UDL on Campus – A resource for designing and developing courses

“The UDL guidelines are organized according to the three main principles of UDL (representation, action and expression, and engagement)” (CAST, 2011, p. 12).

CAST’s graphic organizer depicts that the principles should result in resourceful, knowledgeable learners, strategic, goal-directed learners, and purposeful, motivated learners (CAST, 2011). Rose, Harbour, Johnston, Daley, and Abarbanell (2006) provided the following statements to explain each of the three main principles:

• “The first principle reflects the fact that there is no one way of presenting information or transferring knowledge that is optimal for all students” (Rose et al., 2006, p. 3).
• “The second principle reflects the fact that there is no one means of expression that will be optimal for all students, nor one kind of scaffolding or support that will help them as they learn to express themselves” (Rose et al., 2006, p. 4).
• “The third principle reflects the fact that not all students are engage by the same extrinsic rewards or conditions, no do they develop intrinsic motivation along the same path” (Rose et al., 2006, p. 5).

While CAST continues to receive funding for research and development of training materials and tools. Most adopters of the professional development provided by CAST have surfaced in the elementary and secondary education systems (CAST, CAST Timeline, 2017). Thus, it is important to explore and continue researching the dissemination of the UDL principles for course development within higher education institutions. The creation of the UDL On Campus website, developed with funds by the Open Professionals Education Network (OPEN is a collaboration of higher education institutions and CAST and is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) is an example of UDL professional development resources for higher education institutions. This website offers resources divided into sections for course design, media and materials, and accessibility and policy. The UDL On Campus’ main page states,

When it comes to learning, variability is the rule not the exception. UDL is an educational framework that guides the design of learning goals, materials, methods, and assessments as well as the policies surrounding these curricular elements with the diversity of learners in mind. (CAST, UDL On Campus, 2017)

“As an approach to curriculum development, UDL ensures that students with a wide range of abilities can access and succeed in the general curriculum” (Izzo, Murray, & Novak, 2008, p. 61). Izzo et al. (2008) stated that, “the UDL framework challenges educators to rethink the nature of their curriculum and empowers them with the flexibility to serve a diverse population of learners” (p. 62).

Findings from research regarding faculty who developed face-to-face, hybrid, or online courses with the UDL framework in mind resulted with an overall increase in student engagement (Davies, Schelly, & Spooner, 2013; Scott, Temple, & Marshall, 2015 Smith, 2012). “Utilizing multiple formats, varied
instructional methods, and flexible features of digital technologies, UDL can enhance learning experiences for all students” (Smith, 2012, p. 31). Additionally, Smith (2012) noted that, “the use of instructional approaches that infuse digital tools and resources, such as those embraces by UDL, are essential to engage today’s college students” (p. 36). In addition to the increase in engagement, Scott et al. (2015) found that student performance also increased with the UDL framework considered during course design and implementation.

References


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