Anita Moore

CREATING A COMMUNICATIVE CLIMATE FOR STUDENT DISCLOSURE

Goals of Session

Participants will:

- Understand the legal responsibilities that pertain to instructing students with disabilities.
- Understand the factors related a student's decision to disclose.
- Gain strategies to promote a positive climate for disclosure for students with disabilities.

Opening Discussion:

- Think of a time when you taught students with disabilities.
  - What range of disabilities did your students have?
  - In your experience, when do students chose to disclose the specifics of a particular disability? Why do they chose to disclose? How do they disclose?

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Laws

- Section 504
  - Otherwise Qualified
  - Cannot be denied access
  - Disability: physical or mental impairment
  - Reasonable Accommodations
- ADA
  - Similar to Section 504 but extended protections to students attending private colleges and universities

Who's Protected?

- Anyone who
  - Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities
  - Has a record of such impairment
  - Is regarded as having such an impairment
- Qualified individuals include those with blindness/visual impairments, LD, ADHD, Speech Disorders, Chronic conditions such as AIDS, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, psychiatric disorders, alcohol/drug addiction
- Does not include temporary conditions like pregnancy, or broken bones

What is mandated?

- Students must be given an equal opportunity
- Reasonable accommodations
  - Removal of Architectural Barriers
  - Modifications, substitutions or waivers of courses
  - Academic Adjustments
  - Auxiliary Aids

What Rights Do Faculty Have?

Faculty have the right to:

- Maintain the rigor and the fundamental nature of their course content
- Require students to demonstrate their knowledge of essential course content
- Negotiate an accommodation with the DSS Office

Reasonable or Unreasonable?

- Evaluate whether these scenarios represent requests that might be reasonable or unreasonable:
  - Jim is wheelchair user and needs help using the restroom. Is this a reasonable accommodation?
  - Linda is taking an exam and has requested to have choices on multiple choice exams limited to no more than 3. Is this a reasonable accommodation?
  - Jaime has AD/HD and it severely impacts his attention and concentration. He has requested the use of a notetaker for this classes. Is this a reasonable accommodation?

Points to Remember

- A disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life functions.
- An accommodation is designed to lessen the impact of a disability.
- Faculty have the right to question the reasonableness of an accommodation.
- An accommodation cannot alter the fundamental nature of a course of program.

Disclosure

Opening Discussion

- Think of something that you wouldn't want anyone to know about you. Why wouldn't you want people to know about this thing? What factors would you consider before sharing this information with someone?

Factors Impacting Whether A Student Discloses

- Acceptance of Disability
- Self-Advocacy Skills
- Fear of stigma
- Context

Acceptance of Disability

- Greater Acceptance=Higher Disability Identity
- Related to the Costs and Benefits of Defining Oneself As Disabled
- Visibility of Disability
- Social vs Medical Model of Disability

Self-Advocacy Skills

- Many students with disabilities tend to have an external locus of control.
- Learned Helplessness
- Lack of Self-Advocacy Instruction in k-12

Fear of Stigma

- Students fear the social, academic and psychological consequences of disclosing a disability.
- Negative stereotypes associated with disability
  - Inaccurate assessments from faculty or peers on their ability to complete college level work
  - Inappropriate judgments by peers

Context

- Need to Know Basis
- The Environment
- The Relationship to the Confidant
- The Situation

Scenario

- You notice Jasmine has not been able to keep up in your math class. She comes to class everyday, appears to be paying attention, asks relevant questions, and turns in the homework, which for the most part appears to be right but her test grades are horrible. You begin to suspect that Jasmine might have a disability.
  - Assuming a disability does exist, why do you think Jasmine has not disclosed to you?

Points to Remember

- Disclosure of disability is influenced by many factors.
- Students have many fears related to disclosure and often consider the risks involved.
- Traditional college students may not come to college equipped with the skills necessary to advocate for themselves.

A Classroom Climate for Disclosure

A Positive Climate for Student Disclosure

- Interpersonal Communication
- Culturally Responsive Educators
- Disability Etiquette
- Syllabus Statements
- Respecting Confidentiality
- Universal Design of Instruction

Interpersonal Communication

- Professor Albert Mehrabian's Communication Study
  - 55% of what we respond to takes place visually
  - 38% of what we respond to is the sound of the communication
  - 7% of what we respond to involves the actual words we use.

Culturally Responsive Educator

- Villegas and Lucas Model
  - Develop Your Sociocultural Consciousness
  - Learn about Student's Lives
  - Understanding How Learners Construct Knowledge
  - Holding Affirming Views About Diversity
  - Using Appropriate Instructional Strategies
  - Advocating for All Students

Disability Etiquette

Respecting Confidentiality

- Do's
  - Talk with the student privately about disability related concerns
  - Keep accommodation notices in a secure location
- Don'ts
  - Don't talk with other faculty or students about a student's needs
  - Don't single the individual student out during class

Syllabus Statements

- Include a statement in your syllabus that encourages students with documented disabilities to contact Disability Support Services to discuss accommodations.
- A sample statement: If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services at 268-8259 or cindy.avery@heartland.edu.

Universal Design of Instruction

- Classroom Climate
- Interaction
- Physical Environment
- Delivery methods
- Information Resources and Technology
- Feedback
- Assessment
- Accommodation

Scenario

- Abigail decides to talk with her instructor after class to disclose a disability. Other students are around and her instructor has another class right after. When Abigail approaches, the instructor stops what she's doing and tells Abigail that she would be happy to talk with her during office hours or by appointment?
  - Are there things this instructor did right in this situation?
  - Are there things the instructor could have done differently in this situation?

Scenario

- Jim has been teaching for 20 years and has seen a lot of students with disabilities. In his experience, they are just lazy and just need to try harder. As a matter of fact, he told a colleague LD stands for lazy and dumb.
  - What is problematic about Jim's belief?
  - What can Jim do if he wanted to develop a different approach to students

Points to Remember

- 7-38-55% Rule
- Develop your sociocultural consciousness
- Know disability etiquette
- Respect confidentiality
- Add a syllabus statement
- Design instruction to accommodate a wide range of learners.

Q and A

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Universal Design of Instruction (UDI): Definition, Principles, Guidelines, and Examples

DO-IT

by Sheryl Burgstahler, Ph.D.

Precollege and college students come from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. For some, English is not their first language. Also represented in most classes are students with a diversity of ages and learning styles, including visual and auditory. In addition, increasing numbers of students with disabilities are included in regular precollege and postsecondary courses. Their disabilities include blindness, low vision, hearing impairments, mobility impairments, learning disabilities, and health impairments.

Students are in school to learn and instructors share this goal. How can educators design instruction to maximize the learning of all students? The field of universal design (UD) can provide a starting point for developing a framework for instruction. You can apply this body of knowledge to create courses that ensure lectures, discussions, visual aids, videos, printed materials, labs, and fieldwork are accessible to all students. Specifically, CAST defines Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as "a framework for designing curricula that enable all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. UDL provides rich supports for learning and reduces barriers to the curriculum while maintaining high achievement standards for all." UDL calls for multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement.

Universal Design

Designing any product or environment involves the consideration of many factors, including aesthetics, engineering options, environmental issues, industry standards, safety concerns, and cost. Typically, products and environments are designed for the average user. In contrast, UD is "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (*http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm*). For example, a standard door is not accessible to everyone. If a large switch is installed, the door becomes accessible to more people, including some wheelchair users. Applying UD principles could lead to the installation of sensors that signal the door to open when anyone approaches, making the building accessible to everyone—a small child, a man carrying a large box, an elderly woman, a person using a walker or wheelchair.

When designers apply UD principles, their products and environments meet the needs of potential users with a variety of characteristics. Disability is just one of many characteristics that an individual might possess. For example, one person could be five feet four inches tall, female, forty years old, a poor reader, and deaf. All of these characteristics, including her deafness, should be considered when developing a product or environment she and others might use.

Making a product or environment accessible to people with disabilities often benefits others. For example, sidewalk curb cuts, designed to make sidewalks and streets accessible to those using wheelchairs, are today often used by kids on skateboards, parents with baby strollers, and delivery staff with rolling carts. When television displays in noisy areas of airports and restaurants are captioned, they are more accessible to people who are deaf and everyone else.

UDI Principles

At the Center for Universal Design (CUD) at North Carolina State University, a group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers established seven principles of UD to provide guidance in the design of products and environments (Connell, et al., 1997). The CUD's principles of UD are listed below. They are followed by an example of application in instruction.

1. *Equitable use.* The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities. Example: A professor's website is designed so that it is

accessible to everyone, including students who are blind and using text-to-speech software.

2. *Flexibility in use.* The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities. Example: A museum, visited as a field trip for a course, allows each student to choose to read or listen to a description of the contents of display cases.
3. *Simple and intuitive use.* Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. Example: Control buttons on science equipment are labeled with text and symbols that are simple and intuitive to understand.
4. *Perceptible information.* The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities. Example: A video presentation projected in a course includes captions.
5. *Tolerance for error.* The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. Example: Educational software provides guidance and background information when the student makes an inappropriate response.
6. *Low physical effort.* The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue. Example: Doors to a lecture hall open automatically for people with a wide variety of physical characteristics.
7. *Size and space for approach and use.* Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility. Example: A flexible science lab work area has adequate workspace for students who are left- or right-handed and for those who need to work from a standing or seated position.

UDI Guidelines and Examples

Universal design principles can be applied to many products and environments. Using the CUD format, UDI can be defined as the design of instruction to be usable by all students, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Universal design principles can be applied to the overall design of instruction as well as to specific instructional materials, facilities, and strategies (such as lectures, classroom discussions, group work, web-based instruction, labs, field work, and demonstrations). Universally designed curriculum provides students with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, ethnic backgrounds, language skills, and learning styles multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement *(http://www.cast.org/)*. Listed below are examples of instruction that employ principles of UD. They are organized under eight performance indicator categories, with a goal statement for each (Burgstahler, 2007).

1. *Class climate.* Adopt practices that reflect high values with respect to both diversity and inclusiveness. Example: Put a statement on your syllabus inviting students to meet with you to discuss disability-related accommodations and other special learning needs.
2. *Interaction.* Encourage regular and effective interactions between students and the instructor and ensure that communication methods are accessible to all participants. Example: Assign group work for which learners must support each other and that places a high value on different skills and roles.
3. *Physical environments and products.* Ensure that facilities, activities, materials, and equipment are physically accessible to and usable by all students, and that all potential student characteristics are addressed in safety considerations. Example: Develop safety procedures for all students, including those who are blind, deaf, or wheelchair users.
4. *Delivery methods.* Use multiple, accessible instructional methods that are accessible to all learners. Example: Use multiple modes to deliver content; when possible allow students to choose from multiple options for learning; and motivate and engage students—consider lectures, collaborative learning options, hands-on activities, Internet-based communications, educational software, field work, and so forth.
5. *Information resources and technology.* Ensure that course materials, notes, and other information resources are engaging, flexible, and accessible

for all students. Example: Choose printed materials and prepare a syllabus early to allow students the option of beginning to read materials and work on assignments before the course begins. Allow adequate time to arrange for alternate formats, such as books in audio format.

6. *Feedback.* Provide specific feedback on a regular basis. Example: Allow students to turn in parts of large projects for feedback before the final project is due.
7. *Assessment.* Regularly assess student progress using multiple accessible methods and tools, and adjust instruction accordingly. Example: Assess group and cooperative performance, as well as individual achievement.
8. *Accommodation.* Plan for accommodations for students whose needs are not met by the instructional design. Example: Know campus protocols for getting materials in alternate formats, rescheduling classroom locations, and arranging for other accommodations for students with disabilities.

Employing UDI principles does not eliminate the need for specific accommodations for students with disabilities. For example, you may need to provide a sign language interpreter for a student who is deaf. However, applying universal design concepts in course planning ensures full access to the content for most students and minimizes the need for special accommodations. For example, designing web resources in accessible formats as they are developed means that no redevelopment is necessary if a blind student enrolls in the class.

UD benefits students with disabilities but also benefits others. For example, captioning course videos, which provides access to deaf students, is also a benefit to students for whom English is a second language, to some students with learning disabilities, and to those watching the tape in a noisy environment. Delivering content in redundant ways can improve instruction for students with a variety of learning styles and cultural backgrounds. Letting all students have access to your class notes and assignments on a web site benefits students with disabilities and everyone else. Planning ahead saves time in the long run.

Employing UD principles in everything we do makes a more accessible world for all of us. It minimizes the need to alter it for anyone. For the complete UDI application checklist, consult *Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction* at *http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/equal_access_udi.html.*

Resources

Consult the following resources for further information on UDI.

Applications of Universal Design
http://www.washington.edu/doit/Resources/udesign.html

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Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)
http://www.cast.org/udl/

The Center for Universal Design
http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/

The Center for Universal Design in Education
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http://www.cec.sped.org/osep/udesign.html

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About DO-IT

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers such as those in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. Primary funding for DO-IT is provided by the National Science Foundation, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education. The contents of this brochure were developed under a grant from the Department of Education, grant #P33A990042. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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