Project Overview

In this half-day event, a range of people – faculty, graduate students, and staff – from across the university came together to exchange ideas and experiences about what it means to be a disabled professional and to set up agendas for future developments. The group was joined by professor Carrie Sandahl from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The first half of the day provided opportunities for informal networking and dialogue among disabled graduate students, staff, and faulty, as well as involved allies.

The second half of the day provided participants an opportunity to witness a roundtable discussion after Dr. Sandahl’s keynote address, Professing Disability Studies: Academia/Activism/Artist/Life Reflections. Shorter comments were provided by U-M staff, graduate students, and alumni.

Key Insights / New Questions

The importance of testimony - finding a space where we can witness each others’ struggles, even if we cannot find immediate answers to huge (and small) structural issues

The importance of solidarity - listening to each other can help us deal with the loneliness that is part of minority living in academia

The importance of recognition - even if our differences are diverse, we understand that there is communality and coherence in our respective struggles

Participants

Keynote Speaker
Carrie Sandahl
Associate Professor
Disability and Human Development
University of Illinois at Chicago
Head of the Program on Disability Art, Culture, and Humanities

Invited guests
Jina Kim
PhD candidate, English/Women’s Studies

Jane Berliss-Vincent
Assistive Technology Manager

Lloyd Shelton
MSW Candidate, Community Organization

Jasmine Pawlicki
recent Michigan graduate, Peer Information Counselor, University of Michigan Library

Next Steps

• Cultivate each other as a resource.
• Work through appropriate responses to diversity initiatives: as a very small minority in academia, we are too easily overloaded with service, and we are spread much too thin to work on all of them. How can we help cultivate informed allydom?
• Find companionship - let’s not always be “the only one in the room.”