

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 1, Episode 5

Universal Design for Learning

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We acknowledge and are mindful that CSU Chico stands on lands that were originally occupied by the first people of this area, the Mechoopda, and we recognize their distinctive spiritual relationship with this land and the waters that run through campus. We are humbled that our campus resides upon sacred lands that once sustained the Mechoopda people for centuries.

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Welcome to the Rise, Teach, Learn podcast. I am Dr. Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State. And we are happy to make this resource available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Gunderson. And she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience. Subscribe to our podcast and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

00:59

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach, Learn. I'm your host Jamie Gunderson. In our fifth episode entitled, Universal Design for Learning we explore UDL with Dr. Loui Lord Nelson, an internationally recognized leader in UDL implementation. We also catch up with Jeremy Olguin, Director of Student Affairs technology services to learn about readily available technologies that can serve to break down barriers and support all learners at Chico State.

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Okay, so I am here today with Dr. Loui Lord Nelson and I am super excited and super grateful that she took the time to meet with us today and have a conversation about UDL because I have been following her work in my journey with universal design for learning. So, I wanted to just open up to kind of share with everyone I love UDL. I have been breathing UDL in my teaching practice, and also in my research for nearly a decade. And it's been really neat to watch Universal Design for Learning transition from this like theoretical framework in special education to this like universal adoption in not only higher education, but also K-12 education. So, I feel like I've a little bit grown up with UDL in my research and practice. But I want to turn it over to Dr. Lord Nelson to give us a synopsis of her journey with UDL, which is much more extensive than mine. Thank you, Jamie. Okay, so I really, I did not know about universal design for learning when I was in the K-12 classroom. When I did come to know about universal design for learning, I learned about it in my doctoral program. And then I was introduced to it even more deeply when I was serving as an Interim Executive Director. It was very soon after that, that I was approached by a school district who said: "Hey, we want UDL to be our organizing framework for everything we do in our district. We firmly believe in it. And we think that it is good for all students." This was in 2007. And they had been investigating UDL since 2002. And, but really needed somebody to kind of leadership role. That role had me in front of about 750 teachers was what they had in their

district at the time. But I worked with educators I worked with, well, I worked with teachers, I worked with building principals, I talked to the superintendent, I worked with the directors of Elementary and Secondary and special education. I left in the 2012 year to go do my postdoc at CAST. But in those intervening years, we had moved from working within each building and with teachers all the way to the point of embedding Universal Design for Learning within their professional learning standards. So, you know, my journey with UDL was like this incredible, beautiful beginning because everything stemmed from the framework. And so, it was my role to say, Oh, this is how I like I said, I went off to CAST I was there for a gorgeous year. I worked with their professional learning group. I got to actually work with anybody I wanted to it was like candy shop. And I you know, I was really focused on K-12 at the time, because that's where I came from. Right. But it was while I was there at CAST that actually there was a pretty significant movement starting to help. postsecondary folk understand universal design for learning. And at that time, it was pretty much introduced through disability offices and as a benefit for students with disabilities and definitely it is absolutely it is. But fortunately, that tide started to turn a little more quickly than I think it did in the K-12 environment.

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So now more campuses are realizing, oh, okay, the point of universal design for learning is to help our learners experience this thing called being an expert learner, and Hmm, all of our learners need to practice those skill sets. And we need to give them those opportunities and build those into our lessons in our learning environment. So, I think more and more campuses are starting to either make that shift or as they're coming into UDL, they're recognizing that they just need to start as a full campus wide, meaning all students will benefit from this.

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So currently, I work with anybody who wants to learn about UDL. But that's everything from working with, you know, the people who are implementing it in their classrooms, to ministries of education, who are doing systems change. And I've worked in every place from Australia, and Singapore, and Japan, and throughout Europe, and all over the US, of course, and then in Canada, so it's kind of going, you know, across the world there.

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And it's really exciting. It's very, very exciting to see what this framework looks like in a completely different contexts and how flexible the framework is,

06:29 and what's universal about it, what everyone needs to learn about it. And then again, how unique it is in its application based on context. That's one of the things I love about UDL is it provides guideline, it's kind of like a recipe, you get to pull all these different ingredients and make your own lesson design, you know, your own thing, put your style and your flavor on it. And, and as long as you're aligning to different principles, guidelines and checkpoints, you are essentially implementing Universal Design for Learning, which is really kind of dynamic. And I really like the fluidity and the flexibility of it. This podcast is all about actionable practices, things that we can take into our classrooms tomorrow and implement. And your work really centers around understanding and implementation. And so, I think when I talk to educators about Universal Design for Learning, either faculty or pre service educators, there's still that kind of myth that like, Oh, it's just these three principles. Can you kind of give a brief synopsis of the foundation of UDL why the principles come to be and some of the must-

knows that are essential for educators to understand? Yeah, absolutely. Most people when they think of UDL, if they've been introduced to it, just know it a little bit, it's that graphic organizer, they know, they know, the picture, the framework, everything is grounded in this fact that every learner is a variable learner, not only do we each learn differently, but we individually as an independent soul, I learned differently based on the context in which I sit, that directly impacts my learning. So how I feel about the subject or topic, the relationship I have with the people around me, and specifically, the person who's going to instruct me, the relationship I have with the resources and tools that I that are either made available to me or I can gain access to, or I know about has a huge part of it. And my own emotional state in the moment, quite frankly, to ignore that, in our learners ignores the complexity of learning feels so theoretical, and it's really not it's go in moves from this quote, unquote, theory. Well, it's really theory, but it moves into practice so quickly. And so, if those practices are embedded within the lessons that are being provided to the learners, then it's more likely that those learners are going to be able to hook in and be able to move forward.

Understanding that not only is every learner different, but every learner is different individually within the context, their learning does seem a bit overwhelming for our educators, right? So like, okay, so I have all of these learners, everybody's different. And then each of those learners are different within themselves. How do I plan a lesson or design an activity that would even come close to meeting the needs of all of these learners? And so, um, I know that for me, the guidelines really support me in that endeavor. And I've become more automatic in my practice of it. But can you, do you have any pro tips for folks who are, you know, kind of learning about this learner variability and thinking like, what the heck, how do I adapt my lessons for all truly all learners? Right, right, right. Yeah, yeah. So, you know, we look at the nine guidelines and the 31 checkpoints, and we're like, whoo, and then anybody who goes to <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/> and looks at the framework and clicks on those checkpoints and realizes who there's like a paragraph and two or three bullet points under each of these things. These are this is neat.

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You know, don't stop, please don't stop. What I always suggest is that people just do an introductory, just understand what engagement representation and action expression mean, just read those, those paragraphs. And again, they're pretty pithy. When you read about engagement, representation, action expression, one of those is going to sing to you, I guarantee it. One of them gets more into the effect of networks, which is our emotional drivers, our why of learning: why do we want to learn, representation feels really good to most educators, because it's what we're doing anyway, we're figuring out how we want to represent the information, show it to our learners so that they're going to get it. And then action and expression for those who really love to see the creative side of their learners and just get astounded by what they give them, then they like to start in that one. But I just suggest they choose one of those principles. And then after they've done that, see what one of the guidelines under one of those needs. And it could start with recruiting interest, which is the upper left-hand corner of the engagement, principle of engagement, or maybe they want to start with the expression and communication, which is the middle of the strategic, you know, networks and action and expression. But anyway, reading more about those, and then just giving it a shot. And if when they want to dig into one of the checkpoints and just give that a shot, that's fine. And here's why.

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It doesn't matter where you start, because the framework is, is designed based on neuro psychology, neuro psychology tells us that the entire brain is interconnected. Nothing is done individually. So, it doesn't matter where you start. Because what you do over in the top left-hand corner, is actually going to directly affect and be connected to what's going on in the bottom right-hand corner, you're not doing it yet. You're not thinking about it yet, but you're probably doing some stuff around there. And so, by the time you get to that lower right-hand corner, and you start learning about it, and going, Oh, I'm starting to see the connection, it'll feel a little bit stronger and a little bit better. So, you could you could hang this thing on a dartboard and throw a dart at it and choose your checkpoint that way, and you would still be successful. I mean, yeah, make a game out of it. For goodness' sake. Um, you know, that actually sounds like a lot of fun, I might do that.

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I love that. Because it's such good information. I work with pre-service educators. And the one thing I tell them about Universal Design for Learning is just, you know, start by recognizing the practices that you're already engaging in, and how they might align to checkpoints. And, and when there's some success felt with that, like, Oh, I, you know, I aligned here with comprehension, because I really, you know, I provided this, this and this and, you know, here's the template and, and a guided checklist and all of these tools and resources I'm giving my students, they feel that success, and then they're like, okay, now we kind of shift into this idea of, and I think it comes from like Tobin and Behling of this plus one mindset, or plus one strategy. People think that UDL is like a set of practices, a set of strategies, but really, it's a mindset, the guidelines help us develop this mindset over time. But what you see is true. Once we start implementing, we start to see, and we become more comfortable with the guidelines, we see that like, Okay, my establishing of a learning goal at the beginning of my lesson is hitting, you know, effective regions for recruiting interests, but it's also got some self-regulation executive function, if I come back to that learning goal at the end of my lesson, and I check in with my students and say, you know, let's, this is our goal, this is what we're working on. Talk to me about where you're falling on that goal. So that one practice the way that I use it hits multiple guidelines, principles and checkpoints of UDL. And I think that's what's super fun about it, is that there's no one way to do it. There's no one way to go about it. You can you can pick and choose. So, I know that you said you came with some resources for us higher ed folks, and I am dying to share those with faculty. So we're going to include those on our teaching guide for universal design for learning. But can you share with those resources are?

Sure. So first off CAST, which they're the creators of universal design for learning. They have a section called UDL on campus, and it is purely dedicated to the higherEd implementation of UDL. So that is, it's an HTTP, but it's <http://udloncampus.cast.org/home>

14:57 the let's see a book that I love and you were talking about one of the authors earlier Thomas Tobin. Yeah, he has a book. Yeah, *Reach Everyone Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education*. It's really a primer on how to bring UDL onto your campus. So, people who are excited about the framework, and I want to help kind of move that along on the campus. That's a great book.

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Lillian Nave produces the podcast, *Think UDL* that specifically for higher ed. And it's brilliant. It's wonderful. It's talking with other folks. She's in higher ed, they're in higher ed, they're all having conversations. It's really good.

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Um, another book *UDL Navigators in Higher Education: A Field Guide* that's by Jody Black, and Eric Moore, CAST publishes that one.

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And then finally, there's the UDL-IRN, which is the implementation and Research Network. It is a leg or an arm, whatever of CAST, and they have an incredibly active, higher education special interest groups. So, in higher ed SIG. You can find more about that at the UDL-IRN.org website, which is <https://udl-irn.org/>. And if you go to network, then you can go to the higher ed say they've had two digital conferences so far, incredibly well attended. These are international.

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But the group also is very active on Twitter, #UDLHE, is how you find them.

Perfect. Thank you so much. We're going to include all of those resources, like I said in our teaching guide. So, faculty will have quick access. Dr. Lord Nelson, I am geeked out. Thank you so much for having this conversation with me for sharing ideas and tips with our faculty. And I hope that we can continue having these conversations to support faculty at CSU. I love that.

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All right, so I am here with Jeremy Olguin, the Director of Student Affairs Technology. And he has graciously accepted my invitation to share a little bit about the accessibility resources that are available to faculty and students on campus. So, Jeremy, thank you so much for being here today. Yeah, thank you for having me. I appreciate it. Yeah, why don't we start with just talking a little bit about your role? And what all that entails? Yeah, I mean, more recently, I've taken over a lot of different technology, functional technology duties within the Student Affairs area, we collaborate a lot with campus. And you know, we need some additional help there. But my, my backbone in my, my home is always with the OATS department, which still reports to me and OATS is the office of accessible technology and services.

18:04 in that, in that respect, we were all over the place and all OATS, we try to have as much of a reach as possible. And, you know, we continue to, you know, strive forward, you know, year after year to make more inroads throughout campus.

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That's awesome. And I have to tell you, as an instructor, myself, I really gotten a lot of it's been very quick and easy to just submit assignments, submit documents, and presentations to OATS and get those back in an accessible format that my students can download in multiple ways. So, I think that segues nicely into Blackboard Ally, which is one of our accessibility tools. Could you tell us a little bit

about Blackboard ally and what all the features entail? Yeah, we brought back Blackboard Ally to campus just about four years ago now, with the goal of giving student choice and creating an accessible environment that wasn't just for students with disabilities, a lot of times you hear accessibility and you automatically think disability, and that isn't necessarily the case and Blackboard Ally help change that narrative. You know, it could be, you know, a mom traveling to and from campus, you know, that just doesn't have time, you know, now they can download an audio file so that accessibility isn't just for someone that's visually impaired. Now we have different use cases. And with Ally having five, six different formats available for every content, you know, item type, you know, it's been an amazing, you know, boom, for our campus to have that. I just spoke with Dr. Loui Lord Nelson, all about universal design for learning and Ally is really one tool that allows faculty to provide students options with how they take in information. And so that does align to many of the principles, guidelines and checkpoints of UDL.

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Yeah, I think the most important part about that too, is it doesn't add a ton of workload to the faculty themselves. You can stay with the content item, the content type that you feel most comfortable with still because Ally is the one the process that changes it to different formats, you know, there's not a requirement to make seven different types, you know, you stick with what you like to use, you know, what does teach you ways to make it more accessible. So that way when it does the alternate formats, you know, they're a little bit cleaner for everyone.

So as is the goal of this podcast is we just really want to take research and what we know about good teaching and learning and apply it to actionable practices, and a lot of the features and tools that you have available through OATS definitely assist educators in doing that. Can you kind of describe some of the other really cool happening features that are coming out of OATS?

Yeah, I mean, and we'll talk about the one that we've had the longest that, you know, we we've had individuals find over the last couple years here, and Kurzweil 3000 is probably the biggest one that it's been in the disability community for, you know, nearly 15 years. But it's to the point where, you know, we started to see, well, there's a greater need for this on campus that again, we don't have to focus on students with disabilities, it can be all students, you know, the ability to have an assignment, read back to them, and to highlight on the screen and to change the voice and to change the language. And, again, just giving all those different user options. You know, that's, that's what Kurzweil does. And it's what it does really well. And now we've found a way to purchase a license for the entire campus, and that's faculty, staff and students. So, across the board, that's kind of one of our really, really big ones.

For faculty and students who might not be aware, can you share how one might go about accessing Kurzweil? Yeah, so Kurzweil, you can actually download it on the OATS website, you can download it there. And then all you do is request a username, but we actually just finished eliminating that process, because now you can just use your Chico State credentials. So, what we do is have you download this, you know, additional tool, and then from there, it just ties into your single sign on credentials from Chico State.

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So that's great, that makes it so much easier to access, which is kind of the big goal of UDL access exit options, always. And we were the first campus to do that, you know, in the United States as far as adding single sign on to that product. So, we were pretty excited about it. That's really exciting. Awesome. Well, kudos to you for taking appreciate it. Yeah. And then, um, so I have to tell you, one of my new favorite tools is Otter and I recently used it in a class of mine and my students. One of the reactions It was kind of made me laugh was like, Oh, my ADHD is loving this right now. And so students were able to follow along the transcript as I hosted my class on Zoom. And for those faculty and students who might not know about Otter, can you give a little explanation on what it is and how a person might go about accessing it?

Yeah, first, I want to say you nailed it Otter has become the new, most popular, you know, technology that we have coming out of our office, we hear about it daily, now. It's being used from everything from conference presentations to the classroom. You know, initially, it was brought to campus to solve a problem around notetaking. one of those things where we're running out of interpreters. So, it was another way to do that. And there's this issue with wanting faculty to feel comfortable with recording themselves, you know, there's a little bit of discomfort around being recorded in general. So, we wanted to give some power back to the classroom, you know, you can record it yourself, you can share it with who you would like, you could pull the transcript out, you can delete the audio, I mean, it gives you a range of options. So that's what Otter has really done for campuses, it's kind of created this new environment, that's kind of its kind of fun, you know, to see where does it go across screen, and, you know, and then be able to go add notes and pictures later and create these really robust, you know, study guides and communication guides. And, you know, that's just a couple of the use cases. And then as far as getting it again, we're offering it to all our campus. And in this case, you just emailed the OATS department, and they set you up and once you go to the otter website, you again sign in with your Chico State credentials, and you're activated to our team account with 6000 minutes a month and have a great time playing with it really, it's it's just kind of a fun tool.

If we have faculty or students who really want to engage in use some of these technologies but are maybe you know, not so techno savvy, what supports might we have available? Or how would they go about accessing the resources they need to be successful?

It's good question that actually is the foundation of one of our pillars in the OATS offices, you know, we like to have a high touch environment. And over the last year, we actually added a second staff member. So now there's two in the OATS office along with 16 student assistants. And with that high touch model, anyone that reaches out, we basically permanently attached someone to them, you know, until they say No, I'm good. I've got it up learned it, but it kind of creates, you know,

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A more friendly environment instead of having to drop in and see a different person every time. You know, we kind of connect you with someone that you can bond with over the technology and really learn, you know, its functions and how you need to use it because everyone's different. So, we'd like to tailor to that environment. And you know, that's why we built such a robust team.

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And there you have it, folks. Today we explored UDL, and we also learned about technologies that can serve to break down barriers and support all learners at Chico State. For more information on UDL, including research practices and resources, check out our FDEV teaching guide entitled universal design for learning. I'd like to thank Dr. Loui Lord Nelson, as well as Jeremy Olguin for contributing to this episode. I'd also like to extend a special thank you to Quinn Winchell for our podcast music and to the vocal stylings of Dr. Browning Neddeau for the land acknowledgement.

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Join us for our next episode wherein we will learn more about sustainability and ecological justice. Until then, we got this Wildcats!