



Loyola Marymount University
Intercultural Affairs

A Celebration of You

In *A Celebration of You*, we take a moment to highlight students, staff, and faculty who demonstrate Inclusive Excellence. In this spotlight, we aim not only to celebrate your successes, but to foster more personal connections within the LMU community.

The work that we do at Loyola Marymount to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion stems from a fact that we all should understand well: **in providing the space for diverse individuals to engage, contribute, and thrive, we also enhance our community with rich perspectives, creativity, culture, and innovation that would be unseen in a limited population.** In our conversations about bias, cultural competency, and social justice, we must always be sure to combat the “forgotten -ism.” OIA is exploring how to incorporate a Universal Design for Learning in our spaces to ensure that everyone including people with disabilities can feel seen, understood, accepted, and *celebrated*.

We reached out to **Mary Jo Iozzio**, O'Malley Visiting Chair in Bioethics; **Priscilla Levine**, Director of Disability Support Services; **Katherine Pérez**, Director of The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation at Loyola Law School; and **Sue Scheibler**, professor of Film & Television Studies. Each of these individuals have been spearheading initiatives in various ways to ensure that the disabled community is wholly supported.

Mary Jo became a scholar and educator in Disability Ethics in the early 90s. Recognizing that disability discrimination and injustice is akin to racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, she caters her teachings and practice to Disability Ethics. She is currently a professor of Moral Theology at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry. Her passion for the work stems from recognizing the ways that people with disabilities are continually excluded and/or denied basic human life. In her words, Disability Ethics is essential to “level the playing field when it comes to who counts.”

Katherine, who is proud to be a “queer Latina with a psychological disability,” has been an advocate on intersectionality for disabled communities of color. The Coelho Center's focus is on collaborating with the disabled community to cultivate leadership and advocate innovative approaches to advance the lives of people with disabilities. Katherine takes pride in her work to center disabled voices, expand programs, and engage more leaders in the disabled community, such as increasing the Coelho Center's Pipeline for Students with Disabilities.



Priscilla has been at LMU for 14 years, and as director of DSS, she leads programs that aim to allow students to achieve maximum independence while working on their goals at LMU. The DSS office served about 160 students when Priscilla first started and now serves over 750. From this growth emerges further motivation to enhance the program. Priscilla is dedicated to promoting equal access for students with disabilities to have meaningful experiences—not just in classrooms, but in all aspects of university life.



Sue engages her scholarship, research, and teaching practice with consideration of the need for representations of disability in media, society, and higher education. She ties her work into disability studies and advocacy for her students as well as herself—as a person on the spectrum and a faculty member, Sue understands how the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality etc. must also include disability and language. Sue works to not only create a Universal Design for Learning in her teaching, but pushes to expand conscientiousness across the university.

The reality that we all face is that ableism and lack of acknowledgement of people with disabilities is built into our society—in the expectations we put on professionals, students, and colleagues; physical and environmental structures; and the lack of representation in critical decision-making at higher levels of influence. Mary Jo, Priscilla, Katherine, and Sue work each day to push back against those barriers. As we move forward as a society and reduce these barriers, we should be normalizing the following considerations:

Acknowledge that disability is a community, culture, and shared history—it is a diversity group as well as others. When we cultivate safe spaces to promote this culture and community, we pave the way for *disability pride* and *empowerment*. This empowerment is the foundation on which to develop leaders in the community and expand the voice of those with disabilities. It is important not only for non-disabled people to seek this understanding, but also for disabled people—and others who are questioning themselves, such as those with mental illness or “invisible disabilities”—to know that there is a space and culture open to them.

Consider ableism within all work against implicit bias. We improve as individuals when we seek deeper understanding of ourselves and others, and are mindful that we engage with others in respectful ways. Meaning, we work to eradicate stereotypes and harmful attitudes to which we may consciously or unconsciously contribute. This also includes an attention to language: while some people in the disability community prefer person-first language, others embrace their disability as an important identity label. *Remember that the first practice in respect is to ask.*

Disability Inclusion should be prevalent across the board—this includes services to support or accommodate those who need it as well as uplift and represent people with disabilities in all sectors: students, faculty, staff, administration, maintenance, visitors, etc. This includes Universal Design for Learning, which provides multiple means of visibility, of providing information, of expressing, engaging, and encouraging people of all backgrounds to know that their contributions matter.

The Office of Intercultural Affairs celebrates these women for their amazing contributions.