

Multi-Modal Learning Strategies: Workshop teaches techniques developed for students with disabilities that can benefit all

Sharon Simpson, a Broward College associate professor of biological sciences, has been teaching anatomy and other courses for about two decades, yet she is always willing to learn more about how to communicate most effectively with her students. “Students learn in different ways,” she said. Simpson was one of the attendees at a workshop designed to present innovative strategies for teaching that were originally developed to help students with learning disabilities, yet can be beneficial for all.

The workshop, held on two dates in September and October were presented by Ruby Crane, Stuart Buckley and Janine Hill, who are part of the TRIO grant through Broward College’s office of disability services. The presenters demonstrated some of the strategies and assistive technology available to help students with hidden disabilities, such as learning disabilities, and also students who are visually impaired or blind. Through the experiential work stations, it was possible for participants to put on a set of goggles that simulated various visual impairments and see through the eyes of a person with macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa and other conditions. It was an eye-opening experience.

In general, “a learning style is a learning preference,” said Crane, and there are three elemental approaches, visual, auditory and tactile. A teacher should “include ways of presenting that use all styles,” Crane said, in order to help all students in a class learn successfully.

Utilizing the model they advocated, the workshop presenters began with Crane’s visual PowerPoint, then turned to audio as Buckley demonstrated the various technologies for turning text into sound. Finally, Hill led participants through the hands-on, tactile experience of donning goggles to simulate low-vision conditions. A tremendous amount of information and many insights were conveyed through this multi-modal approach, immediately proving its effectiveness.



Janine Hill, left, Ruby Crane, and Stuart Buckley presented a workshop on learning styles and strategies.