



Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

Thomas J. Tobin and Kirsten T. Behling

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While universal design for learning (UDL) has been successfully in use in the K-12 world since the nineties, higher education has lagged behind in adopting its principles and practices. Most institutions of higher learning agree that UDL is a good idea, yet UDL practices have usually been delegated to, or taken on by, one professor, program, or office rather than being implemented institution-wide. It is this situation that Tobin and Behling are seeking to remedy with their book.

They do so in three interconnected ways: they reframe UDL as something other than disability advocacy, they provide a framework for integrating UDL into all aspects of students' interactions with an educational institution, and they make the case to campus leaders that UDL is not only a way to comply with accessibility law but is also sound educational and business practice. Their hope is that UDL will move from being about projects (making this course accessible to this student) to being about the culture of a school (how an institution attends to all parts of the student experience).

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 (chapters 1 and 2) provides an overview of UDL as well as the legal requirements with which UDL helps institutions comply—the “stick” approach. Part 2 (chapters 3 – 6) argues that now is the right time to adopt UDL, noting the benefits educational institutions are likely to reap by doing so—the “carrot” approach. Part 3 (chapters 7 – 11) shares specific projects, programs, and plans for implementing a UDL culture throughout an educational institution in a scaffolded way: beginning small and adding both breadth and depth over time.

What is so useful about this book is this comprehensive approach: it addresses both the system and its component parts rather than focusing more narrowly on the work of a few employees or offices. In its suggestions for specific populations (campus leaders, faculty services staff, student services staff, faculty members), this book addresses all components of a large university; in its focus on cultural change, however, it is equally applicable to a small school without these specific offices or staff members.

Two things have remained with me long after I closed the book. The first is the mindset change it advocates. Issues of access are frustrating to teaching faculty, especially in small institutions with limited resources. When I start thinking in terms of accessibility, however, I can be both proactive and more imaginative. This imagination is fueled by the “thought exercises” that end each chapter. These brief learning activities provide the scaffolding that could become a UDL redesign plan of an educational institution.

I am also reminded that while those of us in theological education care about legal compliance and sound pedagogy, our commitment to God's *shalom* offers us additional resources and motivation for the slow, organic work of becoming places that welcome and value our students in all their variety and particularity. This book can help us move in that direction.