

Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning: Small Changes that Matter

*Based on Practicing UDL in Higher Education:
A Workbook by the Accessible Dartmouth Initiative*

Why have this conversation now?

Longstanding Obligation

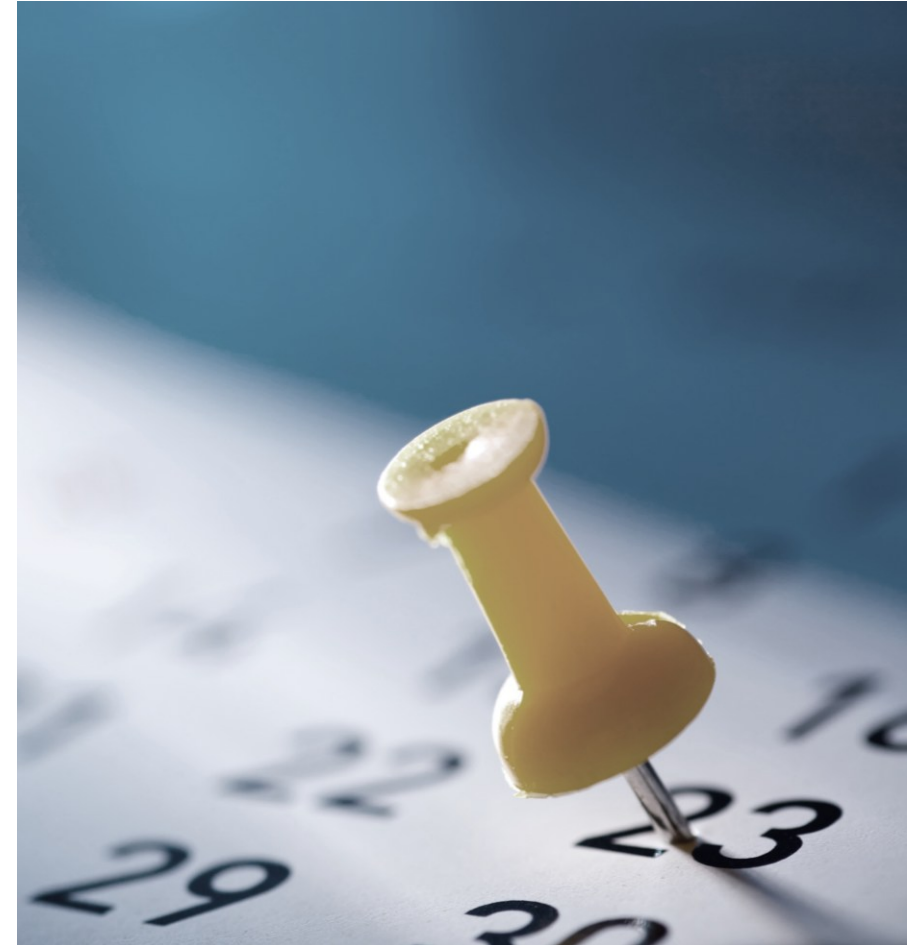
Equal access and effective communication have long been required under federal law.

2024: New DOJ Rule

WCAG 2.1 AA requirements adopted for Title II web content content and mobile apps.

2027 / 2028: Compliance Dates

Deadlines vary depending on public-entity population size.



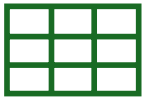
WCAG 2.1 Level AA Standards



Style-tagged headings



Informative alt text



Ability navigate tables and infographics



At least 4.5:1 color contrast for text



Alternative cues to color coding



Descriptive hyperlinks



Captions, transcripts, audio descriptions



“Tagged” PDFs



Keyboard only navigation



Ability to resize or adjust spacing

Related but not identical.

Accessibility	Universal Design
Ensures access for a person who encounters a barrier barrier	Anticipates variability across the learning community community
May involve an accommodation or remediation	Proactively redesigns the learning environment
Often asks, "Can this student use it?"	Asks, "What options help learners reach the goal?"
Includes technical standards	Is a pedagogical design framework

Both are needed. UDL does not replace accommodations.

But UDL can help us avoid “disability dongles”.

Reflection

What do access and inclusion mean in your classroom context?

What policies and pedagogical choices have you made to improve access or implement universal design for learning in your classroom?

How do you encourage your students to contribute to access and inclusion in your classroom?

Rigor should come from challenges, not barriers.

Challenges	Barriers
Intentional	Often unintentional
Invite students to participate	Alienates students from participating
Designed to assess students' skills, subject expertise, etc.	Are often invisible to those who do not face them

Reflection

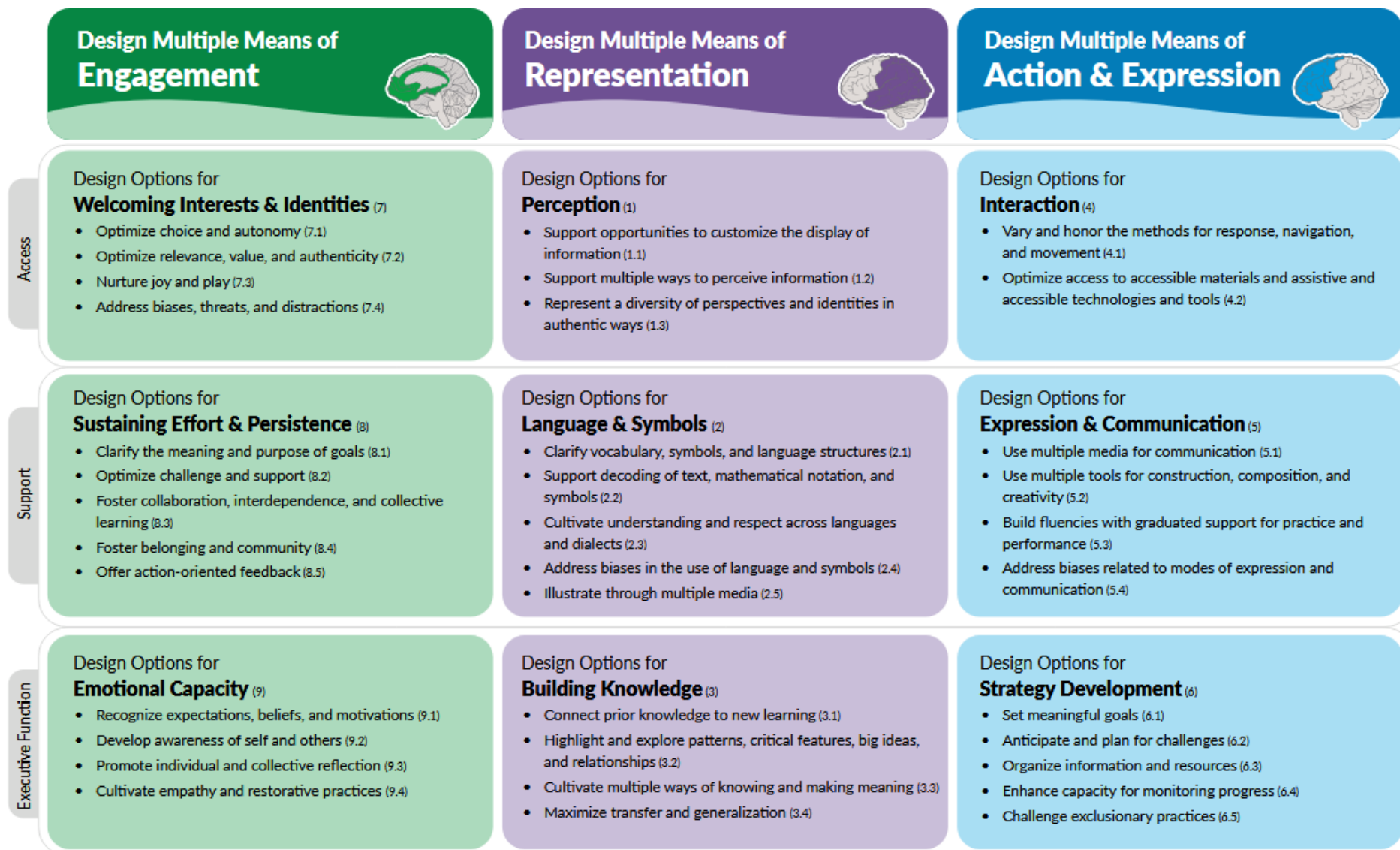
What challenges do you intentionally set for students in your classroom?

How do these challenges invite students to participate in your learning community or your field?

What barriers might some students, but not others, face in engaging with these challenges?

CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

The goal of UDL is **learner agency** that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented.



Reflection

Reviewing the CAST UDL Guidelines, what +1 might you add to your courses this semester?

Are there any changes you'd like to make based on the guidelines or your own ideas that would require support to implement?

Students and Staff as Partners



Faculty

Goals

Disciplinary judgment

Assignment design



Staff

Academic Technology &
& Accessibility

Tools

Workflows Consultation

Consultation



Students

Feedback

Testing

+ Creation

when the work is
pedagogically meaningful

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