

# A Needs Assessment: What and How to Teach Postsecondary Faculty and Staff about the Needs of and Strategies for Students with Disabilities

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## TEACHING ALL STUDENTS, REACHING ALL LEARNERS:

A combination of 2 projects:

*Innovative and Sustainable Teaching Methods and Strategies to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education (IST) and Students with Disabilities as Diverse Learners (SDDL)*

- **SDDL** is a 3-year research and training project, funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. Funding began in October 2008, building on IST, which emphasized training strategies.
- **Project Purposes:** To improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes of college faculty and staff in providing a quality higher education to students with disabilities to enhance retention and matriculation of Students with Disabilities (SWD) in postsecondary education.
- **Fact 1 (as of January 2009):** Trained 1,581 individuals in the UH system and nationally through Professional Development (PD) programs since 2005.
- **Fact 2 (as of January 2009):** Distributed PD materials on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Needs and Rights of Students with Disabilities, Mentoring, and Assistive Technology (AT) to 589 individuals nationally and internationally.

## Needs Assessment

- **Needs Assessment Purpose:** To improve the current PD modules on UDL and Mentoring and develop a new teaching module on Multiculturalism so as to better address the needs of project stakeholders.
- **Stakeholders:** college faculty, staff, researcher, and students with and without disabilities.
  - Q1) What content should be in the PD modules?
  - Q2) What is the relative importance of the content selected for the PD modules?
  - Q3) Is there a difference in the selection and the relative importance of the PD content by previous PD experience on particular content?
  - Q4) What are effective PD delivery methods?
  - Q5) What are effective options for scheduling PD?
  - Q6) What might encourage more faculty and staff to participate in the PD?

## Needs Assessment Survey

- **Distribution:** At a project advisory group meeting with stakeholders & via the UH College of Education and other project listservs.
- **Respondents:**
  - 51 individuals from 24 departments in five higher education institutions.
  - 43.1%-faculty members; 11.8% -staff from Disability Student Service offices; and 11.8% - SWD (See Table 1).
  - About half received PD on the topics and evaluated the PD program as quite useful.
  - There was a statistically significant difference at .01 level between those who did and did not have PD in the perception of their expertise. (See Table 2)

Table 1. Number of the Respondents by School Level and Position

	University	Community Colleges	Total
Faculty/Instructor	19	7	26
Staff from Disability Student Service Offices	2	4	6
Faculty & Staff	2	3	5
Researchers	5	0	5
Students without Disabilities	3	0	3
Students with Disabilities	2	4	6
Total	33	18	51

Table 2. Characteristics of the Respondents

	Universal Design for Learning	Multi-culturalism	Mentoring	Needs & Rights of SWD
Whether One Received PD	52.9% of the Respondents	56.9%	41.2%	62.7%
Usefulness of PD One Received	Quite Useful	Quite Useful	Quite Useful	Quite Useful
Perception of Expertise by Trainees	Better than Average	Better than Average	Better than Average	Better than Average
Perception of Expertise by Non-Trainees	Well Below Average	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average
Trainees vs. Non-Trainees in Perceived Expertise	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	Significant Difference

## Findings

Table 3. Top 5 Contents for Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Order of Importance	Content of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
1	UDL Instructional Methods
2	UDL Instructional Materials
3	Why UDL is Important (Diversity of Background, Strengths, Challenges)
4	Principles of UDL
5	UDL in Distance Education

Table 4. Top 5 Contents for Multiculturalism

Order of Importance	Content of Multiculturalism
1	Multicultural Teaching Methodologies
2	Needs of Students with Disabilities from Diverse Backgrounds
3	Curriculum Design with Multicultural Perspectives
4	Needs of Students from Diverse Backgrounds
5	Multicultural Instructional Materials

Table 5. Top 5 Contents for Mentoring

Order of Importance	Content of Mentoring
1	Mentoring Strategies
2	Mentoring Models
3	Impact of Mentoring
4	Challenges in Mentoring
5	Definition of Mentoring

Table 6. Top 5 Contents for Needs and Rights of Students with Disabilities

Order of Importance	Content of Needs and Rights of Students with Disabilities
1	Strategies for Faculty and Staff
2	Understanding the Diverse Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities in Your Class
3	Reasonable Accommodations
4	Educational Barriers and Supports
5	Assumptions and Attitudes toward Students with Disabilities

- **No statistically significant difference** was found in the selection of and perceived relative importance of content between those who did and did not have the PD in the content.

## An Effective Method of PD

- Case studies (21.6%)
- Lecture (19.6%)
- Problem-solving (15.7%)
- Group discussion (9.8%)
- Panel discussion with guest (9.8%)

## An Effective Schedule for PD

- Combination of one day on-line training and one day on-site workshop (53.4%)
- Three day workshop during vacation (23.8%)
- On-line training (12.6%)
- Saturday workshop for three consecutive weeks during a semester (10.2%)

## How to Encourage More Faculty and Staff to Participate in the PD

- More & better advertisement
- Approach through departments & networking
- More relevant, personalized, interesting content of the PD
- More accessible PD
- Assurance of continued support
- Useful materials
- Incentives
- Making the PD mandatory