Universal Design for Learning: 

A framework for good teaching, a model for student success

Craig Spooner
ACCESS Project Coordinator

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles and techniques for teaching, creating inclusive communication and technology, and accessible course materials.

Universal Design (UD)

- Build in accessibility from the start
  - Curb cuts in city streets
  - Ramps and automatic door openers
  - TV closed captions
  - Ergonomic kitchen utensils
- Everyone benefits from a more flexible, user-friendly environment
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Inclusive pedagogy
- UDL applies to both teaching and technology

Who are college students today?

They are diverse

- Ethnicity & Culture
- Gender
- Nontraditional
- ESL/Native language
- Learning/Cognitive Styles
- Disabilities
ESL/Native Language

What is your good name, sir?
A. Full name
B. Last name
C. Nickname or pet name

Learning Styles

1. Visual
   a) Visual-Linguistic (reading and writing)
   b) Visual-Spatial (graphs and pictures)
2. Auditory (listening)
3. Kinesthetic (touching and moving)
Disabilities

- Mobility Impairments
- Blindness/Visual Impairments
- Deafness/Hearing Impairments
- Learning Disabilities
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD/ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Mental Illness

Disabilities in Higher Education

- Nationally, 11.3% of undergraduates report some type of disability¹
- At Colorado State University²
  - 8%–11% report a disability
  - Non-apparent disabilities are by far the largest proportion and growing
  - Even among students who say they have a disability, few seek accommodations

²Study by Swetz & Appen, Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 2009-2010

Very Concrete-Literal

"When I asked if you were flexible, Mrs. Harness, I was talking about your hours!"
Universal Design for Learning: 3 Principles

1. Instructors represent information and concepts in multiple ways (and in a variety of formats).
2. Students are given multiple ways to express their comprehension and mastery of a topic.
3. Students engage with new ideas and information in multiple ways.

Representation

Alternative Representations*

- Lecture: Its strengths and weaknesses
- Video/Audio podcasts
- Shared note taking

A Tale of Two Documents: The Technical Side of UDL

What makes a document Universally Designed?

- Searchability
- Copy and Paste
- Bookmarks or an Interactive Table of Contents
- Text to Speech capability
- Accessibility
  - Keyboard access, alternative to images, etc.

UDL Tech Tutorials

- Microsoft Word
  - Styles and Headings
  - Images
- PowerPoint
- Adobe PDF
- HTML
- E-Text

http://accessproject.colostate.edu
It helps me learn when the instructor...
- presents information in multiple formats
- actively engages students in learning
- relates key concepts to the larger objectives of the course
- begins class with an outline
- summarizes key points
- highlights key points of instructional videos
CSU Psychology Undergraduates: What engages you?

- Strategies that increase engagement
  - i-clicker questions
  - Asks questions
  - Videos
  - Partner/group discussion and activities
  - In-class mini writing assignments

References


Thank you!

Craig Spooner
craig.spooner@colostate.edu
970-491-0784