

BRIEF 3: UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS

The purpose of this brief is to describe the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in postsecondary settings and to suggest strategies faculty can employ in constructing their courses. Originally conceived as an architectural principle, Universal Design in the postsecondary setting “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). An important aspect of UDL is for the learner to “own” the learning process so they are motivated to learn. A self-assessment of needs will help the learner establish where he or she lacks critical knowledge.

Principles of UDL

Multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, multiple means of engagement.

Why is UDL Important?

Learners have diverse backgrounds, strengths and challenges.

Backgrounds – Ethnicity/culture, language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, educational background and experiences

Strengths – Learning through seeing, hearing, touch

Challenges – Lack of interest or engagement, returning/age, learning disabilities, sensory and physical disabilities, psychiatric disabilities

How is UDL Applied in Postsecondary Settings?

Diversification of Instructional Method

Direct, indirect, experiential, independent, and interactive

Diversification of Instructional Materials

PowerPoint, audio and visual, texts, and notes, group work and workshops.

PowerPoint – Use to give structure to a presentation, integrate images wherever possible, less is more

Audio and Visual – Represent language concepts visually, include audio and video recordings

Texts and Notes – Provide alternative texts that contain the same information, post instructor and student notes online

Group Work and Workshops – Provide review sessions and discussion groups, provide scaffolding

Application of Technology

Electronic note-taking, encouragement, accessibility, online materials.

Please feel free to distribute with the following acknowledgement: Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, HI.

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