

Material taken from these sources:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/inclusive/>

"Perceptions of faculty behavior by student of color", by Mark A. Chesler

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**Inclusive Teaching** means teaching in ways that do not exclude students, accidentally or intentionally, from opportunities to learn. Following are resources, examples, insights from faculty, and stories from students in order to help members of the scientific teaching community accomplish their goal of teaching more inclusively.

## A. PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT EXCLUDES STUDENTS

A number of things may communicate to students in your class, "you don't belong here". Examples of student perspectives on exclusion in the classroom.

### Theme 1: The faculty conveys disrespect, unfairness or lack of confidence in students

Here are student comments on different situations, which show how they might draw the conclusion that faculty comments are condescending or intimidating:

- "The professor is always saying 'I'm sure you all know this by now' or 'This is so basic, I don't need to explain it do I?' Then if I really don't understand something, I'm afraid to ask."
- "Sometimes I've answered a question and it's wrong and she'll just turn and ask someone else without saying anything to me. It makes me feel really put down so I've stopped answering questions."
- "He can be really abrupt in discussions. If the answer you give isn't what he wants, sometimes he cuts you off with 'No!' Maybe he doesn't mean it the way it comes across, but it sure doesn't make me want to talk."
- "When I didn't understand the answer to my question, the instructor finally said 'Well, I guess some of us are just better at visualizing than others of us.' How is that supposed to help?"
- "I wasn't doing well in the course and the professor said, "Oh, well, drop the course. There's nothing I can do for you and there's nothing you can do"

### Strategies to mitigate these kinds of students' perceptions

- Communicate Expectations for Success
- Consider Students' Prior Knowledge
- Orient Students to Ways of Teaching in the Course
- Communicate How Diversity Will Be Valued in the Course
- Use Inclusive Language
- Deliberately encourage and set high expectations of all students in the classroom

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### Theme 2: Disregarding student backgrounds, preparation, or life events that affect learning

Here are student comments on different situations, which show how it affects them when instructors consider (or don't consider) their background, experiences, and life events that affect learning:

- "I knew it would be difficult to balance my job, a family, and course work, but school is so expensive that I can't really afford to work any less, and I have to take care of my daughter whether there's homework due or not. Most of my professors have been encouraging, and they're as flexible as possible about deadlines and things like that. I don't know if I could have gotten this far without supportive professors."
- "On the syllabus it said that if you cannot meet the professor during office hours that you can make an appointment to see her. I have class conflicts during her office hours, but each time I try to make an appointment, she makes me justify why I can't come during regular office hours, and it's really hard to find another time that she's willing to meet. If she was going to give me such a hard time trying to make an appointment outside of office hours, why did she write 'and by appointment' on the syllabus?"
- "English is not my first language. I work very hard to keep up, and the professor has been very helpful. However, if I say something during class discussion, the other students ignore it and continue the discussion as though I

hadn't said anything at all. I'm not sure if they don't understand my accent, or if they think a foreigner doesn't have anything to add. It's very frustrating."

- "The assumption seems to be, 'You'll succeed if you do what I did and become like me.' But is that the only way to succeed, and is that the only kind of success that counts? I wish I could find my own way to finish this degree without sending the message that I'm not really serious just because I'm not doing exactly what my advisor did."
- "I'm Deaf and use a Sign Language interpreter to understand what is said in class. I try to get everything I can out of class, but I can only look at one thing at a time -- I can't look at the board, or the overhead, or my textbook, at the same time that I watch the interpreter to find out what the instructor is saying. Discussions are hard because I have to keep taking my eyes off the interpreter to find out who's talking, and then look back to see what they say. There's always a little time delay with interpreting, so it's often hard to get my question or comment in before the class has moved on."

### **Strategies to mitigate these kinds of students' perceptions**

- Help students learn strategies for successful studying in the discipline
  - Let students know what you have done to become a successful learner in the discipline
  - Make sure assignment guidelines and grading criteria are clearly communicated
  - Take steps to establish good working relationships in class
  - Remind students of resources available for help
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### **Theme 3: Interacting with only a subset of the students**

Here are student comments on different situations, which show how they might draw the conclusion that only a few students are welcome to participate in class:

- "By the time I've thought of something to say, the discussion has moved on."
- "I don't really feel like I can say anything. I think the professor already picked out the 'smart' students and doesn't care about the rest of us."
- "I feel like all the other students sit back and roll their eyes when I ask a question. Maybe I just don't belong in this class."
- "I've got lots of questions and stuff I'd like help with but I feel like I'd be asking stuff that everyone else already knows about."
- "Every time something about African Americans comes up in class the professor looks at me as if I should react somehow. I don't know if he's worried that I'm going to be offended or something but it makes me feel uncomfortable."

### **Strategies to mitigate these kinds of students' perceptions**

- Plan Ahead
  - Use the First Day of Class to Set Expectations
  - Look for Opportunities to Invite Participation
  - Provide Feedback
  - Seek Feedback
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### **Theme 4: Teaching in ways that favor particular backgrounds or approaches to learning**

Here are student comments on different situations which show how they might draw the conclusion that the instructor's way of teaching excludes the student's ways of learning:

- "It seems like I can't understand this stuff at all though everyone else seems to. I wish he would write stuff down sometimes but nobody else seems to need him to do that."
- "At the beginning of the quarter, I tried asking a couple of questions and she always said we'll get to that later. But that didn't help when I was confused right then. Everybody else seems to know what's going on."
- "It seems like every topic has a 'minority day' when we stop talking about the stuff in the textbook and we're supposed to discuss an article by somebody black or Asian or female. But nobody says much .... Those are the

days when the minority students say the least, even though it feels like everyone is looking at them to find out what they think."

- "When he talks about 'common sense' or a 'typical human response', I used to think, 'Not where I live it's not.' For a while I thought it was something wrong with me, but now it's got me wondering if he really knows as much as he thinks he does."
  - "I was doing well enough in classes, but after so long without hearing or reading about anybody I could identify with, I started to think, 'Maybe I just don't belong here.'"
- "The methods of classroom instruction fit a narrow range of student behaviors, interests and learning styles"

### **Strategies to mitigate these kinds of students' perceptions**

- Consider how you teach
- Consider what you teach
- Develop a broad repertoire of cases and examples
- Set the stage for potentially sensitive material
- Respond promptly to discriminatory remarks
- Do not diminish students' strong reactions to negative comment
- Do not ask a student to represent an entire category of people

## **B. RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHING**

### **Part 1: Understand your students**

- Getting to know the students in your class
  - Design your own ways/ideas of collecting student information on the first day of class
  - Carry out student interviews/evaluation for student feedback partway through the course
- Linking course content to student's prior knowledge
  - *Do You Know Where Your Students Are? Speaking of Teaching, 4(2)*, from the Center for Teaching and Learning at Stanford University
  - *What they don't know can hurt them: the role of prior knowledge in learning*, by Marilla Svinicki, University of Texas
- Understand how stereotype threat can affect learning and performance
  - *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*, by Claude M. Steele

### **Part 2: Understand yourself as an instructor**

How does your academic and personal background affect the ways that you plan and teach your class or interact with students? You might be asking, "What does knowing myself have to do with inclusive teaching?" These articles explore that question

- "Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education" – by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson (<http://www.uis.edu/liberalstudies/students/documents/sevenprinciples.pdf>)
- *Your Diversity, Academic Culture, and Teaching and Learning Styles*. Chapter 1 of *Teaching for Inclusion*, a publication of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.
- *Perceptions of Faculty by Students of Color*, from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan.
- *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*, by Claude M. Steele
- *Developing and Teaching an Inclusive Curriculum*, by Deborah Flick, in the UC Boulder Diversity Essay Series (<http://www.colorado.edu/ftcp/downloads/ondiversity.pdf>)