

Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners: The University of Hawaii at Manoa Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education

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INFORMATION BRIEF

The Center on Disability Studies (CDS) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa has received funding for two Higher Education Demonstration Project grants (2005 to 2008 and 2008 to 2011). Information and resources about both projects have been combined under the common title, "Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners." The purpose of this Information Brief is to provide a brief summary of project activities and highlight outcomes and obstacles. CDS staff have produced this Brief to assist others who may be considering developing similar projects and for those who may be able to use the resources developed from these projects.

CDS focused on the Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education because students with disabilities face significant gaps in education services, infrastructure, and opportunities, which create barriers to their success in postsecondary education settings. The literature indicates that many of these gaps are directly linked to a lack of faculty knowledge, skills, and negative attitudes toward working with students with disabilities (Vogel, Leyser, Burgstahler, Sligar & Zecker, 2006; Wilson, Getzel, & Brown 2000). Some of the primary challenges are related to:

1. Gaps in faculty *knowledge* of (a) legal mandates and student and faculty rights and responsibilities, (b) disability services and their relationship to teaching and learning, and (c) the specific impact of disabilities upon instructional decisions within teaching and learning.
2. Deficient faculty *skills* related to (a) effective instructional strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and (b) technology supports for students with disabilities (SWD).
3. Counterproductive *attitudes* of some faculty that reflect their (a) predispositions and assumptions, (b) limited awareness of the needs of SWD, and (c) relative inexperience with SWD and disability law and rights.

For example, in Getzel, Briel, and McManus' (2003) review of 21 projects funded during 1999-2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education, 53% of faculty respondents reported needing additional training regarding legal rights and policy issues in accommodating SWD in classrooms, 40% reported needed training on UDL principles and strategies, and 53% identified a need for resources and materials to increase their understanding and awareness related to educating students with disabilities.

Consideration of the above information informed the development of the Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners. CDS projects focus on Professional Development (PD) and evaluation in the areas of Universal Design for Learning (UDL); Mentoring; Multiculturalism; Assistive Technology (AT); and Rights and Responsibilities. Below is a concise description of each project.

The first funded project, Innovative and Sustainable Teaching Methods and Strategies to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education (IST), worked primarily on evaluation and PD. IST focused on UDL, Mentoring, Assistive Technology, and Rights and Responsibilities including training with faculty at all ten campuses of the University of Hawaii system and many other campuses on the mainland and in the Pacific Rim. One example of an activity from this project which has continued beyond the life of its funding is an online PD training in UDL, AT, Hidden Disabilities, and Rights and Responsibilities. After completing the four modules, a 20 question quiz is available for a self-assessment of understanding of the material. Anyone getting 80% or better on the quiz and answering a few demographic and content questions is eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion for this PD training. Approximately 600 individuals have completed the modules and quiz. This is available at no charge and at all times at www.ist.hawaii.edu/training/

Another activity from this project has been literature reviews on Mentoring, UDL, and Assistive Technology. The Mentoring literature review, "Mentoring Individuals with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education: A Review of the Literature," was published by the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* in Vol. 23, #2, 2010, pp. 98-111. The UDL article, "Universal Design for Instruction in Postsecondary Education: A Systematic Review of Empirically Based Articles," was published in the same journal, in Vol. 24, #1, 2011, pp. 5-15.

As the first project entered its final phases, CDS applied for and received funding for a second project, Students with Disabilities as Diverse Learners (SDDL), which focuses on UDL, Mentoring, and Multiculturalism via training and evaluation. SDDL, like IST, has offered face-to-face trainings and Capacity-Building Institutes. In addition, SDDL has added webinars to the PD training, archived at www.ist.hawaii.edu/webinars/. SDDL also includes a faculty study, in which teaching faculty participate in the PD and in class observations, both of which are designed to assess and improve the quality of the PD and its impact.

The specific activities completed for both projects are too numerous to list in this Brief. However, as of May 2011, outcomes from the two projects include over 2,500 people attending all trainings. Over 40 trainings and 13 webinars have been provided to attendees in the University of Hawaii system, nationwide, and in the Pacific Rim. Training, outreach, and dissemination have reached individuals in 46 states and Washington, D.C.; four U.S. territories and 25 countries.

Faculty development personnel at all 10 UH campuses have attended trainings and several have assisted in or led their own trainings. There are currently over 35 faculty at UH participating in a faculty study assessing the Professional Development series and its impact on students. Faculty trained in project activities have incorporated elements of the training into their classroom teaching, syllabi, goals, materials, strategies, and assessments. As one example, several faculty have added a UDL access statement to their syllabi, which includes reference to Disability Students Services offices, but goes beyond that to UDL for all students. For example: The instructor is committed to making this course fully accessible to all students, including modeling the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

The project Web site combines information from the two projects. The URL is <http://www.ist.hawaii.edu>. This site includes numerous resources such as informational resources, briefs, Facts in a Flash for Faculty, PowerPoints, and Toolkits. As of this writing, 9,103 unique visitors have accessed the site, including 6,487 first time visitors.

While CDS considers both projects to be successful, each project encountered areas that did not move as smoothly as anticipated. In IST, facilitating, editing, and publishing the literature reviews took longer than planned. Submissions to journals were completed, but the publishing process took longer than anticipated. In SDDL, developing training

curricular modules, of the three SDDL topics-Universal Design for Learning, Multiculturalism, and Mentoring-which is ongoing, has been a slower process than expected. Recently, PowerPoint versions of each of these modules were uploaded at www.ist.hawaii.edu/modules/.

We also had more difficulty recruiting faculty for the SDDL faculty study than anticipated. Staff believe this had to do with the budget crises at the University of Hawaii, thus affecting faculty morale, during the first year of recruitment. Faculty participants have increased since that time and continue to grow. Despite these difficulties both projects have delivered the stated objectives. SDDL has also addressed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators, which are a requirement of the **Higher Education Demonstration Project** grant process, as discussed below.

The first SDDL GPRA indicator is that students with disabilities will pass at the same rate or 10% higher than other students. One hundred percent of students with disabilities in classes of faculty participating in the faculty study passed their respective courses. Of all students assessed there was a 98.7% pass rate.

The second GPRA indicator for SDDL is that 95% of faculty trained in project activities will incorporate elements of the training into their classroom teaching 1 and 12 months after the PD training. Faculty members indicated five areas of change following the PD training: Syllabus, goals, materials, strategies, and assessments.

While the numbers are meaningful, so are anecdotes and this Brief concludes with an observation from one faculty participant who wrote:

I had no self identified students with disabilities in my class. No accommodations were asked for. But the students scored very high this semester, higher than usual. I feel comfortable crediting UDL for the generally strong class performance, and so may you!

References

- Brown, S. E., Takahashi, K., & Roberts, K. D. (2010). Mentoring individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education: A review of the literature. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 23(2), 98-111.
- Roberts, K. D., Park, H., Brown, S., & Cook, B. (2011). Universal Design for Instruction in postsecondary education: A systematic review of empirically based articles. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 24(1), 5-15.