



**You Belong Here:  
Making Diversity, Equity,  
and Inclusion a Mission in  
the Classroom**

**SPECIAL REPORT**

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MAGNA PUBLICATIONS



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# It's OK to Be Angry, but Work to Bring About Change

Regan A. R. Gurung, PhD

While most spring terms are done, our past and current students still have to face their emotions in response to George Floyd's death, the national and international riots, and what this all says about race relationships. This customizable letter to students is meant to help. Feel free to share it as is or to further tailor it. I suggest inserting a personal response to events. Here's what I told my students: "I am deeply saddened. I am extremely fearful for the future. I fear for my black friends and my white friends with black children. I fear for anyone not white in America today. I fear for my children who are not white. I fear for myself as a nonwhite man and also as an immigrant, albeit an American citizen." A good link for more: [bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES](https://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES).

Dear Students,  
Are you pained, distraught, or otherwise emotionally taxed? It is difficult to not be in the face of recent events highlighting prejudice. Police brutality led to the death of George Floyd. Breonna Taylor was shot by police in Louisville. Ahmaud Arbery was shot by two

white men while jogging in South Georgia. You may not have experienced prejudice or been subjected to a growing barrage of the reminders of inequity, but such cases have reached epic proportions.

In college our goal is to provide you with an education. We aim to give you content knowledge and skills to live productive, better lives. These lofty goals provide all of us in college with ample opportunity to avoid facing the realities of the world we live in. Yes, we faculty

*"Dear Students, Are you pained, distraught, or otherwise emotionally taxed? It is difficult to not be in the face of recent events highlighting prejudice."*

try to make our classes applied, using many examples of how course material applies to life, but how often do we directly address the turbulence in the world?

Many of you may not hear George Floyd's death discussed in a class. I am sure there are many reasons. Maybe the course has nothing to do with prejudice and injustice and you do not expect anything other than the course content. Maybe the instructor does not want to risk being seen as political or too liberal. Maybe the instructor is too pained or uncomfortable to bring it up. Too often we faculty treat course content as autonomous and let it shield out the world. If we focus only on the syllabus and the

texts, we can avoid any uncomfortable discussions. If so, we have lost a valuable opportunity to truly advance education.

Racism is a horrible reality. Ironically, there is no scientific basis for differentiating the races. The genes of a black person are 99.9 percent identical to the those of a white person. Race is a social construct. "Differences" between races and classes are built over the years and passed on through generations. Racism is a generational burden. This can only change if we all face these realities head on. The injustice of George Floyd's death and others like his is something we all need to face. College is a key place to do it.

There is change we can both help with. College should be a space that is inclusive to all, where every student, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender or ability, works together to build the basis for lifelong learning. Ideally, we faculty collaborate with you to help you not just gain new knowledge but also to evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and apply that knowledge. But knowledge is not fixed. It is dynamic, varies with interpretation, changes, and must be questioned. We faculty can help. We can make sure we create safe spaces for you to comfortably interrogate existing beliefs, some of which may no longer hold, or may be inaccurate. We can make sure we include texts and readings from diverse perspectives than help this process. What can you do?

Empower yourself to act. You can ask yourself whether what you are reading represents a solitary view or one of different ethnicities and genders. You can pay attention to slights and generalizations that misrepresent people. Yes, your fellow students or faculty instructor may not be receptive to discussions of social justice. You may worry about getting a bad grade or being mistreated by peers if you speak up, even so you can

help create a climate where difference can be discussed. You can show you are willing to take on difficult topics and engage in social discourse and invite it, no matter what the course content. If class does not feel safe, look for the safe spaces and receptive ears within campus student organizations or college departments (e.g., an Office for Institutional Diversity). Use them.

If we are to progress as a society and right the wrongs of the past, we all have to work at it, and college is a great place to start the conversation. Right now I am betting that many of you feel like I do. You want to do something. You want to turn away and hear nothing. Competing coping agendas. They are both natural. If you are disturbed, you are not alone. If you are not disturbed, you may be missing something. Learning more about the issues is a great first step.

With the flexibility of summer looming, one way to start to help with change is to make sure you know what the issues are. Consider reading Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist* or, for a broader view, Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning*, Layla F. Saad's *Me and White Supremacy*, or Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. These books will answer some key questions: Why are the historical inequities that so oppressed black people? How is racism built into existing structures? Could you be racist and not even know it? What does it mean to be privileged (and to lack it)?

It is important to be "all in it together" to face the pandemic. It is more important to be unified against racism and inequity.

Sincerely,  
Your Professor

# Using Brief Moments of Inquiry to Enrich Student Learning

Linda K. Shadiow, PhD

**W**ho discovered Pluto? A colleague described this brief exchange he had with his young daughter as they crossed Tombaugh Street in Flagstaff, Arizona. My colleague, ever the professor, pointed out that the street was named for local astronomer Clyde Tombaugh who had discovered Pluto in 1930. His daughter promptly informed him, “Walt Disney discovered Pluto.”

With the characteristic candor of a child, she gave her dad a glimpse of how the world looked through the lens of her six years—her vantage point. His reference to the astronomer came similarly from his accumulation of knowledge and experiences. From their distinct vantage points they each gave other accurate and surprising information neither of them had expected. In this moment, each was learning, and each was teaching.

The exchanges between learners and teachers in a college classroom involve a far more complex calculus than the brief exchange between my friend and his daughter on Tombaugh Street. In its simplicity, however, this incident introduces the merits of becoming aware of the vantage points learners bring to their learning beyond what we might assume or predict. How can we draw out glimpses of students' vantage points to augment what our experiences lead us to expect even before we

know students' names? What might doing so contribute to teaching and learning?

## Using inquiry as a pedagogical tool in an unexpected way

Professionals in most fields use tools to view something not visible to them, yet something necessary to inform the next steps in their process. Using their accumulated knowledge and experiences they select tools that fit their purpose—a navigation device like a sextant or compass, a magnification instrument like a microscope or telescope, a measuring or monitoring tool like an altimeter or hydrometer. What these professionals gain through the use of these tools is information to help them select a course of action. Their professional vantage point is sharpened by what they learn and what it adds to what they already know.

As college teachers, our knowledge of our discipline and our experiences in teaching it guides us in selecting tools we believe will lead to student learning. From our professional vantage point, we make informed decisions about which teaching methods, resources, and assessments will most likely lead to student learning. Tools like quiz and exam results, students' lab notes, their field experiences, and their contributions or silence during class discussions are among the ways we

use to confirm or revise what experience tells us to expect. What we learn with these tools influences how we proceed with further instruction. As the number of times we teach a particular course increases, so do the patterns of predictability we have about how and why learners respond as they learn the course material. We might share Professor Jerry Farber's hope that "On any given day of any given course we would like to be able to pull something out of a file drawer, walk into class and run it." But our experiences semester-after-semester lead us at some level to the same realization as Professor Farber: "But the act of teaching is nothing we can lock up . . . The very next time I walk into a class, I will be, once again, somewhere I have never been" ("Teaching and Presence," *Pedagogy* 8(2): 223, 2008).

## **The act of teaching is nothing we can lock up...the very next time I walk into a class, I will be, once again, somewhere I have never been.**

Each semester, each course, and in each class, each student's presence in the course is rooted in their particular vantage point. If we could get a glimpse from their sightline, what might we learn that would augment what we have been taught by our previous teaching? A vantage point in this sense is different from a reaction we might seek from students as a semester evolves. We are used to using inquiry as the tool to gain some information about how the course content looks from their perspective: We ask for their opinions ("What do you think about that point?") or their judgments ("What is the strongest argument made in this reading?" or "In this situation, what process should be followed?").

With a slight pivot, we can use the tool of

inquiry and turn it from focusing on learning about students' grasp of the course content to learning about how they see their process of learning it.

### **Brief moments of insight gained from inquiry into vantage points**

Consider if you are in a room with others and are asked to put on someone else's eyeglasses. While you may see clearly out of your own glasses, when you put on someone else's the very same images in front of you may appear fuzzy, distorted, or even barely recognizable. The following two examples illustrate how a specifically directed inquiry can make visible a small piece of the vantage point students have of their own learning. Viewing the teaching and learning process from their vantage point is not time-intensive nor does it supplant

content, but it can make important contributions to the teaching and learning interchanges that follow.

### **When a discussion seems to be going nowhere**

Many times I have asked a leading question during a class discussion, only to have it met with silence and sideways glances. Students seemingly start to shrink in their chairs trying to minimize the chances I will ask them directly. Drawing from my experiences I try a few alternatives—a metaphor, an example, a follow-up question, even longer silence. If their silence persists, I mentally go through what I can predict are the reasons for their lack of response—they did not read the assignment,

they did not complete the problem set, they are not paying attention. From the vantage point of my past experiences, I then decide how to proceed.

Considering (as Farber points out) that in this class, with these students I am someplace I have never been, here is a moment to shift the inquiry from their knowledge of content to their view of learning the content.

“Let’s pause here.” My silence follows.

From their vantage point they might be expecting me make a point about their lack of preparation. Instead, I say: “Please help me understand what makes that question a difficult one to answer.” My anticipatory silence follows. I have invited them to help me learn something about the question I just asked. Since they are used to responding to “why” questions from many instructors, the request from a teacher to “help me understand...” is an unexpected one. Sometimes one or two students will venture a response, other times my request sparks many insightful comments. Usually something that does come up leads back to the topic and purpose of the initial discussion.

### **When students turn in a major assignment**

When students complete a major paper or project, my previous experiences with that assignment have helped me judge the assignment’s effectiveness for assessing student learning. When it is an assignment I have used before I often make revisions based on how previous students responded to the assignment. The comments I hear floating around the room the day assignments are due are not particularly helpful: “This was hard”; “We did not have enough time”; “Her instructions could have been clearer”. Taking a moment to shift my inquiry—to learn from

their vantage point—I ask them to turn the assignment over and finish a variation of this sentence: “As I worked on this assignment, the concept/theory/process it helped me understand was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.” (There are a variety of ways to pose this inquiry no matter the instructional format). They teach me something they might not even have articulated to themselves. Sometimes what I learn when they give me this glimpse from their vantage point confirms what I thought, but most often it augments my view.

The form of inquiry used in these examples shares three fundamental characteristics: the inquiry is authentic, strategic, and purposeful. The question or sentence stem solicits information I do not have and would like to know. The inquiry is strategic in that it is integrated into the contexts of teaching and learning at a related point in the instruction and is not randomly superimposed. And the inquiry is purposeful, because the information I am asking for will provide details that could influence my instructional choices for moving forward.

### **Three dispositions that accompany the productive use of this inquiry**

Shifting the focus of inquiry in this way is more a disposition than a strategy. The atmosphere where these small moments of inquiry can thrive is characterized by respect, a willingness to learn from the unexpected, and a commitment to engage. A multi-layered respect is the starting point. Those layers include respect for learners, their learning, respect for the complexity of the content we are working through together, and respect for the inter-relationship between teaching and learning, and teachers and learners.

Welcoming the unexpected requires a certain vulnerability, a willingness to suspend

judgment for a moment if the new information comes across as a challenge. But layers of respect can be built in just such moments when our response is an honest one: “This surprised me because \_\_\_\_\_.”

A third important disposition is the intent to respond. Near mid-semester I have used a variation of sentence stems I have seen frequently referred to in resources on teaching. I ask students to help me understand what assists their learning by completing these sentences: “In learning material to this point in the semester it helps me when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_; it would help me if \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.” We owe students a response to what they contribute. They learn from what we have learned when we point out some threads among the responses, and they learn from our honest accounting of what we will continue or adjust as the course moves forward based on their feedback. Being transparent about why we will not incorporate or adjust what some students have addressed gives them an insight from our vantage point.

The strength of this use of moments of inquiry into students’ vantage points (or “sightlines”) is in the interactions it seeds rather than the reactions.

## **The concluding point**

Help me learn something about learning in this course from your vantage point. This simple request is at the base of an inquiry that enables learners and teachers to contribute and gain focused information related to learning. Teaching is a communicative act foregrounding communication about content. Within the larger picture of semester-long study, it can be small moments of authentic, purposeful, strategic inquiry that enrich the

learning we aim to help students achieve.

## **Resources**

Can a faculty member ever really “see” from undergraduate vantage point?

Nathan, R. *My Freshman Year: What a College Professor Learned by Being a Student*. New York: Penguin, 2005.

Even though this book is more than a decade old, the author’s insights into how using her sabbatical year to enroll as a freshman ultimately helped her think more deeply about college teaching has merit beyond the time in which it was written.

Where can I see examples of faculty making their vantage point visible to students?

Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project, UNLV (Provost’s Office)

Where can I eavesdrop on vantage points of students?

Caplan, Paula J., and Ford, Jordan C. “The Voices of Diversity: What Students of Diverse Races/Ethnicities and Both Sexes Tell Us About Their College Experiences...” *APORIA* 6(3), 2014. Full report available at [http://diversity.missouristate.edu/assets/diversity/Voices\\_of\\_Diversity\\_Project\\_Caplan\\_Ford.pdf](http://diversity.missouristate.edu/assets/diversity/Voices_of_Diversity_Project_Caplan_Ford.pdf)

Davis, Jeff. *The First-Generation Student Experience*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2010.

Michigan State U Journalism Students. *To My Professor: Student Voices for Great College Teaching*. Michigan State U, 2016.

The “Office Hour” video from Northern Arizona University: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDK8rtcQyFA>



# Syllabi: Leveling the Playing Field

Jeanne M. Slattery, PhD

I'm a big fan of syllabi used well. On the crassest level—and it's important—syllabi are contracts between faculty and students, contracts that administration holds us to. When a student makes a complaint, administrators want to be able to pull out the course syllabus and use it to determine whether the faculty member has followed the rules as outlined in the syllabus (Slattery & Carlson, 2005).

The syllabus is my students' first impression of me, and it matters. Even half a minute of a video of a professor teaching predicts end-of-course student evaluations, even when that video is played without sound (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). That predictive power should not surprise us. By the time our students meet us, they've spent years with good teachers and bad and can quickly figure out which faculty and classes will best serve their needs.

Although syllabi identify necessary course rules and tasks, they also serve more altruistic and high-minded purposes. As I write a syllabus, I consider my course goals and how we as a class will go about meeting them (Slattery & Carlson, 2005). These goals provide the structure I need to organize the course, and they give my students something to strive for. I spend time thinking about how I can shape my syllabus to help students identify and use the strategies that make success in the course more likely. I strive to level the playing

field for students who otherwise would be at a disadvantage (Collins, 1997). What makes sense to me may not make sense to students unless I communicate clearly and intentionally throughout the syllabus. I attend to tone and consider what I can do to engage my students in an effective partnership with me (Richmond et al., 2017). In sum, well-designed syllabi are opportunities to create engagement and success—for faculty, students, and the course.

## What should we consider?

The nuts and bolts of syllabus design are discussed much more extensively elsewhere (see Gannon, 2019). At a minimum, effective syllabi include basic course information (e.g., name and prerequisites), required texts and readings, assignments, grades, and university policies. In this discussion, I want to focus on the motivational aspects of a syllabus: its tone, strategies for success, accessibility, and our students' meaning and purpose. These I see as the aspects of a syllabus that level the playing field and increase the likelihood that all students will succeed in the course.

## Syllabus tone

Syllabus tone influences how our students perceive the course and us. Does your syllabus communicate low expectations and focus on punitive rules, or does it demonstrate that

you expect success? Are students discussed as objects or partners? A positive syllabus tone removes barriers to learning and creates expectations that the course is a comfortable and safe place for learning.

My colleagues and I have been studying tone in learner-centered and teacher-centered syllabi for the past 10 years. Learner-centered syllabi build a sense of community, communicate a shared sense of power and control, and use student-centered strategies for evaluation. They are opposite in this focus to teacher-centered syllabi, which do not build community or share power or evaluation strategies (Cullen & Harris, 2009; Richmond et al., 2019). Interestingly, syllabus tone does not affect students' perceptions of a professor's knowledge, competence, or preparedness, but it does affect their attitudes toward the professor and course. Students reading more learner-centered syllabi perceive faculty as more flexible, open-minded, creative, and interesting. Faculty with learner-centered syllabi are seen by students as being caring, having positive attitudes, and being enthusiastic. Students rated a learner-centered syllabus much more positively than a teacher-centered syllabus and reported much higher levels of course engagement (Richmond et al., 2017).

Here's an example of a section from my

online abnormal psychology syllabus that illustrates how I work to communicate the learner-centered notions of community and shared power identified by Cullen and Harris (2009). This respect for the unspoken experiences of others and the confidentiality of clients is particularly important in the online environment. Rather than being defensive in tone or setting up confrontations, my goal is to create a collaborative discussion. I have the same goals for my face-to-face courses, but the context does make a difference. I don't share my photo or schedule virtual office hours in those courses.

### **Let's talk about ethics . . .**

Many of you plan on entering one of the helping professions (e.g., sociology/psychology, rehabilitative sciences, premed, nursing, education, special education). Given this—and our content—it is especially important for us to begin practicing ethical behavior. We should assume that someone “in the room” either deals with these issues personally or has someone close to them who does. Please ask questions to expand your understanding but recognize that course content may be personally sensitive for your classmates. Please use person-first language, protect people's privacy, talk about people in respectful



manners, and listen to and respect other ideas. You don't need to agree with everyone else—you may often disagree—but you need to continue to find ways to respectfully and professionally disagree (e.g., using good listening skills, backing up your opinions with strong evidence).

For my part, I promise to listen carefully, encourage critical thinking about the topics we discuss, and work to build a safe, thoughtful, and respectful classroom. I will disguise the identity of the people in my cases and maintain their privacy, ask for my clients' consent before I talk about them with you, consider other explanations of symptoms, and stay current in my reading of the literature.

## Strategies for success

I know what it takes to succeed in my courses, but many students may not. For years, I have included a list of strategies for performing well. More recently, I've also begun including what I call "pro tips" in my abnormal psychology syllabus. A bit more focused than my list of strategies for performing well, they are part of my goal to get students thinking and acting like the professionals they will soon be. Here are a couple of examples:

**Pro Tip:** You get the most out of assignments when you make them your own. What do you want to learn? Where do you need help?

**Pro Tip:** Getting to know and trust each other helps groups become more successful—and is especially important for online courses. Talk to each other regularly about class and "off-task" things too. Find methods that work for your group.

## Inclusiveness

In several ways, syllabi can communicate that a class is relevant or irrelevant to students. Kuh (2009) found that students were more

likely to perform at a high academic level when they perceived themselves to be members of a supportive learning community. Syllabi can include content that makes it clear that there's a place for everyone in the course. They do so through course goals and learning objectives, the course topics and readings included in the course, and statements that promote diversity. Students judged syllabi with diversity statements as creating a more favorable classroom climate; this was especially true when that statement appeared early in the syllabus (Stein, 2019). Here's how I try to make students feel welcome in my Abnormal Psychology syllabus. The text appears on my syllabus right below my contact information:

Welcome! I'm glad you're here! I want this place to be a safe place for people of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, sexual identities, races, religions, and other visible and invisible differences. Together, we can create a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive place for all of us to work and learn in.

## Accessibility

Faculty regularly accommodate students with disabilities. Many of these accommodations are services that we can offer all students to help them become more successful, regardless of whether they have given us a request from disability services. For example, my university's learning management system (D2L) has recently added docReader, which reads documents in D2L to students. docReader will obviously help students with learning disabilities and recent concussions, but other students may also find it helpful. I point out this feature and encourage all students to consider using it. Rather than tell only anxious students how to manage the course well, I tell all my students how to handle anxiety and the course effective-

ly. I offer help proactively, not only when students request it. Requiring that students request services advantages those students who are more assertive or less anxious about revealing an invisible disability.

Of course, there are accommodations that I don't spontaneously offer to all students; I don't have time and energy to offer everyone testing in a quiet place, for example. When students ask, however, I consider strategies that meet their needs. I want the syllabus to clearly communicate my willingness to do what I can to help students have successful learning experiences in my courses.

### **Students' meaning and purpose**

Our students have a long history of having their goals and sense of purpose ignored, so many see their assignments as busywork. We know better, but students may need some help in recognizing that assignments are purposefully designed and can be meaningful for them. I prompt students to find meaning and purpose in my assignments, as in this media analysis assignment in my forensic psychology course. I also use pro tips to get students thinking about how and why an assignment might be relevant to them.

Why this assignment? The ability to think critically and question what you read and see is an important skill that will benefit you in many different parts of your life, not just your understanding of the court and prison systems. This assignment will help you build this important skill.

I also try to make assignments meaningful by identifying the relationships between learning goals and assignments in my syllabi. I try to be clear about the progression of assignments across the semester and identify how earlier assignments build success with later assignments. Some of these things are apparent in

the syllabus.

### **Conclusion**

Syllabi do not only meet contractual demands. They're an opportunity to help our students succeed in their courses and in life. Because I also see my syllabi as social justice tools, I continually consider how I can engage and motivate my students through them. I do this in the syllabus by working to communicate clearly that I'm committed to helping all students obtain the skills they need to succeed. I want them to recognize that I am their ally in and out of class.

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# Breaking the Code of Silence about Race in the Classroom

Huntly Collins

Racially-charged issues are all around us — controversy over the killing of unarmed black men by white police officers; the slaughter of nine black people during a Charleston, S.C. church service by a young white man who said he wanted to start a race war; the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement on college campuses; the inflammatory rhetoric about race that has been aired over and over in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election. Yet, unless we happen to be teaching a course directly related to race, such as black history or the psychology of racial identity, most of us dodge the topic.

When it comes to race, we, as a predominantly white faculty in colleges and universities across the country, feel awkward, uncomfortable, and conflicted. If we call on a black student in the classroom to explain a

race-related issue, we risk turning that student into a spokesperson for all African Americans. If we plunge into a conversation about institutional racism, we risk making white students feel guilty for the sins of their fathers. There are just too many landmines. So we remain in the boxes of our academic disciplines and avoid the topic of race even when an authentic discussion about race might be one of the

most important learning experiences that we and our students could ever have.

Today, with minority students making up a

growing percentage of our student bodies, it's time to break the code of silence. Yes, there are many landmines, but we need to learn how to diffuse them or deftly navigate around them. And yes, the ultimate goal is a color-blind society. But today, although we have made progress on many fronts and

*“Today, with minority students making up a growing percentage of our student bodies, it's time to break the code of silence...the ultimate goal is a color-blind society.”*

even elected our first black president, we are far from a post-racial society. Just ask the families of Trayvon Martin, or Michael Brown, or Sandra Bland. Or, on my own campus, ask African-American students who were targeted in racist comments posted last year on the computer application known as Yik Yak.

Two years ago, more than 30 members of the La Salle University faculty, myself included, were so horrified by the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.— and subsequent police shootings of unarmed black men—that we came together to begin talking about what we, as Lasallian educators, might do to address the underlying issue of racism that still plagues our society more than 150 years after the end of the Civil War and more than 50 years after passage of the Civil Rights Act. This ad-hoc group, known as Ferguson and Beyond, has now formed working groups to examine what we might do to address race-related issues on the La Salle campus. I am part of the work group looking at pedagogy, and my main concern is how we, as faculty members, can foster honest conversations about race in our classrooms. It's one thing to discuss race when you are teaching a course that directly focusses on race, but how do you do that in a more typical class? That's the issue I want to raise.

As an assistant professor of communication, I do not teach any specialized courses on race. But more and more, race has emerged as a topic in my classes. Even though I live in Philadelphia's Mt. Airy section, one of the most integrated neighborhoods in America, and even though I did award-winning reporting on school desegregation in my previous life as a journalist, I feel ill-prepared to facilitate conversations about race when the topic emerges in my classroom.

I want to describe here three real-life situations that raise difficult questions about

how we, as professors, talk about race. I don't believe there are any "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions. These are dilemmas. I invite your thoughts and insights about each of these scenarios and hope that you, in turn, will share your own experiences.

### **Situation A: Dealing with a racial stereotype**

I am doing a week-long unit on the need for multicultural sensitivity in reporting by the news media. I have already spent one class engaging the students in a survey that helps them identify their own individual prejudices.

Now I want to explore structural prejudice. This is the main reason why there a relatively small number of minority reporters in America's newsrooms. While minorities constitute about 33 percent of the population, they represent only about 13 percent of journalists. Why?

To help students understand the reason for this, I hit on the idea of constructing an analogous question from the world most of my students know very well – the world of sports. Why, I ask, are there so few African Americans on the U.S. Olympic swimming team? Is it because the Olympic Committee is prejudiced?

The students all agree that isn't the reason. But what is?

One student excitedly raises his hand. "It's genetic," he says. "I've read that there are studies showing African Americans have trouble floating. Something about their body mass." The student's response is sincere; he is not trying to put down African Americans.

A handful of African-American students in the classroom sigh and look down at their desks. The majority of the students, who are white, say nothing.

I'm thinking to myself that this would be funny if it weren't so sad. I'm also thinking

that I really want to get on to my main point, which is that to become an Olympic swimmer you have to be able to afford what most African-Americans can't afford—access to an Olympic-size pool, private lessons beginning as a child, membership in a private swim club as you get older, and enough leisure time to engage in non-stop practice.

But there it is, hanging in mid-air and going unchallenged, the idea that black people are genetically inferior to white people.

As the professor, what do I do? I am a Lasallian educator so I want to respect the dignity of each and every student and meet them where they are. But I also have an obligation as a teacher to separate fact from fiction.

So do I rebuff the student with the scientific fact that our genes are 99.9 percent similar? Do I simply let it go and talk with the student after class? Do I engage the class in a discussion of the point raised by the student? If so, what will be the effect on the black students in the room? Will the conversation explode into a cacophony of stereotypes rather than understanding? What will be the effect if I don't address the issue raised?

*Reflection: As you think about these questions, reflect on what you would do in this situation.*

## **Situation B: Putting a minority student in the hot seat**

I am teaching a class on the free-expression clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Since most of the course will revolve around landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions, I want to take time at the start of the semester to find out how much students already know about the Supreme Court and then help them fill in the gaps in their knowledge. I also want to impress upon the students why the court is so important.

Since most of my teaching is based on the Socratic method, I start with an open-ended question to my students: How has the Supreme Court affected your life? Can you think of any way in any arena — health, education, sports, entertainment — that a Supreme Court decision has had an effect on you or your family?

There are 26 students in my class. Most of them are white, but several are African-American or Latino. After I ask the question, there is silence. The silence goes on, making many students feel a bit uncomfortable. But I understand that such uncomfortable silences often bring out the best responses.

Finally, an African-American student who is sitting in the front row utters a two-word answer.

"I'm here," he says.

I ask him to repeat it.

"I'm here."

By this, the student means that without the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, which outlawed segregation in public schools, he, as a black man, would never have gotten the elementary and secondary education that allowed him to be admitted to La Salle University.

What an incredible teaching moment! I have an African-American student in my class giving profound witness to the importance of the Supreme Court by using his own life as an example.

What do I do with this moment?

Do I ask my student to tell us his life story? If so, of course, I won't have time to cover all the points I want to cover on this day.

If I ask him to tell his story, will I be putting him on the spot and forcing him to speak for his entire race or to reveal personal things he doesn't want to reveal? Will I make him feel even more like "the other" than he probably

already feels? Will I be opening a can of worms, risking the possibility that white students will raise the specter of so-called “reverse discrimination” against white people due to affirmative action?

But if I don’t further explore my student’s answer, will I be losing an important opportunity to educate?

*Reflection: As you think about these questions, reflect on what you would do in this situation.*

### **Situation C: Letting the dominant white, male culture fill the room**

I am mid-way into the Spring semester and this is my senior capstone course in our journalism track. It’s called Community Journalism.

In this class, my students report news and feature stories in the predominantly black Germantown neighborhood surrounding La Salle. Their stories go up on Germantown Beat, a news website I created to provide a source of information and inspiration for a community that the mainstream media has long ignored – what I call a voice for the voiceless.

I have 12 students in the class, all white men except for one African-American woman.

The men are mostly interested in becoming television personalities — TV sports commentators or television sports reporters. Several years of working together to produce sports shows on LaSalle TV, our campus station, has helped them build strong bonds with each other. They are now a band of brothers who support each other through thick and thin. The television studio in the Communication Center has become home for many of these men; they spend hours there working on shows, and they relish seeing themselves on a screen that is available to some 300,000 Comcast subscribers in the Philadelphia area.

In many ways, this is a beautiful thing — a

place where students can turn their passion for sports into television shows that teach them certain skills and that give them a sense of self-worth. On the other hand, it can also create an unhealthy sub-culture that unintentionally drowns out other voices.

When these students enter my Community Journalism class they bring with them their sports culture, which fills the room. Before class starts, they chatter about the ups and downs of the Philadelphia Eagles, the Flyers and the Phillies.

During the NFL draft, they eagerly follow every trade on their smart phones, shouting out their approval or disapproval of the Eagles’ picks.

In the midst of all this sits the other student in the class, a frail-looking African-American woman.

She is a few years older than the other students and a single mother with a six-year-old son whom she is very proud of. She lives with her mother in an impoverished neighborhood in Philadelphia. To make ends meet, she works the night shift at a hospital in Bucks County. To get there, she takes two buses. Round trip, her trek takes about four hours. She often comes to class late and exhausted.

One time this student sent me an email saying she couldn’t make it to class that day. There had been a shooting on her block and then a fire. The roads were blocked. People were urged to stay in their houses. She couldn’t even walk her son to school, as she usually did each morning.

Even so, this young woman is a talented reporter and writer. She is eagerly pursuing a story about a half-way house for women released from prison. Her work reflects great insight into the challenges of former felons as they try to re-enter society and rebuild their lives.



But in class, this woman doesn't speak much. And when she does, it is in such a soft voice that it is hard to hear her. "I don't know anything about sports," she confides to me one day. "And I don't care about sports."

How do I handle this? By doing nothing, I am, in effect, allowing the dominant white, male sports culture in the classroom to overwhelm a minority voice that has so much to teach my students.

But what, exactly, can I do?

*Reflection: As you think about these questions, reflect on what you would do in this situation.*

## Talking about race

These are the kind of situations I encounter as I try to deal with race in the classroom. On the one hand, they involve difficult pedagogical challenges. On the other hand, however, they also present an extraordinary opportunity to foster the kind of inter-racial understanding that is essential in a democratic society.

At my university, a conversation about race holds out enormous promise because the university brings together the descendants of two groups that have historically been at odds with one another – working-class African Americans and working-class white students of Irish and Italian heritage. As recently as the 1950s and 1960s, these two groups were

in heated competition for decent housing, education and manufacturing jobs in the City of Brotherly Love. Race riots broke out and blood was shed in predominantly white neighborhoods when blacks tried to move in.

That legacy at once fuels the kind of ugly rhetoric we have seen on Yik Yak over the past year, but it also gives us an incredible opportunity to help members of a very diverse student body learn to hear one another's stories if only we can find ways to encourage honest — and respectful — conversation about race.

Last spring, Frank Bruni, a columnist for The New York Times, praised Amherst and other elite private colleges for enrolling more minority students. The value, he argued, accrued to everybody: "...real learning and a real preparation for citizenship demand the intersection of different life stories and different sensibilities. Colleges should be making that happen."

A similar point was made by Patricia Gurin, a social psychologist at the University of Michigan, in a report prepared by the university to support its position in *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, landmark Supreme Court decisions in 2003 that supported the continued use of affirmative action in admissions.

"If institutions of higher education are able



to bring together students from various ethnic and racial backgrounds at this critical time of late adolescence and early adulthood," Gurin wrote, "they have the opportunity to disrupt

These conversations may be uncomfortable. They may be awkward. They may pull down our scores on student evaluations. (Some white students, inevitably, will claim "reverse

**These conversations may be uncomfortable. They may be awkward. They may pull down our scores on student evaluations. But if we don't talk about race in the classroom, where else will it happen?**

an insidious cycle of lifetime segregation that threatens the fabric of our pluralistic democracy."

At La Salle University, our dynamic mix of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds gives us an important opportunity to keep whole the pluralistic fabric of our society. We must not squander that opportunity by failing to engage our students in honest conversations about race—wherever they lead.

discrimination.") But if we don't talk about race in the classroom, where else will it happen?

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# Creating a Respectful Classroom Environment

Maryellen Weimer, PhD

In our class: 1) everyone is allowed to feel they can work and learn in a safe and caring environment; 2) everyone learns about, understands, appreciates, and respects varied races, classes, genders, physical and mental abilities, and sexualities; 3) everyone matters; 4) all individuals are to be respected and treated with dignity and civility; and 5) everyone shares the responsibility for making our class, and the Academy, a positive and better place to live, work, and learn.

This statement appears in the syllabus for an introductory sociology course. The syllabus is part of a collection of sample syllabi in the Teaching and Resources Innovations Library of the American Sociological Association (TRAILS). It also appears in an excellent analysis of 39 syllabi drawn from the TRAILS collection.

It reminded me of an event that occurred in one of my courses, probably during the late 80s. It was a junior-level course for communication majors. I don't remember

the topic of the day, but I do remember that, quite unrelated to the discussion, a student popped out with a very racist remark. The class went silent, or at least it seemed very still to me. I had no plan; I hadn't ever imagined the situation that had just unfolded.

It had happened in a classroom with no diversity. Maybe that was a good thing because the remark didn't relate to anybody in the room, so nobody was personally insulted and offended. But the lack of diversity was a bad thing, too. It's easier for people to make racist comments when no one from that race or ethnic group is around. Further, those prejudicial remarks and feelings are more likely to continue when encounters with individuals from groups other than our own never occur.

I knew that I couldn't just let the comment pass. So, I walked in the direction of the student, looked him in the eye with what I hoped was my most serious expression, and told him in no uncertain terms that comments like that were not appropriate or tolerated in this course or any other course. I spoke about the dark history of racism and its lingering presence in our society today. I called his remark degrading and insensitive, and I warned of dire consequences should such a comment be made in professional arenas. It was quite a soliloquy. When I finished, there was more silence — only now it felt uncomfortable. But I believed I had done the right thing.

I was using a weekly reaction paper in the course and every last paper I received that week mentioned the incident. I was surprised by the number who said that they felt the class also had a responsibility to respond. I shouldn't have been the only one objecting. But one comment was particularly telling: "I don't think that student will make another racist comment in this class, but I'm pretty sure he will continue to make racist remarks." When I read that, I

knew the writer was correct. I may have stood up for a climate of respect in the classroom, but I hadn't done the more important thing—help the student understand that those comments are as damaging to those they target as they are to those who make them.

Jane Tompkins says that the classroom is a microcosm of the world. "It is the chance we have to practice whatever ideas we cherish. The kind of classroom situation one creates is the acid test of what it is one really stands for." (p. 26) I like the opening statement of today's post because it doesn't leave the defining features of a course to chance. It proactively describes a vision for how a group of learners will operate and phrases that vision in such an inviting way—who wouldn't want to find themselves working and learning with others on those terms?

Of course, putting a statement in the syllabus doesn't create a classroom of respect. It's the actions teachers take in providing leadership and modeling the type of behavior we expect. Students learn about climates of respect from us. The opening statement sets the standards and can be followed by teacher behaviors that actualize them. Is that enough to prevent racist, homophobic, elitist, and other prejudicial remarks? Probably not, but I'd wager it is a way to make them less likely to occur.

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# Activities for Building Cultural Competencies in Our Students and Ourselves

Melissa Gomez, EdD

“Who am I to speak about diversity and inclusion? I am a middle-aged white woman from an upper-middle-class family. I have been afforded numerous opportunities many of my students never have been, and possibly never will be, afforded. I am the picture of privilege.” This is what I told myself at times when the topics of diversity and inclusion came up. However, when you look at the racial/cultural makeup of most college campuses, if faculty “like me” do not broach the sensitive topics of diversity and inclusion, who will?

Therefore, when I was presented with the opportunity to creatively approach diversity and inclusion via a health disparities course, I saw this as an amazing, if not somewhat frightening, opportunity. The result has been both humbling and empowering for me personally.

Health, inherently, is a very complex, dynamic, and enigmatic topic to begin with. When you then ask students to look at not only differences in health outcomes for various populations, but why those differences exist and are so pervasive, it becomes even more complicated. Why do some racial groups experience significantly poorer birth outcomes compared to other groups, particularly when there are no clear genetic/biological explanations? Why are rural residents at significantly

higher risk of dying from a heart attack than urban residents? Why is the relationship between income and health so tight? These are just some questions we address in our health disparities course, and underlying these important questions is the need for a foundational appreciation and understanding of our individual strengths, challenges, and historical perspectives. Here are a few guiding principles I have learned along the way to help students, and myself, get somewhat closer to bridging some significant gaps related to diversity and inclusion.

Be brave yet humble. In my class I ask students to investigate, question, and reflect on their own biases from a place of nonjudgment. Therefore, I must be willing to do the same and share the results of my personal inquiries. I must be brave enough to admit I may not fully understand and appreciate the challenges of many of the populations we discuss in this class. I must be brave enough to admit and investigate my own biases. I must be humble enough to recognize I will always have much to learn. I must set the example for approaching topics and situations that I am uncomfortable with from a place of compassion, a genuine desire to improve my own understanding, and an acceptance that I

may not always get it right. What's more, with the right intentions, I must not let the fear of getting it wrong keep me from trying.

Provide students the opportunity to investigate their own biases and/or cultural experiences from a place of nonjudgment. Several times a semester I provide in-class opportunities for students to sit quietly, reflect, and respond in a private journal to some leading questions about the population, topic, or disparity we will discuss. I encourage them to approach the exercise as a witness, not a judge. They should not feel the need to be punished for acknowledging their own biases.



Instead I encourage students to investigate their biases and look at them as opportunities to learn more about themselves and ways they may interact with their environment and fellow humans. Once ground rules have been established, as well as an environment of mutual respect, we often move on to discussing and sharing our biases and typical stereotypes. This includes breaking down those stereotypes that appear on the surface as well-intentioned, such as Asians are good at math, Mexicans are hard workers, Native Americans are very spiritual, and African-Americans are good athletes. This often leads to

great discussions regarding the danger of lumping people together even with seemingly positive attributes. It is also interesting that rarely, when I lead this discussion, can a class come up with any positive stereotypes for white people.

Emphasize that a collective response may not be appropriate for everyone identified with a particular "group." When discussing diversity/inclusion issues, I have found it is critical to introduce the concept of intersectionality, and how different aspects of identity and discrimination can intersect or overlap. There is an activity from the Australian Attorney General's Department that I have incorporated into my courses. It introduces, via an interactive activity, the concept of intersectionality (which originated during the women's rights era, highlighting the fact that many of the voices of the women's rights movement were white and were not representative of black women and their experiences with discrimination and disadvantage).

To begin the activity, students are first provided a new "identity." Examples include: refugee woman, 35, recently arrived from the Congo through the women-at-risk program; male, doctor, with two children; and a young boy, 14, who recently left home after confrontation with a physically abusive step-father. Once the students have assumed their new identities, they are asked to stand even in a line while statements are read aloud. Based on the statements read and their identities, students can decide if the statement applies to their identity in a negative (step back), positive (step forward), or neutral (stay in place) way. It is interesting for students to see how quickly some parts of an individual's social identity can lead to advantage or disadvantage. In just several statements, students visibly see the gaps between themselves and their classmates'

new identities—very rarely do they ever meet again in the middle. I view our job as faculty, in part, as one to help students become responsible citizens who will somehow find ways to bridge these gaps.

Approach it from a competency perspective rather than a deficit perspective. Introduce students to opportunities and tools that will help them continuously build cultural competency. In my field there is an excellent, free online course on developing cultural competencies in the health professions. This online course, developed and delivered by the Department of Health and Human Services, provides the groundwork for us to discuss what cultural competency “looks like” in our field of health care. Students engage in the course online, which includes a pre- and post-test. There are scenarios, video vignettes, discussion questions, and reflections. I also point out to students that just because they earned a certificate indicating they completed

a cultural competency course, it does not mean they have suddenly arrived at this magic place of being culturally competent. There is no such place; it is a journey, not a destination, and one we are on together.

For more articles like this one, download your copy of Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom »

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# Inclusion by Design: Tool Helps Faculty Examine Their Teaching Practices

Carl S. Moore, PhD, Edward Brantmeir, PhD, and Andreas Brocheild, PhD

**A**re there barriers to inclusion lurking in your courses? After meeting at a diversity and inclusion session of the 2013 Professional and Organization Development Network (POD Network) Conference in Pittsburgh, the three of us set out to develop a tool to help faculty examine their courses through a diversity lens.

We were driven by a lack of available resources that provide a practical approach to digging deep into the nuances of one’s course.

So how does one examine course diversity, given there are so many points of entry into the conversation yet varying degrees of faculty interest and commitment? We decided the best place to start is the syllabus. After all,

it's customary for those who teach in college settings to develop and/or at the very least use a syllabus to guide their courses. That makes the syllabus the perfect focal point for faculty to explore difficult conversations and contradictions about inclusion, exclusion, diversity, privilege, power, and possibilities for transformative change in the barrier-laden structure of college classroom.

We spent a few years of designing and wrestling with what to call our creation (tool, audit, survey?) and eventually decided that it simply was a 'tool' to explore inclusion in one's syllabus and course design. In our ongoing research, deliberations, and presentations of this tool at national conferences, three areas of intentional exploration emerged: inclusion and course context; text; and subtext. The complete tool is rather lengthy and exhaustive, rooted in theory and research on inclusion, multicultural education, universal design, implicit/unconscious bias, and the hidden curriculum (a full version can be found by visiting <http://bit.ly/inclusionbydesign>). For the purposes of this publication we therefore present a brief snapshot of the overarching categories that highlight how the tool can help instructors examine the text, context and subtext of any course.

**Inclusion and Course Context:** A guiding question to explore the context of a course is, how does the context of the course support inclusive learning? We ask educators to reflect on the following:

- o What are the situational factors surrounding your course?
- o Who are the people that will be in your class? Who will not be there?
- o What is the course content? Whose voice is heard? What perspective dominates? What is omitted?
- o How is the content relevant in the "real"

world and for the learners in your class? How can it be made relevant for those who may not recognize its relevance?

- o What is the common pedagogy in your class – the philosophy and practice behind your instructional choices?

**Inclusion and "Text":** As educational developers who have depth and experience in course design, we clearly recognize that the transformation of one syllabus is not enough to address the range of inclusion issues present in any course. In fact, we argue that a transformation of how one thinks about learning and course design is the greater aim. In this respect, we follow the guiding question, How do learning outcomes, assessment, and content support inclusion for all? We ask faculty to examine the tone of their syllabi – is it inviting? Staying true to our training in backwards design and deep learning, we ask faculty to examine the types of learning outcomes (cognitive, behavioral, affective), the variety of assessment, and the teaching and learning activities they will use to achieve learning outcomes: Do they use culturally responsive teaching approaches, flexible or fixed assessments, shared teaching, or co-learning approaches in their classroom? This section is best used with faculty who have experienced course design principles or who have had more lengthy course re/design experiences.

**Inclusion and Subtext:** In this section of the tool, we ask the following questions to encourage instructors to dig deep into the subtext of their course and make the learning process more inclusive and visible for students:

- o What are the implicit rules and messages of your course and are they stated in your syllabus?
- o What are the hidden/implicit/unconscious biases and stereotypes?

o Have you, the instructor, made your philosophy of teaching and learning explicit, or does it remain hidden?

o Is the tone of your syllabus contractual, inviting, learner centered, authoritarian, or energizing?

**Paths Forward:** Although the tool is comprehensive, it is by no way complete. The nature of its aims and the complexity of the topic will continue to make it a work in progress. Practicing what we preach, we feel such a

tool on inclusion should be inclusive and integrate vantage points of a broad network of educators to grow its effectiveness. Therefore, we are in a continuous state of seeking feedback from faculty on the quality and use of our work. Beyond refining the tool, we aim to nourish deeper conversations about inclusion and diversity in hopes of transforming college classrooms by working with professors on their own approaches to course design.

# Teachable Moments about Privilege

Elaine Radmer

**M**any faculty wonder how to help students in the dominant group understand societal privilege without making them defensive. One day, a situation arose in my course that changed my approach to this topic. I was teaching about using APA citations, and, in the course of doing so, opened my spiral-bound copy of the APA manual and folded it back on itself. After several minutes of instruction, I gave students a chance to practice. During this pause, a student spoke up, “I wish my manual had spiral binding,” and the group reverberated with this idea. I hadn’t noticed that my book was different

*“I explained how this situation paralleled societal privilege - unearned benefits from one’s race or class status. Just like I had been unaware of the differences in (book) binding, people who have privilege often don’t realize it.”*

than theirs. But apparently, while I was talking, they were very attuned to the fact my manual was spiral-bound and theirs were paperbacks, which didn’t stay open that easily.

After hearing their comments, I started thinking about the situation. I pointed out that I was unaware of a difference that made my

manual much easier to use than theirs. Thinking out loud, I explained how this situation paralleled societal privilege—unearned benefits from one’s race or class status. Just like I had been unaware of the differences in

binding, people who have privilege often don’t realize it. It is easy to believe that everyone experiences opportunities that promote



personal empowerment. I shared another example. When I was a teenager, I was pulled over for speeding. But the officer let me go with a warning. It took me years to realize that not everyone experienced the same treatment. The officer's response was based in large part on the way I matched expectations or norms in the dominant group to which we both belonged.

After discussing privilege in a relaxed, interesting, and nonthreatening way over the APA manual, I found several other occasions to mention privilege in this course. And I noticed that these references became shared experiences that deepened the bonds between us as a group. This contrasted with the tension that often surrounds discussions of culture and diversity. When the topic is announced at the outset, students participate reluctantly with preconceived notions and general discomfort. They seem to feel cornered into conversations they'd rather not have.

The APA manual binding opened my eyes to a new way to approach discussions about privilege and power. Now I look for teachable moments, so the concepts can be introduced in contexts that makes the issues easier to understand and accept. In almost every course, a situation arises in which I can plant a seed about the meaning of privilege. I also look for opportunities to discuss metaphors I've noticed elsewhere in my life. For example, I



purchased an older used Volvo in 2008. I love that car. Now, when I am on road trips and see a Volvo semi-trailer truck, I feel a sense of pride and belonging. This experience is mirrored for kids who attend a school where pretty much everybody looks and acts like they do. Life at school is just like life at home, which implicitly sends a message of validation and affirmation.

In another driving example, when I am navigating in unfamiliar places, I tend to drive slowly while cars whiz around me in the other lane. But when I'm making my way through heavy traffic, and I know where I'm going, what lane I need to be in, and where the merge points are, then I'm the one whizzing past cars in the other lane. This type of insider knowledge can make an unbelievable difference. One day I traveled a very congested route at rush hour. A friend of mine who was familiar with the area left at the same time, traveled a very similar distance and arrived an hour ahead of me. Due to my lack of information, I experienced initial slowdowns that then snowballed as traffic grew heavier and heavier. This exemplifies Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital. For those of us who have traveled a route throughout our lifetimes, we rarely notice that we are working with insider knowledge. If you don't know the subtle features of that route, the journey is much more challenging.

Experiences that symbolize concepts of social privilege or cultural capital can be discussed with content in every course. These concepts begin to feel tangible to students in the dominant group when they are integrated into a variety of courses via concrete examples that grow out of every day experiences. Teachable moments can arise unexpectedly, like they did in my lesson on APA style. If teachers are looking for them, they can make the most of those moments.

# Making Diversity, Equity and Inclusion a Mission, Not Just an Initiative

A. T. Miller, PhD

**W**hen I was appointed Central Michigan University's (CMU's) first chief diversity officer in April 2018, I was charged with making the campus a more inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. At CMU, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is more than a feel-good effort; it is part of our mission and who we are as an institu-

our DEI efforts too. This year CMU was awarded a National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant to support women faculty in STEM fields and selected by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities to be part of the ASPIRE network to enhance faculty diversity and inclusive pedagogy in STEM disciplines.

**Creating a welcoming and diverse environment is not simply the job of one single person; it requires full participation from faculty and students alike.**

tion. It is a set of goals we work for daily. Our campus thrives on the unique perspectives and backgrounds of everyone who is part of our community. Our conscious effort not only to invest in but promote and celebrate what makes CMU different is a major factor in why so many students choose to call CMU home.

We are already seeing positive results from our dedicated commitment to DEI at CMU. Our institution is [above the national average](#) in faculty diversity by race and gender at all teaching levels—from assistant and associate to full-time professors. Outside organizations and programs are recognizing and awarding

Allocating finances and resources is part of the solution to help drive DEI initiatives forward and generate results, but it does not replace the groundwork needed to create an environment that is truly equitable and inclusive for all people, regardless of race, background, gender, or religion. Creating a welcoming and diverse environment is not simply the job of one single person; it requires full participation from faculty and students alike. We strive to provide concrete tools, attainable skills, and measurable goals to ensure that students, faculty, and staff feel welcome. Below, I provide pointers for univer-

sities to implement a successful DEI initiative.

## Engage faculty and staff

For DEI initiatives to be successful, faculty and staff must embrace them. It is critical to provide training and education opportunities on DEI topics as well as to create an open dialogue about the challenges we face. Additionally, faculty and staff must hold each other accountable as we strive to create a fully inclusive campus.

I encourage you to engage faculty and staff with various online training programs and workshops tailored to meet the needs of your campus. Make these DEI efforts a part of your institution's onboarding and orientation process so new hires are engaged and educated before stepping foot in the classroom. At CMU, we provide a variety of online and in-person DEI training opportunities; we also send teams of faculty, staff, and students to attend conferences such as the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity, Creating Change, and the Intergroup Dialogue Conference. It is also important for all members of the campus community to have a means to provide feedback. At CMU, our Hearing Diverse Voices series gives students the opportunity share their experiences with faculty and staff. These programs also include sessions focused on developing inclusive classroom techniques. Another way to instill DEI accountability among faculty is to give credit for DEI work toward tenure and promotion in department bylaws. This academic year, for the first time ever, all CMU staff will be asked to demonstrate their contributions to DEI during their annual performance reviews. Measures to this effect are rare at US institutions, but they instill real accountability among faculty and staff and help create a system focused on DEI.

## Engage students

From the first campus tour to graduation, we want students to be engaged with DEI initiatives. Institutions should incorporate DEI initiatives into the recruitment process and highlight the diversity of the campus. When you showcase that every single person, no matter their background, can enjoy the resources and activities your institution offers, it creates a sense of belonging and home.

To encourage a healthy campus culture, CMU requires all incoming students to complete a variety of online training courses on DEI. Promoting DEI initiatives should not be a one-time effort, though; it needs to continue throughout the entirety of a student's collegiate education. Through our leadership institute, we offer [Level Up](#), a workshop that explores social justice, power, privilege and oppression, and our volunteer opportunities give students diversity and inclusion training as part of the volunteer placement process. Additionally, all students are required to take a course on race and ethnicity and a second course on social disparity as part of their general education.

All our research studies and feedback show that inclusive diversity is a significant engine of excellence for higher education and improves the college experience before and after graduation. The [National IDEALS survey](#) completed in 2019 shows that compared to their peers at similar institutions, CMU students are more open-minded on all aspects of DEI. The survey results prove that improving open-mindedness makes our students better teammates and communicators—hireable skills they can take with them post-graduation. While students pay an institution to learn hard skills, learning soft skills and tolerance both in and out of the classroom through DEI initiatives is an added value.

## Provide students, faculty and staff data and reports to show improvement

It's one thing to say your institution is committed to DEI, but it's another to prove it. I recommend having clear and transparent data, taken from yearly student and faculty surveys, about the success of existing DEI initiatives and opportunities for improvement. One way to do this is to hire a full-time data analyst to monitor and analyze institutional DEI programs and provide transparent results. This can drive honest conversations about the initiatives, highlight the positive changes happening at your institution, and identify needs, which can in turn drive engagement and participation among students, faculty, and staff.

Diversity and inclusion are essential to the

excellence of higher education, and achieving success requires full participation at every level—from students and support staff to instructors and administrators. The IDEALS survey shows that inclusive diversity is a significant engine of excellence for higher education. CMU has taken steps to ensure that our students and faculty have access to and are participating in inclusive diversity through a variety of programs and initiatives. To affect real change and create a better, more inclusive future together, I encourage other institutions to review data derived from student and faculty surveys and feedback, along with national surveys such as IDEALS, to build an infrastructure that works for them, their faculty, and their current and future student bodies.





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