

## Universal Design: A Guide for Faculty

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### What is Universal Design?

- Universal Design (UD) is a process that involves considering potential needs of learners when designing and delivering instruction.
- UD means identifying and eliminating unnecessary barriers to teaching and learning while maintaining academic rigor.
- UD evolved from the concept of universal design in the physical world, where domains such as architecture and industrial design have identified key goals for their products, including flexibility, consistency, accessibility, explicitness, and supportiveness. UD applies these very same principles to teaching and learning.
- UD is about universal thinking – it goes beyond just accessibility to reflecting on how to maximize learning for student of all backgrounds and learner preferences while minimizing the need for special accommodations.

### Why Should I Include Universal Design When Designing My Course?

- UD is consistent and promotes learner-centered education
- UD promotes the learning of all students.
- UD meets the emerging spirit of all legislation concerning accessibility.
- UD reduces the need for special accommodations for our learners.

### How Can I Make My Classroom Accessible to All?

#### For Documents/Webpages/Blackboard

- Is all written material readable by JAWS or other text reading software (cannot be pdf)?
- Do all significant images have smart tags that explain verbally what they are when rolled over by a cursor?
- Are all discussion boards/tests/quizzes available online able to be read by text readers? Can voice recognition software be used to answer the questions?
- Are background or print colors able to be manipulated by the student to enhance readability? Can text be magnified and/or enlarged by the student? Is the contrast between the background color and the text color adequate?
- Are test and quizzes timed? Can they be un-timed?

#### For Supplemental Materials/Texts/Videos/Lecture Capture

- Are videos closed captioned and is this functioned controlled by individual students or is it on all the time?
- Are lecture notes or outlines provided on Blackboard? Can they be read by JAWS or other text reading software? Are lecture videos available in closed captioning?
- Are texts/supplemental materials available in alternative formats?

- Is real time captioning, a script, or ASL interpreting available for online lecture capture?

### Other Considerations

- Are alternative assignments provided so students can choose a format that best fits their learning style or works best with their disability issues?
- Are oral exams, presentations, or papers possible alternatives to in class testing?
- Are hands-on applications, field trips, or experiments accessible to students with disabilities? Are students able to work in teams or choose alternatives?
- Is the classroom accessible to all students? Are desks and chair heights adjustable? Is appropriate lighting/heating/cooling provided? Discuss safety and evacuation procedures. Send concerns to Deans until needs are met.
- When using a whiteboard or doing an in-class demonstration, explain verbally what is being shown for those with visual impairments or whose view may be blocked. Face the class when speaking and don't block your face, for those hard of hearing.
- Provide multiple, varied, and redundant learning opportunities. Provide regular feedback, encourage feedback from students.

### **Resources**

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Programs/ud.html>

[http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Academics/equal\\_access\\_udi.html](http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Academics/equal_access_udi.html)

<http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/index.htm>

<http://www.facultyware.uconn.edu/home.cfm>

<http://www.catea.org/grade/guides/introduction.php#content>