An Essential and Imperative Part of Teaching: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

SPEAKERS

Stephanie Delaney, Tierney King, Timothy Bussey, Julian Williams

Tierney King 00:00

This is the Faculty Focus Live podcast sponsored by the Teaching Professor. I'm your host, Tierney King, and I'm here to bring you inspiration, energy and creative strategies that you can utilize in your everyday teaching. Diversity and inclusion in higher education...it's important, it's imperative, and it's an essential part of teaching. Today, we're going to talk about how you can infuse inclusive teaching strategies into your online classes and your in-person classes, from your syllabus, your content, to the overall course and environment of it. To start, in Julian Williams's Magna Online Seminar, Effective Diversity and Inclusion Strategies, he talks about the big picture and how it all starts with your institution.

Julian Williams 00:53

So as we think about this framework of inclusion and diversity, I think you have to have a diverse campus before you can have an inclusive one. But as we're going to talk about, the maintenance of an inclusive campus is never ending. I'm sure a lot of you and your campuses would attest to that. It requires a level of intentionality that takes time and energy to develop. So while it may be a little easier to invite this wide swath of folks into our campus, it's going to be a lot more difficult to make sure that each one of those persons feels like they're a part and a functioning part of the campus as well. So that's a little bit about the framework that we're going to use in terms of moving forward here. So as we think about this, and I always like to use the term imperative, because in my opinion, it is an imperative. It is extremely imperative that we think about what our campuses look like in the wake of where we are nationally. And, you know, each of our campuses sits in its own distinct geographic area. But we are also parts of a world and a community that is changing in a lot of ways. But if we think about the national context, particularly around inclusion and diversity and the conversations that are happening on our campuses, there are particular flash points all over. To take an optimistic approach to this, it's my opinion that colleges and universities are positioned and primed to lead in these areas. It's particularly where, I think, as a culture and as a society, we're losing the ability to interact with each other, listen to each other, to learn from each other, and that's regardless of your political spectrum, or our background. But I think that colleges and universities are particularly well situated to have those exact conversations and be leaders there, but it's going to require work.

Tierney King 02:48
So as we look at inclusion and diversity and think of it as a whole, in terms of an inclusive campus, we also have to look at it in terms of each individual course. How do you infuse equity, inclusion and diversity into the online classroom, if you're teaching both in-person and online? In Stephanie Delaney's 20-Minute Mentor, How Do I Infuse Equity Into Any Online Class? she explains what it means to teach and create equity in your classes, and offers specific practices you can incorporate into your online course.

Stephanie Delaney 03:21
when you are thinking about creating equity in your class you're creating, it's not just about the content of the class, it's about the atmosphere that's in the class, it's about the way that the environment that's created in the class - all of that comes to play in an equitable classroom. And so that's what we'll be talking about. And regardless of whether it's an English class, a humanities class, a math class, an accounting class, a biology class, all of them have this classroom culture, all of them have it. And all of them need to address equity to be successful in reaching all students. So to create equity in any space, whether it's an online space or a face-to-face classroom, or in a meeting room, it's about helping people to feel welcome and to feel heard. And the way you start your class is the first thing that you need to do to create that process of inclusion, think about what you do with the common introduce yourself question that you may have in your online class. Is there an opening there for people to share a little bit about what makes them special in a safe way? I like to use an exercise that I call the five nouns. I ask people to give me five nouns that describe who they are, for example, student, mother, international student, kayaker. Sadly, I also have to remind people of what a noun is, usually, but just make sure you put that piece into it. But I have them answer these questions at the beginning. And I answer them too, and I put a sentence or two about myself describing my nouns. I like how easy this exercise is. And it makes it simple for me to connect with students as I'm reading them, and for students to connect with each other.

Tierney King 05:09
In addition to establishing your classroom culture, you will also have to monitor your course so that it stays true to being a safe space for your students. This may include a statement in your syllabus, or something that highlights and addresses respectful behavior.

Stephanie Delaney 05:24
Faculty in online classes will frequently include that netiquette statement explaining how to be polite in the online space. However, as an equitable instructor, it isn't enough to just include the statement in your syllabus. You need to call it out. Perhaps you post a special assignment to draw the students' attention to that statement, and be very clear about how you expect students to behave. Maybe you want to provide some specific guidelines on how to respectfully disagree. Give your students some language on how to do this. Many simply don't know how. They don't have that skill set. And when students respectfully disagree in the class, I like to highlight it and congratulate those students and provide it as a model for other students to follow. When people behave badly, and that sometimes happens, you need to call that out, too. You should have a plan for dealing with bad behavior before it happens, and let students know upfront how it will be addressed. Don't ignore bad behavior, it won't just go away. As an equitable instructor, you'll want to model how to deal with bad behavior. If you're not

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sure, there are lots of resources out there on dealing with conflict. I like the book Crucial Conversations for having some specific roadmaps that you can use to deal with conflict. One way that you can create an equitable space is to track participation data. After you start a class and you've created this atmosphere that you feel is welcoming to all students, you can observe whether students are acting like they feel welcome. Your Learning Management System tracks all sorts of data about your students. How often are they logging in? Where are they posting? What are they posting? You can look at that data to see whether it seems like students are feeling included in the class. Are all students participating fully? Or are you seeing different trends in participating? Can you see who's participating and who's not? Are there patterns with regards to race, gender, language, and learning abilities? You can track your own participation as well, and use that data as a self reflecting tool. Are you always responding to the same students? Make sure that you're responding to students equally. That doesn't mean you have to reply to every single student, but if you tend to, let's say post responses to four or five students per discussion, make sure that it's a different four or five students each time.

Tierney King 08:01
As we talk about these small scale and large scale incorporations you can make in your class, or even as an institution, to be more inclusive and increase diversity-related topics, there are numerous strategies you can start implementing today. In Timothy Bussey's Magna Online Seminar, Bringing Diversity and Inclusion Into Your Quantitative Course, they provide numerous recommendations on both small scale and large scale incorporations.

Timothy Bussey 08:27
So when we're talking about small scale incorporation, you know, this is really one potential method for increasing diversity inclusion related topics into your courses. And this can really happen in a number of different spaces. But some of the spaces that smaller scale incorporation can happen are in spaces like your syllabus, your learning management system, so for instance, like Moodle, Carmen, Blackboard, desire to learn, those are some of the major learning management systems. We're probably all very uniquely familiar with those after basically a year of virtual learning. But there are also a variety of other ways that you can add these into the mix too. So throughout these conversations about small scale and large scale incorporation, also give you a couple of examples of what these might look like. So an example of smaller scale incorporation would be considering, you know, potentially adding a list of BIPOC, so black, indigenous and people of color, and/or LGBTQ+ scholars' works for one of your courses, and then offering this as a potential supplemental resource for students interested in learning more. And, you know, I think for for some folks like this seems like well, will students actually download that? The answer is yes, like, particularly if you're in a discipline where BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ scholars aren't given as much representation. Our smaller scale incorporation is ultimately a really great starting for faculty members who, for instance, aren't as familiar with topics related to diversity and inclusion, or don't necessarily have the time to commit to a larger overhaul of course materials. So essentially, you know, this is really a great option if you're one faculty member who is sort of at this starting point with thinking about diversity and inclusion topics as they relate to your course material and finding ways to integrate that. Or if you're maybe strapped for time, as we are during certainly a very challenging year, and you don't have time to necessarily do a much larger overhaul of your course materials. But again, you know, the impact that smaller scale incorporation can make definitely doesn't want to be understated. So in terms of sort of the opposite of small scale, large scale incorporation is really, really

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beneficial for faculty members who have more time and more interest, potentially, in redesigning courses, or altering sort of more substantial elements of their courses. And definitely, if you find yourself in that situation, large scale incorporation would probably be the better option. It doesn't mean you can't still do some smaller scale things, and it doesn't mean that you shouldn't still do those, but large scale incorporation would be a really good option for you as well. And this type of diversity and inclusion, sort of incorporation work might happen in a number of smaller spaces. So it might also happen in your syllabus, your learning management system or somewhere else. But it can also happen in a variety of other areas of your course. So in particular, we're talking about curricular choices. So we're thinking about the content that we're presenting, we're thinking about the readings, we're assigning the supplementary materials that we're providing to our students. It can also come up in assessment methods, so thinking about using project-based learning, for instance. And there's a variety of other ways that larger scale incorporation can happen in a quant course. So again, when we're thinking about syllabus design, incorporation via syllabus design can also really help in addition to making sure that you're setting that tone for an inclusive and equitable class environment. It can also be really, really helpful with providing practical resources to your students. So many of us probably already include information about various on-campus resources, whether they're tutoring centers, like quant centers, and various other departmental resources. But other resources can also be really helpful to supporting, particularly our students of color and our lower income students and others in in our classes, and in particular in our current courses. Thinking about groups that are underrepresented in STEM, this can be particularly useful for those groups. So for example, you may wish to include information about cultural centers that you have on campus. So maybe if you have a African American or Black Cultural Center, if you have an Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, adding information about that office and how to get in touch with that office would be potentially useful. Adding information about BIPOC, so again, black, indigenous, people of color, mental health resources. Particularly after the summer, a lot of colleges spent time creating catalogs of BIPOC mental health resources in particular. You might also think about if your campus has information about financial assistance programs, such as scholarship opportunities, and an internal grants and/or funds that help lower income students or students in need. That would be really useful information to have, particularly given the costs that often is associated with current courses and or STEM courses with various textbooks and supplies and things like that.

Tierney King 13:53

As you consider how you might implement and integrate inclusive practices and diverse content. Timothy Bussey also recommends asking yourself this:

14:02

So consider your favorite course to teach. How might you increase diversity and inclusion focused changes via syllabus design, curricular changes, and or project-based learning? And of course, how might this improve how your students engage with the course? Or put another way, think about your favorite course to teach. Doesn't have to be at your current institution, but think about your favorite course you've ever taught. And how would you increase diversity and inclusion focused elements in that course, via your syllabus, your curricular choices, so again, your readings, the things you're teaching etc. and/or project-based learning assignment assignments? And then how do you think that would improve the way students engage with your course?

Tierney King 14:47

Whether you're driving to work, or you just need a 15-minute think session, we hope the Faculty Focus Live podcast will inspire your teaching, and offer ideas that you can integrate into your own course. For more information on the sources included in this episode, please check out the links provided in the episode description.