

Pre-Tips to Create an Inclusive Course

Pre-Tip 1: Use Self-Reflection for Awareness

Use of Language

- Reflect: Do you use universal phrases and avoid gender or sexuality binaries? Do you use gender-neutral phrases? *Note*: Inclusive language avoids careless or insensitive words, phrases or tones that can alienate students. Non-inclusive language can be deliberate or inadvertent and reflects prejudiced, stereotyped, or discriminatory views towards people or groups. Inclusive language creates a space of belonging for all students. “Belonging,” or a feeling of embeddedness or mattering, is when students feel they are an integral part of the campus community, have a strong connection to the school, and feel they are seen and valued.
- Actions: Use inclusive examples and language, assessments and be intentional about your word choices.
- Examples:
 - If you use a comparison between an American cultural phenomenon (such as American football or a popular song), are there students in your class who will not understand the reference and thus feel excluded from the classroom environment? Is there a more universal comparison you could use that students of all backgrounds will understand?
 - In a discussion about current politics, how can you avoid an “us” vs. “them” mentality that implies students are not welcome or included in the conversation if they don’t agree with you?

Consider how you think and speak about a group of people.

- Reflect: Do you use stereotypes? Do you tell stories or examples that reinforce stereotypes or provide unnecessary categorical descriptions? Can your examples be successful without assigning particular social identities to them?
- Actions: Use examples that do not generalize or categorize a person based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other social identity. Do not make assumptions about ability based on stereotypes.
- Examples:
 - You are telling your students a story about a lab scientist performing an experiment. Do you need to indicate race/gender/nationality/ethnicity of

the person in order to illustrate your point? Avoid unnecessary details in order to prevent reinforcing stereotypes situated around these categories.

- You are guiding your students to brainstorm resources to help a drug addict access healthcare. What background information about the person is necessary? What information is unnecessary and risks simply reinforcing stereotypes? For example, if the drug addict is pregnant, students may require this additional detail to decipher the best resources available. However, adding that the drug addict is from a specific place, their gender, ethnicity, and race may not be necessary in other examples.

Pre-Tip 2: [Recognize and acknowledge the trauma](#) students are bringing to the classroom during this difficult time.

- Reflect: What challenges might your students be facing due to COVID-19, systemic racism and the general uncertainty of today's world? How could students' anxiety and trauma affect and impact their learning?
- Actions:
 - a) Create a welcoming classroom environment that acknowledges interruptions, distractions, and learning challenges due to our abnormal circumstances early on in your course. This is a step to "humanize the learning environment."
 - b) Further humanize your teaching by acknowledging how the current situation has impacted you.
 - c) Ask your students to share what they may be facing during this time in a community building activity.
 - d) Provide students with greater flexibility than you might have under regular circumstances. Be understanding of requests for deadline extensions or time off due to illness or home environment challenged.
- Examples:
 - A student may approach you and ask for time off or flexibility in deadlines while they cope with the illness of a loved one. Recognize the trauma they are experiencing and be flexible and understanding. Create a timeline and work plan with the student to provide structure. Keep in mind that more flexibility may be required.
 - Online Example: You ask students to have a conversation the first day of class about the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, while you are hoping to have an honest conversation with your students, your students are silent. A great option is to use Anonymous Feedback and an

anonymous survey on Collab or the WhiteBoard feature on Zoom. You can ask students to share their concerns regarding the course, how they are feeling at the start of the course, their goals with the course, and possible obstacles they may face. Here are two examples of Google surveys that could inspire your own survey: one [longer](#) and one [shorter](#). Using this approach, students may feel more comfortable sharing with you anonymously and you will have this information to use throughout the semester.

Pre-Tip 3: Design Your Course to Ensure Accessibility

- Reflect: Think about what different obstacles students may face during the course. Take into consideration socioeconomic, ableness, and physical circumstances that may impact the students.

- Actions:
 - a) Use the [Universal Design for Learning](#) approach. Don't make any assumptions about learners' abilities, but make all course content accessible to the widest range of students.
 - b) Provide transcription or captioning of all video content.
 - c) Use dyslexia-friendly fonts.
 - d) Create or use mobile friendly web resources for your course such as Google Tools, One Drive, DropBox, and Padlet.
 - e) For students with visual accommodations, [contact the Student Disability Center](#) to attain closed captioning, alternative course materials, and assistive technology.
 - f) Provide your materials, such as PowerPoint or Google Slides and lectures, through your course's main site before class begins.
 - g) Record your class lectures and synchronous meetings and upload these to your main site, such as Collab or Canvas.
 - h) Be mindful of how many tools you are using and simplify students' online learning by choosing relevant resources.
 - a) Design all course assignments around accessibility.

- Examples:
 - A student who is visually impaired may request accommodations. Be prepared ahead of time by having your course documents compatible with screen readers and making sure all of your visual content has alt text. Reach out to SDAC for help with captions for video content.
 - Online Example: A student has low-internet connectivity and cannot connect to the synchronous meetings. Providing the student with the

materials before-hand allows students to be able to follow and review the material covered in class.

Pre-Tip 4: Examine Course Elements to [Create an Inclusive Student Learning Experience](#)

- Reflect: Review course content, assignments, teaching methods. Are your assessments and activities set up to genuinely assess learners' knowledge? Are your expectations stated clearly in writing and explained clearly in class?
- Actions:
 - a) Take into account special arrangements, alternative approaches, and flexible assessment activities to foment an inclusive approach.
 - b) Establish community agreements and discussion guidelines to provide collective sense of responsibility and regular feedback processes.
 - c) Set explicit student expectations and model expected behavior, of both interpersonal and other skills, that students are asked to demonstrate in assignments. Do this especially if your course will have student group work or discussions.
 - d) Recognize that your students do not all learn in the same way, nor do they showcase that learning the same. By providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning through a variety of means, students will have opportunities to showcase their strengths.
- Examples:
 - On the first day of class, you engage students in a discussion of how they envision the ideal learning community for the course. Help them set explicit [communication expectations](#). How do they want peers to interact with them? How should discussions be conducted? How should opposing viewpoints be treated? What kind of language should be used? Guide students in creating standards for discussion that will result in a safe environment for students to share their opinions and learn from each other.
 - Example: One of your students may have severe anxiety that makes oral presentations difficult: be prepared to offer alternative means of completing assignments. Consider allowing the student to make a pre-recorded presentation using VoiceThread or similar platforms.

Pre-Tip 5: [Ensure Diversity in Course Content](#)

- Reflect: Do you integrate diversity and equity? Does your course encourage, recognize, and respect diversity and validity of different ideas and perspectives?

- Actions:
 - a) Select content that engages a diversity of ideas and perspectives.
 - b) Use diverse examples and do not assume that all students are familiar with your references.

- Examples:
 - Perhaps upon examining your reading list for the semester, you realize that the majority of your assigned readings are written by members of a certain group based on race, socioeconomic status, or gender. Are there other experts in your field from different racial or gender backgrounds? If the nature of your field is such that you are intentionally looking at one geographic area (for example, Russian or Iberian literature), think about how you can still bring in different viewpoints by examining critical articles written by scholars of diverse backgrounds.