Draft Proposal for Guilford College Quality Enhancement Plan

Universal Design for Learning to Achieve Inclusive Excellence

Program Concept

The three principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), representation, action & expression, and engagement, provide a framework that we believe would serve the students, faculty and staff well for the QEP. As a community, we could commit to designing classes, events, etc. in a way that all learners can access the curriculum/co-curriculum and excel.

Using assessment tools and templates that are already available, we could do something unique to Guilford. With training and support, faculty and teaching staff could design accessible learning experiences and assess those experiences, using the model we have already established with the Writing in the Disciplines QEP.

The resources are readily available and easy to use. One example is this website, which was recently launched to help institutions of higher education implement UDL:

http://udloncampus.cast.org/home#.VG35xiLF8sc

This initiative could set us apart from other institutions, signaling our commitment to diverse learners who make up the majority of our population (adult learners, English language learners, students with learning differences, first generation students, etc.). And it would provide much needed support for faculty and teaching staff who struggle to engage these learners in an effective and efficient way.

Program Implementation

We envision using the template established by the Writing in the Disciplines QEP.

First, the community will establish initial goals and intended outcomes.

Suggested Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes

**Goal One:** At least some percentage of academic and co-curricular programs will establish student learning outcomes and design measurements for the outcomes using the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines.

**Goal Two:** Support the implementation of UDL throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum by enhancing faculty and staff development, academic support services and technologies, and co-curricular programs that facilitate inclusive learning and teaching.

**Goal Three:** Students who complete QEP courses and co-curricular programs will
improve their critical thinking and communication abilities, and will demonstrate better critical thinking and communication as compared to both internal control groups and students at similar institutions.

Baseline Data Collection

- Gather persistence and graduation rates over a five year period for key student sub-populations. Include key admission data for each cohort, including average class ranks, High School GPA, SAT scores, etc.
- Randomly sample 20 faculty, perhaps stratified to reflect the five academic divisions. Exclude those faculty over age 60. Ask them to select one regularly offered 100 or 200 level class and one 300 or 400 level class. Ask them to complete an assessment survey of each class based on its inclusion of UDL based assignments. Have the students in each class participate in a questionnaire that addresses the degree of UDL based assignments. Offer the faculty who participate a modest stipend for their time.
- Using the FYE labs, randomly survey about 10 sections and administer an academic climate survey to discern whether various student sub-populations are finding their academic interests encouraged and satisfied. Administer this survey late in the fall semester to give sufficient time for students to experience the college, yet before we start losing those students who might not persist.
- Identify a particular assignment that lends itself to alternative means of expression. Develop a rubric that assesses the quality of the student responses. During the baseline period, allow only students one mode of expression, say writing. Assess their work using this rubric.

Program Activities

Each year, we would invite faculty and teaching staff to participate in 2-3 day summer workshops. Over the five years, we hope to include every interested faculty and staff member, but certainly a representative from each academic department. In that way, each department would have a resource person to help spread ideas among their colleagues. We would not necessarily target the 20 faculty selected above, but rather use them to see how effectively the ideas from the workshops would disperse across the curriculum.

The workshops would include some of the recent neuroscience on learner variability and implicit bias. We would then explore how these advances might impact the classroom. We would examine our own biases, either the result of our own preferred learning styles or unconscious biases about race, gender, etc. The participants would learn about varied ways that course content and assignments can be adjusted and
expanded, employing “multiple means of representation and engagement, [as well as learners’] action and expression.”¹ The participants would spend time working on course syllabi and class assignments to reflect what they have learned, presenting their ideas to each other before the close of the workshop.

**Assessing Enhancement**

We would use the same methods used in the baseline assessment to look for improvements in climate, persistence, and in the expansion of UDL across the curriculum. In particular, we could use the 20 faculty to see to what extent curricular improvements were experienced only by those faculty who participated in the workshops versus more broadly. To assess student performance directly, we could assign the selected assignment mentioned above, but now allow multiple options for expression. Using the same rubric, we could compare rates of proficiency with the baseline measure.

**Program Meaning for Guilford**

We believe that a focus on Universal Design for Learning to Achieve Inclusive Excellence will yield more effective teaching and improved student success and retention as it expands personal and pedagogical self-awareness among our faculty and teaching staff. In particular, it will draw attention to the *implicit pedagogical and racial biases* that currently limits our effectiveness in reaching more students in our classrooms. As we recognize these limitations, we can bring our creative talents to designing new approaches, attitudes, and forms of assessment that may expand these limits.

What do we mean by implicit pedagogical and racial biases? First, let us explain what we are calling implicit pedagogical bias. No doubt each of our academic disciplines have rather standard ways of disseminating key ideas and theories, developing crucial disciplinary skills, and assessing student mastery of this content and skill set. Likely, each of us have modified our pedagogy to make it more student-centered, experiential, or writing-intensive. Yet, our teaching methods may remain remarkably similar to what we experienced in our own undergraduate and graduate education. To be sure, these disciplinary methods have stood the test of time. Yet, many were developed in an era that accepted extremely narrow norms regarding student capabilities and held only rudimentary understanding of neuroscience.

Not only do we now acknowledge the importance of making our classrooms accessible to students with a variety of physical limitations, we now are recognizing the amazing variety of ways that individuals process, learn, and articulate information. In this reality, some of the tried and true methods may no longer be broadly effective, at least without

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¹ Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0, CAST, 2011
some modification. As faculty and teaching staff, we will be asked to consider carefully why we believe that the lab report, case analysis, research paper, music or literary criticism represent the best (or only effective) way for our students to demonstrate their proficiency.

For obvious reasons, explaining and discussing implicit racial bias is more provocative. Let me do so through a personal example. Last spring, I needed some help with an electrical component. As I entered the local Radio Shack store, I noticed the only employee, currently busy with another customer, was a black female. Immediately, I thought to myself that I was not going to get the help I needed. At this point, I might have listened to my thoughts and simply turned around and walked out the door, especially since I was pressed for time. Intrigued by my thoughts instead, I waited until my turn. After explaining my problem, it took her all of ten seconds to solve it.

I believe this example reveals two important aspects of implicit racial bias. First, some of you may wonder why I would be willing to share what seems like such an embarrassing revelation. A scarlet letter comes to mind. I do so since I believe this example says more about our society than it does about me. Over my life, I have been the (largely) unwilling recipient of countless messages, both overt and covert, of racial (and of course gender) stereotyping. Apparently, many of these messages are stored somewhere in my brain, generally below my level of consciousness. Indeed, it is my understanding that, at most, we are conscious of only four percent of what is actually going on inside our heads at any given time. Walking in that store and seeing the employee triggered my implicit assumptions about black females.

This experience raises a second issue. What if I had not been both self-aware and curious and simply walked out? Even if she had noticed, she would not have known why I was leaving. Maybe, I had simply realized I did not have my wallet. Perhaps there was some other innocuous reason. Yet, what if others also immersed in this society held similar assumptions and walked out regularly? How might this affect her if she noticed this unspoken behavior on a recurring basis? Even worse, what if the store manager noticed this pattern?

This QEP will encourage faculty and teaching staff to consider the assumptions they hold regarding teaching pedagogy and student differences. By increasing self-awareness of these assumptions, faculty and teaching staff will be better able to consider whether and what changes in methods, behaviors, and assessments might better serve the needs and capabilities of a broader range of students in their classrooms.

Concerns to be Addressed

How do we include CCE classes? Focusing on full-time faculty may skew the effort towards traditional students and day classes.

The "resource person" for each department could be a faculty "mentor" for UDL (course release, stipend, committee release???)
We must use internal and external resources and experts.

A representative sample is a problem at small institutions but still valid data.

**Resources**

UDL is being implemented by many institutions of higher education. There are many resources available to us if we decide to pursue UDL for our QEP.

Dr. Elizabeth Berquist of Towson University offers this insight from their campus adoption of UDL:

- In our first year, we measured change in faculty beliefs, knowledge and practices about UDL. This year, we are going to use the UDL guidelines as a rubric to measure presence or absence of the UDL guidelines.

Institutions using UDL campus-wide:

Boston College
[http://www.bc.edu/offices/its/projects/udl.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/its/projects/udl.html)

George Washington University
[http://udlgwu.wordpress.com/](http://udlgwu.wordpress.com/)

San Jose State University

San Francisco State University
[http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/udl](http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/udl)

The University of Vermont
[http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/universaldesign/](http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/universaldesign/)

Towson University, Maryland, Office of Academic Innovation

Colorado State University
[http://accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/](http://accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/)

The California State University
Additional Online Resources:

National Center on Universal Design for Learning

http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/postsecondary

The UDL Implementation Process

http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/planningtemplates/districtresources

UDL & Assessment

http://www.udlcenter.org/resource_library/articles/mislevy

Design-Based Research Plan for Improving Faculty Adoption of Universal Design for Instruction in the Higher Education Classroom, p. 11


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December 1, 2014