Opportunities for Postsecondary Success for Students with ASD

Who we are...

Center for Community Partnerships — a service and outreach arm of the Department of Occupational Therapy at Colorado State University

...Supporting the inherent dignity, potential and full participation of all people.

DOE, OPE-Funded Programs

Featuring the following programs:

- ACCESS
- Opportunities for Postsecondary Success (OPS)
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

is a set of principles and techniques for teaching, creating inclusive classroom instruction, and accessible course materials.

What is it? What benefits from it?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

is a set of principles and techniques for creating inclusive classroom instruction and accessible course materials.

Who benefits from it?

Student Self-Advocacy leading to success for students with ASD
UDL, AT and SA instruction and technical assistance
Program evaluation, dissemination, replication

Opportunities for Postsecondary Success (OPS) — student supports

Student Self-Advocacy leading to success for students with ASD
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ACCESS — faculty instruction

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
Student Self-Advocacy (SA)
Research, dissemination
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 Styles/Intelligences
- Disabilities

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 disability\(^1\)
- At Colorado State University\(^2\)
  - 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

\(^{2}\)Nativity, Racism & Impacts, Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability Print 2011
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.

#1: Representation
- Describe learning objectives in clear, specific terms
- Provide structure to the material:
  - Highlight key concepts, explaining how they relate to course objectives
  - Start lecture with an outline, conclude with a summary
  - Clearly define expectations for classroom behavior
- Post lecture notes online prior to class
- Record lectures and post them online as podcasts

#2: Expression
- Provide flexibility in assessment, especially in language-based tests/exams
- Allow extended time for assessment
- Encourage alternative formats for assignments
- Encourage electronic communication
  - Face-to-face or in-class communication can be difficult and stressful
  - Students may need time to plan ahead
#3: Engagement

- Communicate high expectations for all learners
- Invite students (verbally and on the syllabus) to speak to you privately if they have learning challenges
- Provide prompt, ongoing and instructive feedback to support learning and self-assessment
- Ask students where they'd like to sit
- Help students advocate for themselves. Know the resources available at the university, especially RDS and the OPS program

Findings from UDL Research at CSU

- 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

UDL Framework

Engage Represent Express
Instructors can implement UDL and best teaching practices until the cows come home...

But until students become aware of how they learn, what they need to be successful in the college environment, and how to put strategies and resources in place to promote success—until they become self-advocates—we're only half-way to our goal.

"Self-advocacy is the ability to understand one's own needs and effectively communicate those needs to others."*
ACCESS Self-Advocacy Definition*

- Knowing yourself
  - Strengths, interests, challenges
- Knowing what you need
  - Available resources, accommodations
- Knowing how to get what you need
  - Taking action

Self-Advocacy Skill Development for Postsecondary Success

Why Promote Self-Advocacy?

- Academic Persistence!
  - Self-advocacy is a key predictor of student success. Strong self-advocates (self-responsible learners) tend to experience greater academic satisfaction, higher grades, and have an increased level of ability to succeed in college and in life.*
The problem...

“Too many students with disabilities exit high school with limited self-determination and self-advocacy skills because school and parents assume responsibility for advocating for educational needs rather than fostering the development of these skills in students.”

The solution...

**UDL + Self-Advocacy = ACCESS**

- Inclusive instruction through UDL implementation makes learning accessible to all students.
- Becoming an effective self-advocate is critical for success in postsecondary education – for all students, and especially those with ASD!
- Self-advocacy skill development is the foundation of support strategies for students with ASD!

ACCESS Leads to Questions and Program Development

- Who are the students who are ‘falling through the cracks?’ Why are they struggling?
- How can we best support high-risk students with ASD to promote success in achieving their postsecondary dreams?
- Office of Postsecondary Education provided the potential answer to our questions.
Transition Program Funding Priority

- Authorized by Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) Reauthorization in 2008 (PL 110-315)
- IHEs funded to develop comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with disabilities that impact their cognitive functioning

OPS Project
Opportunities for Postsecondary Success

Transition Program Funding Priority

- HEOA focus:
  - Students with learning/academic functioning impairments, characterized by significant limitations in cognitive functioning and/or adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and/or practical adaptive skills, including students with ASD
  - Addressing a need identified at CSU, FRCC, PSD and beyond
Center for Community Partnerships
Implementing OPS

- CCP partnering with:
  - OT faculty
  - Assistive Technology Resource Center
  - Resources for Disabled Students
  - Student Affairs
  - Front Range Community College
  - Poudre School District
  - Foothills Gateway Inc.
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Adaptive Recreation Opportunities

OPS Goals

- Development of a ‘Postsecondary Transitions Trajectory’
- UDL and AT training and technical assistance
- Transition supports
- Evaluation of program outcomes

Differences between high school and college/university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School (IDEA)</th>
<th>College (504 and ADA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class sizes are usually small</td>
<td>Class sizes may be large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students receive reminders and support for assignments</td>
<td>Students expected to complete their work independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Find</td>
<td>Student must take initiative to seek out accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiv. Education Plans (IEPs)</td>
<td>Self-advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ time is managed for them</td>
<td>Time management skills needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available for assistance and questions during and after class</td>
<td>Professors are available during office hours</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strengths that students with ASD may have*

- Cognitive abilities similar to neurotypical or gifted individuals
- Excellent vocabulary, strong verbal skills
- Focused, diligent
- Honest to a fault
- Strong desire to excel
- Creative, unique ways of thinking
- Passionate about unique interests
- Concrete literal

Challenges that students with ASD may experience

- Difficulty with change, transitions
- Poor ability to read/learn unwritten rules and procedures
- Frequent concomitant anxiety
- Difficulty with communication, relationships, reciprocal social interaction (e.g. roommates, classmates, group assignments, class presentations)
- Presence of stereotyped behavior, interests or activities
- Sensory processing disorders
- Concrete literal

If you know a student with ASD...

...you know a student with ASD!
Possible areas of confusion

- What is the difference between three and four credits?
- What does it mean to add/drop a course vs. withdraw from a course?
- What are the unwritten rules?
- Why can’t I keep texting my roommate?
- What do I do with the assignment when I’m finished?
- What am I supposed to do when a class is cancelled?

Addressing Problem Areas

- Organization
- Selecting Courses
- Social Life
- Living in the Dorms
- Daily Living
- Prepare in Advance
- Sensory Issues
Supports for eligible college students

- Transition Coordinators/Peer Mentors assist with:
  - Development of relationship/friendship with roommate, classmates
  - Socialization guidance, role playing
  - Development of skills/strategies for surviving group assignments
  - Identification of ‘triggers’ – coming up with crisis management strategies
  - Connection to recreation, activities
  - Career exploration
  - Development of self-advocacy skills

Supports for eligible HS students who are headed to college/university

- Transition Coordinators/Peer Mentors assist with:
  - Connection and familiarization with campus locations and resources (individualized)
  - Introduction to dormitory, RA – identification of residential support needs
  - Learning the ropes: signing up for classes, understanding add/drop/withdrawal rules, course management system
  - Development of self-advocacy skills

Supports for eligible HS students who are seeking employment

- Transition Coordinators/Peer Mentors assist with:
  - Work internships, volunteer opportunities
  - Supported employment
  - Recreation
  - Independent living
  - Development of self-advocacy skills
Finding, Getting and Keeping a Job: An OPS Focus Area

- Preparing for an internship interview
  - Shaking hands properly
  - Looking and acting professional
  - Eye contact
  - Hygiene
  - Research company in advance
  - Positive answers to boilerplate questions...

Tell me about your strengths...

What to say, what not to say...
Describe how you are as a team player

a. Teams are kind of bad. Sometimes people don’t know what they’re doing. Sometimes everyone is working on the same thing. And sometimes one person does all the work.
b. I have been on many teams, working on group assignments in some of my classes. I do well on teams when I know what my role is – then I can get my part done and contribute to the team effort.
c. I’d rather work by myself.
d. Teams are not my favorite thing, but I’ll be on a team if I have to.

Why should we hire you?

a. I have taken numerous courses in topics that relate to your business and received a good grade in all of those courses.
b. I am guessing that I am the smartest applicant.
c. Because I read about this stuff for fun. I love it. This is what I do, what I think, what I know. I love it.
d. Because I turned in my application on time and now I’m here for the interview.
As educators, it is our responsibility to support and empower students on the spectrum who are coming to college, seeking employment, pursuing their dreams...

With the supports we are providing these students, we are facilitating their...

...opportunities for postsecondary success

Self-Advocacy Resources
accessproject.colostate.edu
ccp.colostate.edu

UDL Modules
- Universally designed Word, PowerPoint, HTML and PDF

SA Resources
- Disability Information for Faculty
- SA Handbook for College Students with Disabilities (helpful information for students, parents, secondary education teachers and counselors, university faculty)

Thank you!

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References


National Center for Education Statistics, 2008


References


