

# CTE NOTEBOOK

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"Universal Instructional Design"

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## **Reinert CTE Mission Statement**

The mission of the Paul C. Reinert, S.J. Center for Teaching Excellence is to support Saint Louis University faculty and graduate students so that they can better serve the intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of all learners.

## **The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence**

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**Inclusive Curricula: Universal Instructional Design**  
Karen A. Myers, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Educational Leadership and Higher Education

*People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,  
But people will never forget how you made them feel.*

**Bonnie Jean Wasmund**

Inclusion is a good feeling. Knowing that you matter, knowing that your needs were not forgotten, knowing that someone took the time to ensure that you were not left out makes us feel good. As educators, we naturally intend to include all of our students in the learning process. To think that any of our students would feel – or actually be – excluded in our classes would be unimaginable. But as we take a closer look and carefully examine what we do on a daily basis, we must honestly ask ourselves, "Have we included all of our students today?" or more importantly, "Have we *excluded* any students today?"

The application of Universal Instructional Design to our curriculum can assist us in creating an environment that fosters inclusion. Derived from Universal Design (UD; Center for Universal Design, 1997), an architectural concept relating to the development of accessible physical space (e.g., a sidewalk curb cut), Universal Instructional Design (UID) "is a relatively new pedagogical model for providing access to education for people with disabilities by rethinking teaching practices to create curricula and classrooms that are inclusive for all students" (Higbee, 2007, p. 234). Although originally developed for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, UID applies the same advanced planning principles to curriculum and courses. Emphasizing educational practices rather than the design of physical space, UID assists us in ensuring equal educational access for all learners with various backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. These "pedagogical curb cuts" (Ben-Moshe, Cory, Feldbaum, & Sagendorf, 2005) allow us to design inclusive courses at the outset, prior to meeting with the class, thus requiring few adaptations, accommodations, or specialized design once the class begins.

*The Principles of Universal Instructional Design*, developed by the Curriculum Transformation and Disability (CTAD, n.d.; Higbee, 2003) project at the University of Minnesota, are based on Chickering and

*(Continued on Page 3)*



# From the Director

The theme of this edition of the Notebook is Universal Instructional Design (UID). UID focuses on designing curriculum and learning environments that are accessible to all learners. In the opening article, Dr. Karen Myers introduces the principles of Universal Instructional Design (UID) and structures them using the Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education identified by Chickering and Gamson. The Seven Principles of Good Practice form a framework that the Center has used previously to organize programs exploring different pedagogical approaches. Throughout the issue, you will find suggestions and a checklist containing additional strategies for making a curriculum UID friendly. To learn more about UID, I encourage you to participate in the coffee break sessions on UID that the Center and Dr. Myers will be hosting in late May and early June.

The Fall 2007 issue of the Notebook featured an image of a moving van to draw attention to the Center for Teaching Excellence's temporary move to the Academic Resources Center (3840 Lindell Blvd.). This issue of the Notebook includes the same image of a moving van. The Center is preparing to move into new, more permanent space on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Anheuser Busch Wing of Pius XII Memorial Library. Construction of the Center's new home is expected to be completed in May 2008. We invite you to watch as our new physical space takes form, and to visit us in our new location beginning this summer.

## For Your Calendars...

### **Growing a Global Community: Addressing Social Justice In and Out of the Classroom**

**With Keynoter:  
Vernon Wall, M.A.  
Founding Faculty  
Social Justice Training Institute**

**Wednesday, May 14th  
8:30-11:30 am  
St. Francis Xavier College Ballroom**

**Register Online @ [fyp.slu.edu](http://fyp.slu.edu)**

**Sponsored by The Office of the Provost,  
Student Development and The Center for  
Teaching Excellence**

Service Learning Meet and Greet  
with Mark Pousson

May 12th from 9-11am

Knight's Room, Pius Library

Journal Club

The CTE Journal Club will be meeting on April 25th from 12-1pm in Verhaegan Hall, Room 219.

*For more information contact [bhill@slu.edu](mailto:bhill@slu.edu)*

Coffee Break

The topic of the June Coffee Break will be Universal Instructional Design

Watch for our announcement with details!

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Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education." They are:

1. Create a classroom climate that fosters trust and respect.
2. Determine the essential components of the course.
3. Provide clear expectations and feedback.
4. Explore ways to incorporate natural supports for learning.
5. Provide multimodal instructional methods.
6. Provide a variety of ways for demonstrating knowledge.
7. Use technology to enhance learning opportunities.
8. Encourage faculty-student contact. (Fox, Hatfield, & Collins, p. 26)

By utilizing these principles in our curriculum development and daily teaching, we can begin to shape instructional practices that include all learners.

With any new pedagogical model there are benefits and challenges. "This looks like a lot of work," you may be thinking. "How will this benefit my students and how will this benefit me?" As a classroom instructor, it is cost-effective and time-efficient, and it reduces the need for last-minute modifications to accommodate students with a variety of needs, including but not limited to students with disabilities. For example, once your syllabus and class notes are online for all students to access, there is no need for copying handouts for each class period. And since all students have access, there is no need for other departments such as disability services to provide accommodations (e.g., large print) for just one student; all students can minimize or enlarge their own materials as desired. UID also enhances student engagement in learning. In a welcoming, respectful environment with multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge, students might feel safe in participating and empowered to take responsibility for their own learning – a benefit to both the instructor and the student. Other benefits to students include recognizing individual differences among all learners, including differences in preferred learning styles; eliminating the need to be segregated for some accommodations (e.g., extended time), and addressing the stigma associated with the medical model (i.e., disability – or difference - as a deficiency).

It is possible that faculty may face some challenges in using UID. These may include advance planning time constraints, knowledge of available technologies, familiarity with local resources, and degree of administrative support. The latter is a particular concern for tenure-track faculty, specifically in the form of recognition for excellence in teaching, research, and service in the tenure and promotion process. Institutional support in developing accessible educational practices is integral to its success. Through the assistance of departments such as the Center for Teaching Excellence, faculty may receive the tools, skills, and encouragement they need to incorporate UID into their curricula and thus foster an inclusive educational environment.

The Center for Teaching Excellence supports the Saint Louis University UID Community of Practice, a group of faculty and academic staff interested in teaching and modeling universal instructional design principles. Following a highly competitive nation-wide selection process, a five-member team from SLU participated with teams from 11 other institutions at the federally-funded 2007 Pedagogy and Student Services for Institutional Transformation (PASS IT) Summer Institute at the University of Minnesota. In addition, the Community of Practice has been a two-time award winner of the SLU's Retention Management Committee's Mini Grant, which provided funding for the UID Coffee Breaks, i.e., UID educational sessions for SLU faculty.

As educators, it is our intent "to foster understanding and appreciation of human differences, while helping people recognize the importance of civility and inclusion. One way to demonstrate this philosophy is to apply universal instructional design (UID), which can create an environment that fosters inclusion" (Myers, in press). Through dedication and collaboration, SLU faculty are embracing these principles of inclusion, creating welcoming, respectful environments for all students.

*Note: Is your curriculum UID friendly? To assess your own progress, complete the checklist on page 5.*

## References

Ben-Moshe, L., Cory, R., Feldbaum, M., & Sagedorf, K. (Eds.). (2005). *Building pedagogical curb cuts: Incorporating disability in the university classroom and curriculum*. Syracuse, (Continued on Page 7)



**UID: Focusing on the Ability in Disability**  
**Beth Hill, Ph.D., Program Director for Teaching Effectiveness**  
**Center for Teaching Excellence**

Let's face it the essence of Universal Instructional Design is a simple idea; the challenge seems to be moving the idea into action. The basic premise is that learning should be accessible to as many people as possible no matter their learning ability or disability. There is that word, disability---code for handicap which was a term used to refer to individuals who had their "caps in their hands" looking for a handout. Although we have learned to accommodate people with different abilities, we do so, sometimes, because we know it is the right (and legal) thing to do although not the most convenient. This reference to disability may stigmatize UID and consequently stop some teachers from implementing the design on a regular basis, as though it was something applied only in special situations. What if we adjusted how we defined UID? What if we talked about UID as a means to making education accessible to different learning styles?

In this think piece, I would like to offer you another perspective on UID. Think of UID as an optical refractor, that machine you sit behind while getting your eyes examined. The optometrist flicks from one lens to the next to check your vision as you read off tiny little letters. Eventually, you select a set of lens based on your ability to clearly read the tiny letters.

Imagine you are walking into your classroom wearing an optical refractor that changes for each unique learning style represented in your classroom. Besides looking like something out of the film *A Clockwork Orange*, you would probably be overwhelmed by the whirling of the lens changes. Trying to adjust your teaching strategies to accommodate every ability would be maddening and not particularly productive for you or the students. Consider adopting a style of teaching that responds to 60% of the population; multimodal learners learn through a combination of learning styles and are able to adapt to the mode presented (<http://www.vark-learn.com>).

The research is in. We know that millennial students, students born after 1979, are multimodal learners (<http://www.nahsl.org/2006/sweeney.htm>). This birth year means that the majority of your students are multimodal learners. But back to the

teacher who is prepping for their next course and trying to follow UID guidelines, the recommendation would be: design a course that responds, to some degree, to all four learning styles, visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic. In the next few paragraphs, I will offer some strategies on how to design your course based on these various learning styles.

The visual learner takes in information through their sense of sight. Consider integrating a variety of visual aids throughout your classroom discussion. Visual aids run the gamut from your gestures, your facial expressions, your body posture, your clothes to the pictures, posters, videos, DVDs, slides, charts, graphs, and textbooks you choose as the medium for your message. Highlighting, space or symbols can also be applied to assist in directing students' attention to key words and phrases (<http://www.vark-learn.com>).

The aural learner, the learner who takes in meaning through hearing, will appreciate a professor who speaks clearly, projects well, and speaks using vocal variety. This student will find it valuable to have time to talk with the instructor (office hours) and will probably enjoy talking with other students through classroom activities. In large lecture classes, consider using clickers or some device that challenges students to listen and respond to questions asked. Because aural learners prefer to listen, they may not take very good notes. Consider making handouts available of PowerPoint slides or create a blog where a given student each lecture can offer their notes for the class lecture that other students, the professor or teaching assistant can add to, compare and correct.

The read/write learner will be the learner who takes in information through reading and/or writing. This learner appreciates assigned readings in advance, handouts, and lists of terminology, well organized lectures that are easy to note, diagrams, graphs, etc. translated into words and the opportunity to write. Writing assignments could range from quick handwritten responses to one minute papers to more formal or lengthy papers.

Keeping in mind that the majority of students are better versed on keyboards than with writing instruments, here is also an opportunity to integrate technology rather than fighting it.

The kinesthetic learner learns by doing. Offer experiential activities in the classroom. Experiential activities are any activities that the

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## **DOES YOUR CURRICULUM PROVIDE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT?**

### **IS IT UID FRIENDLY?**

**Complete this checklist to find out.**

**Universal Instructional Design (UID) ensures an inclusive environment for all students.**

“The basic premise of Universal Instructional Design is that curriculum should include alternatives to make it accessible and applicable to students with different backgrounds, learning styles, abilities and disabilities.” (Center for Applied Special Technology, n.d.)

**By following the 7 principles\* below, you can make your curricula accessible to all.**

<b>UID INCLUSION CHECKLIST</b>		Accomplished	
<b>1. Creating a welcoming, respectful learning environment</b>		Now	Future
Send welcome email to students prior to start of class			
Create introductory exercises that are personable, friendly and encourage humor			
Include a syllabus statement that fosters an inclusive learning environment. (Refer to attached examples.)			
Learn students' names			
Be open to meeting with students			
During the first week of class lay the foundation to establish learning communities			
Let students know from the outset that the environment is inclusive and that all “voices” are heard			
Encourage questions			
Compliment student participation			
Develop course objectives with student input			
Collect information on "Student Information Sheet" (attached)			
<b>2. Addressing essential course components</b>		Now	Future
Provide class sessions and assignments that meet intended learning outcomes			
Discuss with students the components of the course that build toward subsequent courses			
<b>UID INCLUSION CHECKLIST</b>		Accomplished	
<b>3. Communicating clear expectations &amp; providing constructive feedback</b>		Now	Future
Post comprehensive user-friendly syllabus online prior to beginning of course			
Post online video of instructor explaining teaching style and philosophy			
Provide clear written and audio explanations of course assignments online			
Post grading rubrics of all assignments online at the beginning of class			

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	Start each day with an overview of the day's objectives		
	Ask students to match course objectives with course content, lectures, and assignments		
	Provide students with completed grading rubrics including written comments in a timely manner (i.e., preferably at least one week prior to due date of next assignment)		
	Discuss in class general overall strengths and weaknesses of completed assignments		
	Ask students to complete peer evaluations for team members		
	Encourage students to submit assignments at least one week prior to due date for teacher and peer review before resubmitting revised assignment		
	Provide students with information regarding how to access support structures such as tutoring, writing center, and other out-of-class assistance		
	Ask students to do a one-minute paper at the end of class to outline what they learned, indicate when they were the most/least engaged, and provide comments about the day's class.		
	Request feedback from students on the course/instruction throughout the semester rather than only at the end of the semester		
<b>4. Providing natural supports (including technology) for learning to enhance opportunities for all learners</b>		Now	Future
	Post all reading materials (except text books) and website links online		
	Post some student assignments (e.g., book reviews, movie reviews, etc.) on course site so that other students may review		
	Provide all handouts and evaluations in 12-14 pt. san serif font		
	Provide all PowerPoint slides & handouts in UID format (i.e., few words per slide, san serif font, large bold print) with no more than two slides per page for handouts		
	Be available to students via email, phone, online course site, and in person for assistance		
	Consider the cost of textbooks; if possible, use original sources that can be bought at second-hand book stores, create your own packet of readings, or mention if books are available in library		
	Establish learning communities in the course to provide students with classmate resources		
	Ensure that all field trips, labs, and educational opportunities outside of the classroom are accessible to all students		
	Allow for ample time for exams and assignments		
<b>UID INCLUSION CHECKLIST</b>		Accomplished	
<b>5. Using teaching methods that consider diverse learning styles, abilities, ways of knowing, and previous experience and background knowledge</b>		Now	Future
	Utilize a constructivist approach to teaching by providing information and having students construct meaning from new information based on prior knowledge and experiences		
	Utilize multi-modal teaching techniques including, lecture, large group discussion, small group discussion, pair and share, role playing, case studies, games, exercises, guest speakers, panels, movies, videos, podcasts, vodcasts.		
	Use open captioned videos, DVDs, and video streams		
	Consider the learning styles of your current students and use appropriate teaching strategies		

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<b>6. Offering multiple ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge</b>		Now	Future
	Offer students the option of papers, presentations, PowerPoint's, online presentations, team assignments, poster sessions, role playing, websites, games, exercises, case studies, online discussions, individual and group projects		
<b>7. Promoting interaction among students and between you and the students</b>		Now	Future
	Be available and encourage conversation and assistance via email, phone, discussion board, chatrooms, and in person.		
	Encourage students to develop peer learning communities		

List other ways you might ensure inclusion . . .

\*Adapted from Chickering & Gamson (1987) *7 Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*

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student can experience. Although they could be in the form of field trips, internships or service learning projects, experiential assignments could also be simulations, role-playing, interactive games, or any activities that give the student a first-hand experience. Again, consider ways to incorporate the technology readily available to the students.

As stated at the top of this article, 60% of any population prefers multimodal learning which means that in a classroom of 30 students, 18 will be multimodal learners particularly if they are traditional students. Incorporating a variety of teaching strategies, reflecting a variety of learning styles, may help you to more successfully connect with more of your audience no matter their abilities.

## Universal Instructional Design Resource

The website from the University of Guelph contains informative materials on UID.

Visit <http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/uid/>

## Summer Institutes

### 30th Annual Summer Institute on College Teaching

June 1-5th

The College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia

Applications due by May 21, 2008

Visit [www.vtc.odu.edu/summer\\_institute.html](http://www.vtc.odu.edu/summer_institute.html) for more information.

### What the Best College Teachers Do

June 19-20, 2008

New York City Area

Visit [www.bestteachersinstitute.org/](http://www.bestteachersinstitute.org/) for more information.

### Fairfield University Annual Summer Teaching Conference

June 4-6, 2008

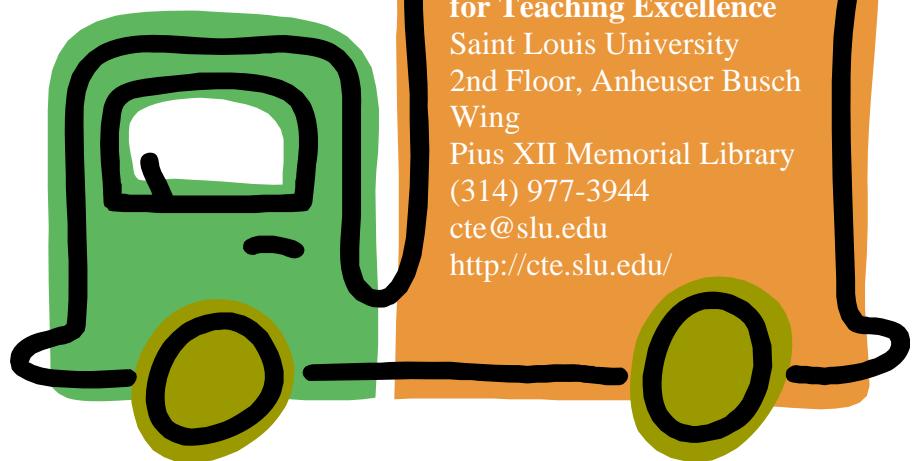
Fairfield, CT

Visit [www.fairfield.educae\\_summerteach\\_conf.html](http://www.fairfield.educae_summerteach_conf.html) for more information.

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## We're Moving!

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