

Academic Planning Summit

January 16, 2015

Title of Session: Inclusive pedagogy

Faculty Facilitator(s) Patricia Morokoff & Lynne Derbyshire

Note taker name Chris Barrett

Check one:

_____ **Morning Breakout 1** _____ **Morning breakout 2**

_____ **X** **Afternoon breakout** _____ **Afternoon breakout 2**

Ideas proposed/Recommendations

Patricia Morokoff, associate dean of Arts & Sciences, and Lynne Derbyshire, a communication professor and director of the Honors Program, facilitated this session. About five people attended.

This session focused on how to build an inclusive classroom that fosters community, embraces diversity, and is community-based rather than hierarchical. Facilitators noted that the 2010-2015 Academic Plan sets as Goal V “ensure a campus climate that celebrates difference and creates a rich learning community built upon respect, inclusion, and understanding of issues related to class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and culture.” URI classrooms need to mirror that goal.

Facilitators and the audience made the following observations:

- Building an inclusive classroom is a shared responsibility of the instructor and the students.
- Students who have experienced discrimination in their lives are likely to be acutely aware of any inequities in the classroom.
- Classroom policies can create barriers for student success. For example:
 - o Strict attendance that forbids students from entering more than 2 minutes late may be challenging for a student who uses unreliable public transportation or a nursing mother who has no control over her infant’s feeding schedule.
 - o Requiring students to print assignments may put a student without money to buy a printer or pay for printing at a disadvantage.
 - o Banning laptops may discriminate against students unable to take notes by hand.
- The boilerplate statement about accommodations for students with disabilities is a necessary step, but some students may require a further invitation to discuss concerns with the instructor.
- It can be challenging, but not impossible, to build a classroom community in large classes.
- The examples an instructor uses in class can have a profound effect on the perception of inclusiveness. Does the instructor always use a heterosexual couple in examples? Always use books by white authors? Always talk about “traditional” nuclear families?
- Some faculty are uncomfortable discussing sensitive topics and simply avoid them.
- Online courses can be challenging for students with disabilities or who lack means. For example, online lectures without captions for deaf students are useless. For a student without internet access at home, tightly scheduled online assignments may be difficult. *Facilitators and the audience made the following recommendations:*

- Instructors should be aware of the examples they use and actively seek to use a mix of people from different races, genders, family units, sexual orientation, etc., including classes where it is not explicitly related to course content.
- URI should allow students to set a preferred pronoun in e-Campus that should appear on rosters, much the same way a preferred name appears. A field called “Name Prefix” is already available in e-Campus but not used.
- URI should provide training and/or materials to faculty on how to incorporate sensitive topics (race, sexual orientation, etc.) into the classroom. These trainings and materials could be facilitated through the college/division diversity committees and/or the Academic Affairs Diversity Committee. A “cheat sheet” about how to incorporate diversity into the classroom could be posted at web.uri.edu/faculty
- To connect with large classes, an audience member recommended the 1-minute essay. At the end of each class, students reflect on the class. The instructor reads, anonymously, some of the essays during the following class.
- URI needs to reflect on how to increase accessibility of online offerings so as not to discriminate against students with disabilities or who lack financial resources for reliable internet connections.
- Providing extra exam time as an accommodation can be difficult if faculty and/or classrooms are scheduled back to back . A staffed center where students could take tests could help.
- We should be designing courses to accommodate all students, not just students with specific needs. In much the same way a ramp will help many others than just those using wheelchairs, steps like captioned online lectures could help more students than just those hard of hearing.

Notable Issues, Questions, Challenges:

Facilitators and the audience noted the following challenges:

- Resources remain a barrier to implementing universally designed courses. For example, captioning videos or lectures is expensive and time consuming.
- Faculty need advance notice of students who need accommodations in order to be able to provide them. Sometimes students do not provide enough notice.
- Some faculty believe that the “real world” has set deadlines and schedules and students who need accommodations in college will not be able to “make it” in the real world. Audience members felt this was unfair as students will gravitate toward jobs that fit their abilities and very few professions have strict timeframes. However, overcoming this attitude will be a challenge.

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- Whom instructors call on or how they assign groups can foster inclusiveness. For example, instructors may call on men more often than woman, or only the front row. Allowing students to self-select into groups may be problematic as students with similar traits gravitate toward each other.
- Even within groups, it’s important to facilitate community. Sometimes students considered “slackers” by their peers or instructor are actually being marginalized by a louder student or overlooked because of race, gender or sexual orientation.
- There is a fine line between compassion and indulging students.
- Depending on cultural background, students may be hesitant to ask for favors or accommodations. Conversely, some students, typically majority and wealthy, may show little hesitancy in advocating for themselves.
- It can be challenging, but not impossible, to build a classroom community in large classes.

- Defining diversity can be challenging,.

Facilitators and the audience made the following recommendations:

- Instructors should be intentional about mixing up whom they call on and forming groups randomly that cut across race, gender, etc. Pulling a student name at random and calling on that student can ensure wide participation. Using lottery balls or playing cards or a similar method to assign groups can mix up groups.
- One professor suggested that instructors ask students in groups to evaluate themselves and their group mates, anonymously. This can help students understand the challenges their peers face and offer the instructor insight into student behavior. For example, a student may note a fellow student has a night job and that's why he is always falling asleep in class and it's not laziness.
- Approach struggling students to discuss their unique situations.
- Get to know your students.
- Since in some cultures it is considered rude to say no to an instructor, be cautious in asking yes/no questions..

- To define diversity for programs aimed at diverse populations, look at more than race or gender. Characteristics such as Pell Grant recipient or eligibility may assist.
- Continue to hold a dinner for Honors Program eligible Talent Development students where they hear from Honors staff and are encouraged to join the program.
- Consider the message being sent by a row of photos that does not show diversity, such as prior university presidents, or notable alums.
- Students from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups at recruitment events can strongly encourage a wider variety of students to apply and matriculate.

Notable Issues, Questions, Challenges:

Facilitators and the audience noted the following challenges:

- A goal of inclusiveness is to encourage individuals of diverse backgrounds to relate and communicate with each other. This may be challenging, however, because many people (faculty and students) are most comfortable interacting with those like themselves.
- Not all faculty consider diversity a priority or perceive a lack of diversity on campus.