Group 1A: Equitable and inclusive teaching/classroom strategies

Facilitators:

Elyse Bolsterstein (Northeastern Illinois University)

Becky Delventhal (Lake Forest College)

Reflecting on experiences as instructor and/or student, what characteristics did an “unwelcoming” and “welcoming” classroom environment have?

* Characteristics of “unwelcoming” classroom:
  + Instructor acting overly defensive when students ask questions,
  + being talked over,
  + instructor pointing out differences/othering (i.e. commenting on someone being the only student of their identity)
  + silent/no participation/no one answering or asking questions,
  + instructor only asking certain groups for input
* Characteristics of “welcoming” classroom:
  + Conversational, everyone chatting before class starts
  + Instructor calling students by name
  + Talking about weather, sports, commute, etc. (non course material)
  + Feel valued/appreciated
  + Feel safe/comfortable asking questions
  + Instructor is relatable

What are some specific strategies you’ve used or seen used to create a welcoming classroom environment?

* Get names as soon as possible from roster, make sure to refer to students names when commenting on a question or idea
* Allow for diverse class participation options, not rely on all verbal participation (give opportunities for non-verbal questions/comments during and outside of class for students that are less comfortable or shy)
* Have students introduce themselves through online forum or survey, and then as the instructor, use their names and comment on something they like (sports team, etc.) in class
* First assignment as an opportunity for introductions/getting to know each other - have students participate in an online discussion, require them to ask questions of each other (a certain number of interactions)
* Invite and encourage students to talk to each other in their groups, before class, during group work

What are some ways you’ve tried to communicate your perspective on inclusivity/equity through your syllabus?

* Put syllabus online, allows it to have embedded links, for it to be changeable/editable
* Course learning objectives in syllabus explicitly focused on DEI
  + Have some course content that covers history of race/ethnicity/colonialism in field
* Design infographic/more visual syllabus
  + Have a pie chart for grade distribution/composition
  + flow chart for learning objectives
  + Might need to think about accessibility for those with visual impairment or who use reading software (i.e. dyslexia) – make sure images have alt text descriptions

What about how you articulate course policies?

* COVID has highlighted some inequities in how policies regarding late assignments and attendance affect different students
  + Discussed how teaching during the pandemic has prompted us to change some of these policies to be more lenient/flexible
* Some specific strategies:
  + Tokens to turn in late work (make any flexibility on deadlines explicit)
    - Some students may not know that they can ask to turn something in late if they have extenuating circumstances (hidden curriculum)
    - 3x tokens that students can use to turn an assignment in 24 hours late, no questions asked
    - Might need to exclude non-allowable assignments, like group presentations, etc.
  + Also, could still have some penalty (i.e. 10% subtracted/24 hours), but set a limit as to how much can be taken off (up to 50%)
    - This incentivizes students still turning the work in, for partial credit, even if several days late
* Issue of grading burden
  + how to pace the work for yourself as the instructor if students are turning in assignments late?
* Also, issue of grading equity
  + How do you make sure you’re evaluating students similarly, if grading the assignment over multiple weeks?
  + Try to use detailed rubrics/grading checklists, but can still be an issue, especially for more subjective assignments like Lab Reports
* Issue of coordinating these policies with faculty in the same department,
  + Should faculty in the same department all have similar policies?
  + Especially in different sections of the same course?
    - yes, ideally instructors would get together and work out a compromise seemed to be the group consensus
* At the high school level, this is also happening, so there may also be a prolonged effect of students unaccustomed to meeting strict deadlines?

Group 1B: Equitable and inclusive teaching/classroom strategies

Facilitators:

Suparna Chatterjee (Arkansas Tech University)

Cindy Voisine (Northeastern Illinois University)

1. Welcoming classroom environment

Include a DEI statement on your syllabus

Transparency is key: tell them why DEI is important to you

Your DEI statement should be individualized for you and the course

Include link to institution’s DEI statement

Student Introductions

Introductory assignment using discussion boards or apps (Voice thread/My name badge)

Opportunity to state how students want to be addressed in class, including pronunciation of their name and their preferred pronouns

Make it optional

Post on discussion board

Option to privately share information with you

2. Syllabus preparation

Adopt a class code of conduct written by students

Allow student choice in design of syllabus content, offer examples of culturally relevant pedagogy but allow students to choose

Self-reflection

Incorporate self-reflection on course material, including an outside book assignment

Have students bring in their own experiences

Students reflect on their skill set that they can bring to the course

iBIOLOGY is a good resource to inspire students to embrace their individuality

Some additional resources shared by participants and facilitators:

1. Welcoming classroom
   1. <https://www.collegestar.org/modules/creating-a-welcoming-learning-environment>
   2. <https://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/preparing-to-teach/ideas-to-create-a-welcoming-engaging-and-inclusive-classroom/>
   3. <https://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/creating-an-inclusive-classroom/>
2. Syllabus
   1. <https://www.dvc.edu/san-ramon/faculty/pdfs/Equitizing%20your%20Class%20Handout.pdf>
   2. Center for Urban Education Syllabus Guide <https://cue-equitytools.usc.edu/>
3. Assessments
   1. <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/equity/>
   2. <https://cpet.tc.columbia.edu/news-press/equity-and-assessment>
   3. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/06/25/assessment-group-releases-case-study-series-equitable-ways-judging-learning>