Inclusive Teaching Practices

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Why is Inclusive Teaching Important?

“Even though some of us might wish to conceptualize our classrooms as culturally neutral or might choose to ignore the cultural dimensions, students cannot check their sociocultural identities at the door, nor can they instantly transcend their current level of development... Therefore, it is important that the pedagogical strategies we employ in the classroom reflect an understanding of social identity development so that we can anticipate the tensions that might occur in the classroom and be proactive about them.”

Benefits of Inclusive Teaching

- Instructors can connect and engage with a variety of students.
- Instructors are prepared for “hot moments” that may arise when controversial material is discussed.
- Students connect with course materials that are relevant to them.
- Students feel comfortable in the classroom environment to voice their ideas/questions.
- Students are more likely to be successful through activities that support their learning modalities, abilities, and backgrounds.
Considerations for Inclusive Teaching Strategies

- How might your own cultural-bound assumptions influence your interactions with students?

- How might the backgrounds and experiences of your students influence their motivation, engagement, and learning in your classroom?

- How can you modify course materials, activities, assignments, and/or exams to be more accessible to all students in your class?
Course (re)Design

- Consider your teaching philosophy
- Diversify your course materials
- Assess early, often, and through different means
- Vary your teaching strategies
- Allow students to demonstrate their learning in various ways

(“Inclusive Teaching Practices.” Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning)
Classroom Dynamics

- Identities and intersectionality
- Implicit bias
- Power and privilege

(“Diversity Wheel.” Loden & Rosner, 1991)
• Our lives are shaped by multiple, mutually influencing factors and identities.
Implicit (Unconscious) Bias

Beliefs or attitudes we hold about others that we are unaware we have

- Faculty often have implicit biases about their students that can impede student growth:
  - Assuming certain students know how to seek help when struggling
  - Assuming students from certain backgrounds or social groups have different intellectual abilities
  - Expecting students who speak with certain accents to be poor writers
  - Treating students with physical disabilities as if they have mental disabilities too
  - Treating students from particular identity groups as experts on issues for that group
Stereotype Threat

• The risk of confirming in oneself a characteristic that is part of a negative stereotype about one’s group
STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING IMPLICIT BIAS

- Work on self-awareness…
  - …that biases are natural and unavoidable
  - …to recognize your own biases
- Intentionally consume information that counters the biases you have
- Challenge your negative biases by focusing on specific counterexamples/positive information
- Participate in bias training
- Talk with others about your (or their) biases
- Solicit feedback from students
Power and Privilege

- **Power**: access to social, political, and economic resources; ability to coerce others’ behavior
- **Privilege**: an invisible package of unearned assets
Consequences of Power & Privilege

• One is able to experience one’s own perspectives and experiences as normal and “human” rather than gendered or racialized.

• One is then able to function rather easily out of this perspective, assuming that one’s behaviors reflect generic human behavior.

• One usually does not ask such questions as:
  • Would I think about this differently if I were a woman/a person of color/disabled/poor/LGBT/etc?
  • How might this affect women/people of color/disabled people/poor people/LGBT people/etc?
Inclusive Moves and Strategies

- Set the tone on your first day
- Get to know your students
- Build rapport among the group
- Be mindful of language
- Acknowledge and respond to difficult topics

(“Inclusive Teaching Practices.” Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning)
Group Agreements

• You might wish to employ group agreements in order to:
  • make your classroom’s norms more explicit
  • have students themselves articulate the ground rules they need for an effective learning environment
  • introduce students to collaborative process and decision making
  • many other things...

• Remind students of norms throughout semester by:
  • Posting them on Webcourses
  • Adding them to the syllabus
  • Reviewing throughout the semester to assess their effectiveness

("Inclusive Teaching Practices." Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning)
Creating an Affirmative, Safe Classroom Space

• Be aware of how much space you take up
• Be aware of who you are
• Be open and honest
• Be respectful
• Be empathetic and understanding

(Example of class agreement. Cox 2018)
A few words on words...

Avoid saying...
• “Colored people”

• “The blacks...”

• “You’re a racist!”*

Say instead...
• “People of color”

• Ask yourself why you are talking about an entire group of people as a monolithic group.

• “I have a problem with what you just said/did, and so might some other people... here’s why.”

• “What you said/did was racist... here’s why.”

(Example of classroom norms for discussing race. Cox 2018)
Navigating Difficult Moments

Difficult moments are inevitable, but saying nothing is not an option!

• Tips for responding productively:
  • Attend to your own reactions
  • Understand the situation
  • Deepen and nuance your short-term response
  • Consider your long-term response

(“Inclusive Teaching Practices.” Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning)
Moving Forward:

- Attend training sessions and workshops on inclusion, diversity, and equity through FCTL and outside sources
- Constantly evaluate and reevaluate your courses and classroom practices
- Seek feedback: from peers, supervisors, and students