

Accessibility Learning Community: Creating Student Success through Universal Design for Learning

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Abstract

Making learning accessible to students increases student success in higher education classrooms. However, higher educators typically use lecture to impart course content and benefit a small percentage of students who learn through listening to lectures. Universal Design for Learning Principles posit multiple ways of representing course content, engaging students in learning, and demonstrating student learning. This poster will describe the newly established UTRGV Accessibility Learning Community and their efforts in applying Universal Design for Learning Principles in their teaching.

Background/Introduction

Discussions on UDL Principles:

Representation, Engagement, and Expression

Faculty reflections on own courses

For new members:

<http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.Wl-NKTdMFZg>

Make teaching practice explicit by "talking about teaching"

Help faculty work collaboratively in democratic and reflective communities

Establish a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry

Provide a context to understand our teaching practices and a forum to consider our assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning (Ward & Selvester, 2011)

Objective

*Gain understanding of UTRGV

Accessibility Learning Community

*Identify benefits of Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

* Provide peer feedback based on our experiences in applying UDL Principles in our teaching

Methods/ Process

- Introduction of Universal Design for Learning Principles
- Faculty reflection every session
- Utilize Mixed Reality Avatar for Providing Feedback Practice
- Faculty provide feedback to each other on course alignment to UDL principles.
- Faculty engage in reflection in safe and open space.



Results

- Unpacking UDL Principles
- Shifting from instructor-centered to student-centered practice
- Faculty Enthusiasm: Pedagogical Inquiry
- Faculty Reflection on Good Teaching Practice

Conclusions/Recommendations

Setting Accessibility Learning Community Norms:

- Openness to improvement
- Trust and respect
- A foundation in the knowledge and skills of teaching
- Willingness to offer and accept supportive and constructive feedback
- Shared commitment to teaching and learning

Acknowledgements

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References

- CAST (2011). *Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.0*. Wakefield, MA: Author.
- Ward, H. C. & Selvester, P. M. (2011). Faculty Learning Community: Improving teaching in higher education. *Educational Studies*, 38(1):111-121.