

Resource Guide

What is Universal Design for Learning?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a pedagogical framework used to help design courses that are accessible for all students, including students with disabilities (Coombs, 2010). UDL promotes a careful consideration of the needs of all potential learners during the planning and development of a course or learning experience (Higbee & Goff, 2008).

Here are three important UDL principles to focus on when making decision about the design of a course (e.g., “Universal Design Basics,” 2019):

- **Provide multiple means of representation:** Use a variety of instructional materials in your teaching (e.g., readings, videos, podcasts, images) and be sure each is accessible for students with visual and hearing impairments. For example, be sure to caption all videos and provide an accompanying transcript with podcasts.
- **Provide multiple means of expression:** Offer multiple ways for students to express or demonstrate their learning. For example, give students the option of writing a paper or creating a podcast for their final course project.
- **Provide multiple means of engagement:** Create different opportunities for students to engage with course content and each other. For example, student “participation” may include posting thoughts and reactions to an online discussion board, demonstrating active listening and engagement throughout a lecture, or making verbal contributions during class or small group discussion.

Resources

Coombs, N. (2010). *Making online teaching accessible: Inclusive course design for students with disabilities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dolmage, J. (2015). Universal design: Places to start. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 35.

Gooble, D. (2017, August 8). Now is the time to think about accessibility. Retrieved from <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1875-now-is-the-time-to-think-about-accessibility>

Higbee, J. L., & Goff, E. (2008). *Pedagogy and student services for institutional transformation: Implementing Universal Design in higher education*. Minneapolis, MN: Regents of the University of Minnesota.

Universal design basics (2019, January 4). Retrieved from <https://faculty.slcc.edu/drc-for-faculty/universal-design-basics.aspx>

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at cttl@slu.edu.