

# Improving Access to College Courses through Universal Design of Learning

State of the Art Conference on  
Postsecondary Education and  
Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

November 30, 2012

# UDL Definition in Higher Education Opportunity Act

**UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING.**--The term “universal design for learning” means a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that--

- (A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and
- (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient. HEOA 103 (a)(24)

# Universal Design for Learning

- Education reform that is student centered, building in access from the beginning like universal design of architecture
- Removes barriers in course syllabi and in the design and delivery of content and assessments to improve achievement of ALL Learners
- Supports instructors by minimizing retrofitting during class
- Supports students by minimizing boredom and frustration-education is in “optimal zone”

# Guidelines for the Three Principles

<http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines>

## I. Representation

Use multiple means of representation

### 1. Provide options for perception

- Options that customize the display of information
- Options that provide alternatives for auditory information
- Options that provide alternatives for visual information

### 2. Provide options for language and symbols

- Options that define vocabulary and symbols
- Options that clarify syntax and structure
- Options for decoding text or mathematical notation
- Options that promote cross-linguistic understanding
- Options that illustrate key concepts non-linguistically

### 3. Provide options for comprehension

- Options that provide or activate background knowledge
- Options that highlight critical features, big ideas, and relationships
- Options that guide information processing
- Options that support memory and transfer

## II. Expression

Use multiple means of expression

### 4. Provide options for physical action

- Options in the mode of physical response
- Options in the means of navigation
- Options for accessing tools and assistive technologies

### 5. Provide options for expressive skills and fluency

- Options in the media for communication
- Options in the tools for composition and problem solving
- Options in the scaffolds for practice and performance

### 6. Provide options for executive functions

- Options that guide effective goal-setting
- Options that support planning and strategy development
- Options that facilitate managing information and resources
- Options that enhance capacity for monitoring progress

## III. Engagement

Use multiple means of engagement

### 7. Provide options for recruiting interest

- Options that increase individual choice and autonomy
- Options that enhance relevance, value, and authenticity
- Options that reduce threats and distractions

### 8. Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence

- Options that heighten salience of goals and objectives
- Options that vary levels of challenge and support
- Options that foster collaboration and communication
- Options that increase mastery-oriented feedback

### 9. Provide options for self-regulation

- Options that guide personal goal-setting and expectations
- Options that scaffold coping skills and strategies
- Options that develop self-assessment and reflection

# UDL in Practice

Apply the three principles to the course goals, materials, instructional methods, and assessments

This ensures all three brain networks are engaged at the same time to optimize learning and accurate assessment.

# Other UDL provisions in HEOA

- State and IHE Reports cards must report on any UDL activities related to preparing teachers to use technology in classroom
- UDL required for certain grants, e.g. Teach to Reach
- UDL is permitted activity in other grants

# HEOA Sec 762

Permissive use of grant funds:

The development of innovative, effective, and efficient teaching methods and strategies, consistent with the principles of universal design for learning.....Such methods and strategies may include in-service training, professional development, customized and general technical assistance, workshops, summer institutes, distance learning, and training in the use of assistive and educational technology.

# National UDL Task Force

[www.udl4allstudents.org](http://www.udl4allstudents.org)

- Spearheaded by NDSS in 2006
- Coalition of 44 national groups representing general education, special education and higher education interests
- Promotes UDL in Federal policy and legislation and dissemination of information on UDL \* UDL and Higher Ed FAQ see: [http://www.udlcenter.org/advocacy/faq\\_guides/higher\\_ed](http://www.udlcenter.org/advocacy/faq_guides/higher_ed)



# Higher Ed Groups on Task Force

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- Association of Teacher Educators
- Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
- Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
- Association on Higher Education and Disability
- Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Association

# State-level UDL Policy

## Example: Maryland UDL Statute

- Created Governor's Task Force for recommendations regarding UDL in MD
- University of Maryland and Institute for Higher Education Policy were represented
- Task Force Report includes UDL implementation recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education starting on page 46

[http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/Route\\_for\\_Every\\_%20Learner\\_Report\\_NSJ\\_%2032511.pdf](http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/Route_for_Every_%20Learner_Report_NSJ_%2032511.pdf)

# Higher Education responds

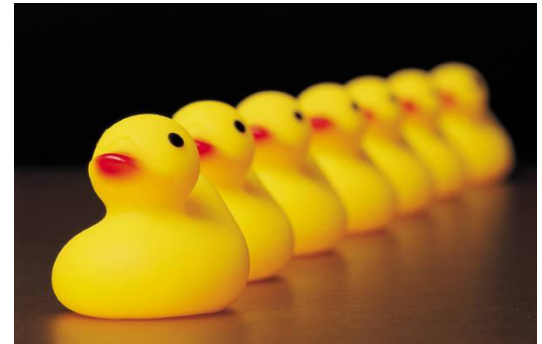
## **Towson University' s UDL path**

- Started over 10 years ago
- Initial inclusion in graduate coursework
- Now Core belief in College of Education
- Now it is resident in significant and useful ways across campus

# Towson University's UDL Path

## College of Education's Actions

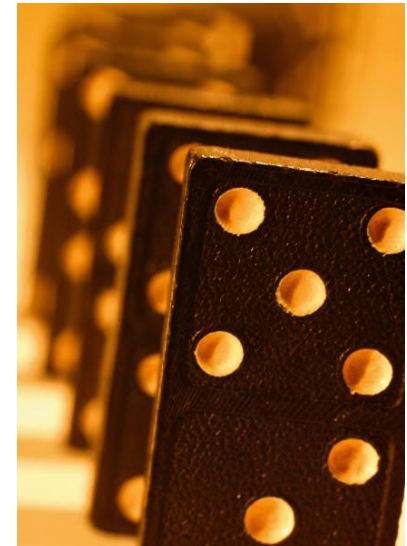
- Integral to our work
- Core value integrated through professional development
- Means to meet needs of every learner
- Differentiation is essential



# Towson University's UDL Path

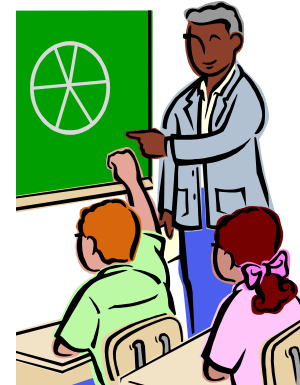
## College of Education's inclusion

- Technology integration courses
- Special Education courses
- General Methods courses
- Internship placements
- Numerous other courses



# Towson's UDL Courses -2 examples

1. Integrating Instructional Technology
2. Introduction to Special Education
  - Focus of key course assignments
  - Lesson Planning assignments and related assessment
  - UDL is vital and significant component



# Towson University's UDL Path

## **Campus View**

- Major focus and organizing theme for Disabilities Support Services
- Knowledgeable staff in Campus-wide Office of Technology Services
- Staff who assist in ways to modify instruction and provide wide range of support

# Disabilities Support Services & UDL

## **Campus examples include- Culture**

- Class Climate- faculty & students
- Teaching Methods & Materials
- Interaction- on-going
- Feedback- detailed
- Assessment- provide options





# Disabilities Support Services & UDL

- Campus examples
- Student honor society-  
Members are disability advocates  
Perform service functions
- Hardware/ software solutions-  
Lightscribe pens  
Kurzweil text to speech  
products



# Office of Tech. Services & UDL

## Campus examples

- Blackboard online teaching examples

## One place for all resources

- Podcasts- presentations & feedback
- Blogs- exemplars, in-depth answers
- Video examples embedded in course

# Office of Tech. Services & UDL

## Campus- Student created projects

- Voice threads- student poster sessions
- Podcasts of students reflections
- Video interviews in language courses
- Second life in marketing & art
- Team based learning-  
advanced PowerPoint or  
video



# Citation

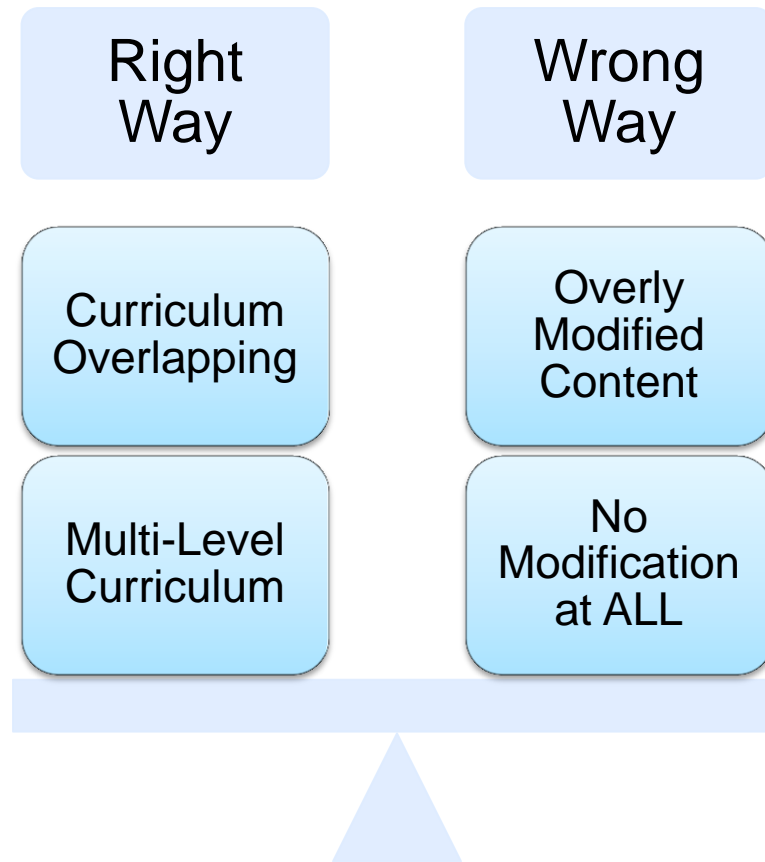
Smith, F. G. (2012). Analyzing a college course that adheres to the universal design for learning (UDL) framework. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 12(3), pp. 1-30.

# Beyond UDL

## Career and Community Studies (CCS) at The College of New Jersey

- All students majoring in CCS require some level of accommodations and modifications to curriculum/instruction, and campus-life support.
- College coursework that is presented with a significant level of UDL provide much more accessible content and instruction.
- Most students majoring in CCS require some level of pre/post teaching and direct instructional support out-of-the-classroom

# Beyond UDL



# Accommodations

- Extra Time
- Copy of Notes or a Note-Taker
- In-Class Mentor Support
- Copies of PowerPoint
- Digital Books / Text
- Out-of the Classroom Assessments

# Modifications

- Simplified Assignments (e.g. 3 page paper vs 10 pages)
- Alternate Assessments
- Modified Readings or Elimination of Required Readings
- Substituting Assignments (e.g. report-out rather than write a paper)



# How are decisions for modification made?

- Individualized
- Freshmen Year coursework in typical college classes are assigned
- Learning styles and abilities to read, write and access essential content are assessed prior to taking coursework outside the School of Education (Freshmen Year)
- Syllabus is reviewed by program staff, a peer-mentor is assigned, and they jointly and in collaboration with the student make suggested modifications which are presented to the course instructor / professor.

# What have we learned from participating instructors / professors?

- Many instructors / professors that have had students with ID/DD have reported positive changes in their teaching.
- Most instructors/professors are willing to continue to enroll students majoring in CCS.
- There is a wide range of involvement from instructors/ professors that have students with ID/DD ranging

Questions or comments??

# Presenters

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