

Identifying Diversity and Committing to Inclusivity In the Online Classroom

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Teaching is Teaching. All good teachers share a common goal:

To help our students overcome obstacles to achieve their dreams.

The platform we use to teach them is really just a technicality.

Sheri McKeever

Accessibility

- Growing online classrooms create increased accessibility.
- Statistics on internet access is changing, more across the world have access.
- Pew research (2019) notes that 75% of Americans have broadband at home.

- Increased accessibility means increase Diversity.
- Does increased accessibility ensure equity?

Diversity in the Online Classroom

- Diversity can be increased in online courses and on ground stays the same.
- Diversity in the online classroom can be many things:
 - Race
 - Culture
 - Gender
 - Sexuality
 - Education
 - Technology skills
 - Written communication skills

The Online Diversity Conundrum

- Online is ambiguous:
 - No physical appearance
 - No cultural expectations or “norms”
- Want to be inclusive and better serve the students by understanding their background but....
 - You may not know educational background, age, socioeconomic status, language etc. that may help identify student needs.

Analyzing Diversity

- Diversity in a traditional classroom can be an asset if an instructor is sensitive to the different backgrounds and student needs.
- Can this be transferred online?
- Clues to diversity in the online classroom:
 - Introductory posts
 - Poor writing skills
 - Repeatedly asking questions when the answers are readily available
 - Misunderstanding directions and not completing work correctly

Meet Students where they Are

- Is this the students first online course or first course?
- Have they used the learning platform?
- Do they know how to navigate the course?
- Do they know the terminology?

Online courses

- 1st generation college students are 4x more likely to drop out after their first year (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020)
- More courses are moving online
- Online teaching can reproduce educational inequities

Inclusive Teaching

- Providing equal opportunities for all students
- Meaningful and accessible learning

- Challenges

Making Teaching More Inclusive

- Self reflect
- Set the stage
- Create assessments with inclusion in mind
- Provide diverse role models
- Understand your students

Self Reflection

- Begins within
- Educate yourself with uncomfortable topics
- Prepare to respond to current events
- Share who you are
- Own your misunderstandings

Set the Stage

- Get to know your class
- Review the syllabus
- Include all voices
- Be open to changing your perspectives based on what you learn

Creating Assessments

- Set clear standards & give timely feedback
- Use clear rubrics
- Provide examples of good work to serve as a model

Diverse Role Models

- Readings
- Videos
- Case studies
- Carefully choose assignments

Understand the Student Body

- University demographics

Students at EIU in 2019

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
American Indian	18	.23
African American	1,145	14.67
Asian	224	2.87
Hispanic/Latino	915	11.72
Pacific Islander	6	.08
White	4,799	61.48
International	321	4.11

Faculty at EIU in 2020

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
American Indian	2	0.4
African American	23	4.7
Asian	32	6.5
Hispanic/Latino	7	1.4
Pacific Islander	0	0
White	388	78.7
International	12	2.4

Making Teaching More Inclusive

- No singular way to create an inclusive learning environment
- Reflection
- Awareness
- Look into your own beliefs and values and be open

Faculty

- Prepare faculty
- Students desire faculty to intervene in racially hostile environments, yet fail to do so (Linder et al., 2015)
- “Reading and sharing professional journals, books or blogs related to anti-bias and inclusive education can augment professional development” (Kechinyere, 2015).

Empathic Pedagogies

- Empathy is unifying
- Can open students to deeper learning
- Sharing and understanding
- Inclusive learning environment

- Students can benefit emotionally, cognitively and psychologically when they are exposed to people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Strategies

- Self-awareness/self-reflection
- Re-evaluating course design
- Evaluate the syllabus
- Diversify assignments
- Provide examples

Questions and Suggestions

- Open for questions
- Open for suggestions and sharing ideas