**Transcript – Dr. LillAnne Jackson**

**Jiexing**

Welcome to the 'Let's Talk about Teaching' Podcast, a podcast dedicated to exploring innovative teaching practices in post-secondary education, examining the day-to-day challenges of implementing and uncovering strategies for success. If you have been following us since our earlier 'Teach Anywhere' podcast episodes, welcome back. We're excited to broaden the conversation and to continue sharing stories and insights from educators that inspire reflection and growth. My name is Jiexing Hu, I'm a Learning Designer with Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation, also known as LTSI at the University of Victoria. My pronouns are she and her.

**Sarah**

I am your co-host, Sarah DeDecker, and my pronouns are she and her. I am a Curriculum Specialist in STEM at LTSI. Before we begin, we would like to acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

**Jiexing**

In this 3-episode podcast series, 'Time is on Your Side', we explore Universal Extended Time in assessments as a tool to enhance accessibility and inclusivity at UVic. This series will bring together multiple guests over three episodes to talk about their experiences and perspectives on Universal Extended Time. We will explore the pedagogical benefits, practical challenges, and how it's being used at UVic in fostering equitable and inclusive assessment practices.

**Sarah**

To help guide our conversation, Universal Extended Time is defined as an access centered assessment strategy that seeks to reduce access barriers created by time restricted assessments and increase overall accessibility for all students. This strategy is often used in the context of exams or quizzes. Applying Universal Extended Time appropriately requires an accurate measurement of the assessment's timing and then applying a calculated extension to this time frame that reflects common time extension accommodations, commonly 1.5 times. This time is applied to all students taking the assessment.

In this first episode of our series, 'Time is on Your Side', we are joined by Dr. LillAnne Jackson, the Associate Dean of the Undergraduate Programs of Engineering and Computer Science at UVic, who will share her perspective and experience in supporting the integration of Universal Extended Time in timed assessments. LillAnne approaches Universal Extended Time, which she calls time barrier free assessments, as a means to make exams more accessible without compromising their integrity. LillAnne shares with us how she has implemented this within her faculty and the outcomes she has seen.

**Jiexing**

Hello, LillAnne. Welcome to the podcast.

**LillAnne**

Hello.

**Sarah**

Thank you for joining us today, LillAnne. Before we start chatting about Universal Extended Time, could you tell us a bit more about yourself? Perhaps share how long you've been in your current role and what you do in your work.

**LillAnne**

My name is LillAnne. I've been the Associate Dean now since I, I'm afraid to tell you, since 2009. This is my third term, and I have to admit I've had a couple of admin leaves in the middle so that I could take a break from that. But overall, I've been a long, long time serving as Associate Dean. I'm a member of the Faculty in the Department of Computer Science, which means I have, you know, background in computer science. I typically teach courses there and I'm also licensed as a Computer Engineer, so I've got some engineering background as well.

**Jiexing**

Thank you. So, as an Associate Dean, what is your understanding of universal extended time and how do you see it fits into broader faculty goals?

**LillAnne**

First, I need to say that we're not particularly happy with the term Universal Extended Time. We feel like something more inclusive like time barrier free assessments would invoke less

concerns from our accommodated students. We just, we like the term better. We're still looking for a good term. The faculty and departments are actually quite happy to work with instructors to figure out how much time everything takes for completion. So, our goal with, I'm gonna call it barrier free assessments is to offer short enough assessments that there is additional time available in the exam period to be able to allow students to have as much time as they wish to complete exams.

**Jiexing**

Thanks. Could you add a little bit to what you meant by short enough assessments?

**LillAnne**

Well, I mean, I need to say determination of the expected amount of time for an assessment to be completed is pretty old art. Those of us that have been teaching, you know, for a long time, we've practiced figuring out how long it takes for someone to complete an assessment. So, I mean, one of our goals right now is to make sure that the assessments that we're giving throughout our faculty can be completed by virtually any student in 2/3 of the amount of time that's available in the exam period. And the nice thing about that is then we can easily allow students the option of taking 1.5 times the available time for the exam. We trust and hope that everybody will finish in that shorter time, but, if somebody, you know, something happened during the exam time, we can give that additional time.

**Sarah**

Thank you for sharing how you conceptualize Universal Extended Time as time barrier free assessments. What was your motivation to implement time barrier free assessments in the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, and how do you see it contributing to increased accessibility across the faculty?

**LillAnne**

Well, I mean, if you think about it, I mean, time is a bit of a sort of a lever. It's a compensation lever that can get pulled as a means to overcome barriers to performance. You know, many different kinds of barriers to performance. I mean, as small as stress or as large as a physical issue. Now, I mean, depending on what is the barrier, the amount of time a person might need is longer or shorter. But it doesn't really change what's happening in their mind and what their knowledge of things. I mean, one of the things that we're trying to do is support the design of test questions to mitigate or eliminate some of these challenges. So, if we can better design the tests, then the time lever is really not needed, right? And it doesn't become as important.

So, we and our faculty respect that there are students throughout our community that find the existence of timed invigilation impacts their performance on those assessments. So, our goal is to try and support a very broad range of expression of learning and showing things.

So some of the things that we're seeing as we start talking about having a little shorter amount of work to do during the assessment, we're finding that our instructors are doing things like perhaps making shorter questions or doing things like providing formula sheets in advance or even sometimes allowing students to make their own formula sheets and bring them with them so that they're familiar with what's happening in the testing environment. So, while I'm using the terminology time barrier free, we're actually starting to encourage people to think more about what they're testing and how they're testing. It really is about thinking carefully through the questions and what you're testing. So, in terms of the stakes for the exams, well, in the end, we still need exams and coursework that add up to 100% of the course material. So somewhere that has to happen. And we also have, you know, there's a fair amount, a lot of our courses need some sort of certainty that the students really know that material, so the invigilated exams are still important in much of our faculty. So, I mean, if we can do exams that are online and can give a lot more time than they need, we do. But otherwise, yes, we're trying to create, if the exam's very short, then we need more exams so that the stakes in each one is less. But for the most part, we're trying to look at ways to not create too many more exams, rather create more effective questions.

**Jiexing**

Thank you. So, within the faculty, what has been the feedback from instructors and students regarding time barrier free assessments?

**LillAnne**

Instructors and students do have different perspectives. When we first introduced the concept of having encouraging our faculty to create shorter assessments and use the time available to allow students to choose longer periods, you know, there was questions about will we be able to test as much material. And so what we're finding is that we've had a lot of conversations about how we test and what we're doing. It's a progressing project, it's not a finished project yet. But we are finding that instructors that have engaged with the process are becoming very well satisfied with it. I mean, it's an ongoing process I'm certain of that. Also, everybody's getting better at having confidence about how long this does take so that that's important. We have had a few accommodated students that have questioned the validity of the time barrier free assessments, you know, they feel like it's, you know, they need to have that additional accommodation. But once they understand that there remains a choice, I mean, we present

this as an option that we can offer them this time barrier free assessment inside the classroom, or they can continue to work with their accommodation center to write their exam in a separated exam center, they welcome the choice. So, I mean, as we progress, we are seeing more satisfaction and understanding that there is, the time isn't, it's just that lever. And I really do think that some of our accommodated students really appreciate the opportunity to have an option to be able to write in the room with their colleagues to feel the environment.

**Sarah**

Thank you. How long has your faculty kind of been having this conversation around time barrier free assessments?

**LillAnne**

I mean, it started just as a conversation without any actual things happening. I would say that it's still in its infancy. It's around a year now that we've been having conversations about it. We talked to different people. I spent a lot of time talking to the chairs about what it means and how it's gonna go, being the person that sort of makes lots of decisions in the faculty as an Associate Dean, decisions on undergraduate students, I do get to see cases where students are feeling like they're not accommodated and so then I get to see how did you evaluate the time for your exams so I get to see lots of evaluations and justifications. So I would say it's, coming on a year that we've since we started having these conversations and I think that it's an ongoing process and it probably always will be. We'll, you know, have an ongoing group of people that are really good at assessing the timing of their exams, and another group of people that are working on it.

**Sarah**

Thank you. You said that you see time barrier for exams. Do you see this in other assessments?

**LillAnne**

I have to think about that a little bit more. I mean, the biggest challenge for our faculty, I mean, has just been the sheer size of some of our classes and the amount of time that the frequency with our classes are very large. Almost all of our courses have lab components and tutorial components where the classes are less large. And in fact, the need to assess them individually is less concise. We get them sometimes to work in teams in many of our labs and so I would say that the mass majority of the work we're doing with the time barrier free assessments is with invigilated exams.

**Sarah**

So what challenges do you see in scaling time barrier free assessments across the faculty?

**LillAnne**

Obviously, if we're trying to give assessments in a in a shorter period of time, then we do have to move to less questions or less dense questions or questions that take less time to produce a response for. So, that's really important. And also, you know, we need to have a defensible assessment of the amount of time that was available to write that exam or quiz. So this is a step that I'm especially working on because in my role as the, you know, decider of many things in the faculty, I need to have a clear evidence of the assessment, the amount of time that would nominally be required for the assessment and the amount of time that was given for the assessment to be completed. So that's, I think, you know, the amount of material and a clear defensible argument about the assessment.

**Jiexing**

Thanks. In your opinion, what are some key factors that would make time barrier free assessments more applicable or successful at an institutional level?

**LillAnne**

Well, as with many things at an institutional level, communication, communication, communication. We need really effective communication between the teaching staff, the students, the administration and the management and just open honest communication about what is going on, how assessments are created, how their time evaluated, how they're conducted, and choices that students have, especially accommodated students like in the classroom versus in an accommodation center.

**Jiexing**

So you talked about in Engineering and Computer Science, we usually have really large classes. Do you see there's anything specific instructors in your faculty do to communicate with students to see whether their needs have been met?

**LillAnne**

Well, I think that the communication with our students, I mean, with each from each of us, instructors in our faculty to our student groups and even to individuals in our classroom is

different for everyone. I mean, what I'm doing in my role as Associate Dean is encouraging communication. So, I respect that each person does things differently. I can tell you what I do with students in my classrooms. I do describe and I also type as I'm preparing for an exam coming up. I will inform the students how I determine how long it takes. I also give students learning outcomes specifically for the exam, and I promise them that I will only test on those learning outcomes so that they can prepare for them. And they can get an idea, they can take a guess of what kind of questions they are. They can even ask me this learning outcome, what kind of question would it be? and I'll point at something in our previous work, a lab we've done, or an assignment question or something that they've seen, or if I've given them, you know, try these kind of questions from your, you know, the back of your textbook if you're doing, sort of like question 4. So, they know. I also do things like give them formula sheets in advance saying this will be on the last page of your exam so they know what I'm testing on they know they can take a guess from my number of learning outcomes, how many questions they'll be, they know what the formula pages are, and they know how I have assessed the timing of the test. So now that's up to them what to understand are they ready yet or not.

**Sarah**

I just wanted to ask if you wanted to speak to this in your course context. You kind of talked about considerations that you take when evaluating the amount of time a test takes. Could you maybe speak to what kind of things you consider when trying to determine that amount of time?

**LillAnne**

Yeah, it's a difficult project, but sure, I've taught for a long time and I, it's been a long time since I've ever made a test that goes too long. So I'm, I'm proud of that. What I do is I get a really good clean version of a test and I do have a guesstimate of the number of questions I can ask per, you know, 30 minute period, 30 minutes probably can't have more than 2 or 3 questions and so 60 minutes can't, you know, twice that. But once I have a really clean version of my test, then I sit down and write it myself. And I time myself. And I mean, first of all, I know the material better than any of the students. I know the questions because I just wrote them. I have a pretty good estimate of the answers. Often I've even written those answers out sometimes, but I sit down and I write it. I time myself from start to finish, and I give the students at least 4 times my time, typically 5 times my time because of all those factors. So, what I need to do now, I mean, that gives the standard sort of fixed time, but now I have to do 1.5 times that, right?

**Sarah**

That's great. Do you see time barrier free assessments becoming a more widespread practice across the university in the future? Why or why not?

**LillAnne**

Yes, I think that we should all consider at least some degree of time barrier free assessments. I mean, I have to admit that we can't, it would be great if we would just have a testing room and a student could start and have 10 hours of time in their space so that they can all of them have really barrier freedom but we can't do that. We're limited on space in many ways. So, I think that the practice of giving the students more time than is actually needed, I think we could spread that quite widely. I think, you know, we have to be somewhat reasonable in the, I mean, we can't, you know, I'm making a plan for us to be able to do 1.5 times the amount of time we need. 2 would mean that we're getting very much shorter assessments and if we're giving them 3 times the amount of time that we evaluate, it's becoming much more difficult. So I think that In the current shape of our schedules, both the in class kind of schedules that we have and the final exam period kind of schedules that we have, the ability to have total freedom of time barriers, maybe not, but to have some freedom from the barriers of time is totally possible. So, I, I've had many conversations with people that would like, you know, the final exam period to have each exam scheduled in 5 or 6 hour time blocks and I'm not sure that we're gonna get that. I'm not sure that we want to. But I think that, you know, we, we want to have a careful assessment. But I do recognize that it's like every academic discipline has a different culture and the culture, I mean, each of those disciplines needs to sort of work through the concept of some sort of barrier free timed exams and some sort of implementation for their own curriculum.

**Jiexing**

Great, thanks so much for having this conversation and sharing your insights with us, LillAnne, and we really appreciate all the perspectives that you bring to our conversation today. Thank you so much.

**LillAnne**

No, no problem. You're welcome.

**Sarah**

Thanks for tuning in. Let's pause our conversation for now, and when we come back, we will chat with our next guest to continue exploring Universal Extended Time and assessments. We

invite you to reflect on how you would adapt Universal Extended Time into your teaching practices. We hope you can join us for our second episode of 'Time is on Your Side' podcast series, where we speak with UVic faculty member, Dr. Breanna Lawrence, who shares her experience with using universal extended time in asynchronous assessments. Make sure to visit our Teach Anywhere website at uvic.ca/teachanywhere, where you can learn more about teaching and learning at UVic. We will talk to you again soon.