

Compassion and Accountability for Inclusive Excellence

1-page Highlights and Takeaways

Presenters: Rachel Jones, Molly Wilder, and Chris DiTeresi
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Panel Highlights

- Chris: Compassion and accountability for instructors depends on an environment/culture of support and openness. At the unit level, it can be helpful to think about support and openness in terms of cultivating capacity for adjunct excellence. All instructors, but adjuncts characteristically, achieve excellence only by coping with constraints on the time and energy they have available for teaching. Units can facilitate adjunct excellence, and thereby facilitate compassion and accountability for instructors generally, by being more intentional about flexibility and making adjustments, and by signaling clearly that asking for help is encouraged.
- Molly: Compassionate practices focusing on embodiment include: anonymous wellbeing check-in polls; required one-on-one meetings to discuss impact of embodied experience on academic work; technology policies intended to maximize student autonomy within constraints of a good community learning environment; and embodiment-aware participation guidelines such as explicitly encouraging positive body language in group discussions.
- Rachel: Situated accountability, paying particular attention to the racialized embodiment of learners and instructors, and reflecting on what an online learning environment conceals or discloses about this; taking accountability for one's Whiteness (as a White instructor); using a 'standpoint and situatedness' assignment to build trust and a meaningful commitment to diversity and inclusion in a class context. Inviting participants to reflect on how gendered and racialized embodiment inflect compassion and accountability in the classroom and how instructors are held accountable by others, including their students.

Key Takeaways

- First and foremost, we hope you have regular conversations about these issues. We strongly recommend that you consider starting a pedagogy discussion group that meets regularly, like the group that fueled our presentation.
- Second, when you have an idea for a compassionate practice but have accountability concerns, we hope you spend some time considering how you might creatively address or reimagine that concern in ways that are compatible with compassion.
- A particular recommendation from one of the workshop participants asks instructors to reflect on how their privilege enables them to employ compassionate practices that less privileged instructors cannot--and to consider how more privileged instructors might signal that their flexibility comes from privilege, not necessarily from being "nicer" or a "better" teacher.
- Finally, remember to be compassionate to yourself as well as to your students!