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Quick Answers

QA 10.16

Q: What is Universal Instruction Design?

A: UID Aims at Designing a Class for Full Inclusion of all Learners

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The increasing number of college students who have special needs or who require developmental studies coursework necessitates new instructional strategies for college courses. Traditional lecture teaching is an ineffective educational strategy for special needs students as it is for any student. Instructional strategies for special needs students can be incorporated into a universal curriculum design that benefits all students. This can be accomplished without completely redesigning content coverage or depleting resources for conducting the class.

Universal Instructional Design (UID), or Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of creating a curriculum or a teaching method that is inclusive of diverse learners. It takes into account the different multi-sensory modes that best address the different learning styles and processing differences. UID permits faculty to infuse even abstract concepts and skills without excluding students with distinctive learning needs. It is one way of successfully facilitating equal access to science coursework. UID aims at full inclusion in the classroom without compromising learning outcomes for necessary knowledge and skills.

This well-researched pedagogical method views all students within a continuum of learning abilities. UID is applicable to any subject matter and can be designed in which an array of learning approaches and teaching strategies. Achieving a successful UID means that all students can participate fully with any learning style or disability. It has even been used to improve the performance of English as a Second Language students enrolled traditional courses. UID contains the following elements for inclusion in the curriculum:

- Create a welcoming classroom climate
- Determine the essential components of the course
- Provide clear expectations and feedback
- Explore ways to incorporate natural supports for learning
- Use varied instructional methods
- Provide a variety of ways for students to demonstrate knowledge
- Use technology to enhance learning opportunities
- Encourage faculty-student contact

UID research shows that including the following elements makes the learning environment a welcoming classroom that promotes the other UID goals:

- Inclusiveness
- Non-distracting learning environment
- Multiple delivery methods
- Information access
- Interaction
- Feedback
- Multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge

The elements of UID can be achieved using very simple instructional strategies. The following daily actions show successful integration of UID principles into course content:

- Provide access to an outline for the lecture
- Outline of content coverage
- Accommodations in lieu of traditional lecture
- Due dates or expectations
- Provide multiple ways of presenting information
- Group work
- Case studies
- Reading assignments
- Tangible examples
- Clarify any feedback or instructions
- Ask for questions
- Repeat concepts
- Give additional examples of concepts

There are many good reference materials and guidelines for incorporating UID. Many of the adaptations are a philosophical acceptance of the UID principles. It applies learning strategies that improve learning for any student. Some useful websites for applying UID include:

- Center for Applied Special Technology at http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_difinstruc.html
- University of Guelph at <http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/uid/>
- University of Minnesota at <http://ds.umn.edu/faculty/applyingUID.html>
- University of Washington at <http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Academics/instruction.html>

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