Students with Intellectual Disabilities: How Universal Design for Learning Enhances the Postsecondary Education Experience
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Background
Families and students with intellectual disabilities are recognizing the value of a college experience and enrollment in colleges nationwide is increasing. These students are accessing college campuses through open enrollment as well as through non-degree seeking admissions applications. (Transition, 2004). With an increase of students with intellectual disabilities on college campuses, the implementation of Universal Design of Learning is an opportunity to enhance learning opportunities for all students.

The Challenge
Many college and university professors struggle with the concept of intellectual diversity in their classrooms, entering unfamiliar territory as each is confronted with the challenge of teaching students with various levels of knowledge, skills, and experiences. Universal Design is one way to meet this challenge.

While there are a variety of descriptors of Universal Design for Learning, the three overarching tenets include:

1. Provide Multiple Means of Representation
2. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
3. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

Creating Mentoring Partnerships
Students with intellectual disabilities gain support for the academic and/or social needs they have, and education majors gain valuable experience making accommodations, promoting self-advocacy, fostering relationships, and collaborating with others, including their mentoring partners. How peer mentors can promote the use of UDL to support students with intellectual disabilities in college:

1. Provide Multiple Means of Representation
   The peer mentor may:
   - provide a visual example of what is being discussed
   - provide explanations of language and symbols being used, making connections to a student's prior knowledge to enhance comprehension

2. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
   The peer mentor may:
   - help the student better understand content by acting it out, or helping the student to act it out or role play
   - provide graphic organizers to help the student organize information more independently
   - suggest the use of technology as an alternate form of expression to access student knowledge

3. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement
   The peer mentor might:
   - read information with the student to access auditory learning styles
   - provide support and praise for work accomplished to promote sustained effort and persistence
   - help collaborative group members design specific questions or roles to better engage the student with a disability in the group assignment

References:
## Nine Types of Adaptations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Level of Support</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Adapt the number of items that the learner is expected to learn or complete.</td>
<td>Adapt the time allotted and allowed for learning, task completion, or testing.</td>
<td>Increase the amount of personal assistance with a specific learner.</td>
<td>Adapt the skill level, problem type, or the rule on how the learner may approach the work.</td>
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<td>Reduce the number of social studies terms a learner must learn at any one time.</td>
<td>Individualize a timeline for completing a task; pace learning differently (increase or decrease) for some learners.</td>
<td>Assign peer buddies, teaching assistants, peer tutors, or cross-age tutors.</td>
<td>Allow the use of a calculator to figure math problems; simplify task directions; change rules to accommodate learner needs.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Alternate Goals</th>
<th>Substitute Curriculum</th>
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<td>Adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner.</td>
<td>Adapt how the learner can respond to instruction.</td>
<td>Adapt the goals or outcome expectations while using the same materials.</td>
<td>Provide different instruction and materials to meet learner’s individual goals.</td>
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<td>Use different visual aids; plan more concrete examples; provide hands-on activities; place students in cooperative groups.</td>
<td>Instead of answering questions in writing, allow a verbal response; use a communication book for some students; allow students to show knowledge with hands-on materials.</td>
<td>In social studies, expect one student to be able to locate just the states while others learn to locate the capitals as well.</td>
<td>During a language test one student is learning computer skills in the computer lab.</td>
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Source: Center for School and Community Integration, Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 1994, 2000