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
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)
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)
Curb-Cuts
Universal Design Continuum

Accommodating individuals one at a time

Universal Design: Barrier-free, fewer individual accommodations needed

Americans with Disabilities Act
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