Diversity in the Classroom: Avoid Stereotypes, Reduce Bias in Grading, and Understand Student Accommodations

Kendra Letchworth-Weaver
Colleen McLinn
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Icebreaker:

Share with the group:
- Name
- Department
- Something that makes you unique as a grad student/postdoc in your discipline
  AND
- Something you have in common with other grad students/postdocs in your discipline
In this session, we will:

- Explore the impact of your social identity upon your teaching and grading style.
- Create ground rules for a productive and inclusive classroom.
- Develop strategies to address controversial topics and sensitive situations in your classroom.
- Design a flexible assignment which accommodates for diverse student learning styles and abilities.
In 1 minute, can you...

- Name 5 women scientists?
- Name 5 famous Asian-Americans?
- Name 5 famous football players?
- Name 5 famous deaf people?
- Name 5 African-American authors?
- Name 5 American TV shows from the 1990’s?

Activity courtesy of A.T. Miller, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Diversity at Cornell University
What are the key aspects of your social identity?

How does this social identity affect your teaching and grading style?

- Brainstorm on your own, using the pie chart and questions on the worksheet.
- Share what you learned with your neighbor(s).

Activity courtesy of Sara Xayarath Hernandez, Diversity Programs in Engineering at Cornell University
Stereotypes can cause marginalization and negatively impact learning.

Even “stereotype threat” can affect student performance.

Asking students to self-report gender or race before a test can decrease scores!

BUT the impact of stereotypes in the classroom can be mitigated!

http://www.academia.edu/806308/The_role_of_stereotype_threats_in_underrmining_girls_and_womens_performance_and_interest_in_STEM_fields
To fight stereotyping...

- Consciously create inclusive groups and assign roles within those groups.
- Encourage students to share their diverse backgrounds and opinions.
- Communicate your expectations that all students can and will succeed!
- Provide mentorship, support, and constructive, affirming feedback.
- Consistently reflect upon your own identity and background to keep subconscious bias in check.

Steele, C. “Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do” (2010)
Work in **groups of 3-5**.

As a group, **brainstorm some ground rules** for an inclusive classroom.

How did your group’s rules **compare to the rules suggested on the worksheet**?

Could you phrase any of your ground rules in a **more positive way**?
Handling “Spark” moments

- Anticipate conflict when dealing with sensitive material.
- **SOAR** (Stop, Observe, Assess, React)
- Acknowledge emotions but address any disrespectful or offensive language immediately.
- Listen and restate perspectives, especially if one student is being attacked.
- Turn the situation into a learning opportunity by bringing in peer-reviewed research.

Assessing Classroom Climate

- Provide students with blank index cards.
- Ask them to respond anonymously.
- **Example prompts:**
  - On a scale of 1 (lowest) through 5 (highest) how comfortable do you feel participating?
  - Name one thing that would help you be more comfortable.
- Collect and review for common themes/issues.
- Keep your class informed about the results, and describe any changes you plan to make.
Work in groups of **3-5 people.**

*Read your case study and answer the questions together.*

*Choose one representative from your group to present your answers to the rest of the class.*
Post-secondary (Dis)ability Accommodations

- Required by Federal Law – Title II of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990.
- ADAAA in 2008 extended the definition of disability to make accommodation much more easy to obtain for students with subtle intellectual disabilities (e.g. ADHD)
- **Accommodation** versus **Modification**
- NOT required to lower or substantially modify essential requirements.

Federal Laws for Post-Secondary disability accommodations: [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html)
Common Accommodations

“University is required to provide appropriate academic adjustments ... to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability.”

Examples: Reducing a course load; substituting one course for another; providing note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters; extended time for testing.

To create a more inclusive classroom, design flexible, accessible assignments which accommodate for a wide range of abilities and learning styles.
Resources for Struggling Students

- Cornell Information on Disability Accommodation: http://sds.cornell.edu/
- Learning Strategies Center http://lsc.cornell.edu/
- Writing Resources from the Knight Institute (including English Language Support): http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/walkin/resources12.htm
- Organizations to support students with disabilities http://sds.cornell.edu/organizations.html
- EARS Peer Counseling http://ears.dos.cornell.edu/counseling.html
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at Gannett http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/services/counseling/caps/
Find a group of **3-5 people** in your discipline:

[Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Engineering]

Select a topic from your discipline, of your group’s choice.

Create a learning outcome around that topic.

Create an assignment which offers students flexibility on exactly how they meet that learning outcome.

Ensure your assignment accommodates a range of learning styles and abilities.
Wrap up

Consider the impact of diversity in your classroom upon:

- Student-Student Interactions
- Student-Instructor Interactions
- Student-Content Interactions


Please turn in EVALUATIONS before you leave.
Additional Resources

- CTE Resources on Diversity: http://www.cte.cornell.edu/diversity/index.html
- University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching: http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching/difficult-moments
- CIRTL Diversity Resources: http://www.cirtl.net/diversityresources
- FAQ for Disability Accommodations at Cornell: http://sds.cornell.edu/Faculty/index.html
- Federal Laws for Post-Secondary disability accommodations: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html
- Disability Accommodations and AD(H)D: http://add.about.com/od/adhdinadults/a/ADA-Amendments-Act-and-ADHD.htm
- Disability Accommodations and Mental Health: http://askjan.org/media/Psychiatric.html
QUESTIONS?

Presenters: Colleen McLinn, Kendra Letchworth-Weaver
Email: MCLINN@cornell.edu, KLL67@cornell.edu

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www.cte.cornell.edu
Ph. 607-255-3990

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