

Strategies to Create an Equity-minded & Culturally Affirming Learning Environment



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Learning Objectives

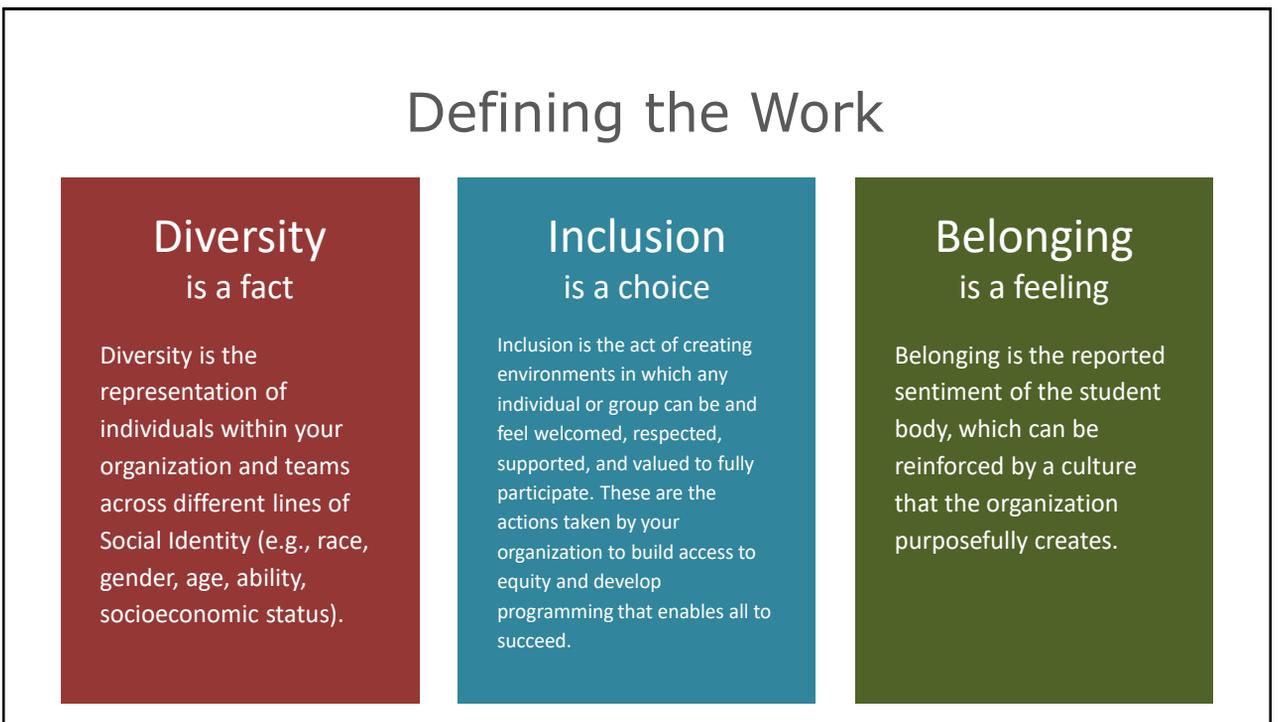
- ★ 1. List strategies that use equity to create a culturally affirming learning environment.
- ★ 2. Develop a plan to implement one of the strategies.

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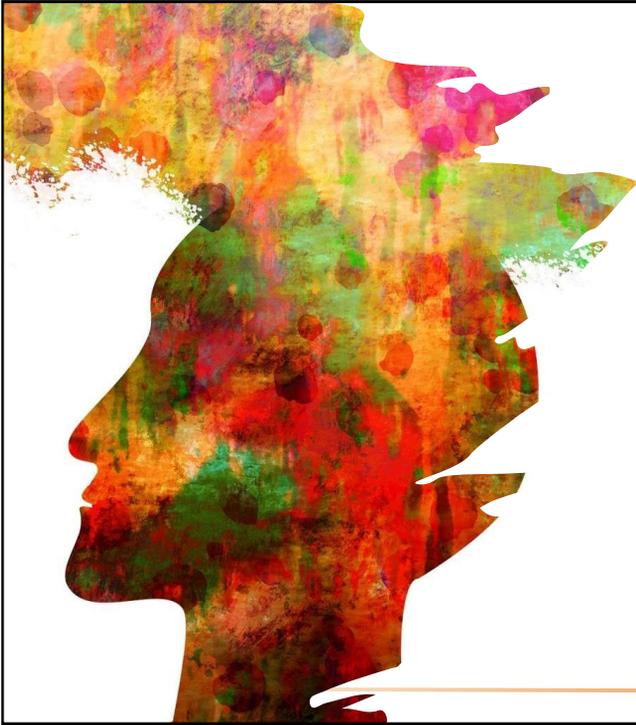
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Reflect on a time you felt like you didn't belong to a group.

How did it make you feel?

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As an educator, how do I build a learning environment that is inclusive, equitable, and accessible so my students feel a sense of **belonging**?

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An Equity-Minded Educator:

Has a perspective or mode of thinking that calls attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes.

Is willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices.

Is aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education.



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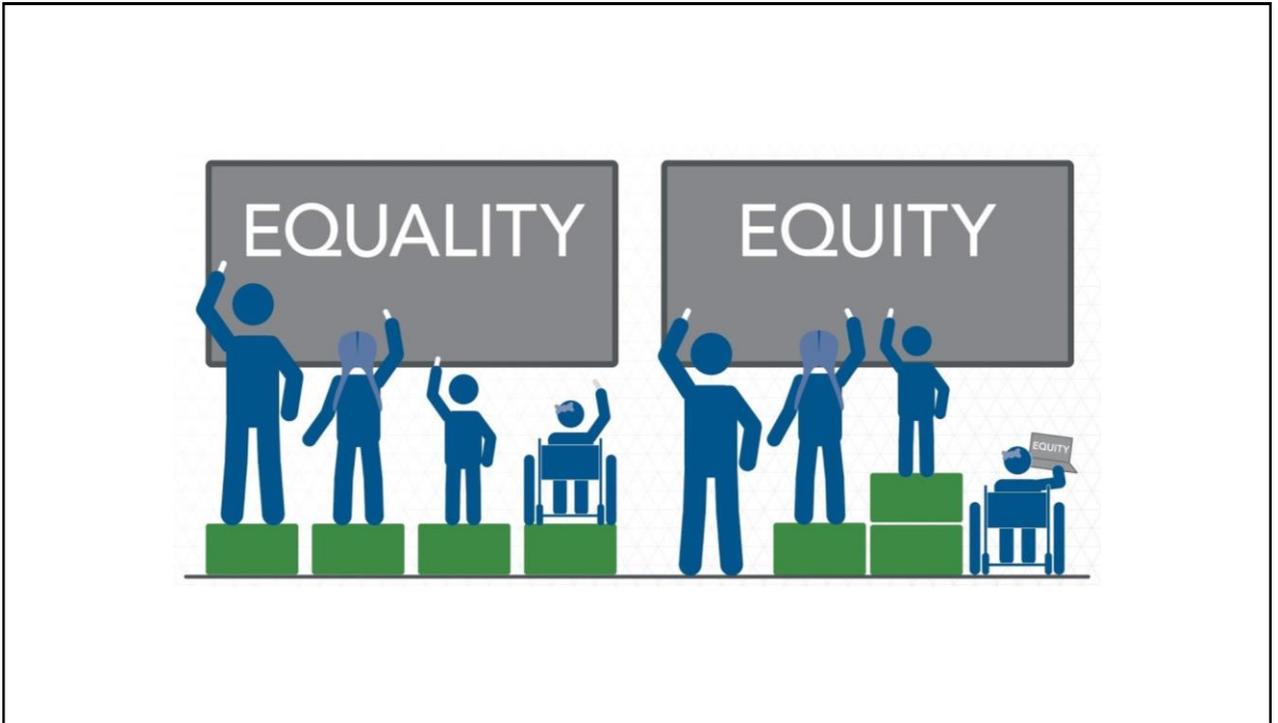
“The American education system was not made for me. Being an AfroLatinx, Queer, and Non-Binary person, I am used to being othered in the classroom setting. I was only ever able to see myself once a year, in February.”

-Brandon Gonzalez

From NYU Metro’s “Interrogating, Interrupting and Eradicating Disproportionality Through Youth Voice and Action” (Malone & Rizkilla, 2021)



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It is important to understand the system of advantage is perpetuated when we do not acknowledge its existence.

-Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

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Disclaimer

Disrupting and challenging our systems,
processes, and practices will be
uncomfortable

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Culturally Affirming Spaces – What they are and aren't

“Culture”...an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of a social group.

Culturally Affirming Spaces: promote **practices, behaviors, and policies** that acknowledge and proactively **affirm students' cultural identities as assets** and integral to their positive self-concept, academic and social well-being.

Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Alim & Paris, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Ferlazzo, 2017

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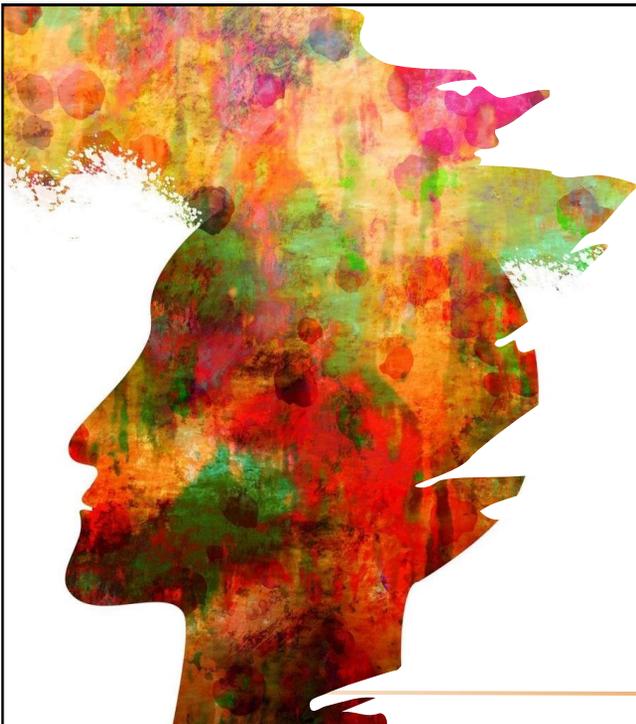
Culturally Responsive Educator

- Ability to meet learner's needs by gaining sensitivity to their differences including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, primary language, etc.
- Hockings (2010) found "***students value teaching that recognizes their individual academic and social identities and that addresses their particular learning needs and interests***"

Hockings, C.S. (2010). Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education: a synthesis of research. York: Higher Education Academy.



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Reflect on your schooling.

How did your educators show respect or validate your identities or experiences?



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Culturally Affirming Spaces

Treat others' culture and experiences with respect and high regard.

Validate students' lived experiences and identities.

Integrate cultural assets into classroom instruction.

Enact mutual respect with accountability between students and educators.

del Carmen Salazar, M., Norton, A. S., & Tuitt, F. A. (2009). Weaving promising practices for inclusive excellence into the higher education classroom. *To improve the academy: Resources for faculty, instructional, and organizational development*, 140, 208.



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Culturally Responsive Teachers



- ✓ Practice cultural humility.
- ✓ Accept there is no "rule book"
- ✓ Don't get defensive.
- ✓ Don't assume they know all the answers.
- ✓ Do more listening than talking.
- ✓ Ask open ended questions:
"What does this mean from your perspective?"



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★ Strategy 1: Learn about the diversity of your students

- [Social and Professional identity](#) Activities (30-60 mins)
- During course planning distribute:
 - Pre-course questionnaires at beginning of course to learn about challenges, expectations, learning styles, to support student success
 - Mid-course questionnaire: How are things are going?



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Pre-Course Questionnaire

Part One: Getting to know you

Name _____

Pronouns _____

Name you would like to be called _____

(feel free write how you say your name phonetically here: _____)

- What do you consider to be your 'hometown'?
- What languages do you speak/read/write?
- What are three adjectives you would use to describe yourself?
- What are hobbies or activities that help you de-stress?
- What do you hope to get out of this class?
- Do you have a reliable internet connection and computer for online learning?
- Have you used Canvas in previous coursework?
- What is your preferred learning style?

Part Two: Your take on classroom dynamics & course planning

- What makes a good class? List 3 things.
- What do you have to do as a student to ensure that those 3 things above happen?
- What are 3 things you expect from your professor?
- What are 3 things you expect from your classmates?
- Is there anything at all you would like me to know about you or your current lived situation this coming quarter that you feel might impact your academic success?
- Please list the potential dates for any religious holidays you celebrate that may impact your ability to be present for class/workshop this coming quarter.



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Identity Activity "This is my House"

"This is my House" Reflective Narrative
06/10/21



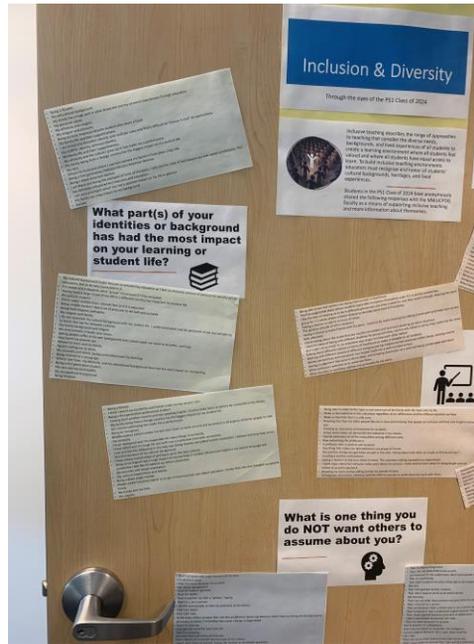
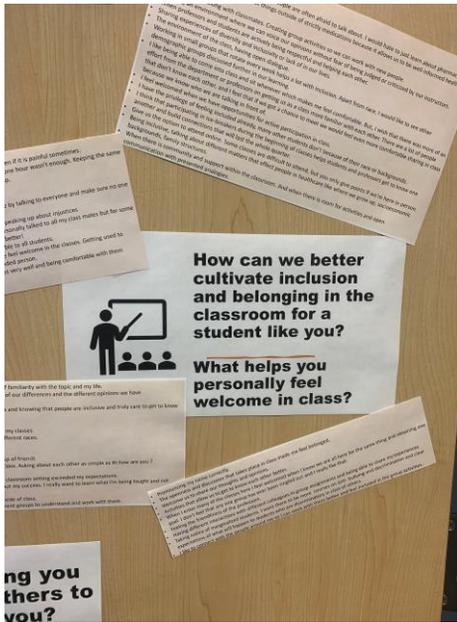
- (1) Personal philosophy: Always be kind and understanding.
- (2) Values: Having my family, fiance, and close friends as a good support system.
- (3) Something important to you: My future and being successful in life.

- (4) Most proud of: I'm proud of where I came from and being a first generation student to earn a bachelor's degree and entering a graduate school.
- (5) Protective mechanism: My mother, she's always been there for me and has been my #1 support system in my good and bad days.
- (6) How you have fun or blow off steam: Going out with my loved ones, painting, decorating, shopping, hiking, and swim (in the summer!).

MOVIES/
CHILL DAY



Student examples used with permission from PPRAD 1551 Cultural Care and Public Health Course, Midwestern University



Interpersonal Awareness

Connection to promote and amplify students' perspectives in order to build compassionate relationships and make content relatable



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★ Strategy 2: Foster Sharing & Community Building

- Create opportunities for cooperative learning to encourage interaction for interpersonal growth and engagement through group work
- Honor sharing and validating multiple perspectives

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Community Guidelines

Set at the beginning of your course and invite students to co-construct class norms to promote an inclusive environment

- 📁 Be fully present
- 🕒 Monitor your airtime
- 🗣️ Speak from personal experience
- ⚠️ Lead with curiosity, not judgement
- 🧠 What's learned can leave, what is said stays
- ✓ Intent vs. Impact



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★ Strategy 3: Include Reflective Practice

- Create intentional time and space to reflect on personal experiences and how the student is interacting with the content you are teaching.
 - *What, So What, Now What?*
 - *Minute paper*
 - *Muddiest Point*
 - *Inquiry-based teaching during lecture*



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★ Strategy 4: Integrate Student Perspective into Content Instruction

- Cross-cultural communication styles
- How does health/illness/treatment look in your family/community?
- Biomedical lens vs patient lens



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Cross-Cultural Communication Tools

- **The 4Cs of Culture:**
 - (1) What do you **call** your problem?
 - (2) What do you think **caused** your problem?
 - (3) How do you **cope** with your condition?
 - (4) What are your **concerns** about the condition/treatment?
- LEARN (**L**isten, **E**xplain, **A**cknowledge, **R**ecommend, and **N**egotiate)
- RESPECT (**R**apport, **E**mpathy, **S**upport, **P**artnership, **E**xplanations, **C**ultural competence, and **T**rust).

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What does health/illness/treatment look like in your family/community?

- What are attitudes towards the use of **emergency services** vs **preventative services**?
- Who are the “**gatekeepers**” of health within your family/ community?
- What value is placed on **homeopathic/alternative therapy** vs **prescription medications**?
- What value is place on the **role of a pharmacist vs a physician**?
- What are **barriers to health** in your community?



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Explanatory model of illness



Health provider's model

- Etiology 
- Time and mode of onset 
- Pathophysiology 
- Course (including symptom severity & trajectory: acute, chronic, impaired) 
- Evidence-based treatment 



Patient's model

- What caused my sickness?
- Why did I become sick now?
- How does this illness work inside my body?
- What will happen to me?
- How should it be treated?



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★ Strategy 5: Create an Equity Minded Syllabus

EQUITY PERSPECTIVE	DEFINITION	EQUITY-MINDED PRACTICE
Fairness	Every student has equal right to opportunity and resources that will advance their learning and achievement.	Demystifying
Care	Every student has the right to self-respect in educational settings, to feel cared for by college practitioners, to have their experiences (personal, cultural, and otherwise) affirmed, and to be acknowledged as producers of knowledge.	Welcoming Creating a Partnership Validating
Transformation	Racially minoritized students have the right to learn in educational spaces where their voices are heard and valued, where inequities they experience are being actively eliminated, and where their agency to change the conditions that contribute to the inequalities that affect them and their communities is cultivated.	Representing Deconstructing

Center for Urban Education. (2020). Equity minded Inquiry series: Syllabus Review . Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California.



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Does my syllabus....



- allow students to continually interact with the document because it is **well-organized & easy to navigate?**
- include **language and tone that is respectful, inviting**, and address the student as a competent & engaged learner?
- **foster positive intrinsic motivation**, one that promotes a learning orientation instead of a performance one (i.e., avoids focusing on consequences, punishments & grade points)?
- include evidence the instructor will **support & incorporate all learners' backgrounds, identities, & viewpoints** including when those differ from the instructor?
- include indicators that **inclusive pedagogical approaches** will be used?
- **encourage the learner to connect with the instructor** about course content?



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Screen your syllabus for...



- **Learner-centered language**
- **Biased** language and images
 - *How does your use of masculine-wording compare to feminine-wording?*
 - *Do your descriptions reflect gender bias or any other implicit biases?*
 - *What can you do to make your descriptions more inclusive?*
- **Gendered pronouns** (use 'you' or 'they' instead).
- A clear **diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) statement**



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DEI Syllabus Statement

* Example

My intent is for all students from all diverse backgrounds to be well served by this course. My goal is for this course to be a safe and brave space for all students where all learning needs will be honored. I view the diversity that students bring to this course as a resource, strength and benefit.

It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity not limited to gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and cultural backgrounds. Your suggestions are always encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students. If you may need any religious or disability accommodations that have not been previously coordinated, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

**Link to the University bias, discrimination, and harassment incident reporting system also provided.*



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★ Reflect and Plan

Strategy 1: Learn about the diversity of your students

Strategy 2: Foster sharing & community building

Strategy 3: Include reflective practice

Strategy 4: Integrate student perspective into content instruction

Strategy 5: Create an equity-minded syllabus

Rate each strategy:

- I already do this in my class
- I sort of do this, but I could make it more explicit/visible
- I'd like to try this
- I'm not sure how this would be appropriate for my course(s)

del Carmen Salazar, M., Norton, A. S., & Tuitt, F. A. (2009). Weaving promising practices for inclusive excellence into the higher education classroom. To improve the academy: Resources for faculty, instructional, and organizational development, 140, 208.



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★ Accountability



I commit to move Strategy # ____ into action in order to be more equity-minded and/or culturally affirming in my course/teaching.

My action step will be to adopt or adapt _____.



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