

# Universal Design and International Study: A Workshop

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**Abstract.** A workshop is proposed to facilitate discussion and follow up activities to build a network of educators and students with an interest in international study in universal design.

**Keywords.** International, education

## 1. Background

Universal design has become a global interest. Europe, Asia, Australia/Oceania, North America, and South America are all home to research centers, design practices, and professional programs in universal/inclusive design. Moreover, knowledge and best practices are being shared across continents. The partnerships that led to the present conference exemplify this internationalization. While international dissemination on inclusive design issues, concepts, and practices has grown among academics, student involvement and faculty scholarship remains primarily “domestic” for many (though certainly not all) programs. Design for cultural differences should be an important aspect of universal design. One of the best ways to educate students about those differences is international education, including student and teacher exchanges, travel-study tours, summer-abroad programs, continuing education, short-term residencies and collaborative research and educational projects.

## 2. Goals

This workshop on international education will facilitate a discussion among representatives from inclusive design programs throughout the world and lay the foundation for follow up activities.

## 3. Method

The UD 2014 Conference offers the opportunity to start such a dialogue that could continue after the conference is over, leading to innovative and exciting programs that

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could benefit students and participating schools greatly. Existing programs could be used as platforms for delivering content in universal design. But, there are also other possibilities that could be explored cooperatively or through collaborative efforts with NGO's that one school alone may have difficulty organizing. Further, the Internet and other digital technologies offer lower cost solutions that can reduce economic and social barriers.

Topics to be addressed during the workshop include:

- What are possible goals of international programs in universal design
- How to recruit diverse international populations to inclusive design programs, including how to increase involvement of colleges and students from regions where inclusive design is not as prominent, such as Africa and Central America
- How to establish effective study abroad experiences, as well as, how to better establish educational partnerships across borders and international student/faculty exchanges between programs
- How to develop pedagogies that explore inclusive design in diverse contexts
- How to manage the logistical, economic, educational, and cultural challenges that international education presents
- How to use the Internet and other digital technologies to create international experiences for those who cannot afford to travel
- How to develop research agendas with a global perspective
- The participation of people with disabilities and other diverse populations, including accessibility to teaching materials and student presentations.

Conference attendees (audience members) will play a central role in discussing these challenges, providing insights from their own experiences as well as speculating on new strategies. The organizers will facilitate the discussion. In addition, they will provide an introduction by describing two base models of inclusive design education as international study: 1) a graduate architecture program in inclusive design at the University at Buffalo, SUNY that is attracting a high percentage of international applicants and 2) a short term residency program (2006-2013) at the Nordic School of Public Health for practitioners from countries in Northern Europe.

#### **4. Follow Up Activities**

The presenters will use contacts made at the workshop to produce two products after the conference: a directory of existing international programs with universal design content, and a social networking site for faculty and students to communicate about international experiences and opportunities in universal design education. We hope these two activities will be the beginning of a long-range effort to promote and organize international educational experiences in universal design.