SEAS Center for Women in Engineering

Fall 2019 - Faculty Handouts

ESTABLISHING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

What is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

Reaching a diverse, equitable and inclusive community is hard. First it is, to paraphrase Justice Potter Stewart, "I know it when I see it." Here's what an inclusive community would look lie::

- Do everything that it can to respect all its citizens, give them full access to resources, and promote equal treatment and opportunity.
- Work to eliminate all forms of discrimination.
- Engage all its citizens in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- Value diversity.
- Respond quickly to racist and other discriminating incidents.

That checklist is easier to outline than to implement. One, or even a few, sessions to discuss aspects of inclusion, unconscious bias and microaggressions will not change a community overnight. We know that it takes time, attention and dedication. And, adding to that the current challenges of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, moving toward an inclusive community is even more challenging. And, if faculty are consumed with managing their requirements in this environment, how can they devote enough time, strength and dedication to make changes?

Are faculty too consumed with managing everything and are they burned out? Many reports note that the burden in this time of the virus falls heavily on women, who are routinely charged with childcare. Kevin McClure, though, (August 14, 2020) reminds us in Higher Education Magazine that "daddy-duty' impacts his day as well. Writing in Science Magazine (August 28, 2020) June Gruber notes "Many academics are also grappling with ongoing racial injustices and associated protests, wildfires, and hurricanes." Her advice is to begin by acknowledging that we are not in normal times and extend that acknowledgement that research might slow and some work is not going to get resolved beyond yourself to your research group. Leaders, department heads and deans might want to begin to consider tenure clock issues for assistant professors. Barnard College, producing a plan under the direction of President Sian Beilock, revised its semester into 8-week blocks for better learning in response to the stress of the pandemic and demands for social justice.

What about your students? Our own CS student, Kayesu Machayo, wrote in a CNN Op-Ed (August 20, 2020) "Unfortunately, for many of my Black peers and me, the path forward is more complicated." She says "According to a recent report by McKinsey, the pandemic could exacerbate existing achievement

gaps between White students and students of color by as much as 20%. And learning losses translate to economic losses." Faculty, especially at an institution where privilege is common, forget that students from diverse communities may need their challenges noted and supported. In the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) (March 20, 2020), Brandon Bayne from UNC Chapel Hill provides an adjusted syllabus outlining such principles as "Nobody signed up for this; the humane option is the best option; we cannot just do the same thing online; and we will foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation," among other wisdoms.

The bottom line is, we need to start with ourselves as we move toward an inclusive community. What are ways to strengthen ourselves, our thinking, our behavior, and our structures to ensure that we are helping our students?

Below are some ways we've come up with through our readings on how to give faculty the tools they need to work toward more inclusive thinking, behavior and structures. It all starts with ensuring we are strengthening ourselves!

Strengthening ourselves

- Find time to exercise. While counterintuitive to the concept of not having enough time as it is to get your work done, giving yourself this ½-1 hour gift each day will enable you to pull from reserves of energy that you didn't know you had!
- Join or create a support group of people you can discuss issues with – such as how to ensure you are being inclusive.
- Use your own professional development opportunities to gain more diversity and inclusion training.
- It may be difficult to absorb all the new information about diversity and inclusion, so avoid getting overwhelmed. Ask for advice from others on how to integrate new thinking with care.

Strengthening our thinking

- Gain deeper insights into your audience of students. Create a voluntary/anonymous "Who's in Class?" survey for students to share items at the beginning of the course that they want instructors to know to help create more inclusive classrooms. Questions include students' first-generation status, access to technology, obligations outside of college, disability considerations and other demographic information.
- Read, seek out documentaries, or listen to podcasts that give you new perspectives on underrepresented groups.
- Document your progress. Have you evolved your thinking over time regarding unconscious biases? Are there diverse points of view that need to be examined in order to better understand and empathize with your students?

Strengthening our behavior

- Strive to address your own unconscious biases (we all have them!). Take a broad view when considering inclusivity – LGBTQ+ groups, students of color, disabled students, first-generation students, women.
- Consider the handful of students who rarely "engage" – reflect on different methods to ensure all perspectives become part of the conversation. This is especially difficult with remote learning, where shy students do not speak up. Find ways to encourage them without embarrassing them.
- Ask students which pronouns they prefer in order to establish an LGBTQ+ friendly classroom. Start by introducing yourself to students this way, and include gender pronouns in your email signature.
- Interrupt and kindly correct student behavior or language that may be harmful to others.
- Avoid using language like "mom or dad" when referring to your students' households. This may alienate those in LGBTQ+ households or those in non-traditional living conditions.
- Learn how to say your students' names. Spend time after you get your class list checking pronunciations on YouTube. Be sure to ask each student how to say their name – even if you think you know.
- Be sensitive to issues of needed breaks. Even, and especially, during this time of remote learning, different people may need more breaks during class.

Strengthening our structures

- Foster systemic cultural change. Is the university doing enough to support inclusivity, to integrate inclusivity methods in teaching, in hiring, in training and in measuring? Are students aware of the efforts being made?
- Provide more instructional supports, and consider the needs of those with disabilities.
  - Use microphones in the classroom to accommodate those who may have a hearing disability.
  - Use fonts that are clear and scalable, such as Arial, Comic Sans, or Dyslexie.
  - Consider those who may be colorblind when using graphs and images that rely on color to demonstrate their point.
  - Ensure pictures of people demonstrate a balance of diversity.
  - Ensure your students have copies of your notes or PowerPoint presentations. Students with hearing issues can benefit from the written reference.
- Eliminate high-cost course materials and support students in using earlier editions of textbooks. If possible, provide students with a PDF version of the textbook.
- Co-develop collaborative classroom guidelines with students.
- Provide alternative assignments for students who are unable to attend class for health or other reasons.
- Give guidance on how Office Hours can be used for one-on-one conversations, and broaden their focus to include any topic on which the student needs help or support (and know when to refer the student to a counsellor). Keep information handy about school or local social services.
- Bring in guest speakers who can speak to the experiences of your diverse student audience, rather than trying to do it all yourself. Include references by diverse authors and that feature characters from a range of backgrounds.

- Consider that many religions have holidays that are not noted on the U.S. calendar. Might this affect a student's ability to turn in homework on time?
- Be aware of food allergies when planning food-related events when we are back face to face.

Additional Readings

Gruber, J., Van Bavel, J.J., Cunningham, W.A., Somerville, L.H., Lewis Jr, N.A. "Academia needs a reality check: Life is not back to normal" https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2020/08/academia-needs-reality-check-life-not-back-normal

McClure, K.R., "Burnout Is Coming to Campus. Are College Leaders Ready? https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-08-14-burnout-is-coming-to-campus-are-college-leaders-ready

Tracie Marcella Addy, Derek Dube and Khadijah A. Mitchell, "Fostering an Inclusive Classroom" https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/08/05/small-steps-instructors-can-take-build-more-inclusive-classrooms-opinion

Daman Lamba, "4 Ways Professors Can Make Their Classes More Inclusive" https://tophat.com/classroom-inclusivity/

Kristin Kelley, "50 Tips and Tricks to Facilitating a More Inclusive Classroom" https://www.weareteachers.com/tips-tricks-inclusive-classroom/

Impact of COVid on Women Faculty: Links to articles

- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01294-9
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7302767/
- https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/gender-gap-in-research-output-widens-during-pandemic-67665
- https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/27/working-mothers-interrupted-more-often-than-fathers-in-lockdown-study