

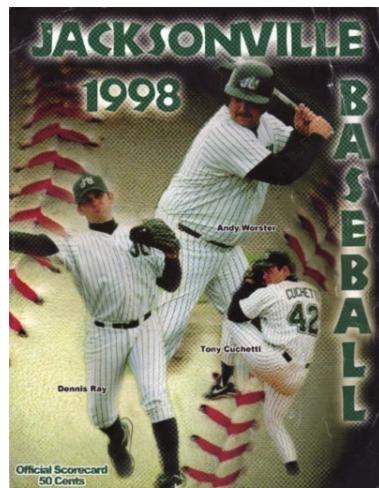
# Invisible DISABILITIES

## Take the Field During Breakout Sessions

When a football hit Ben Lomond High School coach **Dennis Ray** at the base of his skull in 2008, he had no idea he had a concussion that would sideline him as a teacher and a master's student at Weber State for a significant amount of time.

That hit wasn't Ray's first concussion; he played football and baseball in high school and continued playing baseball through graduation at Jacksonville University. By his count, over the years, he suffered as many as six concussions. When it happened a seventh time, he was out of the game.

"After the hit, I thought I was OK, but they had me take a cognitive test to review such things as short- and long-term memory," Ray said. "The results were so poor my administrators said there was no way I could teach



Ray's baseball card from Jacksonville University.

or coach. I was out of work for two months. I couldn't think; it was like a cloud. When I went back to teaching, I had to ask my students about what I used to do in class. I didn't know my own procedures. I had to retrain myself."

At the time, Ray was not only a teacher, but he was also finishing the final paper for his Master of Education degree. "After the concussion, I couldn't even understand what I had written previously," he explained.

Disoriented and discouraged, Ray dropped out of WSU for nearly two years. Assistant

professor of teacher education **Peggy Saunders** encouraged him to return. She suggested Ray research and write about concussions and their effects on education.

That suggestion got him off the bench; Ray conducted original research and devised specific post-concussion game plans for players. He is now an advocate for concussion education.

Ray said he may have punted his own education had not a caring faculty member taken the extra effort to draw him back into class and into the game.

### Veterans and War Trauma

**Charlie Chandler**, coordinator of WSU's Services for Veteran Students, said faculty members are crucial to the comfort,

## Weber State has 600 veterans enrolled this fall; 250 have sustained concussions or are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder.

confidence and success of all students. He's particularly concerned about veterans who have suffered war trauma. Weber State has 600 veterans enrolled in class this fall, and of those, Chandler estimates at least 250 have sustained concussions or are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Chandler encourages faculty to have veterans identify themselves and their potential challenges in order to improve their educational experience. Teachers can watch for telltale signs of trouble such as students missing class and assignments, acting unusually distracted or aggressive.

Instructors can refer students to the Services for Veteran Students, Counseling and Psychological Services Center or Services for Students with Disabilities.

### Disability and Abuse

When an individual summons the courage to reveal a disability — hidden or not — the listener's reaction is critical in order for the person to seek additional help and healing.

**Deborah Dilley** with the Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault will present a



Ray, an advocate for concussion education, coaches baseball at Ben Lomond High.

session on disability and abuse. She said it's important for people to speak out and be heard, and when many speak and many listen, great changes can occur.

"There's a huge movement called the 'People First' movement where individuals are learning to speak and becoming advocates for themselves, but movements are effective only when they are conducted in conjunction with help from other people. You can't have a movement with one person. You have to have a community of people around the same goal."

Advocates and access to opportunities help individuals who face the challenge of diversity or disability find greater success on the educational field and in the game of life.

**13<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity Conference  
Breakout Sessions  
Presenters include: Dennis Ray,  
Charlie Chandler and Deborah Dilley  
Friday, Oct. 7  
9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.  
Shepherd Union Ballrooms A & B**



NEWS ABOUT THE  
DIVERSITY MOVEMENT AT  
WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY  
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### Invisible Disability



As a consequence, our students bring to campus a rich mosaic of values, views and talents. Their life experiences enhance WSU's philosophy and mission of fostering an open and welcoming environment. We strive to produce well-equipped, highly engaged scholars who infuse their academic achievement with their compassion and value for human differences.

To that end, WSU's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity Conference has elected to bring a particular focus to the profound impact people with disabilities have made on our teaching and learning community.

This year's conference theme, "Unpacking the Knapsack of Invisible (And Not So Invisible) Disabilities," underscores how some citizens are frequently marginalized. We sometimes take for granted the immeasurable value people with visible and invisible disabilities add to our campus and society. The Americans with Disabilities Act is proof that access improves opportunities.

Please consider including this event in your class time and work schedules. The planning committee has linked many local sources, experts and agency leaders to bring more understanding to these human attributes that will continue to challenge the breadth and depth of our own humanity.

**Forrest Crawford,**  
*Assistant to the President For Diversity*

# diversity! WORKS!

## Keynote Speaker Advocates for Rights of Disabled



From the wheelchair that she has used most of her life, psychologist **Linda Mona** has helped health-care workers and others tackle the challenges of including people with

disabilities in all aspects of a life rich with possibilities.

"I am trying to broadly conceptualize the disability experience by making it real for every person in the audience," Mona said. "I talk about disability etiquette. What do you do when you have someone with a disability in your classroom? How do you treat them in a respectful way? I want to bring the message of disability diversity across to the audience and make it helpful to them, so they increase their comfort in interactions with people with disabilities, while pushing the social agenda forward."

Mona is a licensed clinical psychologist who has advocated for the sexual rights and sexual expression of people with disabilities for the past 15 years. She has published more than 50 articles on disability and discussed her findings on Oprah Radio, National Public Radio, PBS, NBC's Today show, and *Cosmopolitan* and *Self* magazines.

According to Mona, conversations about disability have increased in the recent past because of America's involvement in war.

"The number of people with impairments increases exponentially with returning veterans," Mona said. "Society wide more money and services are put toward people with disabilities. We see people who look or think differently more in the public eye as it becomes a political issue."

Mona said the experiences of a person living with a disability are closely aligned to the experiences of other diverse communities.

"Disability is actually the very last diverse life experience to be included in multicultural views and multicultural domains," Mona said. "It has been difficult for people inside and outside the diversity world to see the commonalities between disability and other minority experiences."

Mona wants discussions that take place at the conference to filter from the academic setting to conversations in everyday life. She said a successful event will ultimately raise awareness, acceptance and aid in the community, which will then lift traditional barriers that have kept those with disabilities from associating freely with others.



Mona instructs health-care workers on the topics of disability and diversity.

**13<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity Conference  
Keynote Address: Linda Mona, Ph.D.  
"Understanding Disability & Identity"  
Friday, Oct. 7  
8:30 a.m. Shepherd Union Ballrooms A & B**



# UNPACKING THE KNAPSACK OF INVISIBLE (AND NOT SO INVISIBLE) DISABILITY

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY  
13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DIVERSITY CONFERENCE  
OCTOBER 6-7, 2011  
[weber.edu/diversityconference](http://weber.edu/diversityconference)

## THURSDAY, OCT. 6 • WSU DAVIS

6-8 p.m. Opening Reception and Address  
"Autism: A Panel Discussion" with Lisa Ridges of Sahara Cares and Laura Anderson of the Autism Council of Utah

## FRIDAY, OCT. 7 • SHEPHERD UNION BUILDING

8:30 a.m. Keynote Address, Ballrooms A and B  
Linda Mona, Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist  
"Understanding Disability & Identity"

## 9:30, 10:30 AND 11:30 A.M.

Concurrent Panel Sessions

*Topics include:*  
Academic Achievement & Traumatic Brain Injury  
ADA: Past, Present & Future  
Autism Spectrum Disorders  
Disability at Work  
Hidden Abuse/Hidden Victims  
Issues of Reasonableness: Accommodations for Students  
Interpersonal Communication & Disability  
Learning Disabilities  
Managing Caregiver Stress  
Mood Disorders as Invisible Disabilities  
Perceptions & Attitudes About Disability  
Transitioning to WSU from High School  
Veterans & Disability

12:30 p.m. Closing Reception

## Diversity Events 2011-12

### 2011

- Oct. 5 **Clothesline Project**, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Oct. 11 **National Coming Out Day celebration**, 1:30 p.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Oct. 12 **Latif Bolat: Turkish Mystic Sufi musician & poet**, 6:30 p.m. Val A. Browning Center Choral Room 136
- Oct. 13 **National Latino HIV/AIDS Awareness Day & Testing**, 9 a.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Oct. 20 **Oktoberfest**, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Oct. 25 **Make a Difference Day activities**, 9 a.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Oct. 25 **Taboo Talks Religion & Politics**, 10:30 a.m. Shepherd Union Wildcat Theater
- Oct. 26 **Human Sex Trafficking - The Red Movement**, 2 p.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Nov. 5 **Environmental Cleanup & Education**, 10 a.m.
- Nov. 9 **Native American Spiritual Teachings about the Earth**, 12:30 p.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Nov. 14 **Defeating Diabetes workshop**, 11:30 a.m. Shepherd Union Room 232
- Nov. 16 **International Day for Tolerance World Religion Day**, 9 a.m. Shepherd Union Atrium
- Nov. 17 **Transgender Awareness - Engendered Species film & discussion**, noon Shepherd Union
- Nov. 19 **Environmental Cleanup & Education**, 10 a.m.
- Nov. 29 **Double Standards**, 10:30 a.m. Shepherd Union Wildcat Theater
- Dec. 1 **World AIDS Day - HIV/AIDS Awareness & Testing**, 9 a.m. Shepherd Union Room 232

### 2012

- Jan. 13 **Gospel Music Festival**, Val A. Browning Center Austad Auditorium
- Jan. 16 **MLK Munch & March with the Ogden NAACP Chapter**, Marshall White Center to the Ogden Amphitheater
- Feb. 15 **A Conversation With Elizabeth Eckford — one of the original Little Rock 9**
- March 22 **Native American Symposium**, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Shepherd Union Wildcat Theater

## Sessions on the Ledge

October & November Tuesdays from noon to 1 p.m.

## Events to Watch For

- October **Screening of "Little Town of Bethlehem" with Bridge-Building Discussion**
- November **Understanding Our Veterans: PTSD and the Return Home**
- November **Native Genocide in the Early Americas**

*Diversity Works!* is published by the Office of University Communications. We welcome story ideas and feedback from faculty, staff and readers.

Send submissions and comments to mailcode 4025, email [ahess@weber.edu](mailto:ahess@weber.edu), or call ext. 7948.

Editor: Allison Barlow Hess

# UNPACKING the KNAPSACK

## Dissecting this year's Diversity Conference theme and what it means in the WSU community

"Unpacking the Knapsack of Invisible (And Not So Invisible) Disabilities," is the theme of this year's Weber State University Diversity Conference, and it's packed full of meaning.

The term "unpacking the knapsack" comes from feminist and anti-racism activist Peggy McIntosh, who in 1988 authored a famous paper titled "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." This year's Diversity Conference puts a slightly different spin on that idea, focusing specifically on privilege and disability, rather than privilege and race.

It's necessary to understand that each person with a disability is different, and each scenario brings with it its own challenges, said Don Guthrie, recently appointed director of WSU's Services for Students with Disabilities.

Guthrie has dealt with many situations in his nearly 25 total years at WSU. He said the most important thing to keep in mind is to never assume, no matter what the disability. Assumptions can lead to unfair privilege or damaging misunderstandings.

"Even if you can see clearly, and you think you might know what that disability is and what is needed, don't assume," Guthrie said. "The person who is dealing with the disability is going to be the one to provide you with the best answers. When you assume what students need, you can put them at a disadvantage. You can go in a completely opposite direction of what they might need."

Guthrie gave the example of a student with an attention deficit disorder who's having trouble taking tests. You might assume that the student should be moved to a room by himself with no distractions. But you might not understand what exactly is distracting the student — a ticking clock, the white walls — it could be the smallest of things.

"It's so important to engage students in a dialogue and find out what works for them," Guthrie said.

That dialogue can be difficult, especially for those with invisible disabilities. Guthrie said many times a student with an invisible disability is not used to talking about that disability. Because people don't see it, it doesn't arise organically in a conversation.

A lot of the time, when students with a visible disability come into Guthrie's office,

to go up to an instructor or someone else and tell them that you have this particular disability or limitation in class. A lot of time, the question in that situation is 'why?' That's not usually the question we deal with, with physical disabilities. With physical disabilities, the question is usually 'how?' 'How do we accommodate this situation?'

With an invisible disability, it's often, 'Well, you're perfectly capable. Why do we have to do anything different for you? You look

## SOME "NOT-SO-VISIBLE" DISABILITIES

- Learning Disorders (ADHD/Dyslexia)
- Emotional and Psychological Issues (bipolar disorder)
- Brain Injuries
- Cancer (side effects from the treatment of cancer)
- AIDS/HIV

they're used to talking about their disability, and they already know what help they need. He just works to make the accommodation. When a student with a not-so-visible disability comes into his office, it's a little different. Instead of coming to him with a solution, the student has a problem, and needs help finding a solution.

The process to find a solution can be tricky. Preconceived notions can often prevent understanding.

"In my wheelchair, you can see me coming from a mile away," Guthrie said. "It's very clear. When you get to not-so-visible disabilities, what people don't see is that a lot of it is hard to deal with directly. It's hard

as strong or capable as anyone else in this room.' There's an issue of proof, frankly."

Adopting the knapsack concept to disabilities in this year's Diversity Conference follows a historical pattern. The disability rights movement has benefited from past movements, such as the Civil Rights movement of the '60s. Advancing from talking about rights to talking about privilege is the next step, and the WSU Diversity Conference hopes to facilitate that conversation.

Jon McBride,  
University Communications