

8 Disrupting Accommodations through Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract

While the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions (HEI) decided to move classes to online modules. This interruption created issues for students with disabilities (SWDs) and students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) who had to modify their accommodations. Ensuring equitable access to course content requires communication, problem-solving, and flexibility from faculty, service providers, and administrators—yet many students find the burden placed upon them. This is concerning because when students feel they are supported by their institutions, they are more likely to persist to graduate. How can we imagine a new system that is not fully dependent on students requesting accommodations in HEIs? This chapter reviews the accommodations and experiences of SWDs & DHH students and calls for considerations to disrupt the medical model of accommodations through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in higher education.

Keywords:

accommodations, disabilities, deaf, hard-of-hearing, universal design, COVID-19

Introduction

While the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions (HEIs) decided to move classes to online modules to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus and minimize the spread. College students were used to one set of instruction and then suddenly had to adjust to a new delivery platform (American College Health Association, 2020). This interruption especially created difficulties for students with disabilities and students who are deaf or hard of hearing who had to quickly adjust their accommodation needs (Anderson, 2020; Lederer et al., 2021). Before the arrival of the pandemic, undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities were already struggling

with barriers that required them to request accommodations in order to access and learn course materials (Lederer et al., 2021). Ensuring equitable access to course content requires communication, problem-solving, and flexibility from faculty, service providers, and higher education administrators—yet Anderson (2020) discovered that many students with disabilities found the burden placed upon them. This issue is of concern because students who feel supported by their institutions are more likely to persist to graduate (Edman & Brazil, 2009; Tinto, 1993; Vaccaro et al., 2015). During a crisis, barriers are magnified when the “norm” is disrupted causing the necessity for accommodations for disabilities to be revisited and modified. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights a critical need for an examination of the current system of having students request disability-related accommodations in HEIs. How can we reimagine a higher education system that does not always require students with disabilities to ask for permission for inclusion? Through the lens of Freire’s (1970) “practice of freedom,” this chapter calls for considerations for HEIs to embrace Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a practice of freedom and disrupt the current system of requesting disability-related accommodations.

Deaf/HOH and Disability Context

Individuals who identify themselves as upper case “D” Deaf or DeafBlind and the few who identify as hard of hearing (HOH) consider themselves a cultural minoritized community and not “disabled” (Lane, 2002). Sometimes scholars, including myself, disaggregate Deaf/HOH from “disabilities” when discussing their research or argument. In this particular chapter, considering that the content is focused on accommodations, the term “disabilities” will include those who need accommodations on campus. Thus, “disabilities” will include those who need communication access (e.g. deaf, Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind).

Historical Context of Universal Design for Learning

Like a curb cut on the sidewalk that assists a person with reduced mobility or a worker pushing a food cart, inclusive designs are beneficial for everyone, not just those with disabilities. UDL is a proactive inclusive design that was introduced in the 1990s to serve as a framework for individuals to design instruction that reduces barriers and addresses learner variability in the classroom (Meyer et al., 2013). Scholars state that UDL prioritizes diversity and accessibility with a research-based set of principles to guide the design of learning environments that has the potential to be accessible and effective for more students (Black et al., 2015; Cook et al., 2009; Ketterlin-Geller & Johnstone, 2006; Meyer et al., 2013). Evans and company emphasized the importance for higher education practitioners to “be aware of the necessity of, and strategies for, creating inclusive environments” (2017, p. 387). Lynn (2016) and Raue et al. (2011) accentuated the need for campuses to consider creating universally adaptable environments. UDL is praised for its inclusive, holistic approach that is integrated from the beginning.

Disability Theoretical Frameworks

Scholars have given many theoretical perspectives on disabilities but there are two constructs of models often named in literature: medical and social. The medical model assumes that the problem stems with the *individual and their disability* and diverts solutions toward the correction or diminishing of the disability (Fisher & Goodley, 2007; Leake & Stodden, 2014; Shakespeare, 2012; Swain & French, 2000). Dolmage (2017) states that higher education institutions “often mandates that disability exist only as a negative, private, individual failure” (p. 56). I contend that the system of requiring students with disabilities (SWD) to obtain and use accommodations falls within the construct of the medical model since the student tends to be labeled as the one with the “problem” who require the pedagogy and/or environment to be retrofitted with accommodations to meet students’ learning needs. This is troubling as scholars have found a disconnect between accommodations and the objective support for their implementations (Harrison et al., 2008; Kimball et al., 2016; Weis et al., 2014). Since the medical model focuses on individuals, it leads to stereotyping and defining people by a condition or their limitations. This shows the complexity of providing accommodations for SWDs who are encountering barriers and require various levels of support.

The social model of disability names the *environment* as the issue rather than the individual. In other words, disabilities only exist when the environment is constructed in a way that allows certain people to participate while excluding others. The social model calls for implementing inclusive learning strategies, such as the UDL principles (WHO, 2001), that include the strength of shifting the focus of the “issue” from the individual to the environment. The shortfall of the social model is that it does little to effectively *disrupt* systems of oppression and exclusion for students with disabilities. Without addressing this, students receive a message that accessibility is simply not valued. For example, a university can choose to remove specific inaccessible public videos online rather than captioning it if it is deemed as burdensome to the institution. While UDL is an inclusive design as a *noun*, Dolmage (2017) argues that UDL must be a *verb* with an emphasis on the *process* of designing instruction and campuses with the voices of SWDs included.

Positionality

To provide suggestions for environmental shifts, Watt’s (2015) Authentic, Action-Oriented, Framing for Environmental Shifts (AAFES) method encourages authenticity and a recognition of the researcher or scholar’s own positionality. Thus, allow me to share a bit about myself. I am a student at a large research university who identifies as a White Deaf cis female. I worked as an Accommodations Coordinator for a disability services office at a large public research university for over a decade before becoming a full-time doctoral student. My journey includes personal experiences of exclusion

in higher education as an undergraduate and graduate student as well as personally witnessing other students with disabilities and students who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing struggle to navigate the higher education's system to get their accommodations provided.

During the Spring 2020 term, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the classes that I was enrolled in or teaching were abruptly shifted to synchronous online modules. Therefore, I spent several days working with the university's student disability services office to revisit and figure out which accommodations would successfully allow me to have effective communication access. A possible solution was found that included having an interpreter on a web conferencing platform (i.e. Zoom) on one side of my laptop screen and having a separate "virtual room" for classes on the other side of my screen. This worked well at first. Unfortunately, after three weeks of a world that was completely virtual—classes, research team meetings, papers, graduate assistantship work, assignments—like a computer in overdrive that suddenly crashes, I hit a wall. I found myself incapacitated with vertigo, motion sickness, and/or migraines each time I was online, which lasted through the following year. This was novel for me. The experiences that I and my d/Deaf and hard of hearing peers and those with disabilities encountered during this crisis brought me back to pondering questions about the practice of freedom, accommodations, and universal design.

Legislation Historical Context

Before 1973 in the United States, students with disabilities were excluded from education. The passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 opened doors for students with disabilities by banning higher education institutions (HEIs) from preventing access for students with disabilities. As technology advanced, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, and the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 were passed to serve as legislations to remove barriers in higher education for students with disabilities (Raue et al., 2011). However, researchers have found that HEI tend to only meet the minimal requirement of the law (Leake & Stodden, 2014; Lynn, 2016; Vaccaro et al., 2015). To elaborate on meeting such minimal requirement of the law, Dolmage (2017) explains:

although laws like the ADA are supposed to have created a much more accessible Internet, research has shown that "the way disability rights laws currently stand allows the practices of private, non-profit, and public entities to undermine the overarching goals of the law in terms of accessible technology" (Wentz et al., 2011). In fact, "the law encourages the creation of inaccessible information and communication technologies that may eventually become accessible, but often do not. The current state of the law allows for separate but equal, but usually results in simply

unequal” (Wentz et al., 2011). This separation brings us a long way from the promise of the ADA, and reveals that in fact disability law can often be placed directly in the way of disability justice. (pp. 68–69)

Therefore, while disability-related laws exist to legislate against inequality, it should not be assumed that policy has become a substitute for action. I contend that disability-related laws are currently “performatives” since they depend on “how they get taken up” and is, thus, “unfinished” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 11) and are “diluted or not enforced” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 68). Laws and policies that are performative are discouraging for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities as they face barriers to their education, often thwarting their persistence to graduate.

Accommodations Process

In the United States, requests for disability-related accommodations must be “reasonable” as defined in the ADA (1990); thus, in the higher education realm, a “reasonable accommodation” is a modification or adjustment to the environment and materials for students with disabilities. As a result of the US Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), HEIs are not automatically informed that a current or incoming student needs accommodation nor does any accommodation plan automatically transfer to college after high school. FERPA serves as a double-edged sword since it allows students to at least have the choice to not to disclose their disability while also placing the burden on said student to self-disclose by having to register with the disability services office on campus if they need accommodations to alleviate barriers. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported in 2009 that half of students with disabilities do not disclose their disability to the campus disability service office. Various reasons include their wish to “blend in” and not disclose their disability (Harbour & Greenberg, 2017; Squires et al., 2018) for fear of stigmatization and discrimination (Hong, 2015; Squires et al., 2018). The other half who chooses (or feel forced) to disclose their disability find that the burden is placed on them to have barriers reduced or removed for their courses.

To understand how taxing it is for SWDs to obtain accommodations, one must understand the process. In the United States, students must first find the campus disability services office and figure out the steps that their specific higher education institution requires. Usually these steps include the following (AHEAD, n.d.):

1 Complete an application form that requires:

- a naming their disability or disabilities;
- b describing how the disability or disabilities impacts them academically; and,
- c listing specific accommodations that may alleviate any barriers.

- 2 **Obtain and provide medical documentation from a licensed practitioner** who has diagnosed the disability or disabilities and listed recommendations for specific accommodations.
- 3 **Provide additional medical documentation(s)** if the student is not approved for services by the disability services office. During my experience of working for disabilities services, I found this decline of services a rare occurrence. It should be noted that if the student is approved for services, there is still no guarantee that all the accommodations they requested on their application will be approved. Depending on the documentation they submit, some accommodations may not be listed by their practitioner or the disability services office deem the request as not “reasonable,” which is a thorn many find in the ADA.
- 4 **Complete intake:** Once approved for accommodations, the student is usually required to meet with a disability services staff member—such as the accommodations coordinator or disability advisor—to complete their intake. During this appointment, the student learns how they can obtain their accommodations form or letter that lists their approved accommodations for them to take to their instructors. To maintain confidentiality, this form or letter does not disclose the specific disability/disabilities.
- 5 **Provide letter of accommodations to instructor(s):** Once the intake is complete, the student (again) self-identifies as one with a disability by providing their letter/form from the student disability services office to each of their instructors. At that point, the responsibility is placed on the instructor to provide the accommodations and/or work with the disability services office to get the accommodations provided. Depending on the specific higher education institution, some disability services office require students to have the form signed by the instructor and returned while other institutions simply require the student to share the letter or form with their instructors.
- 6 **Notify student disability services office if there are any issues:** Students are instructed by the disability services office to contact their accommodations coordinator or disability advisor if they encounter any issues with getting their accommodations provided by the instructor.
- 7 **Repeat sharing letter of accommodations with new instructor(s) each academic term:** Students do not have to reapply for services each academic term. However, since there are new classes and instructors each term, the student has to repeat the process of getting their official accommodations letter or form from the disability services office and share with their instructors.

This process is not only common in the United States but also globally. Other countries may differentiate in their process with required steps for students with disabilities to receive accommodations. Nonetheless, the pattern remains the same that it is difficult for these students to receive accommodations and have barriers removed in higher education (Hurst, 2018; Kilpatrick et al.,

2015). This ordeal illuminates the exhausting process of asking for permission to receive disability-related accommodations in US HEIs as well as around the globe.

In addition to going through the lengthy process of requesting and obtaining accommodations, the weight also falls on the student to file a complaint with the office of equal opportunity and diversity at their higher education institution if their accommodations are not being provided. Some accommodations requested by students are seen as “beyond” what the ADA requires leaving the student excluded and with limited support, and at risk of not persisting to succeed. This underscores that the issue is in the environment, not the student.

Examination of the Accommodations Process

Scholars state that “accommodations are an unresolved issue in higher education” (Ketterlin-Geller & Johnstone, 2006, p. 166). Accommodations listed on the accommodations letter or form from the disability services office often include a “laundry list” for instructors to check off. When HEIs provide accommodations for SWDs after the curriculum and pedagogy methods are already designed, the accommodations tend not to be appropriate for the student’s specific needs. Dolmage (2017) argues that “accommodations can often increase what’s broken” (p. 69), meaning that accommodations can actually do more harm by not addressing the root of the barrier. Thus, HEIs may want to consider being proactive to minimize the need for requesting accommodations. Integrating Universal Design for Learning, if used as a process that includes the voice of SWDs, can address such root of barriers and improve access for as many students as possible—not just the 50% who registered with their campus disability services office (Belch, 2004; Leake & Stodden, 2014).

Understanding UDL

How can UDL be integrated into college courses? UDL is built on three core principles: representation, action and expression, and engagement (Meyer et al., 2013). This section explains each principle and discusses how to apply it to higher education.

Representation

Representation promotes showing and communicating information in different ways. This is particularly critical for students with sensory or mental health disabilities who may be unable to take in information that is presented through a single form. For example, audio and video content present a barrier for those who are deaf or hard of hearing if it is not captioned. In some cases, instructors may mistakenly interpret the “cc” feature for online videos to mean that the video already has accurate captions embedded. I want

to caution that certain platforms (i.e. YouTube) have a speech recognition tool that *guesses* what the audio is saying, often producing inappropriate and inaccurate captions. I suggest making it best practice to watch the entire video to see if it is appropriately captioned with correct grammar, spelling and terminology. If there are errors, the captions should be corrected or the video should have accurate captions embedded and appropriately synchronized. Automatically providing accurate transcripts for audio files and captions for videos is imperative for deaf and hard of hearing students. It also helps others who prefer to learn through reading or whose first language is not the same as the language of instruction. This is especially crucial during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action and Expression

The *action and expression* principle of UDL emphasizes providing multiple ways for students to interact with the material and show their knowledge. This helps students absorb information and make sense of what they observe. For example, a UDL approach for a final classroom presentation would mean offering alternatives such as students filming themselves and then sharing the video with class or allowing students to provide written deliverables. Another example is the choice for students to choose between having classes synchronously (having students in class online at the same time) or asynchronous (allowing students to watch lectures and do assignments at their own pace). Similar to the representation principle, applying the action and expression principle is especially critical during times of crises.

Engagement

Student *engagement* means looking for a variety of ways to motivate and inspire learners to interact with the material. An example of this principle is offering different deliverables that is more rewarding for the student or providing different levels of challenge. Another example is the option for students to choose between a course letter grade (A-F) for the Pass/Nonpass for undergraduates or the Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grade for graduate level students. As a result of this pandemic, many institutions offered this opportunity for students for their grades for Spring 2020 term. This principle is imperative because it allows students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge without barriers.

Roots of Resistance of Implementing UDL

Some studies show that several instructors and faculty members are resistant to providing accommodations, feel limited with resources, or lack the knowledge of how to provide accommodations (Cook et al., 2009; Sniatecki et al., 2015; Vaccaro & Kimball, 2019). This has caused particular instructors and faculty

to become resentful with having to do “extra work” to make changes for “that one student in the classroom.” On the positive side, numerous disability services staff advocate UDL as a practical strategy for improving access to instructional resources for students with disabilities versus taking the route to retrofit materials for specific students (Singleton, 2017). Similarly, Wilson and company (2011) found that several faculty members and students have a general positive perspective and opinion on the implementation of UDL in the higher education courses. Research shows strong empirical evidence of UDL’s beneficial effects (Black et al., 2015; Burgstahler, 2008; Ketterlin-Geller & Johnstone, 2006; Meyer et al., 2013). Thus, it leaves one wondering why UDL faces so much resistance and why it has yet to be fully implemented across HEIs around the globe. Only a few studies have explored the barriers and resistance behind the implementation of UDL principles and practices by higher education faculty (Lombardi & Murray, 2011; Meyer, 2010; Moriarty, 2007; Pliner & Johnson, 2004). These studies highlight the following as reasons for resistance: (1) institutional and faculty status quo and (2) the argument that it “costs too much.”

Institutional & Faculty Status Quo

HEIs have traditionally been resistant to change. This is evidenced by the fact that it was only as recent as 1973 that HEIs were no longer allowed, because of disability-related legislations, to exclude students with disabilities from their institution. Because of HEIs’ status quo preservation, the creation of higher education environments that are accepting and supportive of students with different needs is often seen as a daunting process requiring a cultural transformation overhaul (Pliner & Johnson, 2004).

A study shows that certain faculty members remain resistant to integrating UDL principles because they prefer to maintain the status quo by providing accommodations instead (Lombardi & Murray, 2011). Further, specific studies discovered that some faculty view UDL as a burden and too much work to implement (Cook et al., 2009; Hong & Himmel, 2009). Singleton (2017) notes that some fields of study “require rigid guidelines (e.g., nursing) or do not use particular formats (i.e., PowerPoint) and, thus, faculty in particular fields do not feel the need for certain types of UDL strategies” (p. 153). These examples of status quo preservations explain reasons for higher education’s resistance to implementing UDL, which is unfortunate since it creates barriers for students with disabilities.

“Costs Too Much”

“It costs too much.” Professor Jal Mehta (2010) who teaches the *Introduction to Education Policy* course at Harvard Graduate School of Education explains that the first question asked regarding implementing Universal Design methods is “How much will it cost?” During my years working as an Accommodations

Coordinator, the question was frequently raised when discussing Universal Design or accessibility protocols. “The answer to these concerns is that UDL does not necessarily necessitate more resources; it is a way of organizing existing resources under a new pedagogical approach” (Ch. 3, Sec. “Funding for UDL”). While most universal design approaches require an adjustment in perspectives and pedagogy styles which requires energy and time, it does not tend to cost additional funds. While training may be required to assist faculty and staff with understanding how to implement UDL, there’s often funding available that the institution can apply to receive. Mehta (2010) encourages institutions to seek federal and state funding available to assist students with disabilities and/or English language learners or technology for accessibility enhancements.

Singleton (2017) encourages for more research to be conducted on faculty attitude toward UDL implementation since there is not enough study on this topic. There’s a need for more discussions on the barriers along with suggested solutions for implementing UDL in HEIs. In summary, the benefits of UDL as a wholistic proactive approach give reason to overcome the resistance of its implementations.

Practice of Freedom—UDL as a Transformative Process

How can HEIs break through these resistances and have a transformative change? Schwanke and company (2001) share a theory that institutions ebb and flow through a three-phase developmental cycle required to achieve universal accessibility. They explain that there is a need for a consciousness raising of inequities (known as the advocacy stage). They also note that *Accommodations*, the second stage, is a response to the advocacy stage when environments and products are modified for individuals. Institutions then move toward *Accessibility*, the third stage, when equitable access is provided to everyone at the same time through a proactive design such as UDL. I have observed that most HEIs “stall” in the Accommodations phase, which is a systemic issue. Having access to education without barriers is a privileged construct that requires deconstructing systemic oppression.

To deconstruct systemic oppression, Watt (2015) calls to view multicultural initiatives as a “practice of freedom,” a term from Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), that shift initiatives “toward an understanding that the dynamic social change process requires [a] complimentary multi-level transformative approach” (p. 15). It encourages the learning of new protocols and methods that are inclusive and emphasizes the importance of *process* versus outcomes. As mentioned in this chapter, there is strong empirical evidence of UDL’s beneficial effects which I suggest are “practices of freedom.”

With this in mind, it is important to consider Dolmage’s (2017) caution for individuals to be aware that claiming UDL as beneficial for “everyone” has a danger of putting the needs of the majority over the needs of those who have been historically excluded—students with disabilities—and erasing their

experiences. Thus, for UDL to be as effective as possible and as a practice of freedom, UDL should be prioritized as an evolving process and action of “becoming” that includes the voices of students with disabilities in the heart of the design phase rather than “a noun—a solid, clearly defined thing” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 155). This means when HEIs are going through changes and implementing Universal Design principles, their faculty and administration should host one-on-one interviews or focus groups with students with disabilities to gather their input. Implementing the three principles of UDL should include “multiple, overlapping strategies, not the delivery of single streams of information and not a blanket approach” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 131). Failing to do this means that UDL will have the threat of being empty promises and just another example of disappointing performance. Thus, I encourage HEIs to incorporate UDL assessments, training, and accountability across campus and ensure that UDL is consistently utilized. This will require a team of campus partners and possibly one or more new staff members. With this said, I highly encourage a representation of individuals with disabilities to be hired and included on these teams.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how the system of accommodations currently burden students with disabilities in HEIs. Accommodations require that students ask for permission for barriers to be removed, which is far from an inclusive practice. Through the lens of Watt (2015) and Freire’ (1970) practice of freedom and Dolmage’s (2017) call for UDL to be a transformative process with the feedback of students with disabilities at the heart of the design, HEIs are asked to consider transforming their system toward inclusion by implementing UDL. Certain accommodations will still be needed such as requesting sign language interpreters; however, with UDL in place, when crises such as COVID-19 arise, less students around the globe will need to ask for accommodations. With UDL, students will have fewer burdens to navigate and be able to more easily access their course materials and demonstrate their skills and knowledge without barriers.

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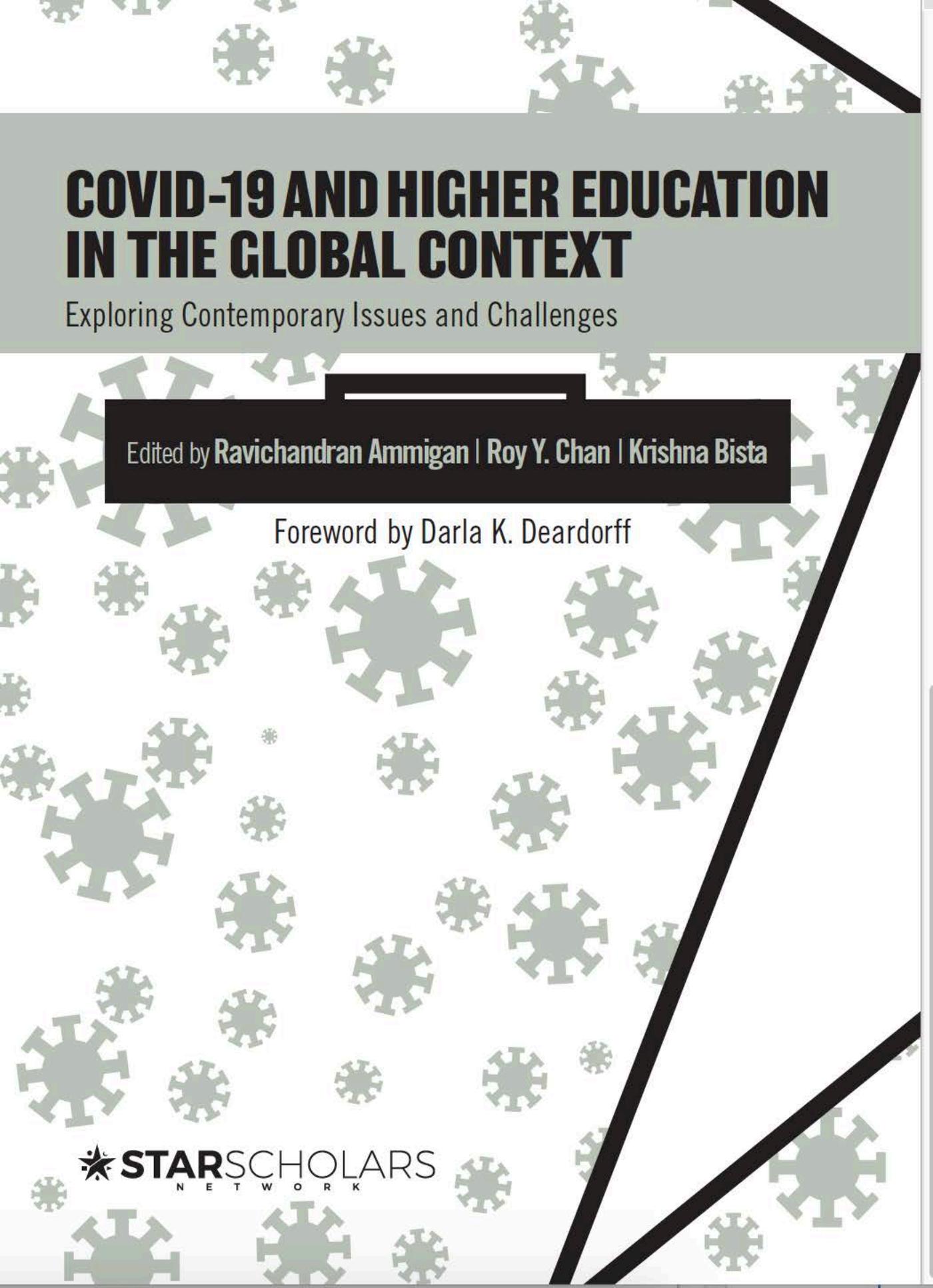
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COVID-19 AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges

Edited by **Ravichandran Ammigan | Roy Y. Chan | Krishna Bista**

Foreword by Darla K. Deardorff

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N E T W O R K

Praise for this book

This book is a must-read for all university leaders and senior managers to enable them to get a better insight into the numerous challenges facing academia in the new normal, where it is not only about academic excellence but also about the human dimension through the enhanced use of technology.

—Dhanjay Jhurry, Professor and Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mauritius, Mauritius

This thought-provoking book captures contemporary changes to higher education at the micro and macro level post-2020. Stakeholders across the sector will benefit from reading the research-driven chapters that are stimulating and insightful. The book interrogates and challenges ways in which internationalization and global mobility can be re-imagined.

—Dawn Joseph, Associate Professor,
Deakin University, Australia

This book shows a more intensive and multi-faceted response by the higher education community to the pandemic that one might have expected. Attention is paid notably to sustain international life on campus.

—Ulrich Teichler, Professor Emeritus,
International Centre for Higher Education Research,
University of Kassel, Germany

This volume is a welcome addition to the literature on international Higher Education produced during the COVID-19 era. With a sensitively chosen array of topics, it shows new thinking around internationalisation, which is encouraging for all, and is exactly what is needed.

—Amanda C. Murphy, Professor and Director,
Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation,
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

With the COVID-19 pandemic seeing no end in sight and its effects on international higher education for students around the world yet unknown, the importance of this timely book cannot be overstated. At a time when we are

literally awash in countless editorials prognosticating on *possible* implications of this health catastrophe, it is refreshing to get a carefully collected series of essays that step back, take a deep breath, and bring us back to the fundamental questions we need to be asking at this most dangerous time for humanity.

—Bernhard Streitwieser, IEP Program
Director & Associate Professor of International
Education & International Affairs,
George Washington University, USA

This is a valuable addition to higher education for understanding the complexities that COVID-19 introduced into the academic landscape. This volume explores valuable topics and issues such as employability, research and mentoring, innovative teaching and learning, and emerging opportunities during the pandemic.

—Jane E. Gatewood, Vice Provost for Global
Engagement, University of Rochester, USA

This timely book is much needed for practitioners, scholars, and policy makers who are grappling with the challenges created by the pandemic. The book is comprehensive given the depth and breath of topics. The human centric approach is refreshing.

—Fanta Aw, Vice President of Campus Life &
Inclusive Excellence, American University, USA

COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges

COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges addresses the lasting impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the higher education sector and offers insights that inform policy and practice. Framed in a global context, this timely book captures a wide variety of topics, including student mobility, global partnerships and collaboration, student health and wellbeing, enrollment management, employability, and graduate education. It is designed to serve as a resource for scholar-practitioners, policymakers, and university administrators as they reimagine their work of comparative and international higher education in times of crisis. The collection of chapters assembled in this volume calls for a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges that have emerged as a result of the global pandemic, and provides as a basis for how tertiary education systems around the world can learn from past experiences and shared viewpoints as institutions recalibrate operations, innovate programs, and manage change on their respective campuses.

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COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context

Exploring Contemporary Issues and
Challenges

**Edited by
Ravichandran Ammigan,
Roy Y. Chan, and Krishna Bista**



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**In memory of those who lost their lives during the
COVID-19 pandemic worldwide**

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>List of Editors</i>	<i>xix</i>

Foreword	<i>xxi</i>
DARLA K. DEARDORFF	

1 The Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education: Challenges and Issues	1
RAVICHANDRAN AMMIGAN, ROY Y. CHAN, AND KRISHNA BISTA	

PART I

COVID-19 and Global Issues in Higher Education	9
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2 The Evolution Revolution: The Application of a Leadership Adaptation Continuum to the Future of Global Higher Education Post COVID-19	11
ALLISON SILVEUS AND LESLIE EKPE	

3 Rethinking the Social Responsibilities of Universities in the light of COVID-19 Pandemic	25
HÀNG TRẦN THỊ, QUY DINH LE NGUYEN, AND LUC-DIEP TRA	

4 “Internationalization at Home” in the United States: Enhancing Admissions and Enrollment Practices for Marginalized Students During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic	39
RAQUEL MUÑIZ AND NATALIE BORG	

5 Financial Ramifications of Coronavirus on Division I Athletic Departments	51
MOLLY HARRY	

PART II

COVID-19 and Academic Issues in Higher Education: Special Topics and Themes	65
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6 Traditional Exams, 21st Century Employability Skills and COVID-19: Disruptive Opportunities for Rethinking Assessment Design in Higher Education	67
ANDREW KELLY, CATHERINE MOORE, AND EMMA LYONS	

7 From Hardships to Possibilities: Dissertation Writing during the COVID-19 Pandemic	80
JUAN MANUEL NIÑO AND ONÉSIMO M. MARTÍNEZ II	

8 Disrupting Accommodations through Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education	93
CARLY D. ARMOUR	

9 Reshaping the Landscape: Considering COVID-19's Uncertain Impacts on Canadian and U.S. International Higher Education	107
MICHAEL O'SHEA, YOU ZHANG, AND LEPING MOU	

10 The Vulnerability and Opportunity of Privatization in Higher Education during a Pandemic	123
ZIYAN BAI	

PART III

COVID-19, Wellbeing and Humanity in Higher Education: International Perspectives and Experiences	137
---	-----

11 COVID-19 and Health Disparities: Opportunities for Public Health Curriculum Enhancement	139
ANULI NJOKU	

12 Internationalizing Trauma-Informed Perspectives to Address Student Trauma in Post-Pandemic Higher Education	154
JOSHUA M. ANZALDÚA	
13 Global Collaboration for Global Solution in Academia: Opportunities and Challenges	172
EKATERINA MINAEVA AND GIORGIO MARINONI	
14 Humanizing the Academic Advising Experience with Technology: An Integrative Review	185
CHARLES LIU AND RAVICHANDRAN AMMIGAN	
<i>Index</i>	203

Tables

4.1	Examples of How to Integrate Internationalization at Home in Practice During and After the Pandemic	46
10.1	Sample State and Institutional Profiles	126
10.2	Sample Program Profiles	127
10.3	Interview Participants by State, University, Program, and Role	128
13.1	Impact on teaching and learning by region, International Association of Universities, 2020	176
14.1	Search Engines, Databases, Academic Articles and Books, and Keywords Used to Synthesize Literature	188
14.2	Categorization of Reviewed Interventions involving Technology for Academic Advising	189

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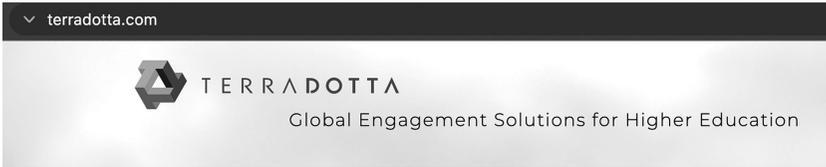
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Foreword

Darla K. Deardorff

The COVID-19 pandemic has represented a unifying challenge globally, providing a defining era in human existence as the pandemic upended life as we know it. *COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges*, edited by Ammigan, Chan, and Bista, delves into the pandemic's impact on higher education around the world. Such an exploration empowers “educators, administrators, practitioners, policy makers, and families” with ideas and guidance that not only can be applied in the current context but also in the post-COVID future.

As the world emerges from the COVID pandemic, it is good to remember the signs of hope that have been there all along from the small gestures of kindness to the heroic efforts of those on the frontlines, from strangers lifting their voices together in song across balconies as the pandemic began with the later Jerusalema dance challenge that swept around the world, even as the pandemic was raging. This pandemic has shown us that we are all truly interconnected, for better or for worse. Desmond Tutu reminds us that we are all in this together and that our humanity is bound up together. We are members of one human family, and when some members are hurting, we all are hurt. He goes on to say, “For us to engage in the practices that will ensure that we all prosper, we must come to know that each of us is linked in the chain of our common humanity.”

As we move into the light of a new day, there is radical hope in truly embracing our shared humanity. Let's seek to see ourselves in others. Let's seek to see the whole picture through discovering others' perspectives beyond our own. Let's seek to see the invisible among us and to remember the power of being seen and heard. As we do so, we can reflect on some of the following questions:

- What do I know about my neighbors?
- Do I make an effort to learn more?
- What are others' perspectives and can I articulate those?
- What are the connections I see in others to my own experiences?
- How much do I really listen for understanding and seek first to understand?

Higher education provides opportunities for students to explore these and other questions, as universities seek to educate global citizens. As we have come to understand more poignantly over the last year that we are indeed part of one global community, we need to remember that education is more than employment or even graduating global citizens—in the end, it is about how we come together as neighbors both locally and globally, to build a better future together. We can make choices every day that help make the world better for all. As Tutu noted, “When we step into our neighborhoods, we can engage in the practices of good neighborliness or we can choose not to. The quality of life on our planet now and in the future will be determined by the small daily choices that we make as much as by the big decisions in the corridors of power.” As we move forward into a post-pandemic era, we must remember that actions matter and what we do impacts others. What daily actions will we take to support the most vulnerable among us? To improve the quality of life for others? How will we uphold justice and dignity for all in the human family? In the end, how will we be good neighbors to each other?

Let us commit to taking action to address the racial injustices and inequities faced by our neighbors. Let us commit to being a good neighbor, as we live in authentic solidarity with each other, aspiring to be compassionate, generous, and kind, knowing that we can find our greatest joy in showing love to all and that in doing so, we are embracing the oneness of our humanity.

Bio

Darla K. Deardorff is the Executive Director of the Association of International Education Administrators, a national professional organization based in Durham, North Carolina, USA. She is also a research scholar with the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University, where she has been an adjunct faculty member in the Program in Education and a faculty affiliate with International/Comparative Studies. In addition, she is an Adjunct Professor at North Carolina State University, a Visiting Research Professor at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa, and at Meiji University Research Institute of International Education (RIIE) in Japan as well as visiting faculty at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) in China. Dr. Deardorff has served on faculty of Harvard University’s Future of Learning Institute as well as Harvard University’s Global Education Think Tank, in addition to being on faculty at the Summer Institute of Intercultural Communication in Portland, Oregon. She has also been an affiliated faculty at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, and Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan) in the United Kingdom and taught at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand. She receives numerous invitations from around the world (in over 30 countries including in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Australia, and Asia) to speak on her research and work on intercultural competence and international education assessment, and is a noted expert on these topics, being named a Senior Fulbright Specialist (to South Africa and to Japan).

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