started teaching a class that was doing just that was bringing in asynchronous voice and video technologies, and we were focusing on the way voice and video influenced the development of community. And that group of that class actually kind of started to put together this very informal, I'll call it a community practice. So we stayed connected in various ways through conferences on Twitter. But it was really nothing formal. Over the years we started Using a hashtag, hashtag humanize OL. And then about four years ago, the California Education Learning Lab put out a grant call for proposals, and they were offering grants for projects that were using technology to reduce equity gaps, particularly in online and hybrid STEM courses. And so me and another person, Mike Smith Smedshammer, who's been a member of this community for many, many years, you know, we caught up at a conference and we were just saying, you think we should go for this grant? And maybe this is our opportunity to really to really dig in to this concept of humanizing and look at the research and really figure out what's going on here and, you know, put together a model maybe and test it. And so that's what we did. And so we convened a group of educators from the California Community College System, the CSU system, and researchers from the UC system and put together a proposal. And it was accepted. And we received our first $1.3 million grant over three years, which is now over. And we we just received a second grant for $700,000 over two years, which now we are in the first year of that grant. And so what it has allowed us to do is do just that, really look at what we're doing, but connect it to the research. And the research that is so vital is research that goes back decades, the same research that we apply to face to face classes when we're talking about equitable teaching and learning. But we've got to bring it into the online environment as well. So I really want to call out the the foundational work of Laura Rendon, her validation theory from the 1990s. Gloria Ladson-Billings work with culturally relevant teaching and so many others, the work of Lukewood and Frank Harris thinking about how we foster caring, validating and challenging relationships on campus with our students and then, you know, applying that to asynchronous online courses, which too often get left out of conversations about equitable online teaching and learning. So we put together a model that brings these things all together, that draws upon culturally responsive teaching and psychologically inclusive course design. And we're using warm demand for pedagogy, which is from the work of Judith Kleinfeld from the 1970s. And we have eight humanizing online teaching elements that faculty learn how to apply to their courses to help them design psychologically inclusive online courses. And those elements draw upon research from social psychology. And we developed a six week humanizing online STEM academy that, for the first grant, we had 79 faculty go through and we did some research on how that academy experience, which by the way, was asynchronous and online. So they're having they're having humanizing be modeled to them. And we did some research, a very deep dive qualitative study on how that academy experience impacted faculty, but also how it impacted students in their online STEM courses. And I should also say that the reason we're focusing on STEM, the reason the grants and so many other grants in recent years and today focus on STEM is because we know that equity gaps are worse in STEM disciplines. And so that's why so much money has been poured into those specific disciplines.

**AS** [00:13:56] Can you provide an example of a discipline in STEM where a faculty or maybe have two examples of something very specific, something nuts and bolts? A listener is a STEM faculty member and they're able to learn about someone who was able to implement culturally responsive teaching. Can you provide a solid example or examples of how that was done? And then what did the faculty member do exactly?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:14:27] Interestingly, I would say there's not a lot of difference between what a faculty member would do in STEM versus outside of STEM. But what I find is that most STEM faculty really want to be amongst their peers and having this professional dialog and this professional learning. But I can give you specific examples from STEM faculty who have gone through the Academy and were seen in the reflections and in the research. The faculty coming out of the Academy are having these moments of deep seeded self realization that they have kind of been masking the professor that they've always wanted to be, because there's been this sense that they're supposed to be something different. And that is an example of these cultural notions of teaching and learning that are so deeply seeded in all of higher education. But when we get into the sciences, you know, that kind of impersonal professionalism and being tough and, you know, keeping a distance from your students is a bit more entrenched in the culture, at least it seems. And so I think that when we when we look at what faculty are doing, they're getting to know their students because through the professional learning, they're starting to understand that knowing who your students are, reaching out and getting to know who your students are is a really important step in building trust with them. And if students don't trust you, then they're not going to lean in to the class. But the other thing that I think is a big shift is really thinking carefully about not only how you are being present in terms of bringing in your your human presence, your verbal, your nonverbal cues in those early clicks in a course, because online students are isolated, but also what words you're using when you frontload your class with messages like this class is going to be really hard. You are going to have to work X number of hours. A certain percentage of you aren't going to make it through this class. Those are the cues that are going to create even more disconnect for students who have been taught their whole lives that they aren't good enough. Right? So our black students or our Latino students, our indigenous students, primarily according to the research, and that's those are other things, just kind of going through that self-reflective process of like, wow, what are those early cues that I'm sending to my students? And not only what I'm saying, but in the policies and the language that they're reading in the syllabus and those sorts of things.

**AS** [00:17:28] Yes. So what I'm learning is that by going through the academy, there is this shift in their mindset that for many of them it was already there. But unfortunately too many of our graduate schools taught us bad habits.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:17:46] Yeah.

**AS** [00:17:47] And bad habits, everything from grading, we do to students what, you know, these antiquated grading policies were done to us, but that's what we know. And so we in turn do that to our students. This toxic rigor language, that's not helpful. It's not helpful at all. And it doesn't give students a sense of belonging. Yes. That that absolutely is foundational and getting to know your students who they are. I work with an English team and to make their courses more culturally responsive, they realized, you know what, we're an HSI. The books that we're using for this class could be more engaging for them. And so they chose this book. I forgot the gentleman's name, but he used to be in gangs. And then he went on and I believe he went to earn a PhD or something. But his story, the students were able to relate to it. Not that all of them were in gangs, but they had family members. So they were very familiar with that. But the byproduct of this is the students who are not Latino/a/x, primarily the white students, they were able to develop empathy because they had these preconceived notions of why you get into a gang. They don't understand that there's tremendous pressure and they were just able to have, really appreciate, what a lot of these people go through. So there is no formula to make things culturally responsive, especially the content. But what I'm finding, Michelle, is that STEM faculty struggle. It's easier not to say that it's easy, in the social sciences and humanities to do that, to bring in a book like that. I didn't know if, and if you don't, that's okay, because what you said was beautiful, right? Is changing the mindset. I don't know if you've heard of any faculty use any specific kinds of content that made the STEM field much more culturally responsive. Similar to the English example I gave you, might you have any examples? And if not, it's okay. As I said, what you said earlier is foundational. It's beautiful.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:19:56] In the academy, we actually, it's interesting because you brought up grading and you brought up the curriculum. And those are two parts that are absolutely essential to equitable teaching and learning, but they're actually not elements of the academy. So in the academy we're really focusing on the relationship aspect and how students feel and how to use technology to get to know them. And I see those components that you're bringing in here is kind of like next level layers of the conversation. So I think that's really important. If I could loop back and talk about one thing that is really relevant, that is a big part of the work that we're doing with humanizing, not only building that self-awareness and these kinds of mind shifts, but cracking these cultural notions. And another really big one in STEM that we're finding is this this perception that you can't be caring and challenging at once, but you either have to be tough or you're a big pushover. And in the work that we're doing and the work that so many people have been doing for so many decades, and in this space of culturally response teaching, bringing those two things together is absolutely imperative. And when we think back on every one of us, every single educator and I've been doing this question, this prompt with audiences of presentations I've been giving for the past probably nine months or so, and I have more than 650 responses right now. But my prompt is think about an educator who has influenced you in a positive way. Picture that person in your mind and then think of two words to describe two adjectives, two separate adjectives to describe that person, and then we enter them into an activity and a word cloud emerges. And the two biggest words are caring and supportive and sure knowledgeable and challenging. And those are in there too. But it's interesting to highlight this kind of gap between, again, that real life narrative and what we recall. And I don't care who you are, every single person, like that relationship is vital. And we know that when someone cares about you, you are going to lean in and push yourself and challenge yourself. And just because the classes online and we can't lose this online thread, well, don't let me lose this here, because this is what it's all about from the work I'm doing anyway, is that online gets left out far too often. And there's this assumption that just because a class is online, that relationship can't exist. And that is a real fundamental problem that all of us have to get over, you have to go about it differently and it requires you to have a different set of digital fluency, right? Know how to use different technologies and institutions have to support faculty with getting there, with developing those fluency. And too often that's not happening. Too often, the focus is squarely on a learning management system. Some of the essentials, of course, design, which I'm not saying are not important, they're vital, but a really well-designed course is not going to feel welcoming to everybody. You've got to have that human presence and that human connection as well.

**AS** [00:23:29] What I know with working with so many faculty is that they hunger for this because here's what they tell me. They say, Oh, I just came from a webinar. A researcher from a university basically told us to be culturally responsive. What do I do with my content? I don't have any nuts and bolts. I would, if I can wave a wand, I would love to see a clearing house, maybe it's a canvas shell of how faculty were able to do that, how especially in STEM. So I looked at how the Flint water crisis impacted the Black community, and I used that in my biology class. It would be great to have a clearinghouse where we can learn what faculty, how they made their content, how is it that they made it more culturally responsive. Because foundationally, you're doing this wonderful work of helping to change their mindset, being supportive and being caring. I think you've talked about this before, about reframing professional development for faculty. Can you unpack that a little bit?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:24:31] Yes. And I would also just say on our project website, humanizeOL.org. You can look at showcases from the participants that have been through the academy. So they all do an e-portfolio humanizing showcase that showcases the elements that they're bringing into their online class. So it's not quite what you're talking about, but I'm a big believer in sharing also, completely. So reframing professional development as equity infrastructure in the and, I can only speak to the California community college system. It's a system that I know the best. So if you're listening in, you're from outside of our system, I'm going to bet you're probably going to agree with some of what I say. But professional development, there's a lot of professional development, but I do not believe that it is intentionally positioned and invested in as something that will that must be in place to guide, to guide an institution towards closing the equity gaps, which is a really big part of the vision for success and part of our system's mission. And you may get different perspectives depending on who you talk to. I interact most frequently with faculty, and in our system we have about 60,000 faculty members, six zero thousand. A large majority of them teach part time, many of them teach at multiple institutions. And some of them will say that they feel like they have access to professional development. Some of them will say that they don't. Most of them will almost always say that they don't feel compensated adequately, adequately for participating in it in this time of vast, deep seated changes. Faculty really do need to feel valued for the work that they do, and compensating faculty for work for making changes is important and professional development, developing professional development, implementing and facilitating professional development is extraordinarily time intensive and difficult work. So when you look at an institution and you ask the question who is responsible for their professional development? Sometimes people just kind of put their hands up or it's like, well, this person does a little bit of it and this person does a little bit and in our system folks where lots of different hats and it can make it very difficult. So I think when it comes to professional development, it's really being strategic, really being strategic about putting it at the forefront of an institutional plan, of an equity plan, making investments in it, you know, ensuring that money is going towards the development, the implementation, and then recognizing and rewarding faculty for what they're doing. And that doesn't always have to be, you know, money. It can be professional development. Foothill has an interesting model for professional growth awards where it calculates into additional compensation. So there's lots of different ways to do that. And I think that's up to the institution to kind of figure out on its own. But for the most part, that's just not the way professional development works in our system. Unfortunately, too often I think it comes down to like, there's something we need to get done. Let's do some professional development around that. Who's going to do it? You are okay, do it. And you know, it's just not as strategic as it could be. And I don't know if you agree with that at all, but those are my observations.

**AS** [00:28:12] Yeah. You know, a college's budget, it tells you its mission. They can have a really pretty mission statement that they worked on, spent hundreds of hours on. But does that budget actually support the mission? And you're right, I think quality PD is often missing, is not included in the budget. And so I've seen it from everything from faculty, you're on your own go to a conference to very well-organized. I've seen campuses with a whole week or two weeks of flex, and it's so well organized and they have reflection prompts for faculty, so it's not here, take what you learn and then there's no follow up. We don't know if they did it or not. There's actually a reflection prompt to say, What practice did you try? Can you let us know at the end of the semester? And how did it go? We're not here to evaluate you on it. We're not here to judge you. Or if it didn't go well, we just want to learn. We are a place of learning, so we want to learn. So you're right. I think we can definitely improve there. And since because, you know, a lot of your good work is around online, there's still a lot of people that believe in-person is the only way. All this online stuff, it's got to go. We needed it during the pandemic. What would you say to those people? What evidence do we have that this online space actually has helped students learn? It's been engaging. It's helped them meet their goals.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:29:47] Well, the first thing I would say is that online was not born during the pandemic. We can go back and look at our institutional or system data before COVID. And, you know, for the 15 years before COVID, online class enrollments is where our growth has been for a solid decade before the pandemic. Online is the reason we've grown during that decade. If we break it out by face to face and online, you're going to see that year over year, face to face was pretty much flat. And there are even years where the number drops year over year. And that is not often part of the story today. And I think it's really important that it be part of the story because it has been part of our mission. It's always been part of our mission. You're absolutely right that quality in online education is a concern, and I'm not trying to sweep that under the carpet. We know that. We know from multiple studies about online community college courses that equity gaps do get worse online. But that is not a reason to not offer online classes, because we also know that when students are given more flexibility, when they have the option to blend their schedules with in-person and and online classes, they can keep their values more intact. Right? They can. They don't have to disrupt their family's lives. They are as much they don't have to disrupt their work schedules as much. And so they can still progress towards their towards their their academic goals. And so that flexibility is absolutely vital for our students who are parents. And that's a really up and coming demographic that we're we're working on here in California serving our parenting students. You know, I was listening to a webinar about parenting students, and the dialog was around that there were students on the panel, which was fantastic, and the students were talking about, you know, driving to campus, getting out of their car, running to class, finishing class, running back to their car and driving back to pick up their kids. But there was no mention that entire panel about online classes. And so we are still missing opportunities. And that is why we've got to talk about access and quality together. And I'm just a really big supporter of any initiative, any program, any conversation that wants to roll those two things together into one, because that's, I think, such a vital topic, particularly today.

**AS** [00:32:33] So I have three kids and all of them have gone through community college and transferred and we live actually equidistant to about three community colleges, but we chose one in particular and it was the one that had a lot of online offerings because the kids loved having a hybrid schedule; that these I can take in person and well, now I have flexibility these I can do online. And what's interesting is that when the pandemic hit and there was the, you know, the great shift to online, this particular college that had been doing online for a while and have had provided quality PD to their faculty on how to do, and by the way, my kids will tell you that they'd rather be in a quality asynchronous where the faculty finds a way to be engaged and caring and supportive than in a mediocre or even an average in-person class. Now, some will say, Well, but you know, you're missing the whole experience, you know, they're not seeing other students. And I'm like, well, that's why they do hybrid. You know, that's why they do still go to a couple of classes a semester in-person. So I think this whole argument that in-person is better than online. I think, I think it's kind of silly. When you ask students, they'll tell you I just like flexibility, especially community college students. Many of them are parents. They have multiple jobs. But the key here is quality, right, Michelle? It's really important because when the pandemic hit, so many faculty thought that what they were doing in-person, they can just do online, and that did not work. But it's learning, right? I think there's been a tremendous amount of learning. My next question for you is, so for the listeners, right, because they can't, all of them take part in this six week humanizing academy, are there some elements that you wouldn't mind unpacking for us that they can leave the podcast go, Oh, those are like really good reflection questions or exercises that I can think about. Any, I don't want to diminish, or reduce your beautiful six week into, you know, 20 minutes left of a podcast. But is there any kind of key takeaways elements of it that you wouldn't mind sharing.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:34:51] Yeah. I think what I really like to encourage faculty to start thinking about if they haven't already, I don't want to assume that they haven't. But week 0 to 1 of an online course and I emphasize 0 to 1, which may sound a little strange, you know, when we when we teach in-person, the first moment we meet our students is so defined, it's so distinct. Right? It's when when the class starts on that first day and it's more ambiguous online, which could be construed as a real opportunity. And so if you think about week 0 to1 as this high opportunity zone, when you know students are thinking about your courses and you can reach out to them through a message, through particularly an email, if you have access to their email addresses even before the class starts, have an email composed with a link out to a liquid syllabus, which is one of the elements that faculty learn about in the academy. And a liquid syllabus is a public web page. And I want to stress public and web page, and it's mobile responsive. A web page allows you to embed a video at the very top, which is, you know, very different than having a link and telling someone to click on it because it's your face. It's that, you know, the verbal, the nonverbal cues are there, your smile, your warm intonation of your voice, you're going to greet your students before they even log into your class. And it's public meeting. They're not going to be confronted with a login screen. We're taking off that barrier. You may have students who don't know how to log in yet, right? We want to really strip away as many barriers as we can. And it's mobile responsive. So when students, and we know students check their email on their phone, and we know that we have a lot of students in our system who are smartphone dependent, who use their phones for learning, a website that is mobile, responsive, that responds to the shape of the size of a student's phone screen, the small size and looks beautiful as opposed to like, even though it's a beautiful PDF, which I'm thinking about myself here, you know, looking at reading a PDF on a phone, you have to swipe with their fingers and make it bigger. And so think about things like that. And then what are the cues? What are the cues that those early clicks send to your students? When do the clicks happen and what cues do they send to your students? So when they land on that, whatever it is you're sending them to, how many barriers can you take away and how many cues can you include that you're going to be there for them. You're in this with them. You're their learning partner, that your class is designed to scaffold and support their learning and that they matter. Mattering is that first layer of belonging. And I really think that when we really challenge ourselves to put ourselves in the shoes of students and actually go through the experience of clicking through a class and reflecting on these questions can be really informative and you'll start to see like, Oh, I need to change that, I need to tweak this, I could say that a little bit better. So I guess those are some those, are some thoughts that I would just offer as starting points. But our website HumanizeOL.org has lots of different ideas and resources in our infographic, How to Humanize Your Online Course. And I also want to say that the model we're sharing, it's not intended to be like, this is the way you have to do it model. What we find is that there are so many faculty who, like you just said a few minutes ago, Al, it's like you here what you need to do, but you don't know how to put it into practice. And so we want to give specific examples of what you can do, like a getting to know you survey, like a self affirming icebreaker in week one. And then once you know how to do that right, then you kind of start making it your own from there.

**AS** [00:39:07] That's awesome. That 0 to 1 that mattering. I love that. Michelle, thanks. Thanks for sharing that. You know what I mentioned earlier, back to my kids when the pandemic hit, right. This particular college was very well positioned to go fully online. What I have noticed in their classes is that 0 to 1 and just you said it, it made a difference. And the other thing I noticed is that they learned this one, this was English, that they weren't going to have a 20-30 page paper due at the end, that they chunked that up. And I love her canvas because I'm still a learner. I was like, Can I see what you're learning here? Well, let me see how this is set up. And I love what she did. She had zero 0 to 1. She had a video. She's very engaging. She's really set expectations. She talked about flexibility. She had it set up where in the first part of the class, the first few weeks as you're, it's a productive struggle, you're learning how to write this first part of this paper. The following weeks, you're going to write the next chunk, right? And then the following weeks you write the next chunk, right? And throughout that time, students are collaborating and giving each other feedback. She's giving them feedback, and then they put it all together and they turn it in at the end. And this was all asynchronous.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:40:38] Yeah.

**AS** [00:40:39] So how do you set it up, right? How you tell students that they matter, how you show them, that they matter how you make them feel like you belong here. From the very beginning, I was a veteran reentry student, and when I started I vetted my classes in particular. So this was before rate my professor. I would go visit all all the classes. And any time, I'll never forget this one guy, he started the class with, I don't believe in A's. A's are perfection. So most of you are going to get to C. And I said, later, I'm not enrolling in your class. Another one was that one, that was, Oh my gosh, look to the person to your left, look to the person to the right. That kind of garbage. So thank you for that. It really helps to remind us that that zero one, is there anything else? Maybe one more thing. I know I'm being a little greedy to unpack from the from the academy that you wouldn't mind sharing.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:41:42] Yeah. A practice that we refer to as the wisdom wall. We encourage faculty to use an asynchronous voice or video tool like voice thread or flip, formerly known as flip grid, and at the end of your course, invite your students to think back to the beginning of the course and ask them, What do you know now that you wish you had known then and share it in a voice or video comment in the form of advice for my next group of incoming students. And that's something on my own liquid syllabus. I actually have it embedded there. So when my students click on the liquid syllabus, they see in they hear a two minute-ish video from me, but they also can click and listen to students that sound like them, you know, that share common struggles that are we're really anxious at the start of the course and that are reaffirming students that, hey, Michelle's there for you, those kinds of things. That's something that faculty really seem to like and students also really benefit from. And if I could, if I could leave with two things that floated through my mind as I was listening to you reflect, I just want to put a call out to our system to find those stories from online students, find those life changing stories, like why do we not hear them? Why are they not part of this narrative? And I hope we can do that. And, you know, when we start hearing those stories and we start seeing those stories, then we'll start to understand that online classes really are being framed in a way that are student centered. And the other thing is I have worked with, I've probably interacted with I don't know how many hundreds, thousands of faculty in my roles over the years. We have some phenomenal online teachers in the system, phenomenal who are just waiting for an opportunity to be showcased. I hope we can shed light on their amazing work, too. And I want to I'm going to call out three of them that have really influenced me over the years Fabiola Torres, Denise Maduli-Williams, and Maritez Apigo, who I know you've had Maritez on one of your podcasts in the past. They're all on Twitter, they're all very active, and they share, their part of, they're sharing what they're learning and they're sharing their teaching. And the more we can just openly share with one another, the more we really will be developing a community of online teaching practitioners that are committed to serving the needs of our students.

**AS** [00:44:29] Yes, I think what you've done, because I've seen, I work with so many faculty and in my view, I know the pandemic has been rough, I know that people are spent, but this has been actually the most exciting time in higher ed. And my view, this is the most exciting time in higher ed. I've never seen so much change. I've never heard so many people have courageous conversations around let's reimagine, for example, grading. Let's reimagine how we talk to students. There's just so, it's so exciting. But at the same time, it's so challenging because change can be difficult. Fear sets in. But I think you're right. I think, so now, foundationally, you've done a lot of work, right, to have these conversations, to be in that middle of this this just exciting time in higher ed, in my view. And then the next step, what I'm taking from this, you're right. I think the next step in this. Let's get those student stories. We got to get those student stories. Maybe my peeps over at the RP Group can do something. I'll reach out to, talk to Dr. Darla Cooper about this. And in the second piece, again, I do a lot of PD, one of the ones that faculty really like. I do it around the 5 E's. Is just a way to frame instruction. It's agnostic, it's not prescriptive. It helps faculty think really about how am I going to engage the student and how are they going to explore the content that I'm giving them. What setting am I going to give them to help explain it back to me? I'm not going to give them the vocabulary yet. I'll introduce the vocabulary eventually and explain. And an elaborate is how to help them apply what they learn in other topics. And then you check for learning, which is evaluate. Well, my point is in doing these, I developed the 5E lesson plan, is that we really, what I'm noticing is that faculty now are like, okay, I get the mindset, I get the kindness toward our students and now it's like, okay, I just need some content. Like, what do I do to actually make it more culturally relevant? And I would like to see almost like a clearinghouse of, of like instructional plans or lesson plans that faculty, you know, they don't have to copy. It is not a prescription. They can add their own flavor. But I think those are the two next steps, in my view. Michelle, to build off of your good work is those students stories and the clearinghouse of what faculty did, those really specific culturally responsive content that they were able to put in their courses, especially in STEM. That tends to be a bit more challenging, not impossible. So as we wind down here, I will definitely put in the shownotes the link to the website and any other resources. Do you have any last words for, let's say, faculty who are doing professional development at their campus or people who are leaders who are thinking about having something more robust in professional development at their campus? Do you have any word of advice for them?

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:47:37] Give yourself grace. It's such hard work. It's such hard work. And it has to be acknowledged that when we are thinking about professional development for asynchronous online teaching and learning, it can't happen in a synchronous environment. We have to have asynchronous professional development so that faculty are immersed in the type of environment that we want them to bring into their own classes. And that's absolutely imperative. And that's come out of our research crystal clear. The experience of being in the learning seat in an asynchronous class and having a facilitator who is flexible, who is challenging and really having to work hard and meet deadlines, but being able to get an extension if you need it. And those are the things that are really, really powerful. So but doing that is harder than I think most institutions, most individuals recognize because it's so time intensive to put that together. So you've got to balance that. You've got to balance the intentionality of ensuring that the asynchronous professional development facilitated, not self-paced professional development is there, but there's been ample investment made in developing it and time given to create it. And then when it comes to that facilitation, this is the other sticky part, it doesn't end at 5 p.m. That has to be acknowledged and that has to be part of the institutional conversation as well, because there can be other implications, contractual implications and such about that as well. But that has to be part of it. And yeah, so just don't leave online out and ensure that when we're supporting asynchronous online teaching and learning that we are modeling it through the same format all.

**AS** [00:49:33] Michelle, thank you for everything that you've done for the system. You positively impact so many people. I tried to be on social media. I'm told that I should be, so I try my best. I'm not that great at it.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:49:47] But you do great. You do great, Al.

**AS** [00:49:50] Aww. You're very sweet, but I seen how people respond to you and how, what a difference you've made from their comments. That right there is says a lot. So thank you so much again for everything that you have done and continue to do. And thank you for participating in the Students Success podcast.

**Michelle Pacansky-Brock** [00:50:12] Right back at you, Al. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do and thank you for having me here today.