Faculty Resources & Best Practices

Disability Support Services AY2024-2025

General Resources2
Effective Communication Tips2
Universal Design for Learning
Examples for Applying UDL Principles to your Course Design4
Creating Accessible Materials4
Digital Accessibility4
PDFs4
Word Documents5
PowerPoints5
Emails5
Additional Resources for Email Accessibility:6
Video and Audio Content6
Canvas/WyoCourses6
General Canvas/WyoCourses Tips:6
Tips for Supporting D/deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students6
Working with an Interpreter:7
Tips for Supporting Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired7
Resources on Supporting Neurodivergent Students8
Supporting Students with Disabilities in STEM

General Resources

- Visit the <u>National Center for College Students with Disabilities</u> for a wide variety of resources and tips for success
- Open Educational Resources (OER) are free and accessible resources that offer teaching, learning, and research assistance for your students. Consider adding OER materials to your courses to ensure access and save students money. They include many formats, including textbooks, full courses, modules, videos, labs, assignments, and assessments.

Effective Communication Tips

Communication is the key to creating an inclusive and collaborative learning environment! Below are a list of things to keep in mind when communicating with your students who have disabilities.

- People with disabilities are people first. The correct wording is to state the person first and then the disability; thus, you would say "the person who is visually impaired" rather than "the blind man or woman." This places the emphasis upon the person, not the disability.
 - This is a general guideline. Some students may prefer different language depending on their disability.
- Do not use the word handicapped.
- Avoid labeling individuals as victims.
- Avoid terms such as wheelchair bound. Wheelchairs provide access and enable a person to get around independently. People are not bound to wheelchairs; they use a wheelchair to assist them.
- When it is appropriate to refer to an individual's disability, choose the correct terminology for the specific disability.
- Avoid stereotyping people with disabilities into the same category. Disabilities vary greatly from one to another and even two people with the same disability may have different experiences and capabilities.
- Always speak to a student privately about their disability or accommodation(s). Avoid allowing other students or faculty to hear these conversations. This includes conversations regarding testing accommodations, class absences related to the disability, etc.

- Arrange for students to pick up copies of notes or class materials that have been put into an accessible format in a time and manner that protects their confidentiality.
- When in doubt as to what to do to protect the student's right to confidentiality, ask the student how they would prefer something to be handled or connect with the student's DSS coordinator.

Universal Design for Learning

"Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and <u>assessments</u> that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.

The UDL principles are based on the three-network model of learning that take into account the variability of all learners—including learners who were formerly relegated to "the margins" of our educational systems but now are recognized as part of the predictable spectrum of variation. These principles guide design of learning environments with a deep understanding and appreciation for individual variability." - (*UDL on Campus: About UDL*, n.d.)

Visit these online resources to learn more about integrating principles of UDL in your classroom:

- The National Center on Universal Design for Learning has shared <u>examples and</u> resources on how universal design can be incorporated into your curriculum
- The University of Washington's DO-IT Center provides <u>principles and examples</u> of universal design
- Read about the connection between UDL and how our brains learn
- Learn about integrating principles of UDL into course assessments

Courses that effectively integrate UDL will have common disability accommodations built into the course. This helps lessen the need for separate accommodations for students with disabilities. For example, choose course materials in multiple formats, show videos with closed captioning, design take-home exams, and build flexibility around assignment due dates in the syllabus.

Examples for Applying UDL Principles to your Course Design

The University of Montana developed a list of examples of how UDL can be applied in college courses:

- Offer the course syllabus before the class starts so students can review and understand course requirements.
- Provide PowerPoint slides and projected materials before your lecture so students can use them as outlines. Be sure your materials are accessible. Read more about digital accessibility below!
- Describe all relevant visual information. Instead of pointing to the board and saying, "Look at that chart," say, "On the board, you see a yellow chart representing the bird population in the United States."
- Assign one or more note-takers who can take notes during your lecture and share their notes with everyone.
- Speak clearly and give students time to process information.
- When possible, allow students to choose from multiple options for learning. Instead of an exam, offer options like essays, podcasts, drawings, class presentations, and video/audio recordings.
- Record the session so everyone has an opportunity to review and take notes as needed.

View more here: https://www.umt.edu/disability/faculty-staff/udl.php

Creating Accessible Materials

Digital Accessibility

• <u>UW Guide on Digital Accessibility</u>

PDFs

- <u>Create and verify PDF accessibility (Acrobat Pro)</u>
- <u>Creating Accessible PDFs from Microsoft Support</u>

Word Documents

- <u>The Department of Health and Human Services has comprehensive guidance and</u> <u>support around making files accessible</u>
- <u>Microsoft Office Accessibility Center</u>
- Make your Word documents accessible

PowerPoints

• Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible

Emails

Email is an essential communication tool and must be accessible. In general, follow website accessibility best practices in your email messages. Accessible email basics include fonts, good color contrast, readability, heading, self-describing links, and alternative text (alt text) for images.

- **Fonts:** Use Sans serif fonts such as Arial and Calibri. To emphasize text, use bold and avoid all capital letters and excessive italics.
- Font color: Use a high contrast mode such as white and black. Use the Color Contrast checker, such as WebAIM Contrast Checker.
- **Readability:** Keep paragraphs short. Use plain language so everyone can understand.
- Headings: Use headings to organize content.
- Links: Identify links with descriptive text. Do not use "click here." Instead, label the link "register now" or "Learn more about Office for Disability Equity."
- Alternative text (alt text) for images: Insert a descriptive text that conveys the meaning and context of an image. Do not use "Image of" or "graphic of." Instead, write one or two short sentences that describe the subject, setting, action, or other relevant information about the image.
- **Flyer graphics:** An image-only flyer graphic is inaccessible. Include the flyer's content as text in the body of the email. In your text, indicate that the attachment is only a visual.
- Attached file's name: change generic file names to be meaningful. For example, change from "00432lsk40g.pdf" to "recommendation_letter_pdf."
- **Directing to a file:** If directing someone to a file (e.g., in Box), give them a direct link, in addition to directions to where the content is located.

Additional Resources for Email Accessibility:

- <u>CSUN Universal Design Center Email Accessibility</u>
- Harvard University Digital Accessibility Creating accessible emails
- Microsoft Make Outlook email accessible
- Microsoft Outlook Accessibility Checker

Video and Audio Content

• Applications like Zoom have live transcriptions or closed captioning built into their software. Learn how to enable this feature via this tutorial from UC Santa Barbara.

Canvas/WyoCourses

- There are several resources for increasing the accessibility of your WyoCourses page or troubleshooting problems.
 - o IT WyoCourses FAQ Page
 - o ECTL WyoCourses Resource Page
 - <u>Visit CSU's page for instructions on how to install a Canvas plug-in that</u> assesses the accessibility of entire courses.

General Canvas/WyoCourses Tips:

- Content is easy to navigate and comprehend (e.g., folders, files, and modules have informative labels, e.g.,: "Week Two: Topic" instead of "files".)
- Content has contrasting text and background colors. Avoid using color as the sole means to convey information.
- Alternative text appears with graphics and images to be accessed by screen readers. Text describes the image (alt tags or longer descriptions).
- Documents uploaded to Canvas (PDF, Word, PP) are accessible to students via screen and text readers.
- Some online homework and assessment tools are not accessible with assistive tech. When purchasing a new software tool, have vendors demonstrate accessibility with various assistive tech tools.

Tips for Supporting D/deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students

• Provide opportunities for the student to participate in discussions or ask questions.

- Pause the video/film when talking, as the student can attend visually to only one source at a time.
- Avoid speaking with your back to the class.
- Do not speak louder than you normally would or exaggerate your words when speaking.
- Students may use an assistive listening device such as an FM system (professor's microphone and student's receiver), hearing aid, or cochlear implant.
- Repeat questions asked and comments made by other students to allow for the student to follow the discussion.
- Control discussions so only one person is speaking at a time.
- Ensure any verbal announcements (e.g. class cancellation, re-scheduled classes, class activities/field work, assignment instructions, etc.) are provided in a written format.

Working with an Interpreter:

- Some students may utilize sign language interpreters to facilitate communication.
- Look at and speak directly to the student and not the interpreter when communicating.
- Speak at a normal rate (interpreter will ask you to slow down if needed).
- Allow the interpreter to sit or stand near you so the student can see the interpreter AND presenter.
- Because the interpreter will always be a few words behind you, it is helpful to allow for a few pauses between topics and main ideas, so the student has a chance to ask questions.
- Interpreters may request class material ahead of a class period to allow them time to study the vocabulary and prepare for the lecture.
- If class is canceled, please notify the student who utilizes sign language interpreters as soon as possible to allow them time to cancel interpreters.

Tips for Supporting Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

• Provide student access to course materials prior to lectures to allow the student time to arrange for alternate formats.

- Offer materials in accessible digital formats as students may need to use various software tools to enlarge or read the material and text. Check with the student to ensure your materials are working properly with their software.
- New, black markers are most easily read on white boards.
- DSS can assist with enlarging materials or finding alternative formats.
- Provide an auditory and visual teaching approach; do the same in meetings or other encounters. Read aloud anything that is written on the board or presented on handouts, PowerPoint slides or any other visual aids.
- Create text-based descriptions of materials that are mainly visual or graphical.
- Attempt to be specific when describing visuals (e.g., avoid "this" and "that").
- Provide clear pathways and directions for the student who is cane traveling.
- If moving a class, be sure to have someone remain behind to let the student know (a note on the door will not suffice).
- If the classroom or office arrangement has changed, let the student know.

Resources on Supporting Neurodivergent Students

- Read this guide from Marquette University
- <u>Visit the Instructor Guide for Teaching Neurodivergent Students created by Montana</u> <u>State University</u>

Supporting Students with Disabilities in STEM

- <u>Visit this webpage from the National Science Teaching Association to view</u> resources about supporting students with disabilities in STEM
- More resources can be found via the National Center for College Students with Disabilities Clearinghouse