

Chapter 10

Applying Universal Design for Learning to Create a Transformational and Accessible Learning Framework for a Technology–Driven International University

Kim K. Floyd

West Virginia University, USA

Neal Shambaugh

West Virginia University, USA

ABSTRACT

Universal design for learning (UDL) guides the developers of the technology-driven international university to design flexible academic programs and design features of the supporting academic units. Faculty, staff, and administrators share a moral responsibility to enable all people to access educational opportunities. Adherence to UDL guidelines ensures accessible academic programs and acknowledges that humans vary in their capacity and location to receive educational and research experiences. The chapter first examines transformational features of the technology-driven internal university, describes the UDL framework, and applies the UDL guidelines to academic programs (UDL-C) and administrative units (UDL-A). Recommendations and further research are suggested applying UDL across a technology-driven international university.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL FEATURES OF THE TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The aim for this book claims that “Launching accessible technology-driven higher learning institutions that offer a transformational educational and research experience can effectively prepare future leaders with the knowledge resources and tools to meet the demands of the 21st century (Khosrow-Pour, 2018). Key words from this statement include “accessible...institutions” and “transformational educational and research experience.” The term “accessible” acknowledges that humans vary in their capacity and location to receive educational and research experiences. Institutions share a moral responsibility to enable people to access educational experiences that acknowledge global change and human diversity. Accessibility is a term used increasingly to hold distance learning programs accountable to the student’s ability to matriculate through a program. Responsive curriculum for the 21st century develops in individuals not only foundational knowledge and multiple skills (e.g., communication, problem solving), but the affective capacity to attend to emotions and attitudes underlying beliefs and action. The editor also identifies the value of implementing institutional core values across programs, including “educational excellence, student-centered course development, lifelong learning, a respectful environment, flexible learning, diversity, global leadership, research contributions, entrepreneurship, partnership, excellent service, and quality.” If these core values are important, then how are these core values integrated into programs?

The mission of this book specifies that “the goal of every university should be to create a transformative impact on society through continual innovation in education, research, and entrepreneurship.” The term “transformational” describes ongoing psychological, cognitive and behavioral changes in people that connect to the moral values of people who are committed to improvements in society (Burns, 1978). Sometimes connected to the development of institutional leaders, a transformational stance can be applied to the design of flexible curriculum responsive to ongoing global change and learner diversity but also to the structure of educational institutions as a means to assist people in both academic programs and administrative units.

Transformational features of a curriculum ensure that educational experiences remain accessible to individual learner differences, including cultural, physical, and cognitive dimensions. In addition, a transformational curriculum may include across all academic programs personalized learning assistance and accelerated plans for program completion. Learning experiences in a 21st century university respond to the needs of students and business incorporating programs which address business and community workforce needs. Resident and distant learning environments are developed to support student lifespan career needs tapping technological tools and authentic problem solving situations. Learning outcomes in a transformational university need to broaden and include foundational knowledge, skills, but also affective dispositions that support groups, business, and community activity. Skills can also include communication and leadership skills, technological literacy, and metacognitive awareness.

A transformational feature within university structures would be to ensure that the purpose of the institution is to serve its audience or constituents across their lifetimes, embracing for students a “cradle to grave” stance. Another transformative feature would ensure that all stakeholders have input into determining issues and options, and that administrative policies and procedures address collaborative decision-making at all levels. Consequently, all constituents would be responsible for ongoing data collection and analysis, so that change and program improvement taps collective data gathering efforts. In particular, technology infrastructure must be secure and enable people to do the jobs they were hired to

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