Curriculum Transformation and Disability: Implementing Universal Design in Higher Education (review)

Holley A. Belch, James Barricelli

Journal of College Student Development, Volume 45, Number 1, January/February 2004, pp. 107-110 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: 10.1353/csd.2004.0002

For additional information about this article
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/csd/summary/v045/45.1belch.html
Curriculum Transformation and Disability: Implementing Universal Design in Higher Education

Jeanne Higbee (Editor)
Minneapolis, MN: Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, General College, University of Minnesota, 2003, 319 pages, free of charge (softcover, on-line)

Reviewed by Holley A. Belch and James Barricelli, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Curriculum Transformation and Disability: Implementing Universal Design in Higher Education, edited by Jeanne Higbee, addresses designing flexible curriculum, programs, and services (both in and out of the classroom) that are inclusive and beneficial for all students. The intent of this volume is to inform specifically disability services staff and faculty to Universal Design and provide student services staff with examples for student affairs. This book is divided into four sections.

The first section, Understanding Universal Design and Universal Instructional Design, focuses on how the professional development opportunities for faculty can promote the use of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Instructional Design (UID). Johnson and Fox begin by offering an informative introductory chapter that provides readers with the historical roots of how disability has been viewed and the fundamental principles of UD and UID. They skillfully identify the challenges and limitations of implementing the UID model and offer their thoughts as well.

In chapter 2, Fox, Hatfield, and Collins discuss the Curriculum Transformation and Disability Model (CTAD), which is a structured 2-day interactive training workshop for faculty designed to introduce the UID model and help faculty integrate it into their curricula. The authors also offer readers formative and summative data that were used to measure faculty members’ satisfaction with the workshops and how faculty members modified their courses, altered their instructional design, and used technology to enhance the learning experience. The value of UID and how faculty altered their curricula as a result of the training workshops is further elaborated by the qualitative data presented by Hatfield in chapter 3.

Schuck and Larson, in chapter 4 address why the institutional environment (e.g., small class sizes, a flexible academic environment, and meeting students where they are developmentally) at a community college complements the UID model. One of the strengths of this chapter is the emphasis on faculty and staff development in meeting the challenges presented by a diverse student population and limited resources.

In the second section, Classroom Strategies, nine chapters authored primarily by faculty members capture how curriculum can be adapted for all learners and offer viable strategies on how to create inclusive classroom environments. The utility of this section is grounded in the first person accounts which illustrate how UID enhances student learning.

Pedelty begins this section by proposing different strategies for implementing the UID within the classroom. His use of verbally discussing accommodation statements with students and providing specific examples of actual student interactions illustrates the effectiveness of this approach to building an inclusive classroom environment. In the sixth chapter, Jehangir introduces the concept of learning communities and their various definitions. She elaborates on how
cooperative learning and faculty collaboration can provide students with multiple ways to represent, express, and engage in knowledge.

The remaining seven chapters in this section focus on discipline-specific strategies for implementing the use of UID. Bruch offers a theoretically-based discussion of the implementation of UID in a basic writing course including an explanation of how he redesigned class assignments to be more flexible and inclusive. McAlester addresses reading assignments in composition courses and suggests workable ways to motivate students. McAlester aptly offers a workable strategy for how the UID model can be used to individualize the course material without diluting course expectations.

For introductory mathematics courses, Kinney and Kinney explain UID's utility for a computer-mediated format. A brief yet concise description is offered of the computer-mediated course and how it addresses different learning styles are provided. Brothen and Wambach offer a computer-assisted model (Personalized System of Instruction [PSI]) in teaching a general psychology course. The two case studies in this chapter clearly illustrate how the PSI model and the computer-based course materials supported the philosophy of the UID model.

In chapter 11, Ghere focuses on how UID can be used within a history course through the use of cooperative learning experiences and highly beneficial simulations of historical events. He discusses the unique challenges and educational needs associated with hearing, visual, and mobility impairments with an emphasis on inclusion. In teaching legal studies, Miksch effectively provides multiple examples of how to engage all types of students in the learning process. Her redesign of the mock trial component of the class is a skillful example of permitting students to participate in a way that complements their learning styles.

The last chapter in this section provides an in-depth look into one student's academic success in light of having severe physical and learning disabilities. Hatch, Ghere, and Jirik offer a vivid and compelling account of how the use of UID can empower a student to work through her disabilities, to actively participate in class and become part of the learning process. The effectiveness of the case study is enhanced by the details offered and the accuracy supplied by Jirik’s first-person account as a student.

The third section, *Universal Design of Student Development Programs and Services*, has five chapters devoted to exploring how this model can be used by student affairs practitioners in the design of programs and services. The authors for each chapter are either in disability services (Connelly, Kalivoda, Totty), academic support services and collaborate with disability service providers (Eaton, Uzes, Wiseby), or faculty (Barajas, Higbee, Shapiro). The breadth of authorship lends credibility to the recommendations. However, neither the editor nor the authors provide a rationale for including only specific functional areas.

Kalivoda and Totty offer a brief but descriptive overview of the history of disability services in American higher education. The authors use a case study to demonstrate the ideal application of Universal Design and stress that providing support services is a shared responsibility. A series of basic recommendations are offered to enhance program access, mediate architectural obstacles, and improve interpersonal relationships with students with
disabilities.

In chapter 15, Higbee and Kalivoda address the crucial role that the admissions process, orientation, and the first-year experience plays in helping students with disabilities develop a sense of belonging on campus. In a "best practices" approach, Higbee and Kalivoda provide snapshots of exemplary models that address diverse student needs and enhance students’ first-year experiences.

The final three chapters of this section address the use of UD in specific functional areas (e.g., residence life, academic support, and counseling). Wiseby and Kalivoda examine how UD can create inclusive social and educational programs in residence life. The authors provide fundamental, practical, and budget conscious information on issues of equal access, facility design flexibility, programmatic needs, professional development opportunities for staff, and legal information that all residence life practitioners should possess.

Higbee and Eaton argue for the broad application of academic support services for all types of students (along with the benefits of a universally designed center). Practical suggestions are offered but with the authors giving limited attention to the physical aspects of the environment. Finally, Uzes and Connelly examine the physical accessibility aspects of counseling centers along with providing case studies that address developmental issues specific to students with disabilities. The case study method demonstrates the complexity of these challenges for students with disabilities.

The fourth section of the book has three chapters dedicated to current technology that could assist in implementing UD model and how the model can be a guiding philosophy for education. First, Kalivoda and Totty provide a comprehensive review of current technological devices and software that can be used to accommodate students with disabilities. The strength of this chapter is the review of existing and new adaptive technology that can help inform practitioners about how different devices can assist students with disabilities. In the next chapter, Shapiro stresses the need for universally accessible information on Web pages and provides a series of examples to exemplify his points. The material here is highly technical and may be best suited for those with appropriate expertise. However, the relevance and utility to student affairs areas should not be overlooked. Finally, Barajas and Higbee effectively argue that inclusion is an essential part of the educational planning process. Curriculum Transformation and Disability has fulfilled its promise of informing disability services staff and faculty about UD and UID. The editor and authors have provided a thorough discussion of these concepts and how to promote student learning. The value of the text is that it can serve as a useful tool to communicate with faculty and staff about engaging all types of students while virtually eliminating the marginalization that students with disabilities often experience as a result of accommodation. The first person accounts by faculty coupled with concrete examples add to the value and utility of the work.

The weakness of this book is that although it provides some good practical examples for student affairs, there is little guidance as to why these functional areas were chosen while others were not addressed. This lack of direction and clarification offers little to the reader in order to determine the value and content of the student services section of this book in relation to others (e.g., Belch, 2000).
Practitioners (as well as preparation program faculty) should use this book as a resource for professional development in order to integrate UD into the physical environment and UID into workshop, program, and curriculum design. The book is available free of charge both on-line (from http://www.gen.umn.edu/research/erdeul or http://www.gen.umn.edu/research/ctad) and in hard copy.

REFERENCE


Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism on College Campuses

Elizabeth P. Cramer (Editor)


Reviewed by Veronica M. Lugris and Tamara L. Share, The University at Buffalo

Homophobia and heterosexism are endemic problems in our society. Despite the frequent “liberal” attributions about university environments, college campuses are not immune from the larger sociopolitical context or the zeitgeist in which they are embedded. In fact, research suggests that LGBT people often experience negative attitudes, harassment, and violence on college campuses (Eddy & Forney, 2000). Thus, there is a need for a compendium of thought that addresses such challenges faced by those in higher education. Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism on College Campuses, edited by Cramer, and copublished as the Journal of Lesbian Studies, 2002, 6(3/4), provides a valuable contribution to an often-overlooked spectrum of issues relevant to affirming diversity in higher education.

Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism on College Campuses is comprised of 19 papers organized into five sections: “The Campus Environment: Campus-Wide Programs and Policies,” “Attitude Assessment and Change,” “Practitioner Training Programs,” “Pedagogy and Classroom Interventions,” and “Feature Films and Documentaries.” It is not possible to summarize the content of each paper within the scope of this review, but we will highlight each section so that readers may have a general sense of the content covered. The first section focuses on addressing homophobia and heterosexism through campus programs such as Safe Zone/Allies and other initiatives. The second section outlines approaches to examining and challenging attitudes toward LGBT people and includes empirical studies in Canada, Australia, and the U.S. The third section presents suggestions on training mental health students to assist and advocate for LGBT people. The fourth section provides teaching guidelines and techniques aimed at educators. Along with these techniques and guidelines, a philosophical framework that encourages critical thinking is presented. Finally, the fifth section provides a listing and summary of feature films and documentaries on LGBT issues.

The editor’s stated purpose was to challenge the reader about how to address homophobia and heterosexism on college campuses. As professionals with experience in programming on issues of homophobia and heterosexism, we found much of what was presented not so much a challenge as an invitation to consider a range of ideas in integrating this important issue into curricula and institutional structures. Nonetheless, we found it stimulating and encouraging to read.