Minds that Matter, Universal Design for Learning

Classroom Strategies for Enhanced Mental Health

Bolea, January 29, 2019

MINIMIZING BARRIERS. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for teaching and learning that includes proactive planning of curricula for the benefit all learners.

recognition network--- strategic network --- and affective network.

Invisible (Hidden) Disabilities

Examples include chronic pain, fatigue, brain injury, mental health issues, autism, ADD/ADHD, learning differences, and cognitive issues related to depressive episodes.

Learning Networks of our Brains UDL allows for multiple means of delivery

- Recognition Network: The "what" of learning.
- Strategic Network: The "how" of learning.
- Affective Network: The "why" of learning.

As a faculty member, focus on:

- **Representation**: How we collect and organize information.

    Key Concept - give/present information in more than one way.

- **Action and Expression**: Planning, performing, organizing, and expressing ideas.

    Key Concept - demonstrate knowledge in more than one way.

- **Engagement**: How learners get engaged; tap into learners' interests.

    Key Concept - challenge and motivate to learn.

MENTAL HEALTH Support Strategies for Classrooms

Abelson, S. (2019). 4 ways Faculty Can Be Allies for College Student Mental Health. The "Q" Blog. ACUE Community. https://community.acue.org/blog/4-ways-faculty-can-be-allies-for-college-student-mental-health/

Some of the UDL suggestions for mental health include the following:

1.Include a statement in the syllabus regarding mental health
This strategy normalizes help-seeking, lays out campus resources, and conveys that mental health is important.

"Sample: Grand Valley State University facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical and mental health conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. Please communicate with me to connect you with supportive accommodations at GVSU Disability Support Resources.

2. Model coping strategies by honestly sharing your own struggles and successes when appropriate.

3. Be prepared to recognize, respond, and refer students in distress.

***4. Establish class conditions and norms that promote well-being, social connectedness, inclusivity, and a growth mindset.

From the University of Texas:
https://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/wellbeing/images/guidebook.pdf

- Focus less on competition and performance and more on learning and mastery.
- Not grading exams or other assignments based on a normal distribution.
- Allowing students to retake exams or parts of exams to learn from mistakes.
- Allowing students to rewrite papers or redo projects based on feedback provided.
- Having students take exams both individually and in groups.
- Giving students choices in how they demonstrate knowledge and mastery of content.
- Build in different ways for students to demonstrate learning and mastery of content. Examples include:
  - Using a variety of assignment types—exams, papers, presentations, videos, etc.

- Letting students choose how they demonstrate their learning within individual assignments (e.g., creating a video, writing a paper, giving a presentation).
- Allowing students to choose whether they work on assignments individually, in groups or with partners.
- Allow for students to fix mistakes and work through problems they've encountered so they can see the progress being made.
  - Let students know you don't expect perfection. Do this by using words like "learning" and "growing," rather than "achievement" or "performance." (growth mindset vs. fixed mindset)

Many institutions are providing a growing set of resources to educators to help them foster conditions for well-being in class. The University of Texas at Austin's [Well-being in Learning Environments guidebook](#) is a particularly good example.

Additional Resources:

[CAST: About Universal Design for Learning](#)

[Universal Design Ideas - UNC](#)

[Universal Design in College Instruction - UO Teaching Engagement Program](#)

Questions to consider:
1) Can I be more flexible? In what ways?
2) Can I be clearer and more open? Can I communicate in more than 1 way? (in class, in writing, graphically, video clips)
3) Can I reduce pressure? (reduce high stakes assignments with no opportunities for recoup?)
4) Can I include a safety valve (low stakes optional/extra credit) (dropping lowest score)
5) Can I overtly state my investment in student learning, and invite questions and clarification through multiple methods? (in class, after class, office hours, email, virtual office hours) (muddy point papers half sheet end of class)?
6) Can I reach out when a student is faltering?