

Hello and welcome to You Got This!, a podcast about teaching and learning and -- being in the classroom, pivoting to digital, pivoting back to digital, hybrid learning, who knows?-- for the whole TRU community. I'm your host, Brenna Clarke Gray, Coordinator of Educational Technologies, and this podcast is a project of your friends over at Learning Technology and Innovation. We're housed within Open Learning but we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcú'ecw, where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you. And as you can tell from my intro off the top, I'm not a hundred percent sure what I'm doing with this space this year. We're back. I've got interviews scheduled for the whole of September. We're excited to showcase the good work of this community, but I'm also having a bit of an identity crisis about what this podcast is for. So well, I'm going to make you listen to my musings about it. Let's get into it.

The original purpose of You Got This! was to try to build community across distance. I'm a big fan of podcasts. I think that they create a real sense of intimacy and community. Podcasts meet us in our most private spaces, our most intimate spaces. I listen to podcasts when I'm doing my son's laundry and packing his lunch. I listened to podcasts when I manage to sneak out for an hour by myself, whether that's an hour of running errands or an hour walking, usually the former, going to try to get more into the latter this fall. Podcasts are portable. They're easy to take with you, they don't require a lot of you, and you can pay as much or as little attention to them as you like. Sometimes some of my favourite podcasts are just background noise, I don't even really know what got talked about, but I liked having company while I was out and about doing my thing.

I really wanted to lean into the idea of a podcast last summer because I thought it held within it a lot of value for all of us as a place to share our experiences, as a place to continue to occupy space together, even when we couldn't do so physically. But also, if I'm honest, as a suggestion, an offering, an example to our community, of what a different kind of medium of content delivery could look like. Not everything had to be a video lecture. I don't know if you remember me saying that at all last year.

So the podcast was about community, about setting an example, but here we are on the cusp of heading back to campus. Maybe some of you already are in your offices. I am nervous and holding out, but I'm going, eventually. So as we return to campus and we find our community again in other spaces, do we need this podcast to continue? That's an open question, one I'm definitely interested in hearing feedback about. My thinking right now is that administrative dictates notwithstanding, this semester is going to be pretty tumultuous, even if we manage to stay in the classroom all year. Which I don't know about you, but I look at that Delta variant and what it has in store for us and I'm not sure. But even if we do manage to stay in our classrooms all term, we're going to have a new set of problems to manage, right? Probably large numbers of student absences, probably for longer periods of time than we've been used to before. We've got students who have been exposed to new technologies. Some of them have found those really beneficial for their learning, looking for ways to fold those into our teaching. We're still living through a pandemic. Many of us are still dealing with trauma or post-traumatic responses to the experiences of the last 18 months, and I think we need to be thinking about workload gentleness, care in the same kinds of ways that we were at the height of the first wave.

So I offer the idea then of this podcast no longer being about teaching and learning and pivoting to digital, but now perhaps about teaching and learning and sustaining our community. It's my fear that as numbers predictably rise here in the interior and anywhere else you might be listening, that the kinds of community that we are so excited about getting back to, coffees and conversation, are going to start to dry up. For many of us who live in parts of the world where it's going to get really, really cold, we're looking ahead possibly to another fairly isolated winter season. I'm hoping that we can keep this podcast as a space to continue our conversations. Those of you who listen to the show regularly will know that I

am no stranger to controversy, to questioning, to challenging the practices both within our university here at TRU and across the country, across North America, across the world. I want to continue to have a space where those conversations can be hosted. I really take seriously my role as Coordinator of Educational Technologies. I think that that work has a strong ethical component. I think that I can provide information, context, and education around critical ethical issues. And I want You Got This! to be a space where those conversations can continue to happen too.

I want to be a place where we can unpack our sticky teaching and learning questions together. I want to think about technology. I want to think about it critically, but also remember the possibilities and what it allowed us to do. I know we're all really fatigued from screens, I definitely am very fatigued from the screens, but at the same time, I'm in awe of what we were all able to do last year. I'm in awe of the way I went 18 months without seeing my family, and yet still felt deeply connected to them because I could check in on them every single day on FaceTime. I'm in awe of the way my four year old has adapted to all these kinds of challenges, and he's gotten into technology and screens a lot sooner than I had hoped, but I watch his facility with these tools and I'm genuinely impressed. So I think you all know that I am no uncritical booster of tech tools, but I worry about a reactive response to the return to campus that eschews a lot of the good that we were able to manage with the help of technology. So I guess what I'm offering here is You Got This! as a space for us to continue all of these conversations. We are not post pandemic, my friends, you all know that, and I am nervous about an administrative tone that seems to suggest that we are. And so I pledge to maintain a space on campus, virtually or not, where we can keep having those conversations.

To that end, I want to tell you about one programming offering in particular right now, there are lots coming up this term, and I'm going to link to the LibCal in the show notes so you can see what my colleagues are planning. It's going to be a really good semester, but I'm particularly excited about my own series, which I'm calling Build Back Better. Thanks, Trudeau, I stole your slogan. By the way, can you believe we're doing an election right now? Sorry, I'll leave that at the door, but come on.

The point of Build Back Better is to keep having these pandemical conversations; somewhere where we can look at research, challenge each other's expectations, be critical and forceful about our readings of the situation as it unfolds, ask questions, but also where we can keep pushing for a more just, more sustainable, more fair, more caring, more inclusive future university.

I spent a lot of time this summer giving talks and keynotes and sessions where I talked about this idea of the post-pandemic university. I believe very deeply in the promise and possibilities of universities, even as I recognize and am frustrated by their limitations and the ways in which they fall short of their mandates over and over and over again. But I remain hopeful that everything we learned in the last year and the kinds of inequalities that the pandemic laid bare for all of us will make it so that the university has to embrace this moment of change. And I'm happy to agitate in that direction. Aren't I always?

This is my offering to you. Season two of You Got This! will still bring you interviews with fascinating and interesting people from across campus. And as always, please let me know if there's someone you think I should be talking to, or if you'd like to come on the show, self nominations always welcome. But it's also going to continue to be a place where we agitate for better, where we have big conversations, where we have troublesome, messy, and slippery conversations, and where we challenge ourselves and each other to do better, for our students, for our colleagues, for our institutional structure, for our values, for our community, every single day. So if you're up for it, I'm planning to be here every week for the rest of the semester and the rest of the year to keep having these conversations with you. Because honestly, it's kind of the best part of my job.

So that is it for episode one of the season two. Who saw that coming, by the way? Not me, of You Got This. As always, if you want to write to us, you can email me on bgray@tru.ca, and I'm also on Twitter

@brennacgray. In both cases, that's Gray with an 'A'. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yougotthis.trubox.ca, and of course, you can always comment on individual episodes there.

I'm going to leave you today with a tiny teaching tip, our first tiny teaching tip of the new year, and that is let's keep care at the core. I'm borrowing that phrase from Sherri Spelic, who I had the pleasure of interviewing this summer for another podcast project that I'm hard at work on, a SSHRC-funded peer reviewed project that I'm really excited about, and I will share more details of as it unfolds. Sherri wrote a book called *Care at the Core*, which is a set of essays about teaching and learning and also life. I'll link to it in the show notes, it's really worth your time to read. I want to encourage you to keep care at the core this year because, as we've already said, we are still in this pandemic. I know many of us want to get back to normal so badly, but when I think about how many people normal used to leave behind, I'm less eager. I'm hoping that we can maintain our focus on inclusivity, even as we start to ramp up our content and our classroom practice back to sort of quote-unquote pre-pandemic expectations. Checking in with students, seeing how they're feeling, being open and vulnerable about your own struggles, and sharing resources on campus, where students can go to get help, these are all things that are valuable every semester. We don't need to be in a pandemic to share vulnerable space. Sharing vulnerable space is a critical component of learning. So that's my first tiny teaching tip for all of you, keep care at the core as you finalize your syllabi, as you prep yourself to walk into that classroom on the first day, and as you think through what this semester is going to look like for students who are struggling.

I'm proud to know all of you and I'm proud to have made it through at least this far of these unprecedented times. I really miss precededented times. Do you think we could get some precededented times? I would love a precededented Christmas. Does anybody think that might be possible? Until next time, I'm thinking about you, I'm rooting for you, and more than anything, I know that you got this and I'll talk to you soon. Bye bye.