

# **Disability Services**

## **Universal Design for Learning**

### **Spring 2019**

#### **Purpose of Assessment**

Every couple of years, Disability Services gathers feedback from faculty members to understand how they can best work with faculty to serve students. This year Disability Services and the Center for Teaching Excellence wanted to gather information to understand how faculty and staff may be incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in their work with students. This is the fourth time Student Life Studies has assisted Disability Services in conducting this type of assessment. The other times were in 2011, 2016, and 2018.

#### **Method and Sample**

A survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The survey contained 13 questions (a decrease of 50%): six quantitative questions, six qualitative questions, and one demographic question. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw every question. The data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

The electronic survey was sent on April 29, 2019, to 1,023 faculty and staff members; however, 17 email addresses were not valid the survey invitation was not received. Up to three reminders were sent to non-respondents before the survey closed on May 13, 2019. Of the 1,006 faculty members who received the survey invitation, 123 completed some part of the survey, yielding a 12% response rate.

#### **Key Findings and Recommendations**

Student Life Studies identified some key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, Disability Services and Center for Teaching Excellence staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents had not heard of Universal Design for Learning and 74% reported they had not received training on UDL. This could be an opportunity for Disability Services and the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) to develop training and information to be shared with faculty and staff members. The departments could consider reaching out to academic colleges or offering training during new faculty orientation and new staff orientations.
- A wide range of common techniques for Universal Design for Learning were reported being used. Almost half of the options listed were used by two-thirds of all respondents. Additionally, when faculty and staff members were provided the definition of UDL, 41% reported feeling they did specific things that might be considered Universal Design that they did not indicate on the provided list. It seems that many techniques are used even though a majority of respondents had not heard of UDL. Trainings may not need to spend in-depth time on how to do some of the specific techniques but rather encourage more to use them.
- There was a fairly low response rate initially. Furthermore, 42% only saw one question because they did not have a role in instructional design. Of the 1,006 receiving the survey, 7% responded who have a role in instructional design. Disability Services and CTE staff are encouraged to use the results cautiously as it may not be fully represented of faculty and staff members working with instructional design.

## Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending order for 2019 mean or frequency percentages. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the entire list of responses can be found in a separate document provided to Disability Services. The topic and questions for the survey changed this year; therefore, comparisons to the previous faculty survey will not be made.

Respondents were initially asked about their role in instructional design through a select all that apply question. Table 1 shows that almost half (48%) reported they taught in-person classes. Respondents selecting the “other” option were able to write a response. Of the six comments, respondents mentioned working in laboratories, managing department social media, being a Dean, serving as an instructional designer for one of the colleges, and serving as a support staff member. Those selecting they had no role in instructional design (n=48) were taken to the end of the survey.

<b>What is your role in instructional design? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>Frequency Percentages</b>
Teaching in-person classes	48%
I have no role in instructional design	42%
Provide workshops or training to students/student employees	10%
Teach online classes	9%
Other	6%
Web designer	1%

Table 1: Role in Instructional Design (n=114)

Those indicating they had some role with instructional design (n=75) were asked, through a select all that apply question, to identify any techniques they use when teaching, training, or designing websites. Table 2, on the following page, indicates that many of the techniques are reported being used by a majority of the respondents, especially providing information verbally, written, online, and using a variety of modalities. Alternatively, using a microphone was the technique from the provided list that was reported the least. Those selecting the “other” response were able to write additional techniques they use. The techniques from the five respondents included allowing different format for project submission, simulations, demonstrations with student participation, and projects.

Which of the following techniques, if any, do you use when teaching, training, or designing websites? (select all that apply)	Frequency Percentages
Provide information in verbal and written format	88%
Provide information online (through E-Campus or other sources)	85%
Provide instruction using a variety of modalities (i.e. visual and verbal)	81%
Provide assessment in a variety of methods (presentations, papers, exams, assignments, etc.)	78%
Provide assignments well in advance of due dates	78%
Use visual aids to describe concepts	74%
Describe verbally any visually presented information (graphs, cartoons, PowerPoint slides, etc.)	71%
Provide opportunities for collaboration (group work, think-pair-share, etc.)	69%
Consider different life experiences when giving examples in class	64%
Provide written feedback on assignments	60%
Provide a rubric for assignments or papers	55%
Provide test reviews	50%
Select textbooks that are available in an electronic format	45%
Break up large projects into smaller assignments due throughout the course of the semester	45%
Select captioned videos	33%
Provide options for different textbooks with the same topics	26%
Always use a microphone	22%
Other techniques intended to reach a wide range of students	10%
None of these techniques	2%

Table 2: Techniques (n=58)

When asked if they had heard of UDL, almost one-third (32%) of the 60 respondents said they had while 68% reported they had not heard of this. Those saying they had heard of Universal Design for Learning (n=19) were asked to provide a brief definition. From the 17 comments, a majority talked about providing access to all students or a wide range of users. Some specifically mentioned supporting students with different perspectives, abilities, and learning strengths. A few used words such as a variety of options and flexible when sharing their definition.

Going to the next page of the survey, without the option to return to the previous question, the definition of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or Universal Instructional Design (UID) was shared with respondents. The definition provided was: *Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or Universal Instructional Design (UID) is a means for providing equity in access to higher education for all students by encouraging faculty to create curricula and courses that take into account all learners.* Based on this definition, respondents were asked if they felt there were specific things they did in planning instruction that might be considered Universal Design that they did not indicate their response about techniques they use. From the 58 responses, over one-third (41%) said yes and 59% indicated no.

Those reporting they thought they were doing a technique that met this definition of UDL (n=24) were given the opportunity to explain what they are doing that might be considered Universal Design. There were a wide range of comments from the 16 who shared a technique they thought met the definition of UDL. Some discussed providing closed-captioned videos, offering a variety of learning methods, giving students more than one way to demonstrate their skills, allowing group work, having video lessons students can watch multiple times as needed.

Faculty and staff members were asked if they had attended training on campus or elsewhere related to Universal Design for Learning. One-quarter (26%) of the 58 respondents reported they had, while 74% said they had not received training. Those who indicated they had received training related to UDL (n=15), were asked where they received the training. Many of the 13 responses, indicated on-campus including some specific areas such as Center for Teaching Excellence, Mays Business School, and Disability Services. A few specific workshops or certificate programs were mentioned including Quality Matters, Instructional Technology Teaching Certificate, and HELLO2 Certificate. Additionally, two other universities were listed: Colorado State University and Georgia Tech.

To better understand the faculty and staff members working with Universal Design for Learning, respondents were asked their role on campus. Table 3 reveals one-quarter (25%) of those responding to the survey were full professors with almost another one-quarter (23%) reporting they were associate professors. Those selecting the “not listed” option for their role (n=6) were allowed to write a response. Those six shared that they were an executive professor, adjunct professor, college dean, professor emeritus, and a visiting assistant professor.

<b>What best describes your role on campus?</b>	<b>Frequency Percentage</b>
Full Professor	25%
Associate Professor	23%
Instructor	21%
Staff Member	16%
Not Listed, please specify	11%
Assistant Professor	5%

Table 3: Role on Campus (n=57)

The final question on the survey asked faculty and staff members if they would like to be contacted regarding UDL, and if so had the option to provide their name, email address, and phone number. Of the 53 responses, 21% reported they would like more information about UDL, 9% shared that they thought they were using UDL in their instructional design and wanted to be contacted, and 70% indicated they did not want to be contacted. The contact information for those wanting to be contacted is provided in a separate document.

### **Department Background**

According to its website (<http://disability.tamu.edu/>), Disability Services “offers accommodations coordination, evaluation referral, disability-related information, assistive technology services, sign language interpreting and transcription services for academically related purposes.” Disability Services works with the Center for Teaching Excellence to provide training on working with students with disabilities to faculty members. According to its website (<https://cte.tamu.edu/Our-Impact>), the Center for Teaching Excellence “support the educational mission of Texas A&M University (TAMU) through evidence-based professional development opportunities promoting proven and innovative instructional approaches aligned with faculty and student success.”

### **Student Life Studies and Project Details**

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, division staff can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

To work with Student Life Studies for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

Report prepared for: Kristie Orr, Disability Services  
 Report prepared by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies  
 Report prepared on: May 13, 2019  
 Survey designed by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies  
 Analysis prepared by: Shawn Ko, Student Life Studies