

Universal Design for Learning

Teaching and Learning Strategies to Support Diverse Learning and Life Needs and Enhance Student Success

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotes opportunities to **increase access** and **reduce barriers** to learning to enhance student success for all with diverse learning and/or life needs. Diverse learning needs may include international students, non-proficient readers, introverts, high anxiety, underachieving students, veterans, students with illnesses. Life needs may include working students, commuters, parents, and non-traditional students.

While not a replacement for all accommodations for students with specific disabilities, UDL offers a proactive approach in designing inclusive classrooms. Applying UDL principles may reduce both the need for individual accommodations and the associated stigma. Rather than addressing needs in a reactive approach, UDL is designing instruction and assessment in a proactive, intentional manner to embrace diversity and support teaching for social justice.

UDL origins stem from architectural design principles (Rose, Meyer & Gordon, 2014). As an example, although ramps and curbscuts were designed for individuals with mobility challenges (wheelchairs), the general population has benefited from this design as it enhances ease of movement for those pushing a stroller, a shopping cart, or luggage.

Teaching and Learning Strategies based on three guiding principles (CAST, 2015; National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2014):

1. Provide multiple means of **engagement** by activating students' motivation and interest
 - Offer a range of both group and individual work
 - Engage students through in-class and on-line activities
 - Allow students to select topics within a given assignment based on interest and relevancy
 - Build in opportunities that engage students past experiences, identities, interests, backgrounds and cultures
 - Technology tools- student response systems and multimedia feedback
2. Provide multiple means of **representation** by presenting information in different formats (video, text, audio, image)
 - Offer visual and auditory works (text, video, infographics)
 - Provide clear, detailed directions and instructions with rubrics and examples
 - Study guides and key word and glossary reviews
 - Record lecture material for students to review after class and use for study purposes
 - Technology tools- streaming videos, voice and text overs, virtual conferencing
3. Provide multiple means of **action and expression** by having students demonstrate their learning through multiple assessment formats
 - Offer flexibility and choice in the way in which students demonstrate the learning outcomes (presentations, essays, videos)

- Provide feedback and opportunities for revision
- Increase the amount of “low stakes” assignments
- Have students reflect on their learning, knowledge, skills and dispositions.
- Technology tools- learning management systems, tools to demonstrate understanding

CETL has created a campus-wide UDL Initiative aimed at shifting the institutional culture toward supporting and encouraging UDL principles and practices in the classroom and across the campus to increase student success. The above teaching tips and strategies are samples from our QuickNotes Series on UDL (developed by Amanda Nichols-Hess, Christina Moore, and Judy Ableser).

You can find additional readings on practical ways to apply or advocate for UDL at OU CETL’s website: <https://www.oakland.edu/cetl/ou-teaching-initiatives>.

References:

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- National Center on Universal Design for Learning. (2014, November 11). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines*. Retrieved from http://www.udcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines_theorypractice
- Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

Submitted by:

Judy Ableser, PhD
 Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)
 Oakland University in Rochester, MI