The Ten Step Approach to Universal Design for Learning Education (UDL)

Published 5/13/2022 by Ashley Ribbel

View all the Teaching & Learning Centre Spark Plugs!

by Sherri Parkins, Learning Strategist in Accessible Learning Services and Professor in the Teaching & Learning Centre

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a plethora of guidelines for teaching. Let's take a look at the University of Arkansas' "The Ten Step Approach to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)" to see how little steps can propel us further along the path of inclusion for all students.

1) Create a welcoming message that encourages students to connect and discuss anticipated needs and accommodations in addition to the information that is formulaic in your addendum. Warm welcoming messages can humanize learning.

2) Keep your Learn@Seneca less like a Costco shopping experience, where items are often difficult to locate, and more like a place that is familiar and we know where to find things. Consider how you label content. Week 1, Week 2, etc. doesn't make it easy to find individual topics. Add the topic to the week's label. Hyperlinks should reflect the actual content. For example, Academic Accommodations – Guide to Support Faculty is clearer than Click Here.

3) Think tool use flexibility! Sometimes we ask students to "just pop your comment into the chat" or "just turn on your mic and respond" forgetting that students, who might be providing care to a child, are English Language Learners, or are not quick typists, may struggle with using those tools. The use of tools, such as Padlet or a Google Jamboard allows students to contribute both synchronously or asynchronously in multiple formats.

4) Provide models of what you expect. New classes mean new expectations from new faculty. Provide previous examples of a great discussion posting (in written or oral format) or provide a template for a project.

5, 6, 7) Rethink colour, font, and format! Ensure that contrast between the text and the background colour is sufficient, that the font is easy to read, and documents are accessible.

Seneca's A Guide for Creating Accessible Documents provides guidance. Although prepared in 2012, it provides sage advice!

8) There is an expression: "a picture is worth a thousand words." What if what we think we are communicating via an image is not the message that students perceive. Include at least a brief description of an image if it appears in your lesson. The more complex the visual, the more detail you should provide.

9) Closed Captions (CC) are for everyone! Audio that emerges from our devices isn't always clear. CC can support audio ambiguity or help English Language Learners understand. Zoom and Microsoft Teams provide AI CC. If you have referenced a podcast, provide a transcript. If you are looking for a quick transcription generator, check out Otter.ai. Use it on your phone to transcribe audio playing from your computer.

10) Is a PowerPoint lecture, live or recorded, the best way to deliver content? Consider UDL's idea of Multiple Means of Representation and explore other ways to access your course content. Perhaps a video, blog, podcast, article, or WebQuest can be an alternative to lectures.

That's it! What's a new step you can take to adopt some UDL Guidelines into your courses?

References

Disability Resource Center. (n.d.). *Ten steps toward Universal Design of Online Courses.* Disability Resource Center. Retrieved January 16, 2022, from https://ualr.edu/disability/online-education/

View all the Teaching & Learning Centre Spark Plugs!

tags : course-design, inclusion, inclusive-design, spark-plug, teaching, teaching-and-learning,