



Inclusive Teaching

Inclusive teachers are mindful of the ways certain aspects of academic culture can be off-putting or mysterious to many students and trigger stereotype threat in students who are members of populations that have been historically excluded from higher education. Through their syllabus, classroom manner, out-of-class accessibility, and feedback, inclusive teachers communicate the message that all enrolled students are capable of success and are valued members of the learning community that the teacher co-creates. Inclusive teachers are attentive to the diverse knowledge-base and skills-development of their students and make pedagogical decisions about learning activities (readings, writing assignments, problem sets, group work, etc.) that will support the success of all students who meet the prerequisites of the course, are eager to learn, and remain relatively healthy throughout the semester. Inclusive teachers attempt to make explicit for students the “hidden curriculum” of higher education—the norms, practices, and information that are often presupposed by those who work in higher education, but which students from different cultures and backgrounds may find unfamiliar. Rather than seeing the diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and talents of students as obstacles to their learning, inclusive teachers take advantage of these differences to maximize the learning opportunities of all students.

Key Inclusive Teaching Principles (based on research done by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan):

- *Students’ feelings of social belonging are strongly correlated to their ability to learn. By the same token, feeling excluded, marginalized, or devalued on campus or in a class or discipline can be a significant barrier to student learning* (Ambrose et al., 2010; Walton & Cohen, 2011). You can facilitate a sense of belonging through learning students’ names, structuring meaningful peer learning opportunities, choosing examples from a broad range of cultural domains to illustrate course concepts, or having students provide examples themselves.
- *Students are more likely to persist through challenges when instructors communicate high standards and provide clear paths to success for all students* (Dweck, 2006; Steele, 2011; Yeager et al., 2014). You can do this by identifying effective study strategies for exams, providing grading rubrics that outline clear criteria for success on writing assignments, or sharing stories about your own challenges and successes learning difficult material.
- *Transparency about expectations and norms benefits all students’ learning and is especially beneficial for first-generation college students and other groups who have been traditionally*



Amherst College

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underserved by higher education (Eddy & Hogan, 2014; Stephens et al., 2012). Transparent practices include identifying learning objectives for class activities, explaining how students should communicate with you and make use of opportunities like office hours, and making clear how student work will be assessed in every dimension of the course, including participation.

- *Student awareness of and appreciation of diversity are maximized when instructors create structured opportunities for classmates to learn about and from one another* (Johnson et al., 2014 . . .). (<http://crlt.umich.edu/overview-inclusive-teaching-michigan>)

Want to learn more about inclusive teaching? Some resources:

*Ambrose, S., et al. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. Jossey-Bass, 2010. Chapter 6: "Why do Student Development and Course Climate Matter for Student Learning?"

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan, "Diversity and Inclusion," <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching>

*Dweck, C. S. *Mindset*. Random House, 2006.

*Eddy, S.L. and Hogan, K.A. "[Getting Under the Hood](#): How and for Whom Does Increasing Course Structure Work?" *CBE--Life Sciences Education*, 13 (2014): 453-468.

*Steele, Claude. *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. WW Norton & Company, 2011.

*Stephens, N. M., et al. "[Unseen Disadvantage: How American Universities' Focus on Independence Undermines the Academic Performance of First-Generation College Students](#)." *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 102(6), (2012).

*Walton, G.M. and G.L. Cohen. "[A Brief Social-belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students](#)." *Science* 331(6023) (2011): 1447-1451.

*Yeager, D. S., et al. [Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143(2) (2014).

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