

Transcript of Claudius's Perspective

[Text on screen: Implementing UDL... Practically. My Experience and Tips]

Hi, my name is Claudius Soodeen, and I'm a university instructor, faculty development specialist, and lifelong learner. Much, but not all, of what I've learned about teaching has been through being a student, being exposed to methods and strategies that either worked or didn't work. The fact that I've been a student while teaching has enabled me to be empathetic and see potential sticking points and opportunities for students. I started teaching in person, but during COVID, I switched to online and took advantage of that medium to adapt techniques and assignments. And I carried on some of those in the face-to-face classroom. [Text on screen: UDL can be used anywhere!] So UDL principles are transportable across teaching environments. In fact, I've incorporated UDL principles even without knowing they had an official name. To me, they're just good teaching principles, and just made sense. They help all students.

One of the fundamental principles I adhere to is that each student is unique. [Text on screen: Each Student is UNIQUE] No two students will necessarily learn in the same way, neither will they have the same needs or respond to the same teaching methods in the same way. Therefore, I try to offer a variety of options in terms of support, in-session teaching, and assessment. I cannot offer infinitely variable options, [Text on screen: Meet students where THEY are!] but I can try to meet students where they are. Furthermore, I don't know which students have which particular needs. So by normalizing these practices, students are put at ease, and I don't have to implement as many alternative practices as I might otherwise have to.

Specifically, looking at the UDL checklist provided in this resource, for online teaching, I made sure I had the following. Now, this is not an exhaustive list. [Text on screen: Explanatory videos for concepts and assignments (closed-captioned)] I had explanatory videos for concepts and assignments, which were closed captioned. [Text on screen: Recorded live sessions] I recorded our live sessions. [Text on screen: Flexible office hours via zoom] I had flexible office hours via Zoom. [Text on screen: Variety of activities in class] I had a variety of activities in class, and [Text on screen: Related content to real-world skills] I tried to relate content to real-world skills. [Text on screen: Multi-part assignments] Some of my assessments had multiple parts to allow students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways, and [Text on screen: Reasonably flexible deadlines] I had flexible deadlines, but within reason, of course. Now, these practices do

not solve all learning issues, but they remove some of the common barriers for all learners, leaving specific issues to address. Some of these issues will need to be referred to specialists. Not all problems need to be solved by instructors.

Are these more work? Not always. However, anything to do with media creation will require time and skill, but there are often tools that can make this task easier. For instance, while I use Camtasia for video editing and manually adding closed captions, other cloud-based content delivery apps can auto-caption videos, for example, [Text on screen: Microsoft Stream, Panopto, YouTube] Microsoft Stream, Panopto, and YouTube.

So what advice do I have? [Text on screen: 1. Start with a few easy practices but not too small!] Start with just a few easy practices, but don't start too small. Flexible deadlines and office hours might be a good starting point, but you could also adapt existing assessments into multi-part assignments with a visual or media-based component to complement a written or oral component. For example, a traditional written assignment can be changed to allow students to demonstrate awareness of core principles on a topic via an infographic. Then, of course, depending on class size, you could have one-to-one meeting with them to discuss gaps and to provide further details that would indicate knowledge. Or, you could have them do a short oral presentation in class, or you could ask them to create a video presentation as an alternative.

[Text on screen: 2. Ask students what would help them learn (EARLY in the course).] Ask students what would help them learn more effectively and make that a general discussion point in the class early in the course. You may get responses about small group discussions, oral presentations, practical application activities, and so on. This will identify some solutions to try that students will more likely respond to positively.

[Text on screen: Don't get discouraged!] Don't get discouraged. Not everything you try will succeed the first time or for all students. If you are able to help one student, consider that a win.

[Text on screen: How might some of the strategies I used help your students, considering your constraints?] Now that you've watched this video, think about how some of the strategies I used might help your students. But also consider the constraints of your course and your own time. For example, who might benefit from flexible assignment deadlines and why? How flexible can you be without negatively impacting the course, student learning, and your own time? All the best with implementing UDL practices into your courses.