

You Matter, You Belong

An Introduction to Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CRTL)

Title V Grant, Closing the Completion Gap, July 2017

The Issue

I'm going to give you some old news. There is an achievement gap in the California Community Colleges. It is exacerbated in online classes, particularly for students of color and low-income students.

California is on track to be over one million bachelor's degrees short of workforce demand by 2030. To fill this gap colleges must address equity gaps among underperforming racial minorities—student groups that make up most of the state and the seats in its colleges.

Culturally responsive teaching and learning means inclusiveness for a wide variety of differences—including religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, and physical abilities. In a 2015 study, employers agreed that employees should be able to “solve problems with people whose views are different from their own.”ⁱ

This handout will give you some new news, and ways to improve pedagogical relationships with students that communicates they matter and they belong in your class.

What Can Faculty Do?

While it is easier to address problems campus-wide, it's better to “create intentional changes that benefit underrepresented students if equity gaps are going to be effectively addressed.”ⁱⁱ Campus-wide changes are represented in the embedded student support tools in Canvas: 24/7 tech support, online tutoring, online counseling, and an online readiness assessment, to name a few. Focused changes can be made by faculty, and may include an equity-minded syllabus, including a diversity statement, and culturally responsive course design, with equity-minded activities and assessments.

Examples of Strategies

Equity-Minded Syllabus

This means aligning your syllabus based on equity-minded and culturally inclusive practices. The process includes a self-assessment; whether the syllabus content demonstrates respect for students, diversity is valued, and instills confidence in students' ability to be successful and achieve their educational goals. Sample language is provided in this document.

Values-Based Assessment

A rubric is a scoring tool that defines expectations for the components of an assignment or piece of work. Rubrics support ongoing learning efforts by making performance expectations clear to all class members and reducing subjectivity in grading practices. They can also describe value-based expectations for students, such as working respectfully with peers or including multiple points of view in writing.

Respect Activity: Discussion Board Ice-Breaker

Ask everyone to identify someone who they do not know in the class or create Canvas groups. Instruct them to introduce themselves to that person, thinking about respect. Each person briefly describes what the equivalent would be in an online class to look somebody in the eyes, be honest, and appreciating somebody's ideas even when you do not agree with them. The point is to reflect critically on our assumptions and socializations around the concept of respect. Summarize ideas people discussed and include that in a class policy for behavioral norms. Students' contributions will scaffold a meaningful environment for collaboration.

Symbolism

Include material authored by people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives

- Rely on books, and scholarly material that engages in respectful discussion of the history and contemporary experiences of discrimination, racism, and marginalization

Include multiple perspectives on each topic

- Consider his/her diverse and eclectic experiences and biases when preparing course materials
- Solicit different points of view that relates to students' diverse backgrounds

Provide video links and case studies related to diversity to promote discussion

- Use class examples encompassing different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, age groups, religions and abilities to make the students feel more comfortable and validated
- Consider “Zooming” in a guest speaker

The Potential for Innovation

Technology is awesome when used as a tool to extend access to (and humanize) learning. Technology can also reduce the financial burden for students by integrating Open Education Resources in your course, in place of an expensive textbook.

For more information about open education resources, go to: <http://cabrillotitlev.weebly.com/open-education-resources.html>

Social learning tools and learning management systems position instructors to deliver content in unique ways. Easy to use webinar technology provides a fun and engaging environment for students to collaborate and communicate with classmates and the instructor. Media tools are also available in Canvas for assessment feedback. See *Leveraging Online Collaboration Tools to Enhance Student Engagement*, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan,

http://www.crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/CRLT_no31.pdf

Canvas can help you divide a large class into smaller groups for better community building, and provide a blueprint course pre-loaded with student support information and resources based on discipline.

Active learning strategies such as polling, engage students more effectively and increase student success for all students. For more information go to: <http://cabrillotitlev.weebly.com/active-learning.html>

Encourage students to apply course concepts to contemporary social problems by participating in internships, student clubs, and service learning programs.

Syllabus Review

Faculty perceive that students do not use the course syllabus except the first week of class, or they ignore it altogether and ask classmates for help instead. A 2008 study showed this perception is not accurate.ⁱⁱⁱ Something to consider is the syllabus can be very revealing of faculty attitudes towards learning. Faculty who thoughtfully choose language that encourages and motivate students, also shape students' first impressions of the course.

Effective syllabi include warm and welcoming diversity-focused statements that invite students to interact with faculty, and an affirmation that you expect them to succeed. The following sample syllabus contains some examples:

WELCOME

Welcome to [course name]. I look forward to spending the semester learning [subject] with you. Over the semester, you will experience a range of feelings, including: success and failure; challenge and boredom; accomplishment and frustration. Please know that I, and your fellow students, will be here to help you through it. Also, persistence and hard work means a lot more in this class than "intelligence." Put in time and effort and I know you will succeed. As an instructor, I will do everything in my power to give you all the resources and support to help you succeed. If I am not doing this, please do feel free to reach out to me. Again, I am here to see you succeed in [course]. Please hold me accountable as I will hold you accountable.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

The following was excerpted from Dr. Yolanda Santiago Venegas' 2017 syllabus for her English Classes.) Online full version at <http://go.cabrillo.edu/crtl>

“I consider it part of my responsibility as an instructor to address the learning needs of all the students in this course. I will present materials that are respectful of diversity: race, color, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religious beliefs, political preference, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship, or national origin among other personal characteristics. I also believe that the diversity of student experiences and perspectives is essential to the deepening of knowledge in a course. Any suggestions that you have about other ways to include the value of diversity in this course are welcome. In scheduling due dates and exams, I have tried to avoid conflicts with major

religious holidays. If there is a conflict with your religious observances, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements. I have developed ground rules to foster a positive climate for diversity and we will review these the first day of class and post them on Canvas.”

OFFICE HOURS

Office Hours:

Natural and Applied Sciences building, Room 701

MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m.; THUR 9:30-10:30 a.m. jsmith@cabrillo.edu

I welcome you to contact me outside of class hours. You may email me, call my office, or contact the division office and leave a message.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Some of the specific skills I hope you will obtain in this course are listed below. Being a critical consumer of information is important; all of these activities will help you become one, and it is my hope that you will use the skills in your daily life.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

Generalized list that includes WHY we learn it

ATTENDANCE

You should attend every class but extenuating circumstances arise that can make this difficult. If you cannot attend a class, please let me know. If circumstances make you miss more than 3 classes during the semester, you may be overextended. I ask that you come see me to discuss your options.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

All of us in the class, you, me, your peers, have a responsibility to create an environment in which we can all learn from each other. I expect everyone to participate in class so that we can all benefit from the insights and experiences that each person brings. As your instructor, I encourage students to name “ouch moments”—times when comments or reactions (usually unintentional) cause upset or discomfort. We will “Listen with respect to the experiences of others,” “Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment” and “Put-downs of any kind are never OK.”

TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS

Specify the books and chapters that students must read each week with a rationale about why they were selected.

How to read the course textbooks

(Excerpted from a training document used by the Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, 2016)

The textbooks contain text, illustrations or figures, and sample problems. The books are not meant to be read quickly, but carefully and thoughtfully. There are problems scattered throughout each section. These are an opportunity for you to apply what you just learned by putting it into practice. When you come to one of these points, stop and try to figure it out. Spend some time thinking about it. It may take you 15 to 20 minutes, or maybe longer. If you are unable to solve the problem after several attempts, make a note about where you got stuck in the problem (a good trick is a post it note or piece of paper stuck into the book on that page) and bring the note to class. Don't give up on the rest of the section or assignment. The books are written to guide you through the process of problem solving, and this requires that you spend some time attempting to solve problems.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Examples include: Tutoring, Counseling, Puente, EOPS, Learning Communities, Office of Equity, Accessibility Support Center, Veterans Center, Financial Aid, Guardian Scholars, Student Resources and Support Network, Student Clubs, and many more!

<https://www.cabrillo.edu/home/services.html>

WHAT POLICIES WILL I BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW?

Quizzes: Missed quizzes cannot be made up, because it is my goal to have all quizzes graded and entered into our online grade book by the end of the day. If you miss a quiz, be sure to download the solutions. The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

Exams: Makeup exams will be allowed, however you need to contact me prior to the day of the exam. The makeup exam will need to be completed before the beginning of the next class so that graded exams can be returned on time to the class.

Academic integrity: You are expected to be honest. In this course, that primarily means you should never turn in work that is not your own. This does not mean that you are not allowed to work with other students. I encourage you to collaborate on homework problems! It is often more fruitful and enjoyable to work with other people when trying to figure something out. They can give you a different perspective or fresh insight on the problem. Conversely, explaining your idea to another person forces you to clarify your thoughts and can help to highlight flaws you may have previously overlooked. However, if you work with others to come up with a solution, afterward you should write up your work on your own. You should not base your written homework on another student's written homework, and never put your name on anything you do not understand.

Phones: Please turn your ringer off and remove ear buds when you come into class.

Syllabus checklist:

- Does the syllabus clearly state goals and objectives of the course?
- Are students asked to be responsible for the success of the class through active and respectful engagement with others in the learning community?
- Is information and resources available for them to succeed at a high level?
 - Assignments clearly described?
 - Support services (e.g. tutoring) outlined?
 - Policies for grading and making up missed work articulated?
 - Steps for accessing technology required for the course offered?
- Is it written in a language that conveys a willingness to help students succeed?
- Does the syllabus incorporate content that fosters diversity, inclusivity, and empowerment? Assignments that address real world problems, social consciousness, or address students' racial-ethnic experiences? Assignments that promote critical thinking?
- Does the syllabus mention that the course will provide students with opportunities to: engage in collaborative work, discussions, or share their cultural knowledge?

ⁱ Hart Research Associates. (2015). Falling short? College learning and career success (Selected findings from online surveys of employers and college students conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities). Retrieved from

ⁱⁱ Dowd, A.C. & Bensimon, E.M. (2015). Enacting justice as care. In A.O. Dowd & E.M. Bensimon (Eds.), *Engaging the "race Question": Accountability and equity in US higher education*. Teachers College Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Collins, T. (1997). For openers, an inclusive course syllabus. In W. E. Campbell & K. A. Smith (Eds.), *New paradigms for college teaching* (pp. 79-102). Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.