

# Faculty Conversations About Teaching

*In our faculty conversation about inclusive teaching, we hope to address approaches to engaging diverse students, strategies for helping students to discuss challenging issues or to think critically about diversity and inclusion, and/or ways to modify assignments or feedback to make learning more broadly accessible. You are welcome to share your thoughts, experiences, best practices and tips for any of these aspects of inclusive teaching.*

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## **My Opening Idea or Definitions**

*Provide a 50-150 word opening statement with your understanding of the most interesting or important aspects of this topic (to you and your teaching).*

While increased diversity in our classrooms can lead to new challenges and issues, it can also mean a richer and more authentic environment in which to learn from each other, to learn about cultural differences, and to teach competent intercultural communication. Courses across the curriculum can be infused with multicultural learning *in toto*, or in part: I will share a concrete example of a Small Group Communication course that has been reconfigured to reflect cultural learning both cognitively and affectively as well as smaller assignments. Cultural learning also includes learning about co-cultures within the larger culture, and about the concepts of privilege and moral responsibility so as to sensitize students to recognize and embrace the diversity surrounding them.

## **Projects I Have Implemented Successfully**

*Summarize 3-4 approaches, emphases, scenarios, or assignments, each briefly explained (50-100 words each) so that participants can envision your past and/or current teaching experiences, whether successful or still evolving.*

1. **Small Group Communication Service Learning Project:** Interest in service learning has increased in the past two decades, partly due to recent accumulation of knowledge about its beneficial outcomes to participants and society. This section describes a small group basic communication course taught in a service learning format at a small liberal arts college. Qualitative comments as well as quantitative data indicate that the small group basic communication service learning course was beneficial to students in terms of aspects including personal development,

clarification of career goals, a sense of connectedness with the community, and a sense of fulfillment in assisting others.

2. **Critical Incidents in Groups:** Intercultural Sensitizers are instruments consisting of a large number of episodes or "critical incidents" depicting interactions between persons from two cultures followed by alternative attributions to their behavior. A programmed learning format is used and participants from culture A are asked to select the attribution they believe members of culture B typically would select. After each choice members are given instant feedback on their answers and are asked to continue until they select the answer given by members of culture B. Learning takes place as participants in the intercultural training session choose one or more of the alternatives and find the cultural explanations for the correctness or incorrectness of their choices.
3. **"One thing unique about my partner is...":** A simple ice-breaker that facilitates learning about one's peer is to have students work in pairs to learn about each other's cultural background and share it with the class as they introduce their peer. "But I am from the U.S.!" is a comment commonly given by mainstream students. By sharing their Italian, British, or French roots, for example, students can realize that all students come from multicultural backgrounds that make the mosaic of the U.S. culture.

### **What Am I Exploring? What Am I Interested In? \***

*Provide a list of 3-4 questions, activities, or options that you have been considering as you continue to adapt your teaching approaches. Briefly explain (50-100 words each) what you find intriguing and/or challenging about these ideas.*

Diverse groups, diverse examples (e.g. names in exams), discussion questions that reflect diversity or "What are your privileges, provided by your social background, family support, and situation that others may not have?" will sensitize students to become more empathic to other cultures and prepare them to be more sensitive global citizens.

## **What are some Best Practices, Tips, or Resources I'd Like to Share with Other Faculty?**

*If you could recommend a list of 3 core values, teaching tips, and/or resources (articles, books, links) that faculty across disciplines could find helpful for inclusive teaching in their courses, what would your list include?*

Embracing diversity can be encouraged and modeled by instructors, not only by the content and activities taught, but also by the manner in which they address students, structure class groups, and questions instructors ask. Simply learning how to pronounce a student's ethnic name correctly, showing that you respect and have interest in their ethnic cultures, and asking thought-provoking questions such as "How might this theory play out differently in a different culture?"

### **For ESL speakers, there are some specific suggestions:**

- Encourage them to meet with you early, and comment on their English proficiency. Some may need extra assistance, but others may already be proficient. Many ESL students would like to gain reassurance from their professors about their English comprehensibility, especially those with accents, so meeting and talking with them early in the semester may give them a boost of confidence.
  
- Let ESL students know that speaking with accents is OK, and that comprehensibility is the most important aspect in classroom communication.
  
- Studies in contrastive rhetoric by Kaplan show that different language-speakers have different rhetorical patterns. Understanding these differences will help instructors when guiding ESL students' writing and communication skills in class
  
- ESL students may be participate more fully if discussion questions and / or PowerPoint slides or lecture notes are posted on-line. It gives students the time to look up new words and prepare responses.

## Resources:

Albert, R. (1995). The Intercultural sensitizer or cultural assimilator as a cross-cultural training method. In S. Fowler & M. Mumford (Eds.), *The intercultural sourcebook* (pp. 157-167). ME: Intercultural Press.

Yook, E. (2002). *A Guide to the Basic Course for ESL Students*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2002

Yook, E. (2013). *The Model Minority in U.S. Academia*. Lexington Books, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2013



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