

System-Level Barriers:

The following job aid is designed to help you identify potential systemic barriers to universally designed learning environments. Print out this job aid and use it to conduct an evaluation of your learning system.

For a refresher on system-level barriers, and why these are so important, visit <http://www.unco.edu/cetl/UDL/Barriers/systems1.htm>.

Job/Task Expectations and Clarifications

Job/Task Expectations and Clarifications define what's expected of the members of the system, namely the teachers, administrators and other support staff. Depending on how jobs and expectations are defined, people will either perform or not perform. If a job or task is either poorly defined or that definition does not include certain features, then the persons employed in those jobs are unlikely to do it.

Review job tasks and expectations for all employees. In the space provided below, address these questions by detailing the current state, the desired state, and a plan of action for modifying job/task expectations to support UDL principles in your context.

- Do roles or jobs lack a definition related to supporting all learners or employees and contributing to a flexible, open environment?
- What should change in those descriptions to support a more universally designed workplace, school or classroom?
- What tasks should be added for all or key individuals to promote UDL?

Skills & Knowledge

Skills & Knowledge is the ONLY one out of the six that can be defined on an individual basis. An individual either has the skills and/or knowledge or does not. All the rest are system characteristics that result from decisions. If undesired performance is due to a lack in skills or knowledge, the solution is training. However, if it's not due to a lack in skills or knowledge, all the training in the world won't solve the problem because the solution doesn't fit the problem. At the broader level, this can be addressed by professional development plans in the schools that are targeted – meaning they are actually tied to what teachers, staff, and administrators should learn in order to bridge performance gaps. Without a systemic, systematic professional development plan in place, the skills and knowledge acquired by *all* individuals in the system results in a scattered shotgun approach, which will not lead to all the parts working in alignment.

In the space below, address the following:

- How many people (employees, teachers, principals, faculty, etc.) have received some form of training in UDL?
- What entity can you partner with (internal or external) to develop or provide training on UDL?
- Who will receive UDL training? How much training will they receive, and what will be your expected outcomes of such training?
- How will you know if people are putting those new skills and knowledge to work?

Policy

Policy is potentially the toughest of all these to address, perhaps along with rewards and incentives. Policies can pose the largest barriers. We do a great job of saying we want our school environments to be inclusive or diverse, and then we bump against some policy that keeps us from doing precisely what we should. For an example, visit <http://www.unco.edu/cetl/UDL/Barriers/policy.htm>.

In the space below, address the following:

- What are some policies in your school/work environment that limit diversity?
- How could those policies be adapted?
- By not adapting those, what could the potential costs be to your school or work? (for ideas, see <http://www.unco.edu/cetl/UDL/Barriers/policy.htm>).
- What policies should be developed to support diversity in your learner population or workplace? What other parts of the system should be modified to support these new policies?
- Who should you involve in developing policies that enhance diversity?

Rewards/Incentives

Rewards and Incentives are something we all know are missing or present for our individual jobs. And yet, when we talk about this from the systems level, it can feel really tough to do much about. We can take a highly skilled and knowledgeable worker with a clear job definition working in a place with strong policies, and he or she still may not perform optimally because there are no rewards or incentives for what we want folks to do.

In the space below, address the following:

- Are you rewarded for what could be considered universal design in your school/work environment?
- If you do what is necessary to ensure all students are learning, will you be rewarded for that (and how) or penalized (and how)?
- What rewards and incentives could be improved at your school or district (or even the national level)?
- What is the one thing that would encourage you as an individual to address universal design and accessibility in your own work?

Consequences

Consequences are just that – what happens as a result of what you do (or what doesn't happen when you do things you shouldn't). These can seem tightly related to rewards and incentives, but in fact are quite distinct. Let's say you *don't* provide access to the curriculum for learners with disabilities – are there consequences for not doing so? Those consequences could be consequences for you, for the student, for the school, for other students, for the parents of the child, and for society.

These often require careful consideration of “drivers” in your context.

In the space below, address the following (FYI – good data on these could be collected from focus groups or interviews):

- If a teacher/faculty member does not employ universal design in his or her teaching, are there any positive or negative consequences?
- If a teacher/faculty member DOES employ universal design in his or her teaching, are there any positive or negative consequences?
- What are desirable consequences for someone who does employ universal design?
- What are desirable consequences for someone who does not employ universal design?
- What other parts of the system should be modified to support newly-defined consequences?

Resources and/or Tools

Resources/Tools – this is where assistive technology comes in, as well as any other technological infrastructure of a school or district. The presence or absence of these, and then the decisions made surrounding these can significantly support or impede an individual's and the system's performance. Sometimes, the barrier is a lack of resources – you just don't have the tool or device or materials to get the job done. Without a curriculum, you'd be pretty lost – curricula are resources in the environments. Without texts or chemistry sets or calculators, you might have a difficult time teaching students what they're supposed to learn.

Sometimes, the barrier is how resources or tools have been implemented in the system – who does or does not have access, what functions or capabilities have been disabled (usually because of policy, which should have been modified instead of constraining the resources), where it's physically located and what you have to do to get it, and so on.

In the space below, address the following:

- What resources/tools do you currently have that would support universal design practices?
- Is your technology infrastructure flexible enough to support universal design? If not, what should happen for you to have an effective technology infrastructure? (don't forget training as a part of that solution, if necessary)
- What resources/tools should you procure to better support universally designed learning?