

## Diversity/Inclusive Teaching Tips

### General rules to follow:

- Learn every student's name and the name he/she prefers to be called and use the names
- Ask about your students' interests and experiences so you can know them as individuals rather than merely members of the group
- Ask about your students' interests and experiences early on in the course
- Encourage students to respond to each others' questions and comments, not just your own, to foster a sense of community
- Don't make assumptions about students based on what you perceive as their minority experiences and needs
- Try to anticipate issues of sexuality, religion, or other values for students as you give assignments and lead discussions
- Provide guidelines for group discussions so as to create an environment where students will feel safe voicing their opinions
- Don't ignore or single out students and never ask a student to act as a spokesperson for his/her group
- Combine volunteering and calling on students by beginning a discussion topic by asking for volunteers and then calling on other students to support, add to, or modify that student's comments
- Monitor students' comments to avoid any personal attacks
- Introduce controversial topics in impersonal ways
- Give students explicit information about how you will grade their work

### Gender Related Teaching Tips:

- Don't overlook capable but quiet students. Demand participation of all students, not just those who always raise their hands.
- Give male and female students equal attention in advising and mentoring.
- Give female and male students equal attention and equally specific feedback.
- Monitor classroom dynamics to ensure that discussion does not become dominated by more aggressive students.
- Vary the classroom structure to include more than just competitive modes of learning.
- Revise curricula if necessary to include female experiences, and to include them in more than just stereotypical ways.
- Increase wait time the amount of time you allow for students to formulate an answer to a question in class.
- Avoid sexist language in classroom discussions, lectures, and in written materials that you distribute to the class.
- Do not ask female students to perform activities you would not request of male students or vice versa.
- Examine your own classroom communication patterns and whether you are reaching all of your students, particularly in classes where female students constitute the minority, and thus enjoy less peer support
- Arrange classroom situations where men and women work together
- Try mixing the groups in a way that ensures that women and men students will occasionally have the opportunity to work with students of their own gender
- Do not simply let students choose their own groups, for this will result in the same students always working with each other
- Change your position in the classroom so that you have a chance to make close eye contact with different groups of students
- If you assign specific functions to group members such as secretary, or group spokesperson, make sure that both male and female students have the opportunity to take roles requiring leadership
- If you observe students making sexist remarks, whether in front of the whole class or in smaller groups, it is best to confront the student(s) and tell them that such remarks are inappropriate and do not further the purposes of the course.
- In classes where gender or other group identity differences are likely to become the topics of discussion, give students printed guidelines that demand respect for all students during the first week of class. Or work out a class contract on rules of discussion at the beginning of the semester.

- Female students' responses should be validated, but try also to push them to go further, and challenge them to do their best. By insisting that a female student follow her statement through to its larger implications, you will help her to develop her critical thinking skills, and will show your confidence in her ability to think critically.
- You can decrease some of the fear students have of giving "the wrong answer" or of not having the answer by explaining that you do not expect every student to have the answer all of the time. Offer to students some questions for which you yourself do not have the answers and share with the class those moments where you are trying to work through a problem yourself.
- Treat students as individuals not as representatives of their gender. Do not assume that a female student is necessarily interested in "women issues."
- Avoid cutting material in a way that gives unequal treatment to men and women. Look for other shortcuts that will not arbitrarily exclude one gender.
- Integrate work by women into the major concepts you emphasize in your course and avoid submitting to tokenism by putting a woman on your syllabus simply because she is a woman.
- When designing your tests, make sure that you do not require information that one gender is more likely to possess. Never include material or concepts that have not been part of the course work. If you do want students to incorporate personal experiences, offer some choice in the questions you give or allow large enough parameters so as not to disadvantage anyone.
- As a math or science teacher, you can have a tremendous influence on women in your class. First, establish a professional atmosphere comfortable for men and women alike. Second, make female students aware that they are capable of learning the material, and encourage those who perform well to take additional courses in the department or to pursue advanced studies in the field. When it is relevant, make reference to women currently conducting important research in your field. When talking about hypothetical scientists or mathematicians to illustrate a point, make sure you occasionally assume the scientist or mathematician is a woman. By doing this, you send out a message to students that your field is open to women as well as men.
- Whether or not you choose to encourage or require non-sexist language from your students, you should attempt to make your own speech and written materials as gender-neutral as possible.
- Do not comment on your students' physical appearance
- Do not ask your female students to complete tasks inappropriate to their role as students, such as making coffee or copies for an interest group or club comprised mostly of male students
- Do not invite a student to discuss the course over coffee or lunch as it can confuse students about your expectations because of the power you hold as a teacher.
- Maintain the highest level of professionalism in and out of the classroom. Remarks considered denigrating of women or men, even when intended as humor, could constitute sexual harassment and could be prosecuted under the university policy.

### **Race Related Teaching Tips:**

- Do not adopt preconceived notions and attitudes about minority students' ability to perform, high or low.
- Honestly explore your and your students' personal views and attitudes towards minority groups/students in general
- Do not assume that there is a "collective identity" minority students share. Instead, treat minority students as individuals.
- Be sensitive to students' expressed tribal affiliation when native Americans are concerned since students from different tribes have their own cultural heritage of which they are proud of.
- Encourage students to get to know each other both during and after class. This would allow students the opportunity to let others in class know the terminology they would like others in the class to use to refer to them, their culture, and etc.
- Do not assume the identity or racial affiliation of a student based on his/her physical appearances.
- Approach students one-on-one rather than singling them out in class.
- Ask students about their preferred names and learn to correctly pronounce their names.
- Pay equal attention to all students.

### **International Students Related Teaching Tips:**

- Get to know your students at the beginning of the semester and learn to pronounce their names correctly.
- Do not single out the international student to "represent" his/her country.

- When asking a student about his or her experience, stressing the student as an individual rather than as a representative of a country will encourage the student without making him or her feel alien.
- Incorporate the special angle/perspective international students can bring into your class.
- Do not overlook the potential tensions between international students in your class due to traditional enmities or clashes of cultural values.
- Expect international students to have different expectations regarding classroom practices and that it takes time for the students to adjust to "American style" of teaching and learning.
- Establish a safe classroom atmosphere through the ground rules of discussion and keep channels of communication open in your office hours so as to give students the chance to adjust to your classroom.

#### **Sexual Orientation Related Teaching Tips:**

- Assume that not all students in a class are heterosexual.
- React firmly to homophobic remarks made in class. Laughing them off in the hopes they will go away does not work. A "respect for your classmates" contract or class rule at the beginning of class helps.
- Give assignments that will not force gays or lesbians to describe their social life or to "come out."
- Use acceptable terms when speaking about gay and lesbian issues
  - significant other or partner not boyfriend or girlfriend (this forces "coming out")
  - sexual orientation not sexual preference (this implies people are gay by choice, not by nature)
  - not lifestyle (again, this implies choice. As one person put it: "Living on a lake is a lifestyle, being gay is a life.")
- Do not assume that HIV positive people are all gay, or that only gay people engage in activities which put themselves and others at risk.

#### **Age Related Teaching Tips:**

- Do not make non-traditional and often older students feel excluded or singled out.
- Make older students feel included in class discussions and in everything else.
- Admit it when you don't know the answer to something and then follow up on it -- this helps build trust particularly with non-traditional and older students.
- Keep an open mind in the classroom and stop trying to keep their classroom molded into one entity.
- Try to be as organized as possible with your materials.
- Whether you are a TA or a professor, do not feel intimidated by an older student.
- Take advantage of the life experience as well as the different perspectives the older students' brought into your class.

#### **Religion and Political Beliefs Related Teaching Tips:**

- Assume that some of your students are non-Christians.
- Accommodate students' important religious holidays: allow for them in your syllabus planning and a make-up schedule.
- Critique a religion or religious belief only if such criticism is important to course material.
- When such criticism is necessary to the course, use a tone and choice of words that show respect for those who hold such beliefs or practice that religion.
- When discussing religious issues, distinguish between faith and proof.
- Assume each student has his or her specific beliefs and rituals, and cannot "speak for" an entire religion.
- Do not criticize political or traditional beliefs unless those beliefs are potentially hurtful to others in the class, or unless such criticism is part of the class content.
- Establish an initial "contract" with your students to show respect for others.

#### **Regionalism Related Teaching Tips:**

- Avoid assumptions and stereotypes based on students' geographic origins.
- Establish a class "code of conduct" or discussion guidelines to help prevent hurtful comments.
- Confront any derogatory stereotypical comment about someone in the class explicitly to prevent it from happening again.

### **Teaching Tips for Dealing with Students with Special Physical or Medical Needs:**

- Remember that the student's disability is only a small part of his or her total identity as a person.
- Always address the student directly, not through an interpreter or caretaker.
- Ask the student privately what things you can do to facilitate learning.
- Know what the student is able to do and plan alternatives ahead of time.
- Ensure that the student can participate in both class discussions and group work.
- Adapt to the student's needs without lowering your usual course standards.
- Be aware of the emotional behavior and frequent absences of the students.
- When covering a topic dealing with illness or disease, assume that this topic may affect some students personally.
- Offer choices on exams and assignments to alleviate student anxiety.
- Do not spend an inordinate amount of time focusing on the disability of the students.
- Reward achievements with relevant praise and offer critiques when the student's work could be improved, just as you would for any other student to make the disabled student feel more included in the classroom.
- Be aware that disabled students generally do not enjoy praise that is based on their disability rather than on their ability.
- Encourage the students to notify you throughout the semester if there is anything else you could be doing to help.
- Treat the students as individuals and as not representatives or spokespersons for the entire group.

### **Learning Disability Related Teaching Tips:**

- Take initiative. If you notice a problem, talk to the student in private.
- Provide a detailed syllabus and assignment descriptions.
- Give directions in writing and orally.
- Present material in a variety of ways: visual, aural, role plays, etc.
- Build skills gradually over the semester and give frequent feedback.
- Allow alternative testing formats and/or extended time where appropriate.
- Avoid looking annoyed when a student asks a question you have just answered.
- Keep students' attention through voice modulation, gesturing to emphasize significant points.
- Help students to organize, synthesize, and apply information.
- Consider putting a statement in your syllabus encouraging any students with special learning needs to discuss them with you.
- Do not assume that a student with a learning disability will come forward by him or herself.
- Suggest possible resources the student can explore in order to address the patterns of difficulty if the student does not disclose him or herself as having a learning disability.
- Build rapport with the student having a learning disability and establish a good one-on-one relationship with the student.
- Do not ignore students with learning disabilities and think that you are sparing them embarrassment..
- Find out how much the student knows about his or her disability.
- Take advantage of students' diverse abilities and not to overemphasize their disabilities will help them to excel in their studies.
- Look for opportunities where the student can demonstrate existing knowledge to help the student enhance his/her confidence.
- Review major concepts and provide multiple opportunities to apply concepts to new situation throughout the semester.
- Try to prepare students for papers and other assignments by giving them questions to help them in their reading.
- Establish explicitly the parameters of successful answers to the assignments.
- Avoid giving questions or instructions that are grammatically or syntactically complicated as they only serve to bewilder the student without testing actual information important to the class.
- Help the student by targeting the student's area of difficulty and suggesting a strategy to compensate.

