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CHAPTER 2

Adopting, Implementing, and Evaluating Inclusive Teaching Practices

Chris Drue, *Rutgers University*
Christina Bifulco, *Rutgers University*

INTRODUCTION

Every student encounters obstacles or barriers that hinder their success or make them doubt their ability to reach their academic goals. These obstacles could be caused by lack of prior knowledge needed as a foundation for new learning, unreliable internet access or lack of access to other technology, illness of one's self or a family member, a comment from an instructor or other student that led one to doubt their ability, or a broken elevator that prevents one from reaching their classroom. These barriers and others like them are unevenly distributed and experienced by students at our institutions. For some students, these barriers are rare and surmountable, but for other students, the barriers

compound to become much more formidable obstacles. For many, these barriers lead to failed classes, extra years trying to complete a degree, and even leaving the university without a degree.

We, the authors, are both educational developers in a university-wide teaching support office at a large public research institution and instructors in the departments of our disciplines. Our role as instructors has given us a window into the experience and effect of barriers to learning. From our classrooms, we work closely with our students, learning about who they are, where they come from, and about their aspirations and goals. Every semester, we see students who struggle, and we share in that struggle as we coach these students through our courses. Invariably, we suffer the heartache of assigning a failing grade to a student who we thought could do it, in whom we believed. What happens to those who fail our classes? Sometimes we see these students again and have another 15-week window into their lives. Most of the time, though, after we assign final grades, these students disappear from our view and fade into the obscurity provided by a large research institution. We rarely hear reports back from those students who leave our institution without a degree.

However, in our roles as educational developers, we can see these barriers to learning from a different perspective. We have reviewed the evidence on time-to-degree and the percentage of entering students who end up completing a degree. According to our institutional research office, the six-year baccalaureate graduation rate at our flagship campus for the 2014 entering cohort was 84.4 percent. While this percentage has increased in recent years, we also want to consider the almost 16 percent of students who are not completing. How do we support and break down barriers that are hindering student success of those individuals?

As educational developers, we have long provided resources on how to improve teaching using active learning and high-impact practices, but we've recently been more explicit about providing workshops and opportunities for faculty that target lowering or eliminating barriers to learning to support student success.

While you could find plenty of literature on barriers to learning, if you have classroom teaching experience you probably have already developed a sense of who is likely to struggle. When we begin one of our workshops with the question of "what barriers do students encounter that will impact their learning," our faculty participants are able to rattle off a long list of barriers related to student identities. The range of responses demonstrates that instructors understand the obstacles that students face. The challenge is to learn about and adopt inclusive teaching strategies that can help students overcome those obstacles, learn new content, persist in their studies, and excel.

For these reasons, we developed a program called the Classroom Inclusivity Series to help instructors at our institution develop inclusive teaching strategies. For the purposes of our program, we define inclusive pedagogy as working toward breaking down the barriers for each individual student to enable them to engage in the course and learn (based on Addy et al. 2021). As instructors, we are in a unique place to do something about the barriers that our students face. We can design courses and manage classroom experiences in ways that reduce barriers and give a greater chance of success for all. The program is organized as a collaboration between our central teaching support office and the university diversity office, with support from several other university offices which provide workshops.

Each workshop is aligned with one of three program competencies:

- **Competency 1: Identities, Biases, and Microaggressions**
  Understand and begin to address your and your students' identities, biases, prejudices, and fears and the impact they have on learning and the classroom environment.
- **Competency 2: Course Design, Policies, and Educational Activities**
  Infuse inclusive teaching practices into your educational practices by course re-design or adopting new teaching activities.
- **Competency 3: Accessibility**
  Ensure course content, web pages, activities, and assessments are accessible to all students.

Faculty and staff participants have the option of earning a credential by attending workshops and submitting reflections detailing what they learned, what and how they anticipate implementing within their course(s), and any difficulties they anticipate encountering. As of the end of 2023, we have offered about 150 workshops and issued 130 credentials to participants.

In this chapter, we explore the strategies adopted by our participants in their written reflections after engaging in our program. We collected these strategies as responses to an open-ended prompt, and we analyzed them as part of our program evaluation, which was approved by our institutional review board. We have organized this discussion based on program competency and ordered strategies within each competency by increasing difficulty. We begin each section with a "starter" inclusive teaching strategy that can be accomplished more quickly, followed by a more intensive "middle choice" level activity that might take more time and effort, followed by the most ambitious changes

that, while challenging, are important to tackle to achieve the biggest impact. We hope that by reviewing these examples of inclusive teaching strategies, you can learn new ideas about how to take the first steps to reduce barriers to academic success in your courses and on your campus.

COMPETENCY 1: IDENTITIES, BIASES, AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

Creating an inclusive classroom environment where the barriers to success are broken down for each individual student can seem a daunting task for those that understand the breadth of differences between students. Where to start? An initial beginning step toward inclusive pedagogy is reflecting on one's own social and professional identity including biases, prejudices, and fears (Applebaum 2019; Bell et al. 1997; Berk 2017). This process has been shown to support instructors' awareness of their students' identities, which is important to develop empathy and increase understanding of how to support students (O'Leary et al. 2020). These findings prompted the development of the first program competency: Understand and begin to address your and your students' identities, biases, prejudices, and fears and the impact they have on learning and the classroom environment.

Biases can impact student and instructor behavior in a multitude of ways, but, in classrooms, these biases, oftentimes implicit, are manifested in microaggressions. This competency encompasses an instructors' ability to respond to disruptive incidents or microaggressions and effectively manage tense classroom moments while learning about students' perspectives and experiences. Microaggressions are many times not intended to cause harm but have been correlated to physical and mental health,

satisfaction, stress, and school and work performance, and found to be at least as damaging as overt discrimination (Jones et al. 2016).

Three themes emerged from faculty reflections on this competency: acquiring knowledge of identities, biases, and microaggressions, getting to know your students, and being prepared for hot moments in the classroom. Within each of these themes, there are strategies that are simple and quick to implement ("starter" strategies) and others that will take more time and/or effort to incorporate into your classroom ("mid-level" strategies). The following three sections provide strategies, each beginning with starter activities and continuing to more ambitious approaches.

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS TO RESPOND TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

At least in our experiences, students rarely express overt bias and discrimination during a public conversation in our classrooms. It is far more commonplace that a student would say something or do something to someone else that is subtly or ignorantly hurtful. These unintentional but commonplace slights are known as "microaggressions" because, while any individual action may not seem meaningfully harmful to an outside observer, the regularity and pervasiveness of the experience leads some students to feel that they do not belong in their field and discipline (Miles, Brockman, and Naphan-Kinger 2020). As one faculty member commented:

> Throughout my career, I have been on the receiving end of microaggressions and bias from students and colleagues. Examples abound. It was both uncomfortable and also a relief to see those experiences represented here. Similarly, I was torn between feeling surprised and unsurprised that so many of the faculty in the workshop are oblivious to the perspectives presented.

Learning about microaggressions is an important first step that will allow you to develop strategies to address these incidents. While many institutions offer training on microaggressions, you can learn about microaggressions on your own by reviewing the Student Microaggression inventory, which was developed from surveys of students at the University of Illinois and University of Denver (Berk 2017). Once you understand what type of statements constitute microaggressions, you can develop strategies to respond to them in a class. Many instructors who completed our program committed to incorporating a syllabus statement spelling out their position on diversity and inclusivity and providing ground rules for how to handle incidents of microaggressions.

Developing a syllabus statement is a starter strategy that can be easily implemented and referred to throughout a course. One faculty member wrote:

> ...syllabus statements are a small and simple way to move towards a more inclusive environment in my courses. Though these statements are not enough, they are a signal to my students that I am working towards increasing inclusivity and letting students know my classroom is a safe place. I will 'back up' these syllabus statements in the classroom through my ground rules, the way I conduct my course, and calling out inappropriate behavior as necessary.

Explicitly stated ground rules and a policy for calling out inappropriate behavior not only warn students that the instructor is serious about making the course a civil space for discussion, but they help the instructor hold themselves accountable for

intervening according to their own policies. Womack (2017) provides an excellent discussion about using the appropriate tone to convey these messages in your syllabus statement such as using warm language in the syllabus where an instructor details what a student can do instead of can't do. Fuentes and colleagues (2021) provide suggestions such as including a diversity statement or one regarding individuals' multiple and intersecting identities within the syllabus. The authors give reflection questions to guide your process developing your own syllabus policies and provide a great additional resource (Fuentes et al. 2021). Most institutions will also have some language that can be incorporated, but putting it into your own words is necessary to truly signal to students, as the previous instructor mentioned, that this is important to you.

START-OF-COURSE SURVEYS

A strategy that takes a little more time to implement but has a rich payoff is to survey students about their background, life experiences, and previous knowledge at the start of a course (Addy et al. 2021). While you might already use a pre-course survey to learn about your students' prior knowledge, faculty who participated in our program committed to developing questions to help them understand more about their students' background and to learn how to better support them. After a workshop considering circumstances impacting learning of transfer students, adult students, and other non-traditional students, one faculty member decided:

> I will begin my course with a survey to give students an opportunity to share things (privately) with me that they think may affect their performance or inform our interactions. I will have specific prompts around language and familiarity with Rutgers, as well as questions regarding worries about the class, as well as the level of confidence they can succeed in this class.

This is a wonderful way to engage students and learn more about them. While time consuming, providing individual feedback to students on their responses can create connections with students and allow you to point out resources that are there to support them. We have begun to include questions asking for students' pronouns (after also introducing ours in welcome videos posted to the learning management system), comfort level with different types of technology and the content, and their future plans/major. Some questions pertaining to native language and cultural norms may be particularly helpful, as one faculty member mentions:

> I will aim to understand the cultural background of my students and utilize culturally relevant examples within the context of the subject matter I am teaching. A challenge I anticipate is understanding the cultural background of students since I have different sets of students throughout the semester. However, asking students to share their cultural background and showing my appreciation of their efforts may be a good place to start.

Even with a pre-course survey to efficiently gather information about students, it may seem daunting to consider how cultural differences contribute to different educational practices. You may need to take the additional step of researching further. For instance, one of the authors noticed that some students put the US dollar symbol after the number when denoting currency. When units were required for a mathematics problem, she would warn them once, but then deduct points if the dollar sign was not

at the front of the numbers in future problems. In many countries, the currency symbol does go at the end of the numbers. It is a cultural norm that students have learned and have known for twenty years, and one reminder may not be enough.

DEVELOPING CLASSROOM NORMS FOR MANAGING HEATED MOMENTS

We have heard some instructors mention that in their content area, tense moments, heated arguments, or other social conflict in the classroom rarely occur. However, even in these courses it is important to be prepared. One of us teaches mathematics courses in which most topics do not trigger classroom conflict. However, in one instance, before coming into the classroom, students discussed a new school policy that some felt was biased against certain groups. An argument between a small group of the students ensued and continued as they took their seats in the classroom. Having only taught a few years at this point, this author was unprepared for the rapid deterioration of civility, as students yelled at each other before the class even began. While one might think that the beauty of the pending mathematics concepts would instantly calm the students, it was clear that additional intervention and discussion needed to take place before teaching the content of the course could even begin. Our students do not come in as *tabula rasa*, devoid of any other knowledge or prior experiences, and so all instructors should be prepared for a heated classroom situation.

Preparation is the key to success, and there are a number of ways that you, as an instructor, can devise strategies to be ready to engage your students. Several participants in our program mentioned how they found the use of classroom norms to be a

valuable way to set the stage to be prepared for responding to classroom incidents. For instance, one faculty mentioned they have developed classroom norms on their own in the past but would be doing so collaboratively with students moving forward:

> I plan to change my approach to setting these guidelines by creating these rules of engagement together with my students. We may create guidelines to address appropriate ways of asking questions or conversing with one another in class, norms for discussing controversial subjects in respectful ways, and/or processes for calling out bias or microaggressions. By implementing these changes, I can reinforce to students that they are colleagues and that this is a graduate program where they are learning to be better public service leaders. In establishing clear expectations of one another, this process can make space to get to know each other on an interpersonal level and build empathy.

Research on student pedagogical partnerships has explained the benefits of co-designing syllabi with students (Cook-Sather, Bahti, and Ntem 2019). Some faculty also saw the benefit of including students in the development of classroom norms, such as this instructor who referred to "classroom community guidelines":

> These guidelines help provide structure to support constructive interactions and responses to negative interactions in course settings. I currently create my own course guidelines before the semester starts and articulate them in the syllabus. However, from this workshop, I plan to change my approach to setting these guidelines by creating these rules of engagement together with my students.

Classroom norms are especially valuable to structure an instructor's response to a heated moment, a misunderstanding, or an incident where bias or a microaggression contributed to harm. As mentioned previously, microaggressions have been seen to be at least as harmful as overt discrimination. Research has also shown that the impact is felt not only by those at whom the bias or microaggression has been directed, but the rest of the class as well (Jones et al. 2016). For this reason alone, it is important to have a strategy to de-escalate a conflict, respond to a perceived sleight, and ensure students feel a sense of belonging. One instructor explained the challenge this way:

> While I have been good at identifying and correcting it in my own behavior, I've always struggled calling it out in others, especially students, fearing it would be perceived as below threshold and not warranting remediation. Moving forward, I will look at it less as 'calling someone out' and more as an opportunity to discuss or briefly mention why a certain level of language is potentially harmful.

While intentions matter, when harm has been done, it should be addressed. Having some "...wording that bystanders can use to call out the microaggression but also call in the person who said it," as one faculty member mentions, is particularly helpful. Consider appropriate strategies for the different ways that microaggressions may be directed, whether student to student, instructor to student, student to instructor, or instructor to students. Another instructor provided an example of what this could entail:

> Of the bystander interventions offered in this workshop, I resonated with being direct and making a clear statement that I do not tolerate microaggressions in my classroom. This is something that I will be sure to put on my syllabus and Canvas sites going forward—to set the tone of my classroom. In this classroom, we will be respectful of each other and each other's differences. I also appreciated the strategies around sharing the impact of the microaggression on yourself, saying 'I feel uncomfortable' or 'I'd like to share the impact of that statement on me,' and asking if others also feel uncomfortable (delegating). This seems like a good way to address the microaggression without asking the target of the microaggression to take on all of the burden alone. I can imagine doing this in a particularly heated classroom situation. I also want to be sure to remember to check in after class with the student who was targeted, to see what kind of supports I can provide...

We appreciate the firm tone of this instructor's suggested language, but also would encourage instructors to be gentle when calling out microaggressions. Students are still learning, and instructors can help them learn to be more cautious and considerate in their language, but this works best when they are compassionate. Even instructors make mistakes—sometimes unwittingly saying something that could be interpreted as a microaggression. Asking the individual who voiced the microaggression, "what did you mean by that?" can start the conversation about how what a person meant is not always the same as how it was perceived by another. A helpful book, while not written for an educational context, is *What if I Say the Wrong Thing?* (Myers 2013) which provides suggestions for self-correction. While learning some of these statements may seem simple, we acknowledge that becoming comfortable and understanding when and how (e.g., tone of

voice, body language) can take mental effort, time, and practice to perfect.

COMPETENCY 2: COURSE DESIGN, POLICIES, AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Once you have reflected on your identity and the identities of your students, you can begin to think through how course design, course policies, and educational activities can act as barriers for some students. Our second competency, "Infuse inclusive teaching practices into your educational practices by course re-design or adopting new teaching activities," encourages you to focus on instructional practices.

In developing our program, we noticed that many of the topics that we fit into this competency were topics covered through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Cast 2018). UDL recognizes that every learner is unique, with different strengths, needs, and preferences, and that traditional instructional approaches may not work for everyone. It involves the use of flexible, customizable approaches to teaching and learning that allow learners to choose how they engage with content and to express their learning in different ways. UDL is based on the principles of accessibility, flexibility, and engagement. By applying these principles, educators can create an environment that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities, those who are learning English as a second language, and those who may have other challenges or learning styles (Cast 2018). While some of our workshops are not framed as UDL workshops, many of the practices discussed in the workshops included in our program incorporate principles of UDL.

However, we didn't believe that inclusive teaching practices should be limited to UDL. We also considered how instructors could make changes to course content, from the readings and assignments that are chosen to the way people from different backgrounds, cultures, and with different life experiences are represented as examples in images, cases, stories, narratives, or other aspects of a course (Marx, Torres, and Panther 2019). It should also include how instructors explain their decisions to include some materials and not others, and how they contextualize these conversations when introducing course content to students. Here we share some of the practices that our participants most frequently embraced.

EXPLAINING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

As a large regional public university in a diverse urban US state, our institution draws students from a variety of backgrounds, with vastly different levels of preparation and understanding about university norms. This is particularly pronounced when we consider our substantial international student population, representing regions of the world where the educational norms place much more distance between students and instructors. One of our partners for this project was the International Student Support office, with whom we developed several workshops for the series. For one workshop, they reached out to their students and collected a series of video vignettes about instances when the students were surprised by the differences between their educational experiences abroad and in the US. In a particularly memorable video, a student from Northern Europe explained how shocked she had been to find that, in the US, professors want students to ask questions, to engage in office hours, and

to develop a friendly rapport. She found it almost unnatural to engage with authority figures in this way. Many of us who are instructors believe that students know that we expect this sort of engagement, that asking questions is important to success, and that there is no stigma associated with attending office hours. But this knowledge has been referred to as "the hidden curriculum" since it is often left unsaid (Cotton, Winter, and Bailey 2013), raising a barrier to learning for those who have not been taught these lessons. While many think this is a concern mainly for undergraduate students, graduate students encounter similar challenges (Bandini et al. 2017).

Since knowledge is based on prior experiences, students will only understand the standard processes in higher education if someone has taken the time to explain them (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 2000). First-year university students' frame of reference is based on their high school education where rules and expectations can be very different. One semester, a student came up after a mathematics class to ask if a course he was taking in another department would fulfill a school requirement. It took one of the authors a few moments to realize what the student was asking before responding that this would be something to ask in the Dean's office. The student replied that it was not a problem, he would ask the other instructor in another section of the course. The author explained that the other instructor would not know either and helped the student look up the Dean of Students at his school. Coming from high school where every teacher knew the procedures and requirements of that school, it may not be obvious that at a large university some knowledge is siloed and needs to be obtained from a particular location.

Many participants in our program reported that they would do more to explain elements of the hidden curriculum such as

the purpose of office hours, how to ask questions during class, or how to format and submit a college paper. We consider this a starter strategy since it can be accomplished with limited resources through in-class or written announcements. Here is how one instructor described it:

> I appreciated the reminder to think about what assumed information I'm asking of students when I ask them a question and also how they have been socially conditioned to interact with instructors. I mentioned during the workshop that I tell my TAs how to best interact with me during the first meeting. I think this is something I will do with students when I'm teaching a course where they have direct interactions with me. I honestly think I do a pretty OK job with this as-is. I've tried to make things more approachable by renaming office hours to student hours and providing students with a list of questions they can ask if they choose to attend. I inform them of opportunities that they should be aware of that are specific to American education.

We hope this instructor will stick to these efforts to demystify the educational experience. We consider this a starter-inclusive teaching practice that can be impactful for student success. Discussions clarifying engagement activities, or how to seek additional assistance or ask questions out of class can be inserted into the weekly announcement before lecture begins, added to the syllabus, or reviewed at any time when a few spare minutes emerge.

BUILDING FLEXIBLE DEADLINES

While students need structure, too often, canned essay prompts or project instructions, and strict deadlines can lead students to submit rushed and uninspired work. What's worse, students can become disengaged from the process of their own learning rather than develop as self-directed learners with a connection to what they study and a sense of responsibility to turn in their best work. By providing flexibility in deadlines and choices in assignments, prompts, or problems, we can help our students develop their agency, though this mid-level strategy may require extra communication with students.

Inflexible deadlines, in particular, create lasting barriers to student success (Patton 2000). Our students hold a variety of identities, as students, but also as workers, student athletes, club members, family members, and caregivers. It is not uncommon for our students to confide in us that they hold multiple part-time jobs in addition to their other responsibilities. While many instructors would like to imagine that our students only worry about our classes, in the modern world this is rarely the case. If a student must decide between accompanying an ailing parent or child to the emergency room or completing an assignment, classwork can be less of a priority than we would wish. For this reason, allowing students to request extensions, while a difficult balancing act for instructors, reduces barriers to learning for all. One instructor explained their approach as follows:

> This semester I offered all students the option to request extensions for any reason. I have been concerned in the past that students would over-utilize this option causing the class to fall behind. However I found that students only asked for extensions when they really felt they needed it, adhering to deadlines the vast majority of the time. Additionally, flexible deadlines allowed students to more effectively work around competing deadlines in other classes. The resubmission policy allowed students to demonstrate mastery of the material, and to integrate feedback into their future work. I found that the quality of the work improved, and students were markedly less stressed. By centering the students in the classroom, I was able to reflect on which policies were truly serving their needs.

Instructors must balance their own needs for scheduling grading and managing the course timeline against endless student requests for extensions. It is challenging because offering extensions requires instructors to both respond to numerous requests for changes and keep track of these differing deadlines. Technology does provide a manageable way to keep track of deadlines and differing extensions. For those instructors who collect work online, most learning management systems allow for custom due dates for different students. This makes it easy to give an extra day to one group of students, and two extra days to another, and then to know while grading which assignments met the deadline and which did not.

We heard from one instructor with hundreds of students who created an online Google Form for students to request extensions, specifying a reason from a drop-down box and then choosing a new deadline from a set of options. While this instructor still needed to use the form to update the deadlines in the learning management system, the form eliminated the step of replying to email requests. Such automation facilitates a process that could be overly tedious.

We offer a word of caution on flexible deadlines. While we promote some degree of flexibility, we do not actually recommend that students be given free range to turn in assignments at any time in the course. Course deadlines serve a function in the classroom because they motivate students to do the work and a significant number of students use impending deadlines as motivation to complete their assignments (Keith and Morón-García 2009). In our experience teaching and consulting with faculty, too much flexibility will lead a large number of our students to put off deadlines until the last minute and then attempt to submit enough work to pass in the last days of the semester. While some of these students can be successful, many are not, either because the quality of work they produce is low or because they did not make time to learn the content before trying to complete the work. The unlimited assignment time tricks students into thinking that they can prioritize other courses, leading to high rates of failure. Students need deadlines to keep up with a course, so flexibility shouldn't come at the expense of having a schedule.

You should also ensure that your policy regarding late work is clearly stated in the syllabus. It can be tempting to take a strict approach in your syllabus stating that you do not allow late work for any reason in order to motivate students to take your deadlines seriously. If a student reaches out and requests an extension and tells you a compelling story, you might grant their request. This discrepancy between the syllabus and actual policy can exacerbate inequalities. Some students will feel comfortable asking for assistance, but others may consider the statement in the syllabus as "law" and will not ask. This creates another type of "hidden curriculum." Whatever your policy is, state it clearly for students in the syllabus and adhere to it throughout the course.

DIVERSIFYING THE COURSE CONTENT

While some instructors at our institution use a syllabus that is provided by their department, and thus are not responsible for the course content, many instructors have to decide for themselves what readings, textbooks, examples, and case studies they will include to support student attainment of the learning outcomes of the course. Naturally, we often turn to what we learned in our own graduate and undergraduate programs, often beginning with the exact syllabi that our favorite instructors used years or decades ago when we first fell in love with our academic subjects. The cost of this approach can be a stale, overly white, overly male, overly heterosexual, overly western collection of academic work. By diversifying this course content and making strategic changes, we can correct some of the inequities of history, help our students see that academia is a diverse and welcoming place, and share ideas that may reflect unique social and cultural perspectives of a diverse world (Ambrose et al. 2010; Hockings 2010).

We recognize that this is the most ambitious of the three approaches discussed here. It is challenging because unless we are brand new to instruction, we have probably already developed an entire course around the content we selected. Our lesson plans for each day reflect the content that students read, with activities that we may have honed for years. We have homework, quiz, and exam questions that ask students to demonstrate their knowledge of the work. Changing out one article, book, reading, or textbook is not a matter of simply updating the syllabus. Each change has cascading effects through the course structure. To fully diversify course content might require numerous such changes, restructuring an entire course. This is hard work that need not be done in one sitting or one semester.

Perhaps the bigger challenge to diversifying the content is that we often are not familiar with material from diverse authors. We may not have even studied a particular course we teach during our own education, and so to teach it, we must first read numerous textbooks, scholarly articles, and other content. Even when deeply familiar with the field, instructors have told us that to select a new article they must first read several contenders to vet them for appropriate language and difficulty and decide how they might fit into an existing unit or module.

Several participants in our program committed to working to diversify their course content. They sometimes found creative ways to approach this work, even in the sciences, where less attention is typically paid to the identity of the scientists read in a course. One instructor described their intentions this way:

> I am going to be more critical when selecting journal articles for class and will look for ones that include diverse groups of authors. Furthermore, I may include a homework assignment based on the podcast *People Behind the Science*, which introduces students to the career path that different scientists have taken and humanizes them. I would then try to find journal articles by these scientists or other diverse voices to demonstrate the diversity of scientists.

This example raises an important point. Diversifying a curriculum is as much about which readings are selected and taught as it is about how this can be discussed and made visible to the students. By having conversations about the identities of the scholars whose work you read, you can frame your decisions, probe historic inequities, and help your students feel welcome in academia. The small steps you can make toward this goal include starting to show diverse names in examples, problems, and case studies.

Another impactful and yet simple technique is using our students' names. Consider giving students an assignment where they create examples that resonate with them and assist you in this creation of multiple and diverse examples. Chapters 1 and 3 of this book include additional discussion of learner-generated content and of diverse representation in the curriculum.

COMPETENCY 3: ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is only just becoming part of the conversation about inclusive pedagogy as many faculty and staff have looked at it through a lens of compliance (Betts et al., 2013). If a student with a hearing impairment cannot watch a course video because there are no closed captions, it becomes a barrier to learning, which leads to Competency 3, "Ensure course content, web pages, activities, and assessments are accessible to all students." We focused our third portion of the program on how we can ensure that all course content—from class readings, to virtual spaces, to the face-to-face classroom are as accessible as possible to students. While accessibility of classroom content is a familiar concept, and instructors are usually aware that certain steps should be taken when creating new digital content and developing a course, many instructors do not know where to start (Guilbaud, Martin, and Newton 2021; Moriña, Perera, and Carballo 2020). Helping instructors develop concrete steps for increasing the accessibility of their courses provides an important avenue for faculty to reduce barriers to learning. Several other chapters in this book discuss accessibility and universal design, including chapters 5 and 6.

Our institution recently purchased Ally, a digital tool that is used to scan the course learning management system to alert instructors to issues that might affect the accessibility of their

courses, such as scanned digital reading files that are not screen-reader accessible and images that do not have alternative text. The tool provides a color-coded gauge to visualize the number of problems found, with green representing courses that have few issues and red for courses with many potential problems. Since this tool arrived on campus, accessibility has become a much more visible issue, leading some instructors to seek out training. We were pleased to be able to include this training in the program. If your institution does not have Ally, it probably has other tools to assist with verifying the accessibility of your content. Reaching out to an office of technology can be helpful to point you in the right direction.

However, our vision of inclusivity goes beyond the course learning management system and digital files. While a hearing or sight impairment may prevent a student from accessing course content, there are other barriers that may hinder students from accessing course content such as financial restrictions that do not allow them to buy a textbook. In this section, we report on three strategies for improving accessibility, from creating accessible digital materials, to adopting open and affordable resources, to finding new ways to present learning materials that are innately inaccessible—such as teaching chemistry lab experiments or dance routines to those who have impaired vision, or in our example, making media such as comics accessible by screen reader.

CREATING ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL MATERIALS

The Classroom Inclusivity Series included many workshops focused on how to ensure that the digital materials we post follow best practices for accessibility. Many of these best practices, including using headers in word processing documents and PDFs,

hosting videos on the university's platform which automatically captions them, and providing alternative text for images, were tasks that our instructors were eager to begin implementing. As one instructor said,

> I had no idea what I didn't know about accessibility equipment and how they work. As I now understand, it is critically important for me to implement changes to my course materials. Though I am off to a respectable start. In preparing my course, I worked closely with [my department's instructional designer] to develop accessible materials. She demonstrated and explained the importance of using headings, for example. During that process, I was careful to use headings, provide short links when possible, and use captions in my course materials. So, I thought that I knew a lot about how to make accessible [sic] my course materials, but I can see that I have a lot to learn. This seminar illustrated to me why it's important to use the formatting functions provided by the software (i.e., use "headings" to create headings) because the instructor explained how the accessibility tools work. I understand now that the goal is to create materials that not only look accessible, but are built to be responsive to various ranges of accessibility.

These actions, while adding an extra layer of complexity for instructors as they set up their course material, are important for many students. Through different workshops in our program we explored the spectrum of ways through which disability and ability are presented. For example, our students may be neurodiverse and may experience dyslexia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or autism. These conditions may or may

not be diagnosed. When instructors follow best practices for accessibility, they can proactively reduce barriers even when it is not apparent that students need this support.

It is easy to get started on this work and to use these practices when adding new work. It is harder to go back to revise the many courses we have already built. For this reason, we categorize "creating accessible digital materials" as both a simple starting strategy to adopt more inclusive practices, but potentially a challenging strategy at the same time, were one to attempt to revise all of the content used in instruction. Here is how one instructor explained it:

> My concern is finding the time! One course I am teaching is moving from a 10-week summer schedule to a 15-week spring schedule. Since new content will be created as well as the flow adjusted, it should be pretty easy to build these guidelines into the course. The challenge will be to find the time to address these issues in my other two courses during that same semester. A solution to this challenge is to create a project plan and block off time each week to implement change. Even though I would want it all done by day one of the course, I have to be realistic that it might take some time for all the accessibility guidelines to be incorporated.

This final sentiment is critical. In our own courses, we have our fair share of old scanned PDF documents without headings, errors in video captions, and other problems. For many years now, we have used these documents in classes by putting them on the course website, rather than having students purchase a printed copy in a course reader. Many of the readings that we have used in our classes simply do not yet exist in accessible formats. To

address even a single reading, we must first scour the internet and library resources to see if an accessible version is available. If not, we search for tools we could use to make the version we have accessible. But in some cases, the scanned versions of classic articles from the 1960s and 1970s simply are not yet available in accessible formats. Our only solution is to wait or to find an alternative source, which means hours of additional work searching for and reading articles, changing presentations and lecture slides, adapting new assignments or homework, and replacing quiz and exam questions.

Given the scope of work that we are asking of faculty, the most reasonable expectation is a steady and methodical approach to revising existing materials. When choosing new materials and making general changes, instructors can prioritize accessibility. Perhaps too, we can follow the suggestions of the instructor quoted above by setting a realistic goal or "project plan" to implement some amount of change and improvement, for the good of our students.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

One of the revelations we had when designing this program was that "accessibility" is not just a goal for accommodating physical limitations or neurological differences. Making a course "accessible" can also mean that students can easily afford the textbooks and course materials. The adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) has the added benefit of making it clear for students that their success is important to us (Levy and Tila 2022) and further allows us to create that welcoming and inclusive learning environment. Our colleagues in the libraries had long encouraged faculty to adopt open and affordable resources, so we included a

workshop on this topic in the program. When course readings are freely available, it increases access for those students who are at the limits of their financial resources. Faculty and students have found that the quality of OER materials is commensurate with the quality of paid resources, and several studies have shown that student outcomes in courses that use OER are also equivalent if not better than in courses that do not (Hilton 2020; Hilton 2016).

We consider adopting new course materials to be a mid-level strategy since it can be challenging for all the reasons described in our discussion of diversifying the course content. It is also time consuming because instructors will need to use open-source databases to search for candidate texts and review them for level, content, and accuracy. However, the quality and availability of open-source materials has improved tremendously in recent years. Here is how one instructor described what was available to them:

> After taking this workshop I searched the internet once more for open-source textbooks for my course and found a huge number of new open source textbooks. Between all these textbooks, I can probably find the material I need for my course. At this workshop, I also learned about fair use, that I can use a small portion of a copyrighted material for educational purposes. I have already used this new knowledge when preparing for teaching my smaller course... . In this course, I have worked with the library to make accessible several textbook chapters via fair use that are not well covered by open-source textbooks. I teach the same courses year from year, so over time I will be able to gradually switch to 100 percent free textbook resources in my courses by combining fair use and open-source textbooks.

In our experience, we have found that while the language in open source textbooks is not always as elegant and as entertaining as the top-selling publisher editions, and the graphics, images, and illustrations may be less polished, there are many books that provide students with the information they need to complete the course work.

We have also found that at our institution, many instructors are convinced that students do not read what they assign anyway. This is especially true of those who teach large courses designed to introduce students to new subjects and fill core requirements, where students may be less intrinsically motivated to master the subject. Instead, the readings are used as references to help with tricky assignments or the review before an exam. These courses may benefit from open resources.

MAKING INACCESSIBLE LEARNING MEDIA ACCESSIBLE

Perhaps the thorniest problem of all that we discovered in our inquiry into accessibility was a fundamental challenge posed by certain kinds of subjects, where the visual or auditory nature of some course content was intractably connected to the meaning students were required to mine from the source. How does a music teacher make a symphony accessible to a student who is hearing impaired? How does an instructor in fine arts ensure that a color-blind student can understand a painting that uses difficult-to-see colors? How does a mathematics instructor add alt-text to a graph without giving information that would effectively answer the questions they are asking of the students? These concerns, though less frequent than some of the others we have described, present a substantial challenge. For instance, one instructor from

an English department described the challenge in her course on the graphic novel:

> Readings of actual comics and graphic novels presented a particular challenge because these texts incorporate both image and text sometimes enclosed in a series of panels (sometimes but not always represented as bordered rectangles) and panels may follow a reading order that is not intuitive or straightforward enough for an automated screen reader to follow. The text is often handwritten in a variety of fonts, colors, and sizes and is highly expressive, while the images are most often complex, incorporating mood, texture, expressive lines and color palette, and figures are depicted with subtle facial expression and body language. This level of sophistication in word-image combinations cannot be conveyed through alt-text and, due to the sheer volume of word-image combinations (sometimes hundreds of pages consisting of a dozen or more individual image/panels per page), using 'long description' is too time-consuming to be a feasible strategy. Added to this, almost no publishers or authors of comics and graphic novels provide fully accessible versions of these works. Those few works that do enable text-to-speech reading, moreover, translate only the written words, and none of the vast amount of information conveyed by the images.

This instructor went on to describe a process they went through to investigate this possible solution: from speaking with IT and accessibility offices on campus, to contacting booksellers and publishers. Through this investigation, the instructor discovered a small number of comics and graphic novels that were available in accessible formats and also learned about the process for making them accessible. It prompted her to consider how to engage her students in making these resources accessible.

By thinking ahead about what course resources provide the greatest challenge and investigating them, you can be better prepared with alternatives, when possible, for students who struggle to access these materials. Unfortunately, this is not something we can provide a step-by-step process to assist you in solving, but we acknowledge that there are not accessibility solutions for all resources at this point and a large amount of time and effort is required for faculty engaging in these problems.

REFLECTING ON THE IMPACT OF YOUR CHANGES

We hope you have identified inclusive teaching strategies that resonate with you and represent a reasonable and manageable challenge to implement in your teaching. As you adopt new strategies, take the opportunity to consider the impact your changes will have. How do you know that the changes you have made to your course have facilitated the students' sense of belonging? By assessing your course changes, you can make decisions about additional modifications, big or small.

To begin the assessment process, consider what your goal was for each course change and what you might measure to determine if the change had a positive impact. This process is similar to how the concept of backward course design suggests you connect your learning goals to your course assessments (McTighe and Wiggins 2005). Some measures or indicators of success are more appropriate for some goals than others. For example, if your goal was to create a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment, student perceptions would be an excellent indicator, as students

are uniquely positioned to comment on their own comfort level in the classroom environment. However, most students tend not to notice how improving the accessibility in a course has benefitted them, even if those same students have used the closed captions of a video instead of playing the sound and waking up their child. In this way, a better indicator for success may be the positive change of a course's "accessibility score" provided by an accessibility checker application.

Begin with the goal and decide on the activities or tasks you have implemented to address that goal. Then consider how you could begin to look at the success of those changes. For example, Table 1 lists a set of goals, activities, and indicators of success. The use of pre- and post-assessments is often held up as a model for determining educational impact, but this is not always possible in assessing inclusive teaching practices. You may ask students for their perceptions of certain elements that you have incorporated into the course, which you most likely would not have asked about previously. Despite the lack of a comparison, a single data point can still be valuable. It can help you decide whether your course change was worthwhile or needs additional revision. Revision is common since instruction is an interactive process and it is difficult to get it exactly right most of the time.

Depending on your goals and activities, you may also want to add a measure to evaluate the fidelity of the activities themselves. For example, if you developed classroom norms for managing heated moments, perhaps in the first year of implementation you found it difficult as the instructor to bring the students back to these norms in tense situations. This is completely understandable as it takes time to develop a new habit, but you should consider how the fidelity of implementation of your activities impacted your results. Those activities were meant to support your goal—if

Goal	Activities	Indicator of Success
Develop and use classroom norms to manage expectations and an inclusive classroom.	Implement classroom norms in your course from the beginning and continually refer to and utilize them throughout the semester.	Review (perhaps peer review) of classroom norms themselves. Ask students their perceptions about use of norms in (a) midcourse and/or final course survey(s).
Incorporate more diverse literature within the field.	Review and include literature from more diverse scholar perspectives. Incorporate activities and/or discussions on the limitations, generalizability, and DEI concerns in field.	Compare syllabi or other course materials showing diversity in authorship. Collect student reflections submitted at the end of the semester discussing DEI topics related to field.
Implement Open Educational Resources	Review and implement Open Educational Resources in place of textbooks and other course materials students need to pay for (while maintaining rigor of content).	Calculate how much students have saved by not buying the textbook or other content. If possible, determine the percentage of students utilizing the resources, perhaps through learning management system access data.

Table 1. Example Assessment Plan for Inclusive Teaching Practices.

you didn't achieve your goal, was it due to some element of the implementation of activities that did not take place as intended? In these cases, you might realize that focusing on implementation is the key to improving the outcome.

While you can plan to gather some indicators of effectiveness ahead of time, be open to incorporating assessment techniques as new situations arise. For instance, after a difficult or tense classroom conversation, you may want to provide an anonymous survey to the students to determine if they feel it was handled properly. Do they feel the class is a safe place? Were all students' perceptions and feelings acknowledged? This reflective activity can help you understand whether further discussion is warranted, and when done regularly over multiple semesters, might show your growth in facilitating and handling these situations.

You will notice that the heading of this section is Reflecting on the Impact of Your Changes. Don't forget that you are a large stakeholder in this process and your experiences implementing them are important as well. Your perceptions, comfort level, and the limited time you have to learn about and make the changes is valuable information for your own notes and those colleagues with whom you discuss the changes.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Having conversations about inclusive teaching is rewarding, but the goal for our Classroom Inclusivity Series is not just to talk, but to do what our Vice President for Academic Affairs refers to as "move the needle." We want our participants to actually make changes to their teaching and we want those changes to positively impact the outcomes that matter to us, such as the graduation rate that we talked about in the introduction. We also need to

justify the time and energy spent on this program to ensure that it will continue. For these reasons, we developed a mixed-methods assessment strategy to collect evidence about what participants are actually taking away from the workshops in our series and how they are adopting the techniques we described above.

Not everyone reading this chapter is an instructor: we suspect that some of you are also university administrators and staff like us who have taken the time to invest in learning about this topic. We include this short section on the evaluation plan for the Classroom Inclusivity Series to provide ideas on how to assess a program with similar goals within your own context. We hope this is also relevant for instructors as they think about how to assess their changes.

The overall goal of our program was to support instructors' development of a well-rounded understanding of what it means for a course to be inclusive, as demonstrated by the range of the three program competencies. Given the breadth of this goal, we had to limit the questions we addressed in our evaluation. As we considered the evaluation of the program in the first year, we wanted to know if the program supported participants to help them understand the issues presented in the core competencies, and we hoped that they held attitudes that were supportive of the goals of these competencies. We also asked how participants use this knowledge to create more inclusive learning environments and if these new practices "stick" after the program is complete.

We used the participant reflection statements to assess understanding of the concepts and to learn about the changes they made or were planning to make. Participants also completed a survey when submitting their reflections which included several Likert-scale questions adapted from existing instruments to evaluate participant attitudes and comfort levels with incorporating

inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms. Focus groups were completed several months later to evaluate the longevity of the instructional changes and participant perceptions of the workshops and program overall.

Is our evaluation perfect? No. Ideally, we would have liked to determine the impact of instructor changes on students and also to understand how differences in individual workshops impact participants. As in the advice we gave in the last section, we assessed elements that we could, and hope to expand the assessment in the future.

Considering our findings, we developed changes that we implemented for the second year of the program. For instance, a review of the reflections made it clear that faculty still needed support to reflect on their identities, biases, and prejudices as stated in Competency 1, so an additional small group discussion session was added as a requirement for the second year. This change was also supported by the focus groups where participants said they appreciated networking opportunities with colleagues across the university and wanted more of these. Focus group participants who had completed this first certificate also mentioned they wanted the opportunity to continue engaging with the program. Survey results and reflections demonstrated that implementation of inclusive teaching practices takes time and therefore a "Level 2," where faculty can focus on implementation was designed for the second year. A complete discussion of our analysis can be found in another article (Bifulco and Drue 2023).

CONCLUSION

Participants in our program learned a variety of techniques and committed to adopting these techniques in their courses or other teaching experiences. However, changing the ways we teach our classes requires time and energy in addition to understanding that it is important. We spoke to many participants in our follow-up focus groups several months after the program to ascertain how well their changes had gone. They were often still struggling to find time to make the most ambitious changes. We fully understand this sentiment since, depending on the institution, instructors learn quickly that teaching may not be the most incentivized aspect of career success. Once a class has been developed, it's much easier to continue teaching it the same way than to disrupt and redesign.

It is also worth noting that while the program was developed for instructors (hence the name of Classroom Inclusivity Series), some participants were staff with training or management responsibilities. The content of the series was still applicable and their reflections detailed that they gained ideas that they would implement in their roles working with others at the university, with student workers, or creating websites.

Given the challenge of adopting these techniques, we hope that the organization of this chapter simplified the process. Many of the techniques we describe—from explaining the hidden curriculum, to adding alt-text to images uploaded to the learning management system—are techniques that you can adopt today, without major disruption or advanced preparation. Once you get started by adopting the quick and easy practices of inclusive teaching, you can turn to the more ambitious practices.

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