**Fast Facts for Faculty**

**Universal Design for Learning**

**Elements of Good Teaching**

**Definition**

Universal design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting. Universal design provides equal access to learning, not simply equal access to information. Universal Design allows the student to control the method of accessing information while the teacher monitors the learning process and initiates beneficial methods.

Although this design enables the student to be self-sufficient, the teacher is responsible for imparting knowledge and facilitating the learning process. It should be noted that Universal Design does not remove academic challenges; it removes barriers to access.

**Who Benefits**

* Students who speak English as a second language
* International students
* Older students
* Students with disabilities
* All students

**Principles**

(compiled from The University of Minnesota’s Curriculum Transformation and Disability grant)

* Identify the essential course content
* Clearly express the essential content and any feedback given to the student
* Integrate natural supports for learning *(i.e. using resources already found in the environment such as a study buddy)*.
* Use a variety of instructional methods when presenting material
* Allow for multiple methods of demonstrating understanding of essential course content
* Use technology to increase accessibility
* Invite students to meet/contact the course instructor with any questions/concerns

**Common Teaching Methods**

Strengths Limitations Preparation

Lecture • Ensures dissemination • Little, if any, student • Information to be

of specific facts participation learned needs to be

• Class size is not • Only learn from clearly indicated

an issue one source • Course instructor should

allot adequate time for

content to be presented

Class • Information and ideas • Only practical with • Course instructor needs

Discussion drawn from multiple small classroom to guide discussion

people • Some students will and keep group

• Student’s attention monopolize the from going "off-track"

easily maintained conversation while • Discussion

others will not topics/questions

engage in discussion should be prepared

before class

Role Playing • Can be very impactful • Students may feel • Course instructor

• Students are able to "put on the spot" needs to identify

test concepts and • Only practical for rules, situation and

techniques presented small classroom roles

in class

Guest • Provides a real-life • Quality of the • Identify and schedule

Speaker example speaker may be poor appropriate speakers

• Gives students • Provide introduction

contacts in the field and background of

speaker

Panel of • Allows for multiple • Speakers may be • Identify and schedule

Experts expert opinions and poor quality experts

ideas on a topic • Competition among • Provide introduction

• May capture more experts and background

students’ attention of experts

Videos\* • Allows for alternate • Students do not have • ~~Required to operate~~

means of representation to actively participate ~~equipment~~

• Keeps students’ • Unable to control • Prepare questions for

attention what students learn discussion after video from video

\*To ensure accessibility and usability, it is recommended that all videos be captioned.

**Implementation**

* Put course content **on-line** allowing students to "pick up" material that might have been missed in lecture
* Use **peer mentoring**, **group discussions**, and **cooperative learning** situations rather than strictly lecturing
* Using **guided notes** enables students to listen for essential concepts without copying notes off of overhead
* Update course materials based on current events and student demands
* Provide a **comprehensive syllabus** with clearly identified course requirements, accommodation statement, and due dates
* Fluctuate **instructional methods**, **provide illustrations**, **handouts**, **auditory** and **visual aids**
* Clarify any feedback or instructions, ask for questions, and use multiple examples
* Relate a new topic to one already learned or a **real-life** example
* Secure a note taker, allow the student to tape record lectures or provide him/her with a copy of your notes
* Allow the student to demonstrate knowledge of the subject through **alternate** means
* Permit and encourage the use of **assistive technology**
* Develop **study guides**
* Give shorter exams more frequently

For a definition of bolded terms and an example of a professor employing Universal Design in the classroom, please visit [www.telr.osu.edu/dpg/glossary.html](http://www.telr.osu.edu/dpg/glossary.html).

**Essential Qualities**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Course content offers various methods of  **Representation**  Universally designed course content provides alternative representations of essential concepts. Faculty should use various methods of representation to allow the student to learn the information in their preferred means.  *Example: Placing course notes on the web allows students to gain the information by lecture and text. Additionally, a student with a visual impairment could record the lecture to capture the notes in alternate format.* | Course content offers various methods of  **Engagement**  Universally designed course content maintains varied skill levels, preferences, and interests by allowing for options.  By having flexible teaching strategies and course content, students can choose methods that support their interest and skill levels.  *Example: When teaching a foreign language, students could choose from a variety of on-line options that would allow them to practice fluency and comprehension at a reading level that is appropriate for them*. | Course content offers various methods of  **Expression**  Universally designed course content allows for alternate methods of expression.  This allows the student multiple means of demonstrating mastery of the material.  *Example: Allowing the students to demonstrate knowledge on a subject by doing an oral presentation or writing a paper or taking a test. Students with a speech disorder may be unable to present the information orally while students with a fine motor disability may have difficulty taking a written exam.* |

**Resources**

Universal Design. [on-line]. Available: <http://www.cast.org>

University of Minnesota’s Curriculum Transformation and Disability. Funded by the US Department of Education. Project #P333A990015. Ways to Incorporate Universal Instructional Design.

Honolulu Community College’s Common Teaching Methods [on-line]. Available: <http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/comteach.htm>

Do-It. University of Washington. Funded by the National Science Foundation, The US Department of Education, and the State of Washington. Grant # 9725110 [on-line]. Available: <http://www.washinton.edu/doit/>.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock. College of Education. [on-line]. Available: [www.ualr.edu/~coedept/curlinks/sped.html](http://www.ualr.edu/~coedept/curlinks/sped.html)

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