Inclusive Syllabus and Teaching Practices

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Objectives

- To critically think and discourse about diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching
- To examine and improve course syllabus
- To apply inclusive strategies in the classroom

Your Experience

Pair and Share

Tell your partner about either an experience you have had or a story about making your syllabus and/or classroom more inclusive.

The role of your partner is to listen attentively.

Teaching Philosophy

- If you do not have a teaching philosophy written down on your syllabus
  - Take the next few minutes to construct your teaching philosophy statement
  - What do you want your students to know about how you approach learning?
  - Is there a human-value/approachability statement that makes it known to students that you are accessible and available?
  - How do you convey that their voice is important?

Terms

- Diversity: Intellectual, practical, and personal engagement with issues related to social justice and equity. Includes racial/ethnic, personal interest, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.
- Equity: Safe, healthy and fair learning environment for all students
- Inclusion: Fully involving and engaging all students in the community of learners in the classroom

Why does this Matter?

- The United States is becoming more diverse, and higher education is reflecting that diversity
  - With that diversity comes challenges for creating spaces that acknowledge and respect differences, resulting in disparate and inequitable situations for students based on their identities
  - These individuals can experience situations that contribute to psychological distress, microaggressions, feelings of otherness and/or exclusion, and various forms of oppression including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism (Pirm, 2018) among others.
Why does this Matter?

- Changing demographics in the United States from 1997 to 2017 show an increase of nearly 7% for Latinx, reflecting 18% of the total U.S. population.
- 2% increase for Asians. In contrast, students identifying as White show nearly a 10% decrease in the same time span.
- Black students make up nearly half of the undergraduate student population nationwide.
- Nearly 45 percent of college students identifying as Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American, or mixed race, compared with 29.2% in 1995-96 (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019).
- McClain and Perry (2017), students who hold marginalized identities have to deal with systemic and structural barriers.

Cultural Competence (Diane Goodman, 2013)

- Self-awareness.
  - Awareness of our social identities and their cultural influences and how they intersect.
  - Awareness of our prejudices, stereotypes, and biases.
  - Awareness of our internalized superiority and internalized inferiority--how we have internalized (often unconsciously) notions of the superiority of our dominant/privileged social identity groups (internalized dominance) and the inferiority of our subordinated/marginalized social identity groups (internalized oppression).

Cultural Competence

- Understanding and valuing others.
  - Knowledge of the social identities of other people, their cultural influences, and how they intersect.
  - Ability to value and appreciate ways of being, doing, and thinking other than our own.
  - Ability to recognize how other people express internalized superiority and internalized inferiority.

Cultural Competence

- Skills to interact effectively with a diversity of people in different contexts.
  - Embrace, integrate, and adapt to different cultural styles.
  - Deal with conflict due to cultural differences and the dynamics of inequality.
  - Engage in dialogue about social identities, diversity, and oppression issues.
Cultural Competence

- Skills to foster equity and inclusion.
- Continual self-development, including for self-education, self-reflection, and personal change.
- Addressing interpersonal and group issues, for example, responding to biased comments, addressing inequitable group dynamics, and creating culturally inclusive work and learning groups.
- Transforming institutions, such as being able to create, critically analyze, implement or advocate for organizational norms, policies and practices that are equitable and inclusive.
- Creating societal change by being able to work collaboratively with others to foster social justice.

Creating an Inclusive Classroom

- Creating and Examining the Climate
- Creating an Inclusive Syllabus
- Acknowledging and Respecting Differences
- Examining Pedagogy

Creating and Examining the Climate

- Student-instructor relationships and student-student relationships
  - Get to know your students. Set the tone on your first day
- Build rapport
  - Intentionally provide opportunities for students to interact with one another
- Language Matters
  - Language can be exclusionary and culturally specific
- Check-in
  - How will you know if your efforts are working?
- Difficult Topics and Conversations
  - Acknowledge difficult truths

Inclusive Syllabus

- Required Minimum
  - Federally mandated ADA statement
  - Statement on accommodations for religious holidays
  - Policies
- Perform a self-assessment
  - Read through syllabus and underline statements of diversity, equity, and inclusion (should be obvious to the reader)
  - Do you have information about campus resources?

Inclusive Syllabus Cont.

- Course descriptions
  - Review the descriptive sections. Critically examine the climate you create and the pedagogy you use.
  - Are issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion addressed?
  - Look for assumptions you might be making about students' knowledge and engagement--Are they rooted in EDI?
- Make Improvements
  - Look for academic jargon that can exclude students
  - Is your teaching philosophy included
  - Examine course readings and topics (Who is centered? Who is erased?)
- Images

Acknowledging and Respecting Differences

- Terminology – Male pronouns, use of idioms, cultural references
- How do you address preferred names and pronoun use?
- Establishing guidelines for conversations
Pedagogy

- Will students know how you address issues of DEI?
- Learning goals clearly articulated – can students and faculty measure progress in achieving?
- Active learning and high-impact practices:
  - Problem-centered learning, team based learning, collaborative assignments
  - None graded assignment to identify needs and support
  - Scaffold assignments
  - Explain how assignments are related to learning goals
  - Rubrics and previous student examples of assignments available
  - Do assignments provide opportunities to apply their own cultures, identities, and backgrounds?

Checklist

- Are my teaching choices clear and intentional?
  - Goal and objectives explicit
  - Content selection
  - Inclusive activities (identity and styles)
  - What support do I offer?
- What assumptions do I have? How do I check for them?
  - Have I made assumptions about the learners in class?
  - How do I find out more about them?
- How do I convey appreciation of student knowledge and celebrate differences?
  - Environment encourages co-constructing learning
  - Lived experiences are respected and invited

Building Rapport with Students

- Intentional time to ask students feedback
- Ask students name pronunciation and use names consistently across students
- What’s the tone in the syllabus? Does it communicate support and welcoming space
- How are differences recognized? Are students treated as individuals who are complex/unique?
- Clear expectations for participation and classroom interactions are set
- How will I use office hours intentionally?

DEI

- Readings and textbook are representative of students
- Required readings are accessible (cost)
- Gender neutral terms in course materials
- Inclusive images

Ground Rules for Dialogues In order for us to have a productive conversation, it is important that everyone participates and we set a few ground rules that will help us create a respectful learning environment where each of us G.R.O.W.S in our knowledge about diversity.

https://www.niu.edu/diversity/_files/toolkit/ground-rules-for-dialogue.pdf

Inclusive Statement Samples