Equitable Lesson Design

There are several things you can do while you're creating your course that will:

- Make your course more accessible to all students, including disabled students, English language learners, students experiencing homelessness and other barriers, and many others
- Support motivation and engagement for all learners!
- Make it a breeze for you if you get Letters of Accommodation (LOAs) from the DRC

Note: these suggestions are not accommodations and are not required by law. They are a way to make your course more accessible to all students and provide flexibility during this uncertain time. By using the suggestions below, you will also make implementing many common accommodations much easier for you and your student(s) once the LOAs arrive.

Standardization and Usability

Use Plain Language to support students in finding what they need, understanding what they find, and using that information to successfully complete your course. You can learn how to use it at www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/. (Pro Tip: Follow the links on the left-hand tool bar for a quick walk through!)

Provide sample assignments and sample test questions when possible. This supports students in preparing for what's coming as well as understanding requirements.

Duplicate spoken instructions in writing. This is particularly important for assignment instructions, due dates, changes, etc. This could include giving a study guide as well.

Collaborate with colleagues to use similar or the same platforms so that students don't need to learn several different online tools at once.

Keep it simple: for many of us, this is a new venture into an online environment, and our students also have a steep learning curve and individual situations that have inherent barriers. Remember that neither you nor your students may be able to do everything perfectly right now.

Build in Choice

When designing activities and assignments, provide choice whenever possible. This could be:

Choice in response (think voice-recorded answers, hand-written, typed) or even responding in first- or third person (especially to sensitive topics). This can apply to in-person activities, discussions, and assignments. Allow asynchronous responses even if you are doing a synchronous class.

Choice of topic: consider providing a range in case a particular topic is not possible for certain students for one reason or another

Choice of delivery: just like us, some of our students are new to using online procedures, or they may not have access to a scanner, printer, or other technology. Allow for this. Let them be creative!

Choice in public exposure: consider providing alternatives for group discussions, such as private discussions, or emailing answers to you. Refrain from calling on specific students during virtual discussions - check with unresponsive students in private to find out barriers. They may need prior notice to give them time to formulate a response, or they may need to be able to answer questions in writing, for example. In this case, we don't know who else is in the room with them, or what other barriers may be present.

Provide Flexibility

Just like us, our students are unsure of what tomorrow will bring. Many are concerned about finances and more. Some may still be going to work or may be sharing technology with parents and siblings. Since it will be hard for us to truly know their circumstances, consider providing as much flexibility as your course allows. For example:

Consider giving full points for late work: find other ways to encourage students to turn things in at due dates, such as helping them understand how concepts build on each other, how you spend your time grading, and more! Give your students the benefit of the doubt by believing that if they could turn their assignments in on time, they would do so.

Ask for suggestions from students: if you can be flexible on certain things, ask for student feedback, either individually or as a group, on the best way to move forward, whether it's for an assignment, learning a concept, assessing knowledge, or something else.

Consider attendance flexibility: while we will want our students to stay connected, it may not be realistic right now to expect every student to log on every day or especially at a particular time each day. Consider building attendance flexibility into your course and reach out to missing students early.

Stay in Touch with Students & Contact Advocates

We will each develop our own ways to stay in touch with students and check to see if things are working out. If your communication plan isn't working for a particular student, and you need more support, contact advocates early - as soon as you have a concern, contact someone! You have many choices:

Have an LOA? Contact the Disability Resource Center at drc@bellevuecollege.edu or the individual Access Specialist noted on the LOA.

Know or suspect the student is autistic or otherwise neurodivergent? Contact Neurodiversity Navigators Program Director Sara Gardner at sara.gardner@bellevuecollege.edu

Has a student revealed abuse or Title IX concerns? Put in a CARE Team report at www.bellevuecollege.edu/reportconcerns/ (There is also information at this link about reporting other things students may reveal or do, such as bias or hate crimes, danger to children or vulnerable adults, and more.)

If you're doing the above, you will be reaching and engaging far more students, and can breathe a little easier about the following accommodations:

- Advocacy
- Flexibility (of course you will still discuss individual situations with students)
- Provide Alternatives to Online Discussion
- Provide Alternatives to In-Class Participation
- Provide Due Dates and Clear, Bulleted Assignment Directions in Writing on the Day the Assignment is Given to Class
- Samples of Completed Assignments
- Refrain from Calling on or Bringing Attention to Student in Class
- Give Notice Prior to Calling on Student

Check in with the learning experts at the Faculty Commons for more on this topic!