



## Research Summary

**Year 3: April 16, 2010 – April 30, 2011**

With support from the United State Department of Education, Ensuring Access through Collaboration and Technology: Partnerships, Technology and Dissemination (EnACT~PTD) established and evaluated an innovative faculty development program in support of students with disabilities across seven California State University (CSU) campuses. Specifically, EnACT~PTD offered faculty the training and support necessary to ensure students with disabilities were provided a quality postsecondary education.

### Project Overview

Recognizing the value of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a model pedagogical framework, EnACT~PTD offered 37 project faculty the skills, support, and training necessary to successfully incorporate UDL principles into their coursework. In addition, EnACT~PTD established campus-based Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) to compliment UDL faculty workshops. These FLC supplemented the traditional seminar-only professional development model by offering faculty a forum to mutually consider the scholarship of teaching and learning in small learning groups. Finally, EnACT~PTD offered faculty an opportunity to reflect and capture their UDL pedagogical practices utilizing a case story format, produced using Pachyderm. Multiple online Video Case Stories were developed which exemplify how faculty addressed specific instructional issues through the incorporation of UDL into their teaching.

### Impact on Faculty

Faculty perception of EnACT~PTD project trainings and activities revealed high levels of satisfaction that met or exceeded their expectations. Specifically, faculty offered praise for the UDL Workshop (88% satisfaction rate); praise for the FLC forum (89% satisfaction); and noted the overall importance of their course changes in light of the teaching and learning process (97% noted as important). Of particular interest, 72% of the faculty stated they would have been “unlikely” or “not made” course changes had they not participated in EnACT~PTD. Faculty also reported an increase in UDL knowledge (100%), as well as enhanced expertise in applying UDL to their teaching (85%). In addition, 68% of the faculty reported that implementation of UDL principles were perceived as positive by their students.

In a follow-up qualitative study, faculty were interviewed to gain insight into their perceptions regarding EnACT~PTD processes on their respective campuses. Key findings from these interviews revealed that the FLC process was valued as a tool to “improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and improving accessibility for all students.” As well, faculty praised the UDL process as a way to “reach everyone regardless of learning style” and that the overall format was valued by the participants given that they “clearly see the benefits to student learning.” Commonly, the highest value was placed on how FLC members offer support and insight to each other on “how to teach a class so that information and conceptualization of course concepts is universally accessible to all students via diverse teaching methods.”

## Impact on Students

During the Fall 2010 term, 1,876 students were enrolled in the 37 EnACT~PTD project-targeted courses. Of those enrolled, 6% were students with disabilities (SwD) and 94% were students without disabilities (SwoD). Students were primarily undergraduates (72%) and primarily female (66%). At the end of the Fall term, faculty identified their unique UDL course changes and asked their students to evaluate the relative importance of these changes. Data revealed that students with and without disabilities demonstrated statistically similar perceptions ( $p > .05$ ) regarding the importance of these unique UDL courses changes. Specifically, all students (regardless of disability status) noted that their instructor's course changes were "important" (mean 2.53) in helping them succeed in class. This is corroborated by data collected on their overall course achievement. On average, SwD maintained a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.98 while SwoD maintained a 2.90 GPA.

In addition, all students were asked to evaluate the relative importance of our project-based UDL Common Elements. Parallel findings were noted in that students with and without disabilities held statistically similar perceptions ( $p > .05$ ) that the UDL Common Elements were "important" in helping faculty create an effective learning environment. Students also offered substantive narrative feedback on how UDL course changes impacted their success including: "having a more complete syllabus," "frequent quizzes as opposed to longer tests," and "the opportunity to let us revise assignments was very helpful."

## Implications for Practice

EnACT~PTD advances a unique and valued approach to faculty development. By adopting UDL as our overarching pedagogical framework, EnACT~PTD faculty participants speak to the value of both our specific UDL workshop and the need to couple this training with an ongoing forum (FLC) for support. This two-pronged approach offers faculty the knowledge and support necessary to carry out important UDL course changes which would have not otherwise occurred. Data indicate that this model readily equips faculty to make ongoing course changes and faculty recognize that these changes are instrumental in the teaching and learning process.

In terms of student success, our project provides concrete information on how UDL practices are perceived by postsecondary students. Data revealed that there were few differences between students with and without disabilities in terms of how UDL course changes impacted their success. UDL changes offered by our EnACT~PTD faculty were of similar value to all students and students' narrative comments affirm this finding. In addition, when evaluating the relative merits of specific UDL strategies offered to faculty by this project, few differences were noted between students with and without disabilities. This re-affirms the notion that UDL as a model pedagogical practice supports all students including students with disabilities.

## Resources for Implementation

As a multi-faceted yet replicable approach to faculty development, EnACT~PTD is a model that can be adopted by any postsecondary institution. In an effort to encourage replication, please contact the Principle Investigators to access our training materials, publications and examples of the Video Case Stories.

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