



National Capacity Building Institute

A post-conference event of the 2009 Pacific Rim Conference on Disability

Addressing Diversity and Disability in the Postsecondary Classroom:
Universal Design and Beyond

When & Where:

Wednesday, May 6, 2009
Ala Moana Hotel – Honolulu, Hawai'i
9:00am-4:00pm

Purpose:

To increase the knowledge and skills of attendees who have an interest in improving postsecondary instruction to learners from diverse backgrounds, including learners with disabilities.

Focus:

The integration of Universal Design for Instruction, Mentoring, and Multicultural Awareness.

Proceedings

Students with Disabilities As Diverse Learners

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**National Capacity Building Institute
Addressing Diversity and Disability in the Postsecondary Classroom:
Universal Design and Beyond**

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Proceedings

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Introduction

Aloha:

Following are the proceedings for the National Capacity Building Institute, *Addressing Diversity and Disability in the Postsecondary Classroom: Universal Design and Beyond* held in Honolulu, Hawai'i in May, 2009. The purpose of the CBI was to share our experiences about ensuring access to the postsecondary classroom for all learners. In a post-institute survey of participants, **92% of participants indicated that the CBI was “useful” or “very useful.”**

The program included presentations from leading experts in the field, informal talk-story sessions, and hands-on activities. Topics included multiculturalism and cultural brokering, mentoring, and Universal Design for Learning. Wrote one participant:

“[The CBI] was hands-on, relevant, yet data-driven. The presenters were well-paced and [discussed] things that can be carried over to various parts of the Pacific.”

Another participant commented:

“[Before the CBI] I knew there were links [between multiculturalism, mentoring and UDL] but I was not able to visualize them. Now I can honestly present the positive aspects of accessibility showing these links.”

And finally:

“[The CBI] gives me hope for our students with disabilities whose dream is to access postsecondary education.”

Warm Regards,

Faculty and Staff of the *Students with Disabilities as Diverse Learners Project*
Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Robert Stodden, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

Kelly Roberts, Ph.D., Project Director

Steven Brown, Ph.D., Project Coordinator

Megan Conway, Ph.D., Training Coordinator

Agenda

National Capacity Building Institute Addressing Diversity and Disability in the Postsecondary Classroom: Universal Design and Beyond

Wednesday, May 6, 2009
Ala Moana Hotel – Honolulu, Hawai‘i
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Time	Activity/Topic	Speaker
8:30-9:00	Registration & Breakfast	
9:00-9:30	Introductions	
9:30-10:30	Multiculturalism & Cultural Brokering	Paula Sotnik
10:30-11:00	Interactive Activity	
11:00-12:00	Mentoring	Steven Brown, Adam Tanners, Madeline Harcourt, Kathleen Kane, Linda Laine, Joakim Peter
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-1:15	Laugh!	Gerald Yahata, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
1:15-2:15	Universal Design for Learning	Bryan Cook & Emiliano Ayala
2:15-3:15	UDL Hands-On Activity	
3:15-4:00	Synthesis & Evaluation	Megan Conway

Synthesis

Megan Conway, Ph.D., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Dr. Conway's presentation summarized the topical areas of the institute and demonstrated how they are interrelated. In relation to multiculturalism, it is imperative postsecondary educators learn to recognize the impact of diverse identities on students' behavior. To meet the challenge that diversity presents, educators can employ cultural brokering. Cultural brokering is the act of bridging together persons of different cultural systems.

One strategy a cultural broker can use is mentoring. It provides for real-life learning, teaching, and networking via a one-to-one relationship. Mentoring especially assists those from diverse backgrounds who may face discrimination and isolation in academic and work settings. In addition, students with disabilities can serve as mentors to faculty about their expertise regarding their lives and how disability and postsecondary education intersect.

Another successful strategy is through the instructional strategy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL recognizes that learning and teaching takes place in an environment of diverse student strengths and challenges. The curriculum must balance rigor with the need for flexibility and diversity of instructional methods and materials. There are specific strategies an educator can use to increase classroom inclusiveness.

Moreover, diversity awareness (opens doors), mentoring (provides support), and UDL (ensures access) are all individually important; the most powerful strategy is using them all together.

Dr. Conway requested informal feedback of the CBI and formal feedback through a questionnaire/evaluation.

Multiculturalism

Diversity and Disability in the Postsecondary Classroom: Universal Design and Beyond Innovative & Sustainable Teaching Methods and Strategies

Paula Sotnik, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, Boston

The reality is that a person rarely has a single identity, but rather an individual is a member of multiple, diverse communities. Identity can be affected by environmental or social circumstances (e.g., people with disabilities, homelessness, low socioeconomic status, low literacy, language barriers, veterans), as reflected by our complex lives. Cultural brokering is an effective strategy to meet the challenges of diversity in academic and work environments. According to Jezewski and Sotnik (2001), cultural brokering is, “The act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural systems to reduce conflict or produce change.” A cultural broker can, “Function as a ‘cultural bridge’ between diverse communities and mainstream service systems, understand how a diverse community’s culture differs from the mainstream service system’s culture, explain nuance and values of one culture to the other culture, and tolerate different views, values, and beliefs.”

Sotnik presented the Culture Brokering Model, as adapted from Jezewski (1995). In her presentation, she applied the model as adapted for a rehabilitation scenario. The model includes intervening conditions that precede any stages; Stage 1 (Perception), Stage 2 (Intervention), and Stage 3 (Outcome). The intervening conditions might include issues such as type of disability, communication, age, cultural background, gender, power/powerlessness, economics, politics, stigma, etc. Stage 1 involves the perception of need for cultural brokering. Problems at this stage could be barriers to access and utilization, and breakdowns in connections. Stage 2 focuses on establishing trust and rapport, and maintaining connections. Intervention strategies can occur via advocating, negotiating, sensitizing, networking, innovating, medicating. In Stage 3, a successful resolution involves establishing connections between consumers and the rehabilitation system and maintaining facilitation across systems. A lack of resolution at this stage results in continued breakdown (feedback loop).

Activity: As part of her presentation, Sotnik had the conference attendees engage in a collaborative activity, “An Exercise in Self-Awareness.” Sotnik cites the following rationale for her activity:

“It is important to develop self-awareness of our own culture and other influences to get a sense of similarities, differences and range of experiences as compared to individuals we work with. As effective culture brokers, we can then explore how this might influence our perception of and interaction with others. Through knowledge of our own values, beliefs and biases, we can become perceptive of the many variables that should be considered when identifying intervening conditions in culture brokering.”

The activity focused on a sampling of individual characteristics (physical appearance, ethnicity, SES, gender, religion) that were chosen to facilitate an analysis and discussion of our own culture. Dr. Sotnik also engaged participants by placing a variety of objects on each table for people to manipulate while they listened, such as balls, blocks, and markers. Because everyone learns differently, some people who are tactile learners may find it easier to pay attention if they have something to occupy their hands.

Mentoring

Steven E. Brown, Ph.D., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Adam Tanners, Madeline Harcourt, Kathleen Kane, Linda Laine, Joakim Peter

According to Brown, one definition of mentoring is:

“[A] dynamic, reciprocal, long-term formal, or informal, relationship that focuses on personal and/or professional development. A mentor is a sounding board and guide. Mentors provide perspective, resources, and ask thought-provoking questions. In the ideal mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees, or protégés, learn from and teach each other” (Foster Heckman, Brown, & Roberts [2007]).

In his presentation, Brown discussed three types of mentoring. One-on-one mentoring involves an activity where the mentor and mentee are in direct contact. Some examples include face-to-face-meetings, telephone conversations, e-mail, letters, and text messaging. In group mentoring, more the one mentee works concurrently with a mentor (e.g., community-based, electronic mentoring). Peer mentoring involves two people of equal status and in similar situations, where one will serve as a mentor to the other. Where the mentoring takes place is not as important as what takes place during the mentoring. Brown concluded with a visual representation of the Mentoring Model, downloadable at <http://www.ist.hawaii.edu/mpp/model/> .

Examples from the “Talk Story” Session:

Steven E. Brown (Mentor)/Joakim (“JoJo”) Peter (Mentee)

Peter met Brown in a hospital where both were in wheelchairs. A conversation ensued because of that commonality. Peter credits Brown with encouraging him to “get started” so to speak. Brown has been a mentor to Peter in many ways, but especially in disability advocacy. He described Brown’s strength in independent living and that Brown has been an advocate since the early 1980s. Peter has called on Brown many times over their 5-6 year relationship for assistance and feels as if listening to Brown’s experiences in how to effect policy changes have been a big help.

Peter returned to his native Micronesia after graduate school at UH and is currently a director of a college campus. He stated that it is very hard because he is the only person in a wheelchair. Therefore, there are neither peers, nor role models available to him locally.

One of the main challenges in Brown and Peter continuing their mentor/mentee relationship is physical. They seldom see each other, but utilize technology such as Skype to maintain contact. Peter looks forward to personal and professional visits to Hawai‘i in order to catch up and unload on things because they tend to build up at home. Peter commented that he had learned a lot from Brown, while Brown stated he learned from his mentee as well, particularly about life with a disability in a Pacific, collectivist culture.

Kathleen Kane (Mentor)/Madeline Harcourt (Mentee)

Harcourt entered UH as a non-traditional, first-generation college student at 37 in 1989. She chose journalism as her major (was a newspaper editor previously) and a minor in political science. Harcourt first met Kane through a women in politics course. Kane was a TA at the political science department. Harcourt

was struggling with her journalism classes, but enjoyed Kane's classes and eventually change her major to political science.

Kane described her relationship with Harcourt from 1989 – 1992 as that of student-teacher, but neither had referred to it as a mentor/mentee at the time. Kane remembered Harcourt saying that when she entered her class, she felt as if she were in a place where she could learn, grow, and excel. Kane shared that she thought of Harcourt as a holistic thinker, always forward-thinking and asking challenging questions. In 1992, Harcourt was diagnosed with a learning disability. She stated that Kane was supportive throughout the diagnosis and her seeking admission to graduate school.

Harcourt recounted struggling with her identity upon entering grad school and described one professor who did not think that she had a learning disability. In 1993, Harcourt earned her Master's degree in political science and went on to international service and the YWCA. She applied to the Exceptionalities Ph.D. program and was accepted approximately 10 years after earning her Master's. Her main area of interest was adults with learning disabilities. As part of her Ph.D. program, Harcourt worked with Kane to develop a training program (disability-related access) at the Center for Teaching Excellence, which is mandatory for teaching assistants and is open to faculty. Harcourt will be teaching an honors course in Fall, 2009.

In reflecting on the mentor-mentee relationship, Harcourt noted that it started out formal and academic when Kane was Harcourt's TA, then she left academia to work in the community, and when she returned for her Ph.D. the relationship had changed somewhat, but it felt as if "it was like it was yesterday." Kane stated that she was thankful for her mentoring relationship with Harcourt because she would not know so many things about mentoring and disability if it were not for her.

UDL Novice Group

An Introduction to Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

Emiliano C. Ayala, Ph.D., Sonoma State University

Ayala's presentation began with the origin of the UD concept from architecture, whereby the physical environment and products are intentionally built to provide access to the greatest number of people possible. The field of education adapted this concept to apply to learning environments (UDL) in order to make the curriculum the most accessible to the most students. "UDL is the proactive design of our courses to ensure that they are educationally accessible regardless of learning style, physical or sensory abilities." Ayala used an example involving Stephen Hawking taking a paper-and-pencil multiple-choice test to ask, "Educationally, does one size fit all." Clearly, Hawking's extraordinary knowledge of physics would not be evident because he could not master that one form of expression.

Furthermore, there are certain assumptions about effective instruction in postsecondary environments. These assumptions are: (1) the role of a university faculty member is to teach all students as effectively as possible – not weed out the unqualified, (2) students have different "learning style" preferences, (3) a proactive approach to designing instruction to meet a diverse student body is preferable to making exceptions case-by-case (accommodations), and (4) faculty want students to learn the course content in a meaningful way.

Current brain research indicates three distinct yet interrelated learning networks (Rose, Meyer, Hitchcock, 2005): Recognition Learning Networks (how we make sense of presented information); Affective Learning Networks (how motivation & participation impacts learning), and Strategic Learning Networks (how we demonstrate our learning or mastery). In applying this information to a specific course, faculty can offer various methods to: (1) REPRESENT (show) essential course concepts in support of recognition learning networks, (2) encourage student ENGAGEMENT (participate) in support of affective learning networks, and (3) EXPRESS (demonstrate) what they have learned through strategic learning networks.

Ayala provided three examples of implementing UDL principles in a course – Business Accounting (representation), Organic Chemistry (engagement), and Introduction to Music (expression). As for representation, knowing that students access information in a variety of formats (including auditory, visual and tactile), educators can vary how they express essential course content. Engagement involves knowing that active participation is key to learning and educators should adopt various ways that students can actively participate in class.

The benefits of UDL for faculty include: (1) the ability to reach a diverse student population without necessarily modifying your course requirements or academic expectations, (2) tools to consider how and what you teach in a structured and systematic manner, and (3) an opportunity to critically examine your teaching effectiveness in light of the reappointment, tenure and promotion process. In addition, students many benefits when instructors implement UDL principles such as: (a) greater access to course content, (b) greater opportunities for achievement, and (c) greater satisfaction with the learning process.

Ayala concluded with the results of a study conducted by Ensuring Access Through Collaboration and Technology (ENACT), which showed nine effective strategies for implementing UDL into courses. This study also discussed faculty perceptions of UDL training and its impact on their instructional methods.

Activity:

Build the Article

- a. Form small groups (5 to 7 people) and have them quickly read the UDL fact sheet (http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/Universal_Design.htm)
- b. Groups separately brainstorm key words which capture the essence of the article
- c. Groups separately come to a consensus on 10 key words
- d. Groups separately use wooden blocks to literally build the article as a structure
- e. Groups share with everyone

UDL Advanced Group

Universal Design for Instruction: Practical Techniques for Postsecondary Education

Bryan Cook, Ph.D., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Cook discussed the need for UDL, as the college student body is becoming increasingly more diverse. He cited these statistics:

- 40% age 25 or older
- 31% racial/ethnic minorities
- 34% attending college part-time
- 20% increase in international students from 1998 – 2004
- Students with disabilities 2.3% in 1978, 9.8% in 1998

In relation to students with disabilities an educator may or may not know who these students are, thus waiting for self-disclosure can limit teaching opportunities. UDL is a retention tool, as it causes a shift in pedagogy from delivering instruction to promoting learning.

Cook spent several slides discussing the origins of UDL in architecture (UD) and defining the term, which were similar to Ayala's presentation. According to Cook (as cited in Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2001), the major principles of UDL are:

1. Equitable use (instruction is identical whenever possible, equivalent when not);
2. Flexibility in use (accommodates wide range of abilities and provides choice in methods);
3. Simple and intuitive (instruction is straightforward and predictable);
4. Perceptible information (necessary information is communicated effectively);
5. Tolerance for error (instruction anticipates speed of learning and necessary skills);
6. Low physical effort (physical activities should be minimized when possible);
7. Size and space for approach and use (consider the appropriate size and space for instructional method and activities);
8. Community of learners (academic environment promotes interaction and communication), and
9. Instructional climate (welcoming and inclusive, instructor has high expectations for all learners).

He explained that the guiding principles could be viewed also in terms of representation, engagement, and expression.

Currently, there is no experimental research to support the effectiveness of UDL in higher education. However, research does support some methods associated with UDL. For example, guided notes are an effective tool to make lectures (the most dominant type of instruction) more accessible to all learners. Guided notes are handouts that guide students through a lecture. The notes help students identify the most important course content. An instructor deletes key facts, concepts, and relationships from the lecture outline for students to complete during the lecture. The remaining information structures and contextualizes the notes for students. Cook included an example of guided notes in his presentation to which the attendees could refer. Cook cited the rationale of guided notes as: (1) being consistent with UDL principles, (2) improving the accuracy of notes, (3) freeing students from excessive writing, and (4) actively involving students in constructing notes and following lectures.

Research also supports the use of the pause procedure. Cook described the procedure as:

“Short (e.g., 2-minute), periodic breaks to review notes and discuss contents. [The instructor] pauses at natural breaks, app[roximately] every 15 m[inute]s. The pauses can be an independent review of notes and/or a short writing assignment or group (e.g., dyad) discussion of notes. [An instructor should] include time for unresolved questions and set the timer for the end of [the break].”

According to Cook, the rationale for the pause procedure involves: (1) being consistent with UDL principles, increasing the accuracy of notes, (3) allowing students to reflect, integrate, and ask questions, and (4) providing students and instructors with breaks during the lecture.

Finally, the use of graphic organizers is an effective instructional method. These organizers are visual and graphic displays that depict relationships in course content. Cook presented 4 examples of organizers in his presentation. Organizers include Venn diagrams, concept/spider/story maps, flowcharts, hierarchies, etc. The rationale for graphic organizers includes: (1) being consistent with UDL principles, (2) presenting relationships between concepts visually and clearly, and (3) facilitating “non-memorization” study strategies.

Contact Information and Thanks

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