Inclusive Teaching Strategies: Suggestions for Supporting a Diverse Student Population
January 18, 2017
Center for Teaching and Learning
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Introduction

Inclusivity practices within and outside of classrooms are crucial for promoting student success and for ensuring a rich, rewarding educational experience for all students. Current initiatives, such as Davidson’s QEP, illustrate the institutional commitment to inclusivity...but how does our commitment to inclusivity translate across all courses and fields? This document outlines a number of strategies that any faculty member can use to create more inclusive learning environments for all students.

The strategies presented here are by no means the only practices that can promote inclusivity and there is no one “formula” for “inclusive pedagogy.” Indeed there are multiple ways in which faculty can create classroom environments that value a diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and worldviews.

As you examine the list provided here, you will find that you already do some or many of these things in your classes. That is great! The challenge for each of us is to discover additional strategies that will continue to improve our students’ success. Further, the list below is not meant to be a list of practices that are “required” to make a classroom or learning experience inclusive. Some strategies may work better than others in some fields or for individual teachers. The goal of creating this document is not to provide a “checklist” or a “to do” list, but to provide ideas that you may want to try or to modify to meet your classroom needs. Our goal as teachers is to help our students learn. Most of these strategies will help all students in that regard.

The list of strategies below was compiled from many resources, some of which are found on the annotated bibliography on the [CTL website](#). I thank the current QEP Learning Community¹ who helped compile this list (and who would be great resources if you have questions). This spring the CTL will host at least four Experimenting As Teachers (EAT) lunches that will focus on inclusive pedagogy. These will be announced in the VPAA newsletter. Also note that attendance at one of these EAT lunches is an example of what can be included in next year’s FAR. Finally, I am happy to meet with individuals and groups at any time to discuss any topics concerning inclusivity practices.

Best,

Verna Case, Associate Dean of Faculty

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¹ Mark Barsoum, Karen Bernd, Shireen Campbell, Dylan Fitz, Ann Fox, Barbara Lom, Clark Ross, Fred Smith, Kevin Smith, and James Sponsel
Inclusive Strategies

Personal strategies:
- Get to know students as individuals and create community in your classroom
  - Learn names, ask about interests, make connections outside of classroom
  - Share your own personal stories
  - Be aware that all students do not come to your class with the same “cultural capital” and exposure to academic discourse
  - Understand that financial limitations may play a large role in student choices (including paying for textbooks or other course expenses) and ability to participate in activities outside of class

Pedagogical strategies:
- Relevance
  - Make connections between course material and broader global or societal issues or with other courses at Davidson
  - Highlight diverse array of scholars/scientists/artists/writers/thinkers in course content
  - Use variety of examples from different sociocultural contexts in class, on assignments, case studies, and test questions
  - Recognize how your personal selection of course materials, examples, and readings reflects your perspectives, interests, biases.
  - Encourage different points of view by addressing conflicting opinions in your field and providing resources for students to see a variety of interpretations/points of view
  - Allow/encourage students to examine issues they find personally compelling in assignments
  - Discuss the value of what students are learning to future careers or lives
- Communication
  - Adjust course design elements (small or large) in ways that enhance communication, structure, agency, clarity, etc. for students
  - Share your rationale for pedagogical choice with your students
  - Provide clear feedback, encouragement, mentoring to each student
  - Use a blind grading strategies, sharing an assignment’s grading rubric in advance, avoiding grading on a curve
  - Addressing/acknowledging implicit bias, stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, etc.
- Foster growth mindsets\(^2\)
  - Encourage contributions from all students
  - Value creative/critical thinking
  - Set high standards and let students know they can achieve them

\(^2\) Growth mindsets recognize that people can develop abilities and strengths through perseverance and hard work. This mindset fosters a love of learning and resilience in the face of difficulties.
Recognize that students have individual strengths that they bring to the classroom and that they can adopt strategies to compensate in areas where they may not be as strong.

Show your appreciation for sincere efforts to learn.

- Classroom climate
  - Use a variety of teaching methods
    - Deploying a variety of active learning strategies
    - Use visualizations, demonstrations
    - Balance concrete information and abstract concepts
    - Give students time to digest, reflect on material
    - Provide a variety of individual work and group work for class problem-solving or critical thinking activities
  - Class culture
    - Use a variety of strategies to encourage equal participation by all students
    - Establish ground rules for discussing difficult topics
    - Encourage multiple perspectives and free exchange of ideas
    - Ask for feedback from students and other faculty on specific teaching strategies, challenges, or questions and using that feedback to improve class atmosphere, culture, environment

- Opportunities for achievement/success
  - Provide a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate what they are learning
  - Using formative assessments and/or retrieval practice to promote learning

Professional activities in support of inclusive practices:
- Serving as an equity advisor for faculty searches
- Reading articles/books/podcasts that discuss inclusivity in the college classroom/campus
- Creating or initiating learning opportunities about pedagogical inclusivity for fellow faculty/staff
- Attending or initiating on campus or off campus talks, panels, or other presentations that focus on inclusivity/diversity/pedagogy
- Collaborating with faculty at other institutions on projects that promote inclusivity across higher education
- Providing a voice for inclusivity with in departments/programs/classroom design committees, etc.
- Accessibility Outreach programs through Office of Admissions - Disseminating information about college life, college prep, paying for college