

# **Supporting Students with Diverse Learning Needs in Postsecondary Education Session I:**

## **Useful Strategies for Instructors**

**Lilly West 2008**

**Robert A. Stodden, Ph.D.**

**Kelly D. Roberts, Ph.D.**

**National Center on Secondary Education and Transition  
Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa**



# Areas of Discussion:

- A. Diversity Defined & Explored
- B. Signs of Positive Growth & Progress
- C. Areas of Needed Improvement
- D. What do we Know about Postsecondary Education
- E. Implications for Postsecondary Education Faculty
- F. Addressing the Needs through Universal Design for Learning

# Climate Assessment

# A. Diversity Defined

- The differences, similarities, and related tensions that exist in any mixture....Diversity is not limited to issues of race and gender, nor is it confined to the workforce (Thomas, 2006)
- The fact or quality of being diverse; difference (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)
- All of the ways in which people are different (Bucher, 2000)

# A. Diversity Defined - Elements of Diversity

- Race
- Age
- Physical characteristics
- Sexual orientation
- Education
- Gender
- Language
- Disability
- Economic Status
- Profession
- Religion

# A. Diversity Defined - Disability

–An individual is considered to have a disability if:

- S/he has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,
- S/he has a record of such an impairment, or
- S/he is regarded as having such an impairment

# A. Diversity Defined & Explored

## Disability vs. Diversity

See Handout

PAUSE

## B. Signs of Positive Growth & Progress

- Increased numbers of youth with disabilities graduating high school with a diploma
- Decreased numbers of youth with disabilities dropping out of high school
- Numbers of college freshmen with a disability have tripled over the past twenty years
- Increased numbers of students with disabilities persist in attaining a degree or credential

## B. Signs of Positive Growth & Progress

- Increasing numbers of postsecondary education settings enroll students with disabilities
- Majority of postsecondary education institutions offer a minimum level of disability supports
- Higher employment rates are correlated with younger ages for persons with disabilities
- A postsecondary education degree serves as an equalizer for persons with disabilities in employment settings

# C. Areas of Needed Outcome Improvement

- Youth with disabilities are less likely to complete a rigorous secondary school curriculum
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to graduate with a diploma
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to initiate postsecondary education
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to complete postsecondary education/will take longer

## C. Areas of Needed Outcome Improvement

- Youth with disabilities are less likely to be employed
- Youth with disabilities are less likely to earn as much as peers without a disability
- Youth with disability are less likely to maintain a comparable quality of life to their peers

# D. What Do We Know About Postsecondary Education?

- Type and range of educational support offered varies significantly from one institution to the next
- Supports provided are not linked to instruction or learning
- Students are responsible for describing their disability needs and advocating for necessary supports
- Supports are not provided in an individualized way

# D. What Do We Know About Postsecondary Education?

- Support provision is linked to access rather than learning success or program completion
- Faculty expectations and awareness of disability and cultural diversity are low
- Little assistance with coordination of related supports and services required to function in the role of student.
- Technology can be an equalizer in postsecondary education settings

# E. Implications for Postsecondary Education

- Focus upon preparing youth with the skills & behaviors needed to access, retain, & succeed in postsecondary education settings
  - **Self-determination & advocacy skills**
  - **Academic process & content skills**
  - **Use of accommodations & supports to learn**
  - **Management & coordination of skills & strategies**

# E. Implications for Postsecondary Education

- Focus upon building a transition pathway of connecting supports & services
  1. Seamless pathway
  2. Connecting linkages (school, family, post-school)
  3. Supportive network of persons & agencies
  4. Solution focused, interagency coordination

F. Addressing the Needs  
through  
Universal Design for Learning

## F. Universal Design for Learning/Instruction

Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.” (DO-IT, [www.washington.edu/doit](http://www.washington.edu/doit))

## F. Universal Design

Architectural concept that refers to designing a space to take into consideration the needs of all potential users of that space

# F. Universal Design for Learning

“[Universal Design for Learning] UDL provides a blueprint for creating flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments that accommodate learner differences.

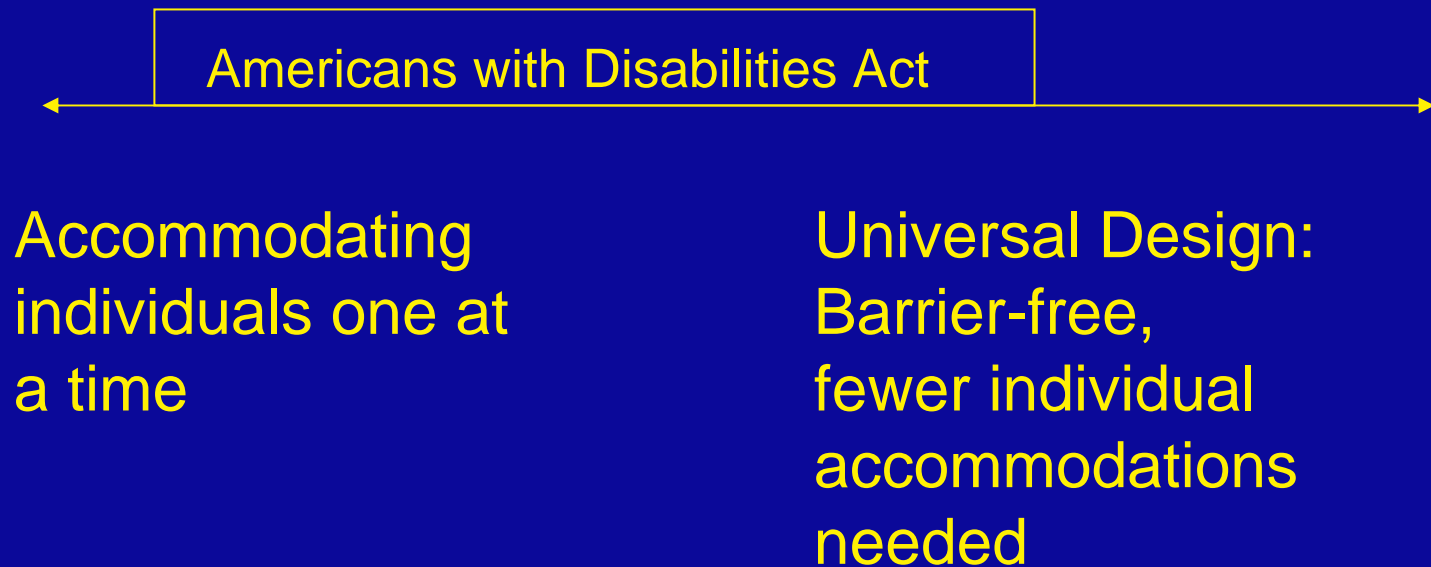
‘Universal’ does not imply a single optimal solution for everyone. Instead, it is meant to underscore the need for multiple approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners.”

(CAST, [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org))

# Curb-Cuts



# Universal Design Continuum



# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Principles of UDL

- Multiple means of representation
- Multiple means of expression
- Multiple means of engagement

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Why UDL is Important

- Learners have diverse backgrounds.
- Learners have diverse strengths.
- Learners have diverse challenges.

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Diversity of Background Ethnicity/culture

- Language
- Socioeconomic status
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Educational background and experiences

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Diversity of Strengths

- Learning through seeing
- Learning through hearing
- Learning through touching and doing

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Diversity of Challenges

- Lack of interest or engagement
- Returning/age
- Learning disabilities
- Sensory and physical disabilities
- Psychiatric disabilities
- Language barriers

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## How is UDL Applied in Postsecondary Settings?

- Diversification of instructional method
- Diversification of instructional materials
- Application of technology

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Instructional Methods

- Direct
- Indirect
- Experiential
- Independent
- Interactive

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Instructional Materials

- Power Points
- Audio and Visual
- Texts and Notes
- Group Work and Workshops

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Power Points

- Give structure to a presentation
- Integrate images as appropriate
- Less is more

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Audio and Visual

- Represent language concepts visually
- Include audio and video recordings

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Texts and Notes

- Provide alternative texts that provide the same information
- Post notes online

# F. Universal Design for Learning

## Group Work and Workshops

- Provide review sessions and discussion groups
- Provide scaffolding