

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Ohio University

Project Details			
Title	Universal Design in General Education Curriculum	Status	REVIEWED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	01-08-2015
Timeline		Reviewed	04-18-2015
	Planned Project Kickoff 01-01-2014	Created	12-20-2013
	Target Completion 12-31-2015	Version	1

1: PROJECT GOAL

A:

The project will identify 6-8 large lecture style courses (125 or more students in a single section) in which the faculty are willing to redesign the course in accordance with the principles of Universal Design. The faculty will be provided training and mentorship in the area of Universal Design in order to redesign their courses. The Universally Designed courses would be expected to improve the learning experience and achievement of learning objectives for a broad spectrum of students. Additionally, there should be a reduction in the need for instructors to make arrangements for individual accommodations in these courses.

2: REASON FOR UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT

A:

Currently, there is an institutional priority in creating an accessible and inclusive campus with regard to people with disabilities. Additionally, the numbers of students with disabilities has greatly increased over the past few years. Universal Design in instruction is proposed to create greater access for students with a range of abilities and reduce the need for individual accommodation. While UD emerged from a vantage point of creating inclusion for students with disabilities, it has been found to increase access to the curriculum for students without disabilities who may have a broad range of learning styles and individual strengths and weaknesses.

3: ORGANIZATIONAL AREAS AFFECTED

A:

Student Accessibility Services will be the office primarily responsible for the project. The project will also directly include 6-8 faculty from departments that offer the same large lecture (125 or more students in a section) format general education courses in the Fall semester each year. This project will also rely on the support of members from the Presidential Advisory Council on Disability and Accessibility Planning and the Office of Information Technology's academic support.

4: KEY ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

A:

The Universal Design in General Education Curriculum project will specifically impact the instructional design and delivery of several large section general education classes. The faculty instructing these courses will be provided training on the principles of Universal Design and offered consultative support to create classes that intentionally aim to teach and access a broad spectrum of abilities and learning styles.

5: PROJECT TIMEFRAME RATIONALE

A:

This project will run for two years in order to gather baseline data on the courses designed and delivered as is and then to gather comparative data for the redesigned courses instructed by the same faculty the following year. Additionally, faculty are likely unfamiliar with the concepts of Universal Design and the training and mentorship of the redesign process will require several months.

Spring 2014: Identify specific courses and secure faculty commitment

Fall 2014: Faculty teach courses as currently designed

Spring 2015: Training regarding Universal Design is provided and faculty are mentored in the redesign process

Fall 2015: Faculty teach Universally Designed courses and project concludes

6: PROJECT SUCCESS MONITORING

A:

Progress will specifically be tracked in relation to the major milestones in the timeline above. The Assistant Dean for Student Accessibility will assemble a project team in January 2014 that will meet regularly towards the implementation of this project.

7: PROJECT OUTCOME MEASURES

A:

If the project meets the anticipated goals, the student evaluation feedback should be significantly more positive in the Universally Designed courses as well as seeing an improvement in the overall grades in the courses and a reduction of the number of students receiving below a C and potentially retaking the course later to improve their grade.

Faculty should be able to report greater achievement of student learning objectives.

Additionally, there should be a reduction in the need for instructors to make arrangements for individual accommodations in these courses.

Project Update

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: General Project Status: In-progress (but delayed)

Original Project Start Date 1/1/2014

Originally Projected End Date: 12/31/2015

Anticipated Completion Date if Not Completed: 12/31/2016

This Action Project effectively has been delayed for one year due to some unanticipated changes, such as an opportunity to create several new academic technology positions and include them in the planning and implementation of this initiative.

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: The project will identify 6-8 large lecture style courses (125 or more students in a single section) in which the faculty are willing to redesign the course in accordance with the principles of Universal Design.

A short list of faculty who routinely teach qualifying courses has been developed. Invitations to participate will be sent early January 2015.

The faculty will be provided training and mentorship in the area of Universal Design in order to redesign their courses. Training has not yet been delivered although four potential trainers have been identified who could provide a high quality training specific to the higher education environment.

The Universally Designed courses would be expected to improve the learning experience and achievement of learning objectives for a broad spectrum of students. No progress due to delayed implementation.

Reduction in the need for instructors to make arrangements for individual accommodations in these courses is anticipated. No progress due to delayed implementation.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: The project is still in its beginning stages after some unanticipated changes and opportunities arose. To date, funding in the amount of \$23,000 has been secured to provide the training and compensation to participating faculty and the process of identifying potential faculty has begun. Additionally, a short list of faculty has been developed for potential participation as well as initial conversations for those who may participate on an oversight committee. Shortly after the project began a key partner decided to retire from the institution and the position was not filled until a few months later. In addition to this change, our academic technologies department began the process of hiring a team of instructional technologists who would be embedded in each academic college and assist with course development. Although the project could have proceeded despite these changes, it was decided that waiting for the instructional technology team to be in place would provide greater involvement in the project. We believe this decision will lead to better infusion of the project goals throughout the institution at a more sustainable level post project completion.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Due to the delayed implementation, there has been little to no involvement of the larger community during this past year. January 2015 will begin the phase which will require collaboration.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: There has been little effect during this past year due to the decision to slow the projected timeline for the opportunity to include key collaborators.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Based on the work completed thus far, one potential challenge that may arise is the limited number of faculty who routinely teach large, lecture style general education classes. Initial conversations with potential faculty indicate that it may require a higher degree of coordination within a department to assure that faculty can teach the course on the required schedule.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: New timeline:
Spring 2015: Identify specific courses and secure faculty commitment; form oversight committee and select vendor to provide training; determine specific measurable outcomes anticipated for the Universally Designed courses
Fall 2015: Faculty teach courses as currently designed
Spring 2016: Training regarding Universal Design is provided and faculty are mentored in the redesign process
Fall 2016: Faculty teach Universally Designed courses and project concludes

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: We considered cancelling this Action Project due to the intentional lack of progress from the decision to delay implementation. This project is our fourth current Action Project. However, we decided to keep the project active to help provide additional impetus to keep moving forward with this important initiative.

Update Review

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: As the flexibility of technology and digital media can be used to greatly enhance learning environments, inclusion of the academic technology positions in the planning and implementation of the project appears to support the delay of the project.

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: Putting the focus on large lecture courses is a way to touch a large number of students, to not only enhance their learning experiences, but to also gather some meaningful data within the framework of this project. As a significant number of students will experience this enhanced learning environment, this project could also lead to student demand for similar learning environments in other courses.

In preparation for the formal training, if the project team has not done so, it may be helpful to direct the participating faculty to the websites of the institutions with active UDL initiatives.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: As mentioned previously, the decision to delay the project to include the new instructional technology team appears to be key to the overall success of this initiative.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: As stated in the project narrative, the project will be under the direction of the Student Accessibility Services office. However, as UDL has the potential to improve learning outcomes for all students, communication about the progress of the initiative to the larger instructional community beyond the 6-8 faculty members directly involved is critical.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: Recognizing that the original project would likely not have been as successful without the inclusion of the instructional technology team is in itself an effective practice. A major component of quality improvement is the ability to change and adapt.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Even though a smaller number of faculty may end up being involved in the project, since the lecture classes themselves have large enrollments, there should still be sufficient data to evaluate the effectiveness of the redesigned classes.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIME LINE

A: The timeline and identified steps are reasonable and actionable. The inclusion of mentors, in addition to the actual training should result in course designs that provide the desired results.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: Ohio University is to be commended for its commitment to student learning, and an Action Project is an effective way to provide focus and time commitments to the implementation of UDL.