

Faculty Resources

Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom (7.8.2020)

This document was created by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at West Chester to reaffirm the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion. The current national climate calls for efforts that work to remedy racism, xenophobia, transphobia, homophobia and many other areas of intolerance. This information seeks to inform faculty of several resources, tools and strategies for fostering an inclusive classroom, maintaining civility and managing dynamics that might arise. Beyond these resources, the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Dr. Tracey Robinson (trobinson@wcupa.edu) and staff in the [Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) can consult and assist you when you have questions, concerns or are seeking more information.

"West Chester University (WCU) affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community. It is through freedom of exchange over different ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments that individuals develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Diversity and inclusion engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning, and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect."

*~ Executive Summary,
2015 WCUPA Campus Climate Assessment Project*

Diversity and Inclusion are institutional priorities, intrinsic in the University's [Mission Statement](#), [Values and Vision Statements](#), and [Strategic Plan: Pathways to Students Success](#).

As a community of educators, our goals are to foster WCU graduates who will:

- 1) Collaborate with others to solve problems and address societal needs
- 2) Engage inclusively in a diverse society
- 3) Understand the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live

To fulfill its mission, the University must demonstrate:

- 1) Community and cultural engagement
- 2) Continuous improvement
- 3) Critical thinking
- 4) Inclusion
- 5) Scholarly and creative activities

Best Practices for Classroom Management

On the Front End

Set expectations—ground rules/operating guidelines

Build pride in diversity into course content, syllabus, lab culture

Develop your own awareness and empathy

Be sensitive to the impact of discussions on marginalized students. For example, a class discussion on sexual assault, homophobia or racism can cause a student to revisit trauma associated with a personal experience.

Group work: assigning teams and roles, provide instruction on team functioning, credit/contributions

- Make it clear you value all students
- Emphasize mastery and learning

Throughout the Semester

- Assess the climate - mid semester feedback
- De-escalate rather than be Defensive (listen first, speak softly)
- Practice interrupting microaggressions, recognize teachable moments
- Become familiar with resources available at university
- Support the rights of students
- Start with an assumption of honesty—don't believe the worst in students
- Get to know students to head off angry confrontations

Setting Expectations. Include any of the following within your course syllabus:

- Diversity and Inclusivity Statement
- Class Diversity Statement
- Statement on Diversity
- Diversity Statement on Civil Dialogue
- Diversity Statement on Respect
- Discussion Guidelines

Multiple examples from various universities can be found here:

https://www.clemson.edu/otei/documents/Teaching%20Review%20Resources/Diversity_InclusionSyllabiSamples.pdf

Curriculum Diversity. You don't have to teach a Diverse Communities Course to infuse diversity into your curriculum. Does your course prepare students to actively engage in a diverse society? Is it taught from a monocultural or multicultural lens/foundation? Is there the opportunity for students to understand and explore their views, biases and values? A course that includes diverse foundations or perspectives draws on theories that help explain how human differences influence our understanding of a course topic (Banks 2006).

Course Adjustments. In any course, instructors may need to change their plans. As students respond to information that is presented, express frustrations, assert themselves, or as incidents occur in class, more time or different ways to follow-up, process and respond may be needed. Consider online forums, discussions, quizzes or activities for students that help them process a topic further. Inclusive adjustments are sensitive to students' diverse learning needs and matched to course goals. Adjustments made despite student needs (e.g., to cover a predetermined amount of material) are typically deemed non-inclusive (Laird 2014).

Policies

Disruptive Classroom Behavior Policy

- This policy includes harassment & discrimination as unacceptable forms of behavior
- A third party can be asked/invited in to observe your course upon request

Reporting Harassment or Discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or veteran status.

Preferred Name Policy allows a preferred first name to appear in select University systems and records, even if individuals have not changed their legal name. While anyone is welcome to use a preferred name, this policy was developed to respond to the needs of transgender and non-binary communities, international communities, and anyone who prefers the use of a name other than their legal name.

Additional Resource, 2019 Racial Climate Survey Results. The survey provided recommendations in six content areas, including student experiences with faculty. Areas were assigned a value from 1 to 4 ribbons based on each institution's performance within the national cohort. Content areas included:

- **Mattering and Affirmation** is defined as others noticing and caring about what students think, want and have to say
- **Cross-Racial Engagement** is defined as whether students feel calm, empowered, open and encouraged when engaging in conversations about race.
- **Racial Learning and Literacy** is defined as the extent to which there is racial diversity reflected in classes, where students learn about race, who on campus helps them to learn about race and preparing to live in a racially diverse society.
- **Encounters with Racial Stress** is defined as specific harmful acts, behaviors, or attitudes directed at students based on their race.
- **Appraisals of Institutional Commitment** explores the extent to which students believe that the campus leadership deals with racism/racist incidents effectively, in the open, and in a timely manner.

This document from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2017) Frequently Asked Questions for Faculty in the Wake of the 2016 Election has helpful, still relevant, advice for maneuvering through difficult conversations in our classrooms or other academic spaces.

Other resources:

Bell, Lee Anne, and Pat Griffin. 2007. "Designing Social Justice Education Courses." In *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, edited by Marianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, 2nd ed., 67-87. New York: Routledge.

Johnson, A.G. 2006. *Privilege, Power and Difference*, 2nd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Laird, T. F. (2014, December 29). *Reconsidering the Inclusion of Diversity in the Curriculum*. Retrieved July 07, 2020, from <https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2014/fall/nelson-laird>