Multicultural Diversity in Higher Education

The Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence is a division of the Office of Vice Chancellor for Instruction
Course Purpose and Objectives

*Without an understanding of the unique meanings existing for the individual, the problems of helping him effectively are almost insurmountable.* —Arthur Combs

Professors and instructors know that students learn in different ways. Our classroom experiences confirms this every day. Most of us have done some type of diversity training, so we also know that there are numerous factors which affect students’ learning. This class is designed to help educators work toward honoring cultural diversity in their classrooms.

**Course Objectives**

1. You will gain a deeper understanding of cultural diversity as it relates to learning.
2. You will be able to recognize less obvious aspects of cultural diversity.
3. You will model tactics for overcoming stereotypes and biases.
4. You will be able to identify different classroom strategies to work effectively with the broad range of students enrolled in your class.
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Pre Test

PURPOSE: The Cultural Diversity Quiz illustrates how our perceptions and information we receive from the media, school and other sources are often wrong. You will take a quiz. At the end of the class we will discuss the correct answers and your own perceptions.

Suggested Time Frame: 10 minutes to take quiz

Activity: Please individually and silently answer the quiz questions to the best of your ability.

DISCUSSION: See Post Test
Cultural Diversity Quiz

Please circle the correct answer for each question. We will discuss the answers when everyone has completed the quiz.

1. Diversity is only about race and gender. True/False
2. Racism is less prevalent now than it was over 40 years ago. True/False
3. White students are affected by their cultural or ethnic background. True/False
4. All Hispanic students speak Spanish. True/False
5. Minority students should join student organizations that represent their ethnic heritage. True/False
6. African Americans tend to be more verbally aggressive than other races. True/False
7. Deciding to vote for someone because they are a member of your race is not a bad thing to do because they will represent your interests. True/False
8. Asian Americans are the model minority because they all excel in school. True/False
9. Affirmative action is unfair to white males. True/False
10. Historically Black Colleges foster a segregated society. True/False
11. Successful sex therapy exists for homosexuals who want to be heterosexuals. True/False
12. Making comments about a man or woman’s physical characteristics is not a bad thing to do, so long as it’s positive and no one hears you. True/False
13. What percentage of U.S. toxic waste dumps that do not comply with Environmental Protection Agency regulations are found in predominantly African American or Latino communities?
A. 10%
B. 50%
C. 75%
D. 90%

14. Which of the following variables most closely predicts how high someone will score on the SAT test?
A. Race
B. Region of residence
C. Family income
D. Parents’ academic achievement

15. How many of every thousand senior level male managers of Fortune 1000 companies are Asian or Asian American?
A. 3
B. 47
C. 99
D. 153

16. According to a Business week study of 3,664 business school graduates, how much more, on average, does a man with an MBA from one of the top 20 business schools in the U.S. make during the first year after graduation than a woman in the same situation?
A. About $1,500 more
B. About $3,000 more
C. About $6,500 more
D. About $10,000 more

17. Compared with schools in which 5% or less of the students are people of color, how likely are schools in which 50% or more of the students are people of color to be overcrowded (25% or more beyond capacity)?
A. Equally as likely
B. Twice as likely
C. Four times as likely
D. Six times as likely

18. Children raised by single mothers attain, on average:
A. 4 fewer years of education than children raised by two parents
B. 2 fewer years of education than children raised by two parents
C. The same level of education as children raised by two parents
D. 2 more years of education than children raised by two parents
19. 97% of all students in public high schools regularly hear homophobic comments from peers. What percentage report hearing homophobic remarks from school staff or faculty?
   A. 5%
   B. 27%
   C. 53%
   D. 74%

20. According to the U.S. Department of Education, about 61% of public school students in the U.S. are white. What percentage of public school teachers are white?
   A. 61%
   B. 73%
   C. 87%
   D. 99%

Sources: Paul C. Gorski for EdChange and the Multicultural Pavilion; Diversity Initiatives, Villanova University, 2005
Part One

Understanding the Depth and Breadth of Cultural Diversity

PURPOSE: In order to address cultural diversity, we first need to define it. In defining it, we reveal the limitations and assumptions often made by educators about what students identify as culture.

Suggested Time Frame: 90 minutes

ACTIVITIES:

Exploring Language: Definitions activity

We will explore the different definitions of race, ethnicity, prejudice, discrimination, racism, sexism and homophobia.

Understanding the depth and breadth of “Multicultural”

We will explore the understanding of culture by listing all dimensions of it and categorizing the list items.

We will discuss the relatedness, importance, and of how individuals define themselves and others.

We will discuss which of the categories you as an educator focus on when trying to teach multi-culturally.

DISCUSSION:

Definitions for each word should come from two sources: the person’s opinion and a scholarly source.

Suggest all dimensions of culture you can think of. Reflect on your own culture and the dimensions of that culture with which you identify.


Hidalgo’s levels:

The Concrete: This is the most visible and tangible level of culture, and includes the most surface-level dimensions such as clothes, music food, games, etc. These aspects of culture are often those that provide the focus for multicultural “festivals” or “celebrations.”

The Behavioral: This level of culture clarifies how we define our social roles, the language(s) we speak, and our approaches to nonverbal communication. The Behavioral level REFLECTS our values. Aspects to
be listed in this category include language, gender roles, family structure, political affiliation, and other items that situate us organizationally in society.

**The Symbolic**: This level of culture includes our values and beliefs. It can be abstract, but it is most often the key to how individuals define themselves. It includes value systems, customs, spirituality, religion, worldview, beliefs, mores, etc.

How do you define yourself within these categories?

Which of the levels is the most important category?

When you meet somebody, which of those items (under any of the categories) do you use to understand them culturally?

Is your attempt to understand others culturally consistent with how you want to be viewed and understood?

What forces in our society might contribute to our simplification of the culture of others, even though we don’t want to be defined simplistically ourselves?

Which of these categories do you, as an educator focus on when you are trying to teach multiculturally?

How has education generally tried to be “multicultural”?

What are the aspects or dimensions of culture that we focus on in our classrooms trying to be “multicultural”?

Is this consistent with how we know people want to be defined?

How might we make conceptualization more consistent?

Source – The Depth and Breadth of “Multicultural” by Paul Gorski
Cultural and Learner Diversity

PURPOSE: Culture and learning are connected in important ways. If a teacher is to facilitate successful learning opportunities for all learners, he or she must know the learner. This includes knowing about innate personality and also learned cultural values that affect behavior.

Suggested Time Frame: 60 minutes

ACTIVITIES:

After discussing the relationship among culture, communication and education, culturally different discourse structures, ethnic variations in communication styles and problem solving and task engagement, each group will design a class activity that would take into consideration the different ethnic styles of learning.

DISCUSSION:

RELATIONSHIP AMONG CULTURE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

A study of the nature of culture and communication (Porter and Samovar, 1991) shows a reciprocity that exists between the two and the importance of these to intercultural interactions. This provides valuable information for culturally responsive teaching. The authors describe communication as “an intricate matrix of interacting social acts that occur in a complex social environment that reflects the way people live and how they come to interact with and get along in their world. This social environment is culture, and if we are to truly understand communication, we must also understand culture.” (p. 10)

Culture is the rule-governing system that defines the forms, functions, and content of communication. It is largely responsible for the construction of our “individual repertoires of communicative behaviors and meanings. Understanding connections between culture and communication is critical to improving inter-cultural interactions. This is so because “as cultures differ from one another, the communication practices and behaviors of individuals reared in those cultures will also be different,” and “the degree of influence culture has on intercultural communication is a function of the dissimilarity between the cultures.

Languages and communication styles are systems of cultural notations and the means through which thoughts and ideas are expressively embodied. Embedded within them are cultural values and ways of knowing that strongly influence how students engage with learning tasks and demonstrate mastery of them. The absence of shared communicative frames of reference, procedural protocols, rules of etiquette, and discourse systems makes it difficult for culturally diverse students and teachers to genuinely understand each other and for students to fully convey their intellectual abilities. Teachers who do not know or value these realities will not be able to fully access, facilitate, and assess most of
what these students know and can do. Communication must be understood to be more than a linguistic system.

CULTURALLY DIFFERENT DISCOURSE STRUCTURES

In conventional classroom discourse students are expected to assume a passive-receptive posture. (Kochman, 1985) They are told to listen quietly while the teacher talks. Once the teacher finishes, then the students can respond in some prearranged, stylized way—by asking or answering questions; validating or approving what was said; or taking individual, teacher-regulated turns at talking. Students are expected to be silent and look at teachers when they are talking and to wait to be acknowledged before they take their turn at talking. Once permission is granted, they should follow established rules of decorum, such as one person speaking at a time, being brief and to the point, and keeping emotional nuances to a minimum.

In contrast to the passive-receptive character of conventional classroom discourse, some ethnic groups have communication styles that have been described as participatory-interactive. Speakers expect listeners to engage them actively through vocalized, motion, and movement responses as they are speaking. Speakers and listeners are action-provoking partners in the construction of the discourse. These communicative styles have been observed among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Hawaiians. As is the case with other cultural behaviors, they are likely to be more pronounced among individuals who strongly identify and affiliate with their ethnic groups and cultural heritages. For example, low-income and minimally educated members of ethnic groups are likely to manifest group cultural behaviors more thoroughly than those who are middle class and educated. This is so because they have fewer opportunities to interact with people different from themselves and to be affected by the cultural exchanges and adaptations that result from the intermingling of a wide variety of people from diverse ethnic groups and varied experiential backgrounds.

ETHNIC VARIATION IN COMMUNICATION STYLES

Among African Americans the participatory-interactive style of communicating is sometimes referred to as call-response. It involves listeners giving encouragement, commentary, compliments, and even criticism to speakers as they are talking. The speaker’s responsibility is to issue the “calls” (making statements), and the listeners’ obligation is to respond in some expressive, and often auditory, way (e.g. smiling, vocalizing, looking about, moving around, “amending”). When a speaker says something that triggers a response in them (whether positive or negative; affective or genitive), African American listeners are likely to “talk back”. This may involve a vocal or motion response, or both, sent directly to the speaker or shared with neighbors in the audience. This practice has been described as “breaking in and talking over.” (Longstreet, 1978; Shade, 1994) This mechanism is used to signal speakers that their purposes have been accomplished or that it is time to change the direction or leadership of the conversation. Either way, there is no need for the speaker to pursue the particular discourse topic or technique any further.

African Americans “gain the floor: or get participatory entry into conversations through personal assertiveness, the strength of the impulse to be involved, and the persuasive power of the point they
wish to make, rather than waiting for an “authority” to grant permission. They tend to invest their participation with personality power, actions, and emotions.

Consequently, African Americans are often described as verbal performers whose speech behaviors are fueled by personal advocacy, emotionalism, fluidity, and creative variety (Abrahams, 1970; Baber, 1987). These communication facilities have been attributed to the oral-aural nature of African American cultural and communal value orientations (Pasteur & Toldson, 1982; Smitherman, 1977). Many teachers view them negatively, as “rude,” “inconsiderate,” “disruptive,” and “speaking out of turn,” and they penalize students for them.

Gay’s classroom experiences and personal conversations with Asian international and Asian American college students and professional colleagues revealed some recurrent communication features. These individuals tend not to declare either definitive advocacy or adversarial positions in either oral or written discourse. They take moderate stances, seek out compromise positions, and look for ways to accommodate opposites. They are rather hesitant to analyze and critique but will provide factually rich descriptions of issues and events. They also use a great deal of “hedges” and conciliatory markers in conversations; that “starts and stops,” affiliative words, and apologetic nuances interspersed in speech, such as “I’m not sure”, “maybe…,” “I don’t know, but…,” “I may be wrong, but….” These behaviors give the appearance of tentative, unfinished thinking, even though the individuals using them are very intellectually capable and thoroughly prepared academically. And many Asian and Asian American students are virtually silent in classroom discussions.

Gay’s observation of Asian and Asian American students includes frequent interjection of “ritualistic laughter” into conversations with her about their academic performance. It happened in instructional and advising situations in which the student was having difficulty understanding a learning task that was being explained by the teacher. Rather than reveal the full extent of their confusion, or lack of understanding, students will interject laughter into the conversations. It functioned to diffuse the intensity of their confusion and give the impression that the problem was not as serious as it really was. Teachers unaware of what is going on may interpret these behaviors to mean the students are not taking their feedback or advice seriously. Or they may assume that the students understand the issue so completely that they have reached a point in their intellectual processing where they can relax and break the mental focus (signaled by laughter). When queried about this practice, students invariably say “it’s cultural” and often add an explanation for it that invokes some rule of social etiquette or interpersonal interaction that is taught in their ethnic communities. Interestingly, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Cambodians offer similar explanations about the motivation behind and meaning of this shared behavior. These students explain that “ritualized laughter” is a means of maintaining harmonious relationships and avoiding challenging the authority or disrespecting the status of the teacher.
Many African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian American students use styles of inquiry and responding different from those employed most often in classrooms. The most common practice among teachers is to ask convergent (single answer) questions and use deductive approaches to solving problems. Emphasis is given to details, to building the whole from parts, to moving from the specific to the general. Discourse tends to be didactic, involving one student with the teacher at a time (Goodlad, 1984). In comparison, students of color who are strongly affiliated with their traditional cultures tend to be more inductive, interactive, and communal in task performance. The preference for inductive problem solving is expressed as reasoning from the whole to parts, from the general to the specific. The focus is on the “big picture,” the pattern, the principle (Boggs et al., 1985; Philips, 1983; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974; Shade, 1989)

Although these general patterns of task engagement prevail across ethnic groups, variations do exist. Some teachers use inductive modes of teaching, and some students within each ethnic group of color learn deductively. Many Asian American students seem to prefer questions that require specific answers but are proposed to the class as a whole. While many Latino students may be inclined toward learning in group contexts, specific individuals may find these settings distracting and obstructive to their task mastery.

In traditional African Americans and Latino cultures, problem solving is highly contextual. One significant feature of this contextuality is creating a “stage” or “setting” prior to the performance of a task. The stage setting is invariably social in nature. It involves establishing personal connections with others who will participate as a prelude to addressing the task. In making these connections, individuals are readying themselves for “work” by cultivating a social context. They are, in effect, activating their cultural socialization that an individual functions better within the context of a group. Without the group as an anchor, referent, and catalyst, the individual is set adrift to function alone.

These cultural inclinations may be operating when Latino, adults begin their task interactions with colleagues by inquiring about the families of the other participants and their own personal well-being or when African American speakers inform the audience about their present psychoemotional disposition and declare the ideology, values, and assumptions underlying the positions they will be taking in the presentation (i.e., “where they are coming from”). This “preambling” is way for the speakers to prime the audience and themselves for the subsequent performance. Students of color in classrooms may be setting the stage for their engagement with learning tasks (e.g. writing an essay, doing seatwork, taking a test) when they seem to be spending unnecessary time arranging their tests, sharpening pencils, shifting their body postures (stretching, flexing their hands, arms, and legs, etc.), or socializing with peers rather than attending to the assigned task. “Preparation before performance” for these students serves a similar purpose in learning as a theater performer doing yoga exercises before taking the stage. Both are techniques the “actors” use to focus, to get themselves in the mood and mode to perform.

For those Asian Americans who prefer to learn within the context of groups, it is accomplished through a process of collaborative and negotiated problem solving. Regardless of how minor or significant an issue is, they seek out opinions and proposed solutions from all members of the constituted group. Each individual’s ideas are presented and critiqued. Their merits are weighed against the ones suggested by
every other member of the group. Discussions are animated and expansive so that all parties can participate and understand the various elements of the negotiations. Eventually, a solution is reached that is a compromise of several possibilities. Then more discussions follow to ensure that everyone is in agreement with the solution and understands who is responsible for what aspects of its implementation. These discussions proceed in a context of congeniality and consensus building among the many, not with animosity, domination, and the imposition of the will of a few.

Treisman observed the study habits of Chinese Americans to determine why they performed so well in high level mathematics classes and to see if he could use their model with Latinos and African Americans. He found what others have observed more informally—the Chinese American students always studied in groups, and they routinely explained to each other their understanding of the problems and how they arrived at solutions to them. Treisman attributed their high achievement to the time they devoted to studying and to talking through the solution processes with peers. When he simulated this process with African Americans and Latinos, their achievement improved radically. Treisman was convinced that “group study” made the difference. Given other evidence that compatibility between cultural habits and teaching-learning styles improves student performance, this is probably what occurred. Communal problem solving and the communicative impulse were evoked, thus producing the desired results.

These are powerful but challenging pedagogical lessons for all educators to learn and emulate in teaching students of color. Collective and situated performance styles require a distribution of resource (timing, collective efforts, procedures, attitudes) that can collide with school norms; for instance, much of how student achievement is assess occurs in tightly scheduled arrangements, which do not accommodate stage setting or collective performance. Students of color have to learn different styles of performing, as well as the substantive content to demonstrate their achievement. This places them in potential double jeopardy—that is failing at the level of both procedure and substance. Pedagogical reform must be cognizant of these dual needs and attend simultaneously to the content of learning and the processes for demonstrating mastery. It also must be bidirectional—that is changing instructional practices to make them more culturally responsive to ethnic and cultural diversity, while teaching students of color how to better negotiate mainstream educational structures.

Classroom Strategies

PURPOSE: There are no universal solutions or specific rules for responding to cultural diversity in the classroom and research on best practices is limited. However there are strategies educators can use to work effectively with a broad range of students enrolled in your classes.

Suggested Time Frame: 60 minutes

ACTIVITIES:

Inclusion/Exclusion exercise – This activity challenges you to re-examine your own teaching practices. Think about your own teaching as you engage in this activity and hear each other’s stories.

You will share your own experiences as students, exploring different ways people are made to feel “included” in the learning process. The existence of different learning needs and the necessity for a wide range of teaching styles emerges.

You will divide into pairs, preferably with someone you do not know well. Each participant will share two stories with their partner: (8-10 minutes)

- Recall a time from your own schooling when you felt especially included in the learning process in a particular class.
- Recall a situation when you felt excluded from the learning process in a particular class

As a group the pairs will share each other’s stories. A volunteer will record brief notes about both categories of stories. (What makes students feel included? What makes them feel excluded?)

DISCUSSION:

What similarities do you see among the situations in which people felt especially included in a learning process?

What consistencies do you notice in the situations in which people felt excluded?

What differences among the stories do you find interesting?

What can you do as a teacher to ensure that the needs of all students with similar varying learning needs are sufficiently met?
General Strategies

*Recognize any biases or stereotypes you may have absorbed.* Do you interact with students in ways that manifest double standards? For example, do you discourage women students from undertaking projects that require quantitative work? Do you undervalue comments made by speakers who have an accent?

*Treat each student as an individual, and respect each student for whom he or she is.* Each of us has some characteristics in common with others of our gender, race, place of origin, and socio-cultural group, but these are outweighed by the many differences among members of any group. We tend to recognize this point about groups we belong to (“Don’t put me in the same category as all those other Texans/Californians/New Yorkers you know”) but sometimes fail to recognize it about others. However, any group label subsumes a wide variety of individuals—people of different social and economic backgrounds, historical and generational experience, and levels of consciousness. Try not to project your experiences with, feelings about, or expectations of an entire group onto any one student.

*Rectify any language patterns or case examples that exclude or demean any groups.* Do you

- Use terms of equal weight when referring to parallel groups: men and women rather than men and ladies?
- Use both he and she during lectures, discussions, and in writing, and encourage your students to do the same?
- Recognize that your students may come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds?
- Refrain from remarks that make assumptions about your students’ experiences, such as, “Now when your parents were in college...?”
- Refrain from remarks that make assumptions about the nature of your students’ families, such as, “Are you going to visit your parents over spring break?”
- Avoid comments about students’ social activities that tacitly assume that all students are heterosexual?
- Try to draw case studies, examples, and anecdotes from a variety of cultural and social contexts?

*Do your best to be sensitive to terminology.* Terminology changes over time, as ethnic and cultural groups continue to define their identity, their history, and their relationship to the dominant culture. In the 1960’s, for example Negroes gave way to blacks and Afro-Americans. In the 1990s the term African American gained general acceptance. Most Americans of Mexican ancestry prefer Chicano or Latino or Mexican American to Hispanic, hearing in the last the echo of Spanish colonialism. Most Asian Americans are offended by the term Oriental, which connotes British imperialism; and many individuals want to be identified not by a continent but by the nationality of their ancestors— for example Thai American or Japanese American. In California, Pacific Islander and South Asian are currently preferred by students whose forebears are from those regions. To find out what terms are used and accepted on your campus, you could raise the question with your students, consult the listing of campus wide student groups, or speak with your faculty affirmative action officer.
**Get a sense of how students feel about the cultural climate in your classroom.** Let students know that you want to hear from them if any aspect of the course is making them uncomfortable. During the term, invite them to write you a note (signed or unsigned) or ask on the course evaluation form one of more of the following questions (adapted from Cones, Janha, and Noonan, 1983):

- Does the course instructor treat students equally and evenhandedly?
- How comfortable do you feel participating in this class? What makes it easy or difficult for you?
- In what ways, if any, does your ethnicity, race, or gender affect your interactions with the teacher in this class? With fellow students?

**Introduce discussions of diversity at department meetings.** Concerned faculty can ask that the agenda of department meetings include topics such as classroom climate, course content and course requirements, graduation and placement rates, extracurricular activities, orientation for new students, and liaison with the English as a second language (ESL) program.

**TACTICS FOR OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES AND BIASES**

**Become more informed about the history and culture of groups other than your own.** Avoid offending out of ignorance. Strive for some measure of “cultural competence” (Institute for the Study of Social Change, 1991); know what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior and speech in cultures different from your own. Broder and Chism (1992) provide a reading list, organized by ethnic groups on multicultural teaching in colleges and universities. Beyond professional books and articles, read fiction or nonfiction works by authors from different ethnic groups. Attend lectures, take courses, or team teach with specialists in Ethnic Studies or Women’s Studies. Sponsor mono- or multicultural student organizations. Attend campus wide activities celebrating diversity or events important to various ethnic and cultural groups. If you are unfamiliar with your own culture, you may want to learn more about its history as well.

**Convey the same level of respect and confidence in the abilities of all your students.** Research studies show that many instructors unconsciously base their expectations of student performance on such factors as gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, prior achievement, and appearance (Green, 1989). Research has also shown that an instructor’s expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies: student who sense that more is expected of them, tend to outperform students who believe that less is expected of them—regardless of the students’ actual abilities (Green, 1989, Pemberton, 1988).

**Don’t try to “protect” any group of students.** Don’t refrain from criticizing the performance of individual students in your class on account of their ethnicity or gender. If you attempt to favor or protect a given group of students demanding less of them, you are likely to produce the opposite effect: such treatment undermines students’ self-esteem and their view of their abilities and competence (Hall and Sander, 1982).
Be evenhanded in how you acknowledge students’ good work. Let students know that their work is meritorious and praise their accomplishments. But be sure to recognize the achievements of all students.

Recognize the complexity of diversity. At one time the key issue at many colleges was how to recruit and retain African American students and faculty. Today the demographics require a much broader multicultural perspective and efforts to include many underrepresented groups. Although what we know about different groups is uneven, avoid generalizing from studies on African American students (Smith, 1989).

COURSE CONTENT AND MATERIAL

Whenever possible select texts and readings whose language is gender neutral and free of stereotypes. If the readings you assign use only masculine pronouns or incorporate stereotypes, cite the date the material was written, point out these shortcomings in class, and give your students an opportunity to discuss them.

Aim for an inclusive curriculum. Ideally, a college curriculum should reflect the perspectives and experiences of a pluralistic society. At a minimum, creating an inclusive curriculum involves using texts and readings that reflect new scholarship and research about previously underrepresented groups, discussing the contributions made to your field by women or by various ethnic groups, and describing how recent scholarship about gender, race, and class is modifying your field of study.

Do not assume that all students will recognize cultural literary or historical references familiar to you. As the diversity of the student and faculty populations increases, you may find that you and your students have fewer shared cultural experiences, literary allusions, historical references and metaphors and analogies.

Consider students’ needs when assigning evening or weekend work. Be prepared to make accommodations for students who feel uncomfortable working in labs or at computer stations during the evening because of safety concerns. Students who are parents particularly those who are single parents, may also appreciate alternatives to evening lab work or weekend field trips, as will students who work part-time.

Bring in guest lecturers. As appropriate, you can broaden and enrich your course by asking faculty or off-campus professionals of different ethnic groups to make presentations to your class.

CLASS DISCUSSION

Emphasize the importance of considering different approaches and viewpoints. One of the primary goals of education is to show students different points of view and encourage them to evaluate their
own beliefs. Help students begin to appreciate the number of situations that be understood only by comparing several interpretations, and help them appreciate how one’s premises, observations, and interpretations are influenced by social identity and background. For example, research conducted by the Institute for the Study of Social Change (1991) shows that white students and African American students tend to view the term racism differently. Many white students, for example, believe that being friendly is evidence of goodwill and lack of racism. Many African American students, however, distinguish between prejudice (personal attitudes) and racism (organizational or institutional bias); for them, friendliness evidence a lack of prejudice but not necessarily a wholehearted opposition to racism.

**Make it clear that you value all comments.** Students need to feel free to voice an opinion and empowered to defend it. Try not to allow your own difference of opinion prevent communication and debate. Ste pin if some students seem to be ignoring viewpoints of others. For example, if male students tend to ignore comments made by female students, reintroduce the overlooked comments into the discussion (Hall and Sandier, 1982)

**Encourage all students to participate in class discussion.** During the first weeks of the term, you can prevent any one group of students from monopolizing the discussion by your active solicitation of alternate viewpoints. Encourage students to listen to and value comments made for perspectives other than their own. You may want to have students work in small groups early in the term so that all students can participate in nonthreatening circumstances. This may make it easier for students to speak up in a larger setting.

**Monitor your own behavior in responding to students.** Research studies show that teachers tend to interact differently with men and women students (Hall and Sandler, 1982; Sadker and Sadker, 1990) and with students who are – or whom the instructor perceives to be – high or low achievers (Gre, 1989). More often than not, these patterns of behavior are unconscious, but they can and do demoralize students, making them feel intellectually inadequate or alienated and unwelcome at the institution.

As you teach, then, try to be evenhanded in the following matters:

- Recognizing students who raise their hands or volunteer to participate in class (avoid calling on or hearing from only males or only members of one ethnic group)
- Listening attentively and responding directly to students’ comments and questions
- Addressing students by name (and with the correct pronunciation)
- Prompting students to provide a fuller answer or an explanation
- Giving students time to answer a question before moving on
- Interrupting students or allowing them to be interrupted by their peers
- Crediting student comments during your summary
- Giving feedback and balancing criticism and praise
- Making eye contact
Also refrain from making seemingly helpful offers that are based on stereotypes and therefore are patronizing.

**Reevaluate your pedagogical methods for teaching in a diverse setting.** Observers note that in discussion classes professors tend to evaluate positively students who question assumptions, challenge points of view, speak out, and participate actively (Collett, 1990; Institute for the Study of Social Change, 1991). Recognize, however, that some of your students were brought up to believe that challenging people who are in positions of authority is disrespectful or rude. Some students may be reluctant to ask questions or participate out of fear of reinforcing stereotypes about their ignorance. The challenge for teaching a diverse student body is to be able to engage both verbally assertive students and those with other styles and expressions of learning.

**Speak up promptly, if a student makes a distasteful remark even jokingly.** Don’t let disparaging comments pass unnoticed. Explain why a comment is offensive, or insensitive. Let your students know that racist, sexist, and other types of discriminatory remarks are unacceptable in class.

**Avoid singling out students as spokesperson.** It is unfair to ask X student to speak for his or her entire race, culture, or nationality. To do so not only ignores the wide differences in viewpoints among members of any group but also reinforces the mistaken notion that every member of a minority group is an ad hoc authority on his or her group (Pemberton, 1988).

**ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS**

**Be sensitive to students whose first language is not English.** Most colleges require students who are nonnative speakers of English to achieve oral and written competency by taking ESL courses. Ask ESL specialists on your campus for advice about how to grade papers and for information about typical patterns of errors related to your students’ native languages. For example, some languages do not have two-word verbs, and speakers of those languages may need extra help – and patience – as they try to master English idioms. Such students should not be penalized for misusing, say, take after, take in, take off, take out, and take over.

**Suggest that students form study teams that meet outside of class.** By arranging for times and rooms where groups can meet, you can encourage students to study together. Peer support is an important factor in student persistence in school (Pascarella, 1986), but students of color are sometimes left out of informal networks and study groups that help other students succeed (Simpson, 1987). By studying together, your student can both improve their academic performance and overcome some of the out-of-class segregation common on many campuses.

**Give assignments and exams that recognize students’ diverse backgrounds and special interest.** As appropriate to your field, you can develop paper topics or term projects that encourage students to explore the roles, status contributions, and experiences of groups traditionally underrepresented in scholarly research studies or in academia (Jenkins, Gappa, and Pearce, 1983).
ADVISING AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Meet with students informally. Frequent and rewarding informal contact with faculty members is the single strongest predictor of whether or not a student will voluntarily withdraw from a college (Tinto, 1989). Ongoing contact outside the classroom also provides strong motivation for students to perform well in your class and to participate in the broad social and intellectual life of the institution. In addition to inviting groups of your students for coffee or lunch, consider becoming involved in your campus orientation and academic advising programs or volunteering to speak informally to students living in residence halls or to other student groups.

Encourage students to come to office hours. Of course, all students can benefit from the one-to-one conversation and attention that only office hours provide. In addition, students who feel alienated on campus or uncomfortable in class are more likely to discuss their concerns in private. (Chism, Cano, and Pruitt, 1989)

Don't shortchange any students of advice you might give to a member of your own gender or ethnic group. Simpson (1987) reports the following unfortunate incident. A white male faculty member was asked by a female African American student about whether she should drop an engineering class in which she was having difficulties. Worried that if he advised a drop, he might be perceived as lacking confidence in the intellectual abilities of African American women, he suggested that she persevere. Had the student been a white male, the professor acknowledged, he would have placed the student’s needs ahead of his own self-doubts and unhesitatingly advised a drop.

Advise students to explore perspectives outside their own experience. For example, encourage students to take courses that will introduce them to the literature, history, and culture of other ethnic groups.

Involve students in your research and scholarly activities. Whenever you allow students to see or contribute to you own work, you are not only teaching them about your field’s methodology and procedures but also helping them understand the dimensions of faculty life and helping them understand the dimensions of faculty life and helping them feel more a part of the college community (Blackwell, 1987). Consider sponsoring students in independent study courses, arranging internships, and providing opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research.

Help students to establish department organizations. If your department does not have an undergraduate association, encourage students to create one. Your sponsorship can make it easier for student groups to obtain meeting rooms and become officially recognized. Student organizations can provide peer tutoring and advising as well as offer social and academic programs. In fields in which women and certain ethnic groups have traditionally been underrepresented, some students may prefer to form caucuses based on their gender or cultural affinities (for example, women in architecture). Research by the Institute for the Study of Social Change (1991) has documented the importance of association for students of color as a basis for collective identification and individual support.
Provide opportunities for all students to get to know each other. Research shows that both African American and white students would like greater interracial contact. African American students tend to prefer institutional programs and commitments, while most white students prefer opportunities for individual, personal contacts. (Source: Institute for the Study of Social Change, 1991)

Cultural Diversity Quiz Results

This quiz illustrates how our perceptions of reality and the “facts” we are taught through the education system, the media and other sources of information, are often limited in depth or simply wrong.

Suggested Time Frame: 20 minutes

DISCUSSION:

Participants will take turns reading the questions and offering their answer. We will go through each answer and poll the class by a show of hands. The correct answer will be given and we will proceed to the next question.

Poll the class on the number of questions answered correctly.

How many of you feel mislead or misinformed about these issues? Why did you struggle with these questions?

Did any specific questions jump out at you or any answers surprise you? Why did those particular answers surprise you and where did you receive the information that led you to believe something different?

Where do people generally get information about individuals and groups related to race, gender, and socioeconomic class, and other social or cultural identities?

How do you process information that you get from these sources? Is your understanding of the information informed by your own experiences or worldview?

How can misinformation about these issues contribute to stereotyping and oppression?

What is your role as an educator in challenging these stereotypes or providing fuller understandings of these issues?
Reflection

If we as teachers are teaching at the Hidalgo’s concrete level (easiest) most of the time, we are not teaching for “best practices” within a multicultural context. The challenge is to present and represent our classroom teaching at the behavioral and symbolic level, along with the concrete. Instead of trying to define cultures through celebrations or festivals, draw students into thinking, questioning and answering at all three levels.

Education must become more student-centered and inclusive of the voices and experiences of the students. Teachers must be prepared to effectively facilitate learning for every individual student, no matter how culturally similar or different from her- or himself. Educators, activist, and others must take a more active role in re-examining all educational practices and how they affect the learning of all students: testing methods, teaching approaches, evaluation and assessment, school psychology and counseling, educational materials and textbooks, etc. (Source Defining Multicultural Education by Paul Gorski and Bob Covert 1996, 2000www.edchange.org)
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