Adapting to COVID-19: Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to Remove Barriers for All Learning
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Opening

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Okay, so we get started. Hi everyone. Thank you so much for being here. It'll be our pleasure to present some ideas on Universal Design for Learning as a means of removing barriers for learners as we adapt to COVID-19. My name is Dr. Seanna Takacs. I'm so happy again, to be able to present with Junsong Zhang and Arley Cruthers and we'll be moderated by Duane Seibel of course.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Next slide. Before we get started, we'd like to have our territorial acknowledgment, so Arley and I are both with KPU where we work study and live South of the Fraser river which is on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Kwantlen Musqueam Katzie Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples.

Junsong Zhang:

I also respectfully acknowledge the justice institute of British Columbia New West campus, is located on the unceded traditional territories of Qayqayt and Musqueam peoples.

Introduction

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Okay. And we'll go to the next slide please. Hey, we have four learning objectives today. The first one is that we're going to work on recognizing barriers in the online classroom. And we're also going to understand how design thinking can support online classes, of course, we'll explain Universal Design for Learning principles. And we're also going to talk about some concrete ways of mitigating barriers in online learning using the UDL framework. And as we said in the advertising, there's going to be lots of concrete ideas that you'll be able to come away from this webinar with and lots of time for Q & A as well. Okay. Next slide please. So first of all we're going to talk about what UDL is and Jun will take us through principles of Design Thinking which is really key to understanding UDL. We'll talk about, as we said Online Learning & its Barriers.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Next. We'll talk about again, UDL for Online Learning to mitigate those barriers and also some Ideas to Try. So towards the end of the webinar, this is where you'll have a chance to hear about, as I said, these concrete ideas, to ask lots of questions, and this is where Arley Cruthers is going to jump in and is going to have lots of ideas directly from the classroom, because she's actually tried a ton of these ideas this semester. So she's tired, but fresh in her thinking on UDL after the semester, so we're super appreciative that she's here to share her experiences today.

UDL Overview

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Next slide please. Let's talk first about what UDL is, UDL is first and foremost, a curriculum design framework, and it's a curriculum design framework for addressing diversity of learners in our classrooms. So when we talk through UDL, we're going to be talking a lot about how we can sort of orient ourselves towards the diversity of learners in our classroom.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And you're actually experiencing this right now using type well today to have remote transcription, which is making this presentation maximally accessible for folks who will help us by captioning. So again, as a designer for your classes, the idea is that you are developing maximally accessible curriculum, to both you and the student are interacting with. So one of the flavors that Jun and I like to bring to our UDL work and Arley as well, is to bring that idea that the classroom is an ecology and that students and instructors are interacting equally but differently with the curriculum design. And UDL is a systematic design approach that removes learning barriers, the systematic piece is really, really key. And that approach includes clarifying learning goals and it also provides a flexible instructional environment.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And that flexibility is achieved by again, focusing on the diversity rather than individual learners. And we'll get into that in a little bit more, sorry, in a little bit more detail later. Next slide. There are a number of UDL priorities. The first UDL priority is Teaching to the Margins, and by that we mean that before we even start designing, before we even start teaching, we have ways of imagining what, again, that diversity is going to look like in our classrooms. So who are the students who may not be able to access the classroom, who may not be able to access the instruction for what reasons. And in considering teaching to the margins, we really do move beyond a model of disability and we take into account, especially during COVID, especially during this rapid emergency shift to online learning where do barriers pop up and for whom.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And that can be surprising as we've all seen, I think at this point. Next point please. And so another priority in the UDL framework is being proactive versus reactive. So again, thinking about what we're likely to see in our classes, what the barriers are likely to be and planning for that in advance rather than reacting after the fact. And the third, UDL priority is to remove barriers and enable access for as many students as possible next. The fifth priority in the UDL framework is to clarify expectations. And this, I think we all have found really comes to the [inaudible 00:07:17] especially during COVID time. So having very clear goals, very clear expectations, having a really clear syllabus, a really clear course presentation, helping students to understand what expectations look like in terms of engaging in the class. What expectations look like in terms of success, and also having students given the opportunity to express their own expectations.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And again, to understand how those expectations look in terms of having a system or an ecology in the classroom. Another priority is providing flexibility and providing options which we'll get into more detail about. UDL also prioritizes varied assessment. So moving beyond that idea of having a paper, a midterm,

and a final, are there formative assessments that we could use to understand how students are engaging in the class? What kind of beliefs are they bringing to the classroom environment? And again, this is absolutely crucial during COVID, and during this rapid pivot to online. Really understanding how students are entering that sort of instructional frame. And the assumptions that they're bringing with them into the class will really help guide how you're going to provide flexibility and options. What expectations are going to look like and also what barriers are going to look like. And finally, a key priority in the UDL framework is creating expert learners.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Expert learners are learners who are able to understand their sense of engagement. They're able to understand their sense of motivation. You can really tell who the expert learners are at the end of the course. So the extra learners are the students who may say, you know what? I didn't do that well, I know I didn't do well. I didn't work hard enough, or I didn't ask for enough help. And you can also have non-expert learners who do really well in your classes. You can have a student who gets an A+ and really has no idea. They may attribute that to luck or because you like them. So creating extra learners who are really aware of how they're learning. How to manage their expectations, how to manage their engagement and really to be able to reflect and kind of a metacognitive of sense, which we'll get into a little bit more. That's really key in the UDL framework. Next slide please.

Design Thinking

Junsong Zhang:

Let's talk a little bit about design thinking. The reason why we're talking about design thinking is because universal design learning for learning is actually user centered. UDL didn't come from the field of education at the beginning, it was from architecture where they wanted to expand the access for people so that they can access and critique the buildings easily. So we as educators, we borrowed the idea and would expand it, essentially we're working as architectures, thinking about how do we build our courses and curriculum so that more people could actually access it. The key of this is the users, who are the users for this course? And Seanna said, we think this is ecology. It's your students and also yourself who is teaching the class because you're both using the design of the course, and you're continuous improving it, you're collecting feedback.

Junsong Zhang:

So that includes your students' feedback and of course, yourself. Design thinking is really a framework for you to think about how do I design human centered learning and also learning experiences. So there are five steps in design thinking according to Stanford university. The first step is really empathize, empathize means you really need to understand how your users think that includes yourself and your students, how they behave, how they feel, and it requires you to gather information and develop knowledge of other experience motivation needs. So commonly we use, sometimes we use what we call user persona to describe the motivation experience or the needs of your students. So sometimes you can also do an interview or look at history or just talking to the students, observe. The second step is define, it's basically analyze your findings and sensitize them into easily understandable framework so that you can actually define the problems.

Junsong Zhang:

So you may be able to identify multiple problems in this defined stage, but to be more practice because we have limited time and resources, it's really critical to identify and prioritize the problem that you want to start with. I'm sure Arley can speak a little bit more about that. How do you prioritize and what do you think is the most important in the classroom so that you can actually address it. The next step would be ideate, ideate is a stage where you brainstorm solutions and think about how do you address the problem that manifests through the defined things. Usually we think it's easier when you're working with the teams so that you have different ideas. Of course, if you're working with yourself, you can do some sort of a visualizing. You can do a little bit of simple sketch to sort of communicate this idea with your colleagues or even just to yourself.

Junsong Zhang:

It helps you to clarify what kind of idea you are having. The next step is actually a prototype. A prototype means you are making your ideas more tactical where you actually build something or try something, education sort of the learning design will be building something on the learning system or writing a document. So just try something that is simple and low cost, because prototype doesn't require you to build a high fatality. That means full blown course. It's just an idea so that you get to see how that looks like. And the last phase is test. This is where you do some user testing, including your students and get the ideas, get how they feel about it so that you know how to improve it for the next stage.

Junsong Zhang:

This design thinking it's actually iterative, once you finish testing, you go back to empathize. You think about, Oh, this is how my students feel and think and behave. Now I have this kind of idea and I go back and define what are the new problems coming up from this. So there's [inaudible 00:14:27] face to face work that would do some sort of activity where you can design a wallet. It's fun but just for this workshop, we can only give you very high level if you're interested Seanna, and I could also answer some of the questions a little bit later. Next slide.

Online Learning and Barriers

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Okay. Typically and you may have noticed this yourself that barriers in online learning tend to cluster around two locations. First of all mapping the online environment, this has to do with actually developing a cognitive map of what the online environment is going to look like. What kinds of projects am I going to have. What are the exams going to look like. A huge one is where do I locate the content. What's key is structuring the content. So one of the pieces in the UDL framework has to do with the way that are representing content. Where is it going to be located? How can I access it? Will I be able to refer back to it easily? Is that window going to shut down for me all of a sudden if I open a video? That kind of thing.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And then of course mapping out due dates and being able to get a sense of when the due dates are, how that kind of looks according to the calendar, that sort of thing. And we know that a lot of that sort of mapping of the online environment actually has to do with people's spatial ability. So a key in the UDL framework in terms of working in online environment is helping students really gain a spatial sense,

using calendars, using graphics, using colors. And again, Arley, has experimented with this a lot, so she can talk about that quite a bit. That's one of the largest barrier in online learning and then the second barrier is feelings of isolation and again understanding the classroom as an ecology, those feelings of isolation count for students and also for instructors. There's that question about not being sure how to engage. There's less of that nonverbal well, if any nonverbal social feedback, lots of students aren't sure even how to ask questions in an online environment.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Am I bugging my instructor by sending so many messages or sending so many emails and the instructor can feel remote and unavailable. There's just that lack of connection or that lack of attachment feeling that the instructor is kind of out there in the midst sort of thing. And we get lots of feedback from instructors who are also feeling the same way that students also feel remote and unavailable which I think is part of the reason that there's an emphasis on keeping cameras on, staying in touch. There's a huge emphasis on engagement right now, and this is where the UDL framework can be really helpful because there are some keys to engagement, creating community, staying kind of stuck together, close together within reach of each other that we really want to emphasize today. Next slide.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

So one of the ideas is that many of these barriers emerge because of the LMS, being really careful about how learning management system works. It does have the capacity to supplant human agency we kind of bow to the LMS and what it will allow us to do. And so we really want to be careful. Generally speaking, we want to be very careful about how we're making pedagogical decisions. Are they being made within the confines of the LMS? The LMS will let me do this. Canvas will let me do this or won't let me do this or likewise, Moodle permits me to do grading this way, but not that way. So asking ourselves, are we being constrained by the LMS or are we enabling human agency for ourselves as the instructors and for our students as well and making decisions based on sound pedagogical practices rather than just what the LMS will or won't allow us to do. Next slide please. Jun, did you want to take this piece?

The Mission

Junsong Zhang:

Yeah, basically before we go into the framework of UDL, we just want to be clear on the mission, why we're really talking about this while we're having this session today. We really want to help everyone to generate more connection and community for yourself and your students. And of course, think about how can we be more explicit about how we engage students through better design and of course, making more authentic flexible connections in terms of content lived experience, because sometimes the course content can be very much text-based and it doesn't connect to students a lot. And student may not necessarily connect to the content just because of how it's presented or how it's being instructed. So it's very important for us to think about how do we do that, and UDL is a framework where we can look at what ways to do that. And of course, in the special time of pandemic, we do want to engage in the ethic of care where we talk about how to take care of ourselves, how to take care of our students.

UDL Framework

Junsong Zhang:

Next slide. I'll briefly talk about that the UDL framework. So just a clarification UDL frame work is not a problem itself, it doesn't solve problem for you rather it's a design framework where you could take a look and see where your design could start. Offers a lot of insights and principles for you to have fresh look of your curriculum learning course. So UDL actually is divided in three categories, three aspects. The first one is The Why Of Learning and sometimes we call it just engagement. In this aspect, we talk about how do we engage our students, because we have to understand that students have different motivations and they feel things differently. And there's a lot of diversity around how students are motivated.

Junsong Zhang:

They have different experiences from previous learning. They have different subject area knowledge, for example, I'm really good at geography or language, where there are some other students who are good at math and they have different goals for learning. Some just want to get a job. Some they want an answer career through getting more academic credentials and they probably have different abilities, hobbies. So it's really important for us to figure out how do we engage our students and offer options, offer multiple ways to engage them. So offering choices for engagement is a very key aspect of it, and it will give you concrete ideas slightly later. The other aspect of UDL framework is The What Of Learning often referred to as representation, [inaudible 00:22:36] about our teaching and learning 99% of our stuff are in texts.

Junsong Zhang:

With online learning, you have a little bit of video, you have discussion always in texts as well. So we are very much concentrated on texts and that's how we express meanings for thousands of years. But there's a lot more about representation. It's about symbols. You can use symbols, shapes, different language, different graphic organizers so that we can include more students, for example today we're using closed captioning. So that is not just texts and it's not just voice. You have something to look at so that it help students to learn what you're trying to teach. And it's really, really important for us to think about the [inaudible 00:23:30] for each modality, sorry for the word, modality. Sometimes we talk modality, it means different ways of learning, different ways of presenting information or hearing.

Junsong Zhang:

That could be voiceover. It could be graphics, it could be texts, so modality is kind of word we use interchangeably. That's really important to think about how do you represent your information so that students can absorb easily. The other aspect is Action and expression often we think about this as the way for students to demonstrate their learning. If you look from students' perspective, when they are trying to finish an assignment, whether they're doing, they're trying to process information, they're trying to synthesize it and they're trying to demonstrate it. But the way how is demonstrated is often decided by you already, you're saying, this is assignment where I want you to write a paper, 2000 words or occasionally you will say, I want you to make a video presenting, it's kind of decided by you already. So when we talk about action and expression, we're really trying to expand the range of options that you can offer to your students without the change of your learning outcomes.

Junsong Zhang:

And it's something that we can think about, sometimes we have to, existing learning outcomes from the syllabus or coastline, but offering those choices, it's a good way to engage your students so that they can actually self-regulate, think about what skills they need to use, what tools they need to use, how they're going to reach from one to B so that they can actually complete assignment that you give, but at the same time you get to see different assignments, which is quite exciting. Sometimes as an instructor designer or design instructor don't you feel like it's kind of boring if you're just reading 20 papers for this assignment. Would it be actually more exciting for you to see a video or a graphic kind of design for this assignment without changing the learning outcomes. So that's basically the UDL framework. It's really a place where you start thinking about how you design or redesign your classes or courses, to better engage and represent and help students to become expert learners. Next.

UDL for Online Learning

Junsong Zhang:

This is the part where I want to speak briefly, because this is something you can find online. If you look at the UDL framework or UDL principals, it'll give you all the information you need. I'm not going to just repeat myself to that extent, but basically for UDL from an engagement standpoint, you really want to think about how to recruit interest. Like we said, students have different interests, how do you make sure that they are all interested in the course and sustaining effort and persistence throughout the course. How do you make sure that they don't just halfway they're like, Oh, I really had enough with this course, I don't want to take it anymore. And of course, supporting self-regulation so they learn how to learn themselves. Next slide. From a representation standpoint of view there are three priorities.

Junsong Zhang:

It's [inaudible 00:27:04] about how to provide options, so they can actually perceive and learn new information. Like I mentioned already, you can think about voiceover, think about graphic, think about text, providing options is really big thing so that they can actually learn better. The second is the choice for the language and symbols they use to represent their ideas, have you ever think about that your student can be part of the conversation to decide how they want to represent their ideas. The last one is also of course, support learning through multiple means for comprehension. That means lots of different ways, different modality so that they can absorb the information. Next.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Could I just hop in here actually very quickly. So just to tie this back to the idea of thinking in terms of design, it's really, really key with the UDL framework, it's really, really key to involve students in the sort of process. So what'll happen sometimes is when instructor first hear about the framework and providing options. It sort of feels like, well, we're just going to kind of blow the doors open and allow students to do what they feel like and allow them to do everything that they want. And then you're marking five different videos and two different interpretive dances and three essays and then it's kind of like, Oh my goodness, how's my assessment going to look. I wanted to take this opportunity to say that, first of all when we talk about providing options, those options lie in having conversations with students and they lie in canvassing students for what would be most meaningful for them.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And you may indeed find that students say, you know what? This is the kind of information that I really feel like showing in terms of an essay, or I really feel like showing in terms of a video. You'll find that the options are really quite limited and not something that you can work on with students together. So really moving beyond you either blowing the doors open, providing just do what you want and also moving beyond, you can do this and do this, but really making it a conversation with the students in the classroom to say, what's going to make sense here and what are the available options and how can this be most meaningful for you. And that's what brings along the engagement, representation and options for action and expression. Thank you.

Junsong Zhang:

Thank you. Next slide. The last one is about action and expression again. When we think about, we try to get students finish their assignments. What are the options for them to act on it? Is it something they can, interview someone? Is it a thing that they can actually write something? Does is require bodily activities or just intellectual activities? What are the options among those choices you can have. The second would be, like Seanna said, we really want to engage students to have a conversation around what makes sense for you to express and communicate. And I think often it's really important so that they feel they have the autonomy around how they express and research definitely shows that if students feel they have some more controls to learning, they should tend to learn better. The last one is helping them to set goals, planning, and managing and monitoring workload.

Junsong Zhang:

So that's something we'll talk about slightly later, the next slide's about practice so that you can take, because in order to help them to finish their assignments or do the word that you want them to do is also important to help them to understand how they can break down the assignments. And that's why in lots of the courses that we design, we usually have a piece where we talk about goal setting, at the beginning what's recorded, in the middle of the term and in the end of the term, how do you help your student to plan it. And also for big assignments, instead of just waiting for the last week, they have to complete all the assignments. How do you scaffold those little pieces where they can actually see the template, write a draft for you to provide some feedback so that they actually don't feel like overwhelmed at the end of the course. Seanna, do you want to add anything here?

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

No, I think we can move along.

Ideas to Try

Junsong Zhang:

Perfect. The next three slides will be actually about the ideas that you can try already, but before we go there, we just want to remind you that UDL again is a framework. It includes everything, engagement, representing. It could feel like a lot, but we really just want to remind you that you can start from somewhere small. If you just want to start with engagement, that's perfect. So choose the starting point in the framework and you work on one or two things and create clear goals for suffering students and think about how your students prefer to learn and to build and continue to develop their skills. And of course, think about the alternatives, options. And the reason we mentioned design thinking is that it's

not one time plan. It's not like I designed this for this course. It's perfect. It's done. You have to think about how can I improve it by getting feedback over and over.

Engagement

Junsong Zhang:

Next. This is where we have conversation. So Seanna and Arley feel free to jump in. I've listed a few points here where I feel it's the practice that I do in instructional design. First build in opportunities for learners to provide their input on how classroom tasks are designed, so that's a really good practice to ask for feedback. In LMS what we do usually is to have a discussion thread where we say suggestion box and student just can go in any time to provide feedback and think about how we can design this better. What are other some of the choices to you Seanna and Arley?

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

I think this ties into number two as well, another piece of UDL is really having meaningful tasks that are authentic. Having students think about real audiences and having a purpose to assignments and a purpose to analysis, a purpose to all of it. Why are we doing this having a really clear rationale. I know that Arley has experimented with this quite a bit maybe she wants to, Arley maybe you want to chime in here.

Arley Cruthers:

Yeah. In my courses I've sort of experimented with this in a number of ways, and maybe I'll just talk about it in the context of my blogging project, just because that's the one that is sort of freshest in my mind. But I decided that I wanted to have students blogs simply because I teach applied communications, which is a business writing course. And that's a course where sometimes students don't have a lot of business experience. And so I was looking for ways to connect. Okay. They have to organize information. They have to think about an audience's needs. They have to integrate visuals. How can we allow students to practice those skills in ways that are going to be relevant and meaningful and engaging to them, because this is obviously a pandemic.

Arley Cruthers:

I want everything that they do to be meaningful, to have an authentic audience, if they choose and to be something that they're really interested in. And so the nice thing about the blogging project was that students could blog about something that they cared about and that could look many different ways. So I had students who were making video cooking blogs. Now that's something where you have to think about an audience, you probably had the experience of trying a recipe online and realizing, Oh, this step is incomplete or they just said, make the dough and I've never made dough before. So I don't understand how to put water into the dough or what texture I should be looking at. It's really making them think about audiences, it's making them think about organization, above visuals, about what visuals to include, about what to leave in, what to keep out or what to link to.

Arley Cruthers:

And so it was also really great for me because I got to read so many different blogs. So there's blogs on cooking. There is blogs on black lives matter. There is blogs on people just capturing their lives or talking about mental illness that they've experienced. And a whole bunch of different formats, makeup blogs,

beauty blogs. I learned, I should have thrown my mascara away about five years ago. I learned stuff I was cooking along with students so I was... students would post the recipes and then I would try to cook them. One piece was that the blogging allowed students to kind of figure out how to make those learning outcomes their own. But the other piece was that before they started, I had a proposal activity where they really reflected about, they came up with a grading criteria for their blog.

Arley Cruthers:

So they really reflected on what does success look like here? What does success look like for me? Because my makeup blog that's the video is not going to look the same as your meditation on your life during COVID-19 or your blog about gardening that talks about the inner lives of plants. So getting students to really reflect on why are we doing this? What does success look like? What kind of feedback do I want? Ended up with a course that hopefully, and Seanna, I have a lot of discussions, but next semester when I do it, I'm going to add even more scaffolding. But I think the kind of two takeaways was both having a real audience and having these sort of shorter goals and having students think at the beginning, what are my goals and how am I going to relate to learning outcomes?

Arley Cruthers:

Hopefully made the course more interesting to them, but also for me, it was a lot, I've done it before where I've marked 25 of the same paper on the same topic. It is way better to be like, Oh, what am I going to learn in this batch? Maybe I'm going to learn about how to make a chicken adobo. Maybe I'm going to learn about someone's poetry.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Can I add something in there too, having to do with point number five I think is really key is constructing link tasks. I mean, theoretically that's what it is, is always constructing linked task with varying degrees of difficulty. And oftentimes what happens is when we think about changing our design, we kind of equate diversity with we need to make things simpler or we need to make things easier. And that's not actually the case. Oftentimes what students are craving is that things need to be made more difficult and more meaningful. So that's why I like to use the UDL framework in my work with faculty to say, maybe students are actually craving a level of difficulty that's not being offered. They really want to work this in particular ways to make them more meaningful, but they want it to be tougher.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

They want to take the information in the course, the content in the course, and they want to extrapolate to a bigger challenge or something that they feel is really a problem that they'd really like to work on. So a key to engagement is really being mindful that there are degrees of difficulty that you can work into your course design. And that's often hugely engaging for students. It's bringing in prior knowledge, prior experience and then saying, okay, where do we want to go with this? And that's where I'm designing for feedback and also the degrees of difficulty kind of work really, really well as a mesh to support student learning. And then in the Q and A if we want to talk about that a little bit more that's a really nice site to talk about engagement. Maybe we could go to the next slide and talk about representation a bit.

Junsong Zhang:

Perfect.

Representation

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Representation is one of my favorite parts of the UDL framework. So maybe I'll just take the reins here. So when we talk about providing options for representation, we really want to look at how information, how content is being represented again, as Jun said, is it just being represented in print? Is it highly verbal? Is it visual? What modality are we using? Are we having students building, are we having them create or construct again, Arley, will be great to chime in on this, but we really want to help students focus on specific vocabulary terms that are going to connect to prior knowledge. Having students which I think a lot of folks are doing is designing, using resources like videos, animations, and simulations.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

There's a session on Friday on H5P, which was really, really good to attend if you're interested in these kinds of representational questions. Again, providing transcripts and then also highlighting important relationships between different components, different concepts and of course having students create concept maps even large concepts maps, the kind of growth throughout the course. These are the keys around representation. That's kind of, my background is in cognitive science, around reading comprehension so lots of stuff about how we're creating mind maps, how are we're creating representations of information and how nuanced and variable that is because it is an online process and really attending to that idea that as we're learning.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

We may need different types of information in different modalities and giving students the opportunity to have those options and also express what they need next, like do I need to watch some more videos? Do I need to review an aspect of the content more? Is it all kind of hanging together or is there some aspect of the course or some aspect of a concept that I really need to work on a little bit more, that's where providing options for representation come in.

Arley Cruthers:

Yeah. And I think that one of the things that I noticed, especially with the pivot to online is that the ways that I was doing representation pre COVID. I've taught online before and pre COVID when I talked to students, they said, I really liked your video work. Like I like those videos, the videos really helped me to understand the concepts, but right now I'm teaching a lot of students who are international students who are in their home countries who don't have reliable internet access. So for example, I was doing a lot more video grading last semester because students really like to kind of hear the tone of my feedback.

Arley Cruthers:

But this semester I gave students twice because I had a lot of students who, if I send them a video, that's video feedback of their project, they might not be able to watch it. So having those transcripts or having those and doing a pre-survey. So one of the more useful things I did this semester was do a pre survey so that I knew students' technology needs. I knew some of their needs because the way that I've taught

this course in the past is not the same as I taught it during a COVID. So I tried to design it for someone to do it with pen and paper, so that if someone has only limited access to the internet, limited device, they can still do it and participate.

Junsong Zhang:

That's a great example, at our JPC we often face situations where we need to simulate a scenario for our law enforcement people and that's also a challenge too. If you think about how paramedics learn they usually just go to the classroom and the instructor will talk about a scenario and the students would actually act it out, practice those steps so that the action master, the correct staff to do certain things. And the important thing about choices think about how to as an instructor represented information.

Junsong Zhang:

Do you present it from the book? Do you use that book so that you can read about it, or is this something that is actually necessary to watch the video, or is necessary to have the instructor to demonstrate themselves or in certain cases it's important to have an actor or actress coming in and create that chaos so that they feel challenged that they can't manage it. And it goes back to the engagement piece, not necessarily all the time you have to provide simple, easy ones. So think about the representation, different levels of engagement is also quite important.

Action and Expression

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

Yes. We go to the next slide. Okay. Shall I take this one? When we talk about providing options for action and expression again, the idea is designing from the get go thinking about diversity, thinking about levels of challenge and building opportunities for learners to communicate their knowledge in a variety of formats that are appropriate relevant, and also meaningful. You may get to a point in your classes where students they would like to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that might be, it might be unexpected. So also throwing that open to students and saying, this is kind of my idea, this is what I would like to do, these are my thoughts on this kind of assignment. If you have other ideas, if you have some alternatives you can also have a class consensus on that as well.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

And we can talk about that a little bit more, also providing learners with lots of examples of ways to solve problems or addressing issues. So the idea that there isn't just one way to skin a cat, we can look at problem solving, we can think about the challenge, we can think about alternatives and really work on that in the classroom environment looking at alternatives in that sort of way. And it's also a really good opportunity, A to give feedback in different formats, but it's also a really good way to help students organize course content. So really action and expression has to do with that end state, which is so key to expert learning and it's so key in the UDL framework is goal setting. So if we're trying to get from point A to point B, what's going to make the most sense.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

In a typical classroom, the instructor might say, okay, this is point A and this is how I'm going to get you to point B and then I'm going to measure you at point B. So UDL kind of turns out around a little bit and says, okay, well, here's the starting point. Here's the content. Now let's look at goals for the content but

also let's look at goals for how we're going to learn, how we're going to organize the course content and also how we're going to demonstrate that we understand the course content. Again, it's giving students more agency in the learning process. And then along those lines, if you look at point number five that gives us the opportunity to pose questions to learners that ask them to reflect and self monitor, not only on the content, but how they're coming to the content, what is the process that they've used to get to that content.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

I've had the opportunity in a bunch of statistics courses where I've been lucky to have instructors who say, okay, well, yes, you got to the answer or you didn't get to the answer, but let's look at your process and let's look at what you were thinking and how you kind of monitored your learning to get there and see if we can change the process rather than just the outcome. And that has a huge impact on assessment because then the student is assessing themselves and we're also assessing, and then you can also bring in peer assessment. And again, Arley, I think you probably have some neat thoughts on this particular area.

Arley Cruthers:

Yeah. And I mean, I think that one of the nice things about when it comes to assessment and getting students to reflect is that a lot of what I do involves a piece of upgrading. So I try to teach in a very process oriented manner. My background is in creative writing and I really want students to resist the urge to just go, okay, I need to get this done let's just go from, I write, I maybe do a bit of revision and I hand it in. So one of the ways, if I want students to really focus on the process and to take some risks and to try new things, one of the things that I sort of quickly discovered was that I had to change what I was grading and how I was grading. So a lot of how I grade now is getting students to for example, in one of my courses we do this big report that's based on design thinking where students kind of come together and write a report.

Arley Cruthers:

And at the end, their final task is to take what we learned and teach it to somebody else in a new way. And so that can be anything and it doesn't also doesn't have to be an English. So I've had students create posters, videos, comic strips whole range of things but this isn't a video making class. It's not a painting class, it's a communications class. So what I'm really grading them on is a memo where they are explaining to me, what was I trying to do? How did I go about doing it? Did I run into any obstacles? If so, how did I encounter that? How did I address these obstacles and what would I have done differently? So somebody can take a risk if I have a big ambitious idea where I want to create this wonderful cartoon or something, and it doesn't quite come out the way that I want it, because I'm still learning how to make cartoons.

Arley Cruthers:

They can still get a good grade. So one of the things that I'm trying to get students to do is to really commit to a process and not to try to be okay with not having the right answer, because I think if I'm grading them in a traditional format there's going to be the feeling of like, if I don't know the answer for example, I'm going to write about things that I'm really comfortable with, and I'm not going to take risks because many of my students, if I get a bad grade in this class, it could jeopardize my [inaudible 00:51:25]. It could jeopardize my pathway to my goals. So taking the focus off of the product and putting

it on the process for me and grading has really helped to both give students more control over their learning and then also giving them that reflection piece. So they're being graded on their reflection.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

I see that Darren, in the chat I know I'm not supposed to look at the chat, but in the chat Darren's posted what sounds like a pretty neat thing around both analog or digital concept maps. And it looks like there's a new tool there that hopefully Darren, you can chime in within in the Q&A maybe give us some idea about that concept maps or a great idea around both representation and action and expression as well.

Arley Cruthers:

Seanna and I just worked on a project where we created a big mind map assignment for students and it really was this sort of missing piece in that project, where students are more intentionally making connections between the kind of different elements of the course and then the different modules. To answer that question that popped up in the chat I have, because I teach communication, I'm grading them in some ways their ability to write a memo because that's one of the learning outcomes of the course. So I'm grading them on, did they use the parts of the memo? I'm okay with higher marks, I don't personally, if a student can show me, I would love to give everyone As.

Arley Cruthers:

If that shows that the students have mastered the learning outcomes. So I grade them for a small piece on their, did you use the memo format that we discussed in class? Did you use specific examples, et cetera. But most of what I'm grading them on is completeness, how thoroughly did they answer the question. Did you use examples from your own work. Did you reflect on the process et cetera. And I guess one of the challenges is that there are some institutional challenges of, if you have to grade on a curve and that's really unfortunate, it's hard when you're in that particular context.

Arley Cruthers:

But another ways that in what I'm doing this semester is that students come up with the criteria that they want for example, if I'm grading a blog they say, okay, I want you to focus on source use. I want you to focus on storytelling. I want you to focus on organization. And so within that framework, I can then give them assigned traditional grades in that way. So that might be a way to get around it, to just give students if you can't focus on the process in that way, then you can at least give them some control over what categories you're assessing.

Q&A

Junsong Zhang:

We have a couple minutes, I think we already started answering questions already. So feel free to jump in to ask questions, we'll answer them in the next couple of minutes. And of course we have, I'm going to send a link where you could read a little bit more about the recent what Sean and I wrote, so you'll have more details if this is too broad for you.

Arley Cruthers:

No, I don't encourage, the question was do you encourage requiring students to keep cameras on? I know personally for me, first of all I don't do a lot of synchronous. I've added synchronous sessions to

give the students who wanted that sort of structure to give them that structure. But I designed my course to be a synchronous and then I don't require them to keep their cameras on in part because some of them have been with issues. Not everybody wants to show their house or they may have kids and stuff going around. And I found that most students want to communicate in the chat and that's also okay with me so you don't have to speak. And I can also share with you a bunch of assignment packages that I have that have some rubrics for the reflective memo to answer Maddie's question.

Duane Seibel:

Okay. One more question. You can either put it in the chat or unmute mascot. There's a question from Gabriel. What sort of templates are there available for getting students to fill in with the course Cochran camp?

Junsong Zhang:

Can I jump in. I think it BI designer question so if you have [inaudible 00:56:55] designer that you're working with, that'd be at a point you can talk to them how to design the template specifically for your course. If you're talking about the assignment or template then you can also draw from your previous examples, previous classes who did it well, or you can write something that is simple and easy for your students to answer. But also, again, if you're just looking for student feedback, it doesn't have to be template. You can have a conversation, especially that we're teaching online now there's a lot of video conferencing tool where I would encourage the instructor to have deep briefing session. Introduction at the beginning to ask students what they want to do, how they want to do it and during the midterm, they can ask again in debrief about, at the end of term, you can talk about it again.

Duane Seibel:

There was one question that came in advance and maybe I'll toss it out. It's the last question. And it's addressing students with dyslexia. Are there tools to help? Acknowledging a high percentage of students in prison have this issue.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

UDL actually grew directly out of research on students with dyslexia and I won't go into a lot of that detail although it's very interesting. But suffice to say, that's one of the aspects of variability that we would explicitly want to take into account. For students who have reading disorders is what it's termed now, for reading disorders that's where an option for action and expression and an option for representation is super, super important. So for students who have reading disorders coming to content by watching videos and by listening is really, really key. Also having ways of highlighting specific vocabulary terms, different ways of accessing written language is really important.

Dr. Seanna Takacs:

But again, it's a great example because that's exactly what UDL grew out of is that 10% of kids who have reading disorders, who were able to come to all of the content and had all of the interest and the background knowledge and so on, but had that barrier to access specifically around print. So in that sort of sense with this pivot to online where everything is so, as Jun indicated earlier so much of it's print. The print load has really, really expanded in a lot of classes, so that can create what's normally kind of a moderate barrier. It can become an enormous barrier for some students. Does that answer the question? Yeah. And then Rolly, in the chat has some ideas on text to speech apps. So text to speech just becomes absolutely crucial here.

Closing

Duane Seibel:

Okay, well, we're at the end of our time. So I'm going to take this opportunity to thank our facilitators today, Seanna, Jun and Arley for spending time with us and sharing this information. I'd like to thank each of you for participating. You will receive a transcript of this session with materials afterwards, if you've signed up for it. But you can also go back and look at all past and future webinars at the link provided on this slide. And I encourage you to go to the BCcampus main website and sign up for their newsletter so you'll get regular updates each Wednesday on what's happening. I'd like to provide a special shout out to Kelsey for providing our technical support in the background today. And also for the first time we've attempted real time captioning by type well, and thank Christine for her work. I don't know if you've been watching this, but wow, she can type. Thanks again. I hope to see you in this session soon.