UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

I. What is an inclusive classroom?

Characteristics of Inclusive Classrooms

From Saunders, S. & Kardia, D., (2004). *Creating inclusive college classrooms.* Adapted with Permission from University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. Learn more at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P3_1.html.

Inclusive classrooms are characterized by (Saunders & Kardia, 2004):

- Assuring that the classroom is usable by students with differing characteristics, including accessible work stations and appropriate lighting and acoustic characteristics, etc,
- Building and maintaining an environment where all students feel comfortable expressing their opinions.
- Reviewing course content from multiple standpoints.
- Including research and writings from authors of diverse backgrounds.
- Being cognizant that scholars are influenced by their own worldview and their scholarship reflects this.
- Using multiple teaching methods to aid the academic success of students with varying learning styles**.**
- Encouraging critical thinking and academic excellence in a respectful environment.
- Recognizing and appreciating within-group differences, i.e., not all members of any particular group will hold the same opinion on any given issue.
- Assuring that all activities, materials, and equipment are physically accessible to and usable by all

II. Preparing for an Inclusive Classroom

Create a Syllabus that Embodies Diverse Perspectives on Subject Matter

From Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. (2002). *Teaching in racially diverse college classrooms.* Learn more at http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/TFTrace.html.

- Establish clear expectations and goals for the course and include them in the syllabus.
- Ensure members of project groups, panels, and laboratory teams are diverse and the leadership of these teams is shared by all students.
- Use writing assignments that encourage students to explore different points of view.
- Integrate the work of authors and researchers with diverse perspectives relevant to the topic.
- Include a statement on the syllabus inviting students with various differences to discuss their unique learning characteristics with you
- Prepare the syllabus early to allow students the option of beginning to read materials and work on assignments before the class begins and to allow adequate time to arrange for alternate formats, such as books on tape.

UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

Incorporate Diversity into your Teaching Approach

From Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. (2002). *Teaching in racially diverse college classrooms.* Learn more at http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/TFTrace.html.

- Ask yourself how students who are different from you would experience the course.
- Expand your range of educational approaches. According to Hurtado (1996) research illustrates that no one instructional approach is best for maximizing learning in an inclusive classroom. Consider lectures, collaborative learning options, hands-on activities, Internet-based communications, educational software, field work, etc.
- Utilize scenarios and course and presentation materials that reflect the diversity of our society.
- Ask yourself whether students with different backgrounds and experiences are likely to have a familiarity with the material you have chosen to use.
- Consider in advance how you can handle sensitive issues or heated discussions that may arise.
- Assign group work in which learners must support each other and that places a high value on different skills and roles.
- Provide specific feedback on a regular basis; for example, allow students to turn in parts of large projects for feedback before the final project is due.
- Regularly assess student progress using multiple, flexible, accessible methods; consider portfolios, group work, projects, take home assignments as alternatives to the standard in-class paper and pencil timed test.

III. In the Classroom: Creating Inclusive Discussions to Maximize Learning

Establish Ground Rules

Reprinted and adapted with permission from the University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching - CRLT. (2004). Guidelines for discussion of racial conflict and the language of hate, bias, and discrimination. Learn more at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/racialguidelines.html.

It is important that students agree on the guidelines before discussion begins. You can agree upon them at the beginning of the semester and refresh their memory as necessary throughout the semester. A few sample ground rules include:

- Be honest and be willing to share.
- Listen with curiosity and the willingness to learn.
- Resist the desire to interrupt.
- Try to understand by asking questions, clarifying, and reflecting on what you hear BEFORE you respond.
- Think critically not only about others' perspectives, but also about your own.
- Use "I" statements. No one speaks for another or for an entire group of people.
- Avoid critiquing others' experiences and don't engage in name calling; focus on your own experiences.
- You can disagree. Differences in perspectives foster learning.
- Suspend judgment. Be open to the kernel of wisdom in each person's story.
- Be brief.

UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

Facilitate a Productive Discussion

Reprinted and adapted with permission from University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (2004). Guidelines for discussion of racial conflict and the language of hate, bias, and discrimination. Learn more at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/racialguidelines.html.

Start each class and discussion with an objective and structure discussions so that there are clear guidelines regarding appropriate boundaries for the discussion (e.g., specific discussion topics). Guide the discussion by intentionally relating students' questions/comments back to the course content and learning objectives. The University of Michigan CRLT provides a few example discussion objectives:

- Present more specific information about the subject that has not been previously addressed in class or in public discussions of the topic.
- Highlight the multiple perspectives surrounding the subject and encourage students to think critically.
- Encourage students to apply course material to "real-life" issues.

You are an active participant in the discussion. In addition to being the "guardian of the ground rules," you may also need to help students engage each other in a manner that maximizes learning. For instance, you may need to ask clarifying questions, challenge inaccurate information, ask students to integrate their discussion points with major points from their readings.

Your educational interventions are geared towards enabling students to think critically and develop informed perspectives. Also, classroom discussions are excellent opportunities for students to practice communication and conflict resolution skills and receive feedback in a safe manner. These skills will be invaluable to students throughout their lifetime as they encounter others with alternate worldviews.

Increase Discussion Participation

Reprinted and adapted with permission from University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (2004). Guidelines for discussion of racial conflict and the language of hate, bias, and discrimination. Learn more at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/racialguidelines.html.

A major tenet of an inclusive classroom is that multiple perspectives when shared in conditions such as those described above lead to more effective learning. Therefore, it is important to encourage as much student participation as possible. A few ideas from CRLT for increasing participation are:

- Ask for students to bring in articles or video clips that relate to the discussion topic and briefly introduce them to the class.
- Assign students to teams in which they apply course concepts to current events or issues. Ask each group to share one or two major points from their work with the larger class.
- "Think-Pair-Share" – Ask the class a question, but have students individually write down their responses. Then ask students to pair-up with someone they don't know. Provide explicit instructions about what you would like each person to share with their partner. Let the class know that after a few minutes you will indicate time is up and ask the person who has not yet shared to do so. After the pair discussion is concluded, reconvene the class and ask if anyone would like to volunteer one thing they learned.
- "The Round" – A question is asked to the class and each person has the opportunity to respond briefly to the question. If a student does not wish to participate, he or she can "pass."
- Provide alternative means for contributing to the discussion, such as allowing questions or comments to be submitted on note cards.

UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

IV. Using Difficult Classroom Moments as Learning Opportunities

Reprinted and adapted with Permission from the Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Warren, L. (2000). Managing hot moments in the classroom. Learn more at http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html.

Scholars such as Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and G. Gurin (2002), who take a development approach to inclusion argue that moments of disequilibrium or stress can be, if handled properly, the very moments that promote cognitive growth.

Go Back to the Ground Rules

During times of high emotion or conflict you may need to remind participants about the ground rules. The ground rules will help frame the mutual sharing of ideas in a respectful and responsible manner (Saunders & Kardia, 2004; Warren, 2000).

As part of encouraging the open exchange of ideas in the classroom, you may find an idea expressed that you or others in the classroom find offensive. You can protect a student's right to free speech while at the same time leveraging the moment to help students think critically and apply course material to inform their perspectives.

In order to protect a genuine sharing of ideas while encouraging students to test their assumptions, Warren (2000) recommends several different strategies listed below. For example, a faculty member could respond to an offensive remark by sharing with the larger class that they have heard similar view points expressed in society. Subsequently, they could encourage discussion by asking the class what some of the reasons might be for the perspective expressed. After this exploration, the professor can ask people who have a different perspective than what was originally expressed to share their viewpoint. Warren argues that this encourages students to engage in perspective-taking, critically analyze multiple viewpoints, and more effectively articulate their own position.

A few other strategies suggested by Warren (2000) and the University of Michigan's CRLT (2002) are included below. To review their complete list of suggestions visit Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, *Managing hot moments in the classroom.* http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html and University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (2004). *Guidelines for discussion of racial conflict and the language of hate, bias, and discrimination.* Learn more at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/racialguidelines.html.

- Ask students to articulate a position on the discussion topic from another person's point-of-view using a format in which they restate the person's position and share information in support of that position. You may ask students to research the topic from this assumed perspective outside of class. In the next class, you can ask students what they learned and what impact, if any, it had on their thinking or manner in which they communicate about a topic.
- Use journals, writing assignments or paired-discussion as mechanisms to help students explore their thoughts and feelings about a topic of discussion before the class discussion. In class this method can be used to reduce tensions and allow for discussion after a period of time. As part of an out-of-class assignment students can gather research in support of opposing positions on an issue, and then apply their critical thinking and analytical skills to arrive at an informed conclusion.
- Provide students with ideas on where they can gather additional information or suggest campus events they might attend to increase their knowledge about a discussion topic. For highlights of diversity events visit the DRO website at http://diversity.arizona.edu/.
- Discussion can also be delayed until the next class period if the issue is important to address, but you are not sure how to do so in the moment. Let the students know the topic will be discussed in the next class and assign homework to help ensure an informed discussion.

UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

Addressing Classroom Dynamics

Reprinted and adapted with Permission from the Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Warren, L. (2000). Managing hot moments in the classroom. Learn more at http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html.

Warren (2000) provides several excellent examples of addressing dynamics (e.g. gender dynamics) in an inclusive classroom. For instance, if the professor avoids responding to dynamics such as men intentionally or unintentionally interrupting others, talking over women, or dominating the discussion the professor may signal her or his implicit agreement that men have more to contribute than women. Rather than avoiding these dynamics, you can facilitate a discussion about gender dynamics and help all students identify methods of improving their communication skills.

Difficult moments are learning moments. They provide opportunities for faculty to model, and the students to practice communication and conflict resolution skills which can be of assistance to the student in both their professional and personal lives. (Warren, 2000)

Wrapping-Up the Discussion

Reprinted and adapted with permission from the University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (2004). Guidelines for discussion of racial conflict and the language of hate, bias, and discrimination. Learn more at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/racialguidelines.html.

At the end of classroom discussion, summarize the major points as they relate to course objectives. The CRLT suggests using a technique they call "The Minute Paper" in which you ask students to share the key points they learned and to list any important unanswered questions. Common themes from "The Minute Papers" can be addressed briefly at the outset of the next class session and, if appropriate, lead into the content for the next class as well.

UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

V. References and Resources

RESOURCE: Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning

Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. (2002). *Teaching in radically diverse college classrooms.* Retrieved July 21, 2006, from http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/TFTrace.html.

Warren, L. (2000). *Managing hot moments in the classroom.* Retrieved July 21, 2006, from Harvard University, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning Web Site: http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html.

RESOURCE: University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)

Saunders, S & Kardia, D., (2004). *Creating inclusive college classrooms.* Retrieved July 21, 2006, from the University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching Web Site: http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P3_1.html.

University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (2004). *Guidelines for discussion of racial conflict and the language of hate, bias, and discrimination.* Retrieved July 21, 2006, from http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/racialguidelines.html.

OTHER REFERENCES

Burgstahler, S. (2005). Universal design of instruction: Definition, principles, and examples. Retrieved October 2, 2006, from University of Washington, Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology Web site: http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/instruction.html[i]

Gurin, P. (1999). New research on the benefits of diversity and beyond: An empirical analysis, *Diversity Digest, Spring 1999*. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from http://www.diversityweb.org/Digest/Sp99/benefits.html.

Gurin, P., Dey, E.L., Hurtado, S., and Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol 72(3), Fall 2002.

Humphreys, D. (1998). Diversity and the college curriculum: How colleges and universities are preparing students for a changing world (Ford Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative). Retrieved July 1, 2006 from http://www.diversityweb.org/diversity_innovations/curriculum_change/principles_and_practices/curriculum_briefing.cfm.

Hurtado, S., (1996). How diversity affects teaching and learning: Climate has a positive effect on learning outcomes. *Diversity Digest, Spring 1996.* Retrieved May 12, 2006 from http://www.diversityweb.org/research_and_trends/research_evaluation_impact/benefits_of_diversity/sylvia_hurtado.cfm.

Hurtado, S. (2003). Preparing College Students for a Diverse Democracy: Final Report to the U.S. Department of Education, OERI, Field Initiated Studies Program. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

UA*discusses . . .* Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

A Project of the Special Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity within the Division of Human Resources

References Continued -

Hurtado, S., Engberg, M., & Ponjuan, L. (2003). The impact of the college experience on students' learning for a diverse democracy. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Portland, OR, November 12-15, 2003.

Hurtado, S. (2005). Research shows benefits of linking diversity and civic goals. *Diversity Digest*, Vol 9(1). (p.6) Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Maruyama, G. & Moreno, J. (2000). University faculty views about the value of diversity on campus and in the classroom**.** *Does Diversity Matter? Three Research Studies on Diversity in College Classrooms.* (pp. 9-33). Washington, DC: American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors.

Smith D. (1997). Executive summary. *Diversity Works: The emerging picture of how students benefit.* (pp. V-VII) Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1997.

---

[i] SAP-DI and OIE wish to acknowledge the contributions of Carol Funckes, Disability Resource Center for her assistance with integrating Universal Design Tenants into this handout.