Universal Design for Learning Basics

Main ideas

- All classrooms are populated by **diverse learners**
- Students bring to the classroom their own background, strengths, needs and interests
- When this diversity is not recognized and addressed by proactive curriculum design, our students may encounter **barriers** to learning
- Universal Design for Learning is a **framework with guidelines** that can be applied to reduce these barriers, and provide better access to learning for all

Breaking it down

- **Universal**: Curriculum can be designed for, and used by, everyone
  - Curriculum should provide genuine learning opportunities for every student (this does not necessarily mean that all students achieve the same end results or do so in the same way)

- **Learning**: Learning occurs based on the interaction of three brain networks:
  - The recognition network ("What" of learning)
  - The strategic network ("How" of learning)
  - The affective network ("Why" of learning)

- **Design**: Intentional planning enables diverse individuals to achieve learning goals by mitigating or removing barriers
  - Universal Design is an infrastructural concept, used in the development of buildings and structures and other places
    - Universal Design is predicated on the notion that **what is essential for some is often good for everybody**
      - Poor design limits use; smart design broadens use
  - UDL applies these concepts to education, providing a framework for how to support and challenge our diverse students
  - UDL focuses on learning goals, methods, materials, and assessments
The UDL Process

- First ask, "What are my course goals?" What do I want my students to know, do, and care about?
- Then ask, "What barriers in the classroom might interfere with my diverse students' opportunities to achieve these goals?"
- To reduce or eliminate these barriers, use the three UDL Principles to create flexible paths to learning:
  - Provide multiple means of representation (provide content in different ways)
  - Provide multiple means of action and expression (give learners different ways to demonstrate what they know)
  - Provide multiple means of engagement (motivate learners in different ways)

Explore

Learn more about UDL concepts, principles, research, and practice:

- [CAST: UDL Theory and Practice](#) (requires free sign-in)
- [CAST: About UDL](#)
- [UDL on Campus: UDL in Higher Education](#)
- [CAST: The UDL Guidelines](#)