

Creating an Inclusive Classroom



Diversity creates tremendous opportunities for learning and engagement. It also increases the need to consider ways of creating an inclusive classroom environment for all students. This guide offers ideas and suggestions for choosing teaching practices, assessments, and learning materials that improve the learning experience for all students.

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≡ Academic Culture

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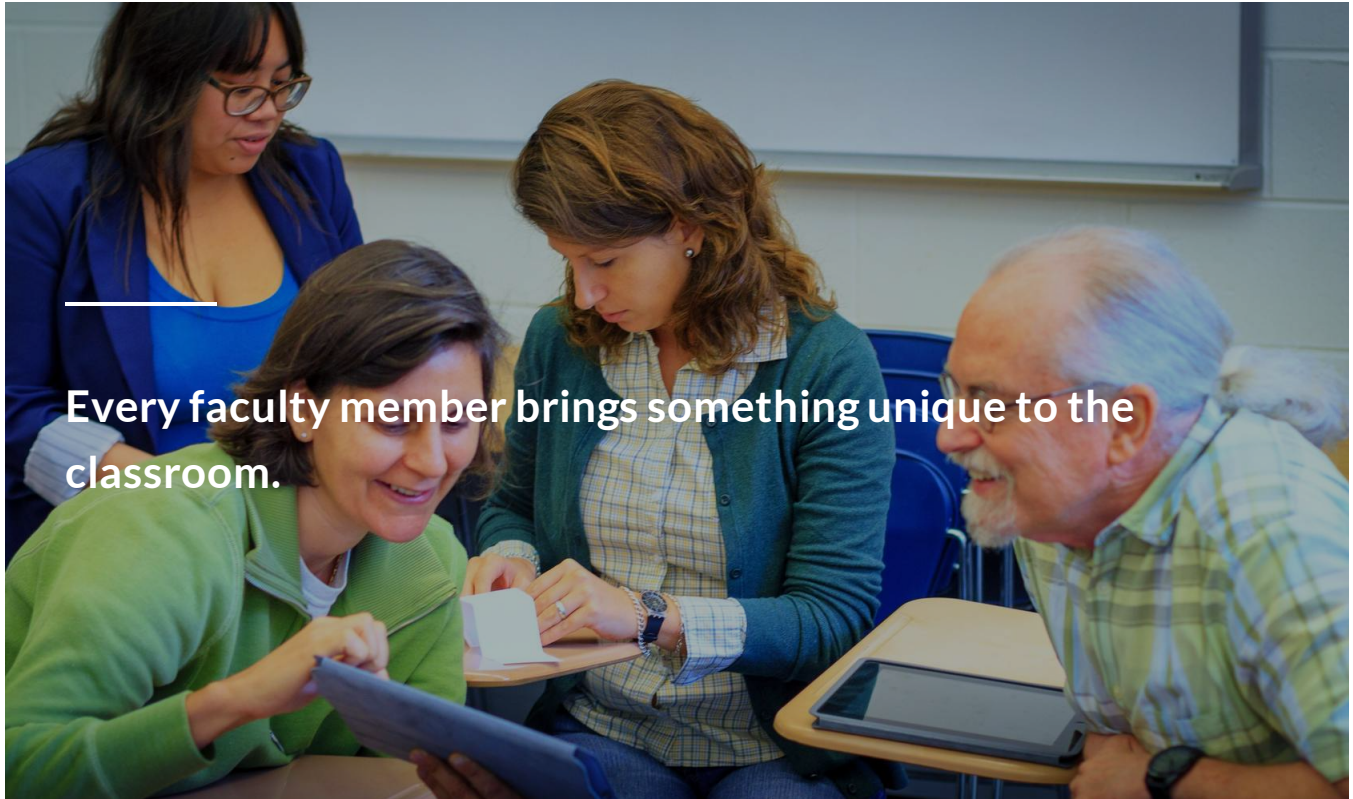
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Faculty Matter



Every faculty member brings something unique to the classroom.

We often categorize diversity by things we perceive such as race, age, and gender, or other physical attributes. It is important to think beyond what we can observe to include invisible diversity that encompasses characteristics such as different world views, place of origin, income, religion, and sexual orientation. We each come into the classroom with our own experiences, views, beliefs, and biases. These shape our interactions, our understanding, and our teaching.

Questions to Consider



Reflection Exercise

Reflecting on our own identities increases our understanding of inclusion in teaching. Write down the different ways that you identify yourself. You might include your race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, location, socioeconomic status, abilities or anything else that makes up your personal identity.

- Think about ways or times you think those identities have benefited you or created challenges.
- Recall an incident in which you became aware of differences related to some of those characteristics listed above. What was your response to the experience? How did that affect you in that moment and afterward?

- Recall an experience in which your own difference put you in an uncomfortable position with the people directly around you.
- How do your memories of differences affect you today? How do they (or might they) affect your teaching?

How do your differences impact your teaching?

- How might your opinions or experiences influence your teaching and interactions with students?
- How much information do you typically share with your students?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of sharing your views with students?
- What is the role of my viewpoint in the classroom?

Resources

- [AAC&U - High-Impact Practices - TAMUSA](#)
- [Humboldt State University - Inclusive Pedagogy](#)
- [National Education Association - The Assumptions We Make About Diversity](#)
- [TED Talk - Unpacking and Transforming Your Biases for a Better Community](#)
- [Tomorrow's Professor - New Research on The Benefits of Diversity in College](#)
- [U.S. News and World Report - Why does Diversity Matter at College Anyway?](#)
- [Tolerance.org - Teaching Tolerance: Test Yourself for Hidden Bias](#)
- [Chronicle of Higher Education - Do Their Stereotypes Affect Your Teaching?](#)

Age



Have you ever made a cultural reference in your class only to be answered by blank stares? How can students not remember (add your own icon or big event here)? Perhaps your students seem to be using words that don't make any sense. If you are more than a few years older than your students, you may experience a generation gap. Your students do not share the same tastes in music or clothing, and their views of entertainment differ from yours. Likewise, you may have different perspectives on politics and current culture than students because they grew up at a different time and lived different experiences. Students may find some views old-fashioned or out-of-touch.



What generation are you anyway?

Trying to keep track of who's who in generational America? Neil Howe and William Strauss define generational cohorts this way¹:

- 2000 to present: Generation Z
- 1980 – 2000: Millennials
- 1965 to 1979: Generation X
- 1946 to 1964: Baby Boomers
- 1925 to 1945: Silent Generation

Age and Technology

Whether you grew up with a rotary phone, a typewriter, a floppy disk, an Atari gaming system, or a cell phone, technology probably played a different role in your life compared to your students. Faculty experiences with technology change our views on everything from communication frequency to academic integrity. Even something as simple as being in constant touch with family and friends is a big shift from the experience of those who grew up in an age of postage stamps and long distance phone bills. The newest generation of students may have no experience with physical textbooks. They may expect to receive text messages. They may not check email.



Where were you when...?

Age creates common experiences and stories. When you are dealing with a different generation, it can be harder to find cultural touchstones and anchor points. Think about your "do you remember where you were..." moment. Do you remember where you were when John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Ronald Reagan were shot? Do you remember where you were when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded or the planes hit the twin towers on 9/11? You might remember some of those events as clearly as yesterday, but for most of your students, those are all stories, not experiences.

So how do we bridge the divide? One way to engage students is to ask them about their big moments, and help them put the major topics of your field into the context of their lives. This requires some effort and willingness to learn about popular culture and the current student experience, but the work pays big dividends in mutual respect and understanding.

Sources

¹Rosenberg, M. (2018). Generational Names in the United States: Gen X, Millennials, and Other Generation Names Throughout the Years. ThoughtCO <https://www.thoughtco.com/names-of-generations-1435472>

Academic Culture

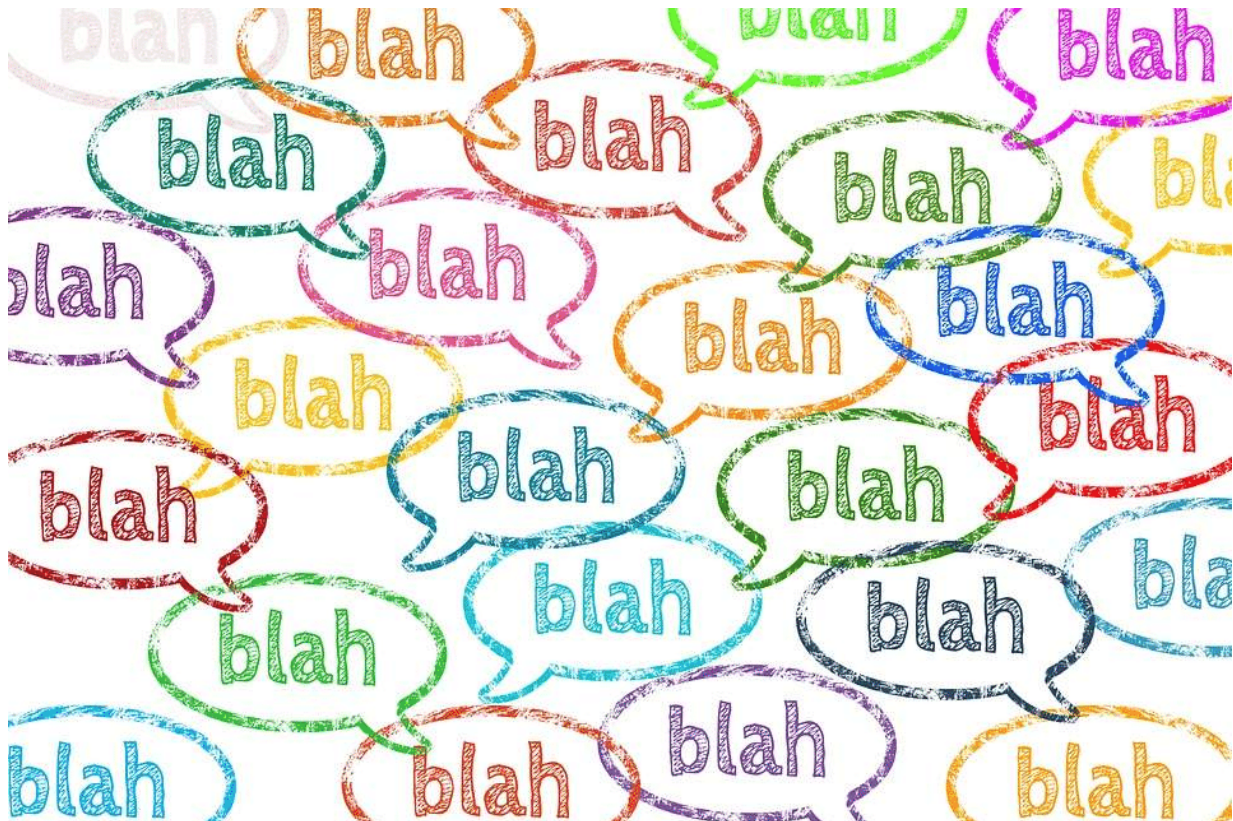


Students face a brand new environment with unfamiliar expectations, norms and rules. The experience includes learning a new language. Academics use a lot of jargon. Consider this list:

Syllabus
Office Hours
Census Day
Core Courses
Elective
Credit Hour
Prerequisite
Non-resident
Term

Transcript
Pell
Degree requirements
Student Life
Commencement
Course Number
Interlibrary Loan

Bursar
Office Hours
Waitlist
Catalog
Department
Add/Drop
Chair
Dean



If you tell a student to “head over to the MS during office hours, and I’ll get my chair to sign off on a waiver of that prerequisite you need,” will they know what you mean?

Using academic jargon creates the impression that if you don't understand it you don't belong.

Help students by speaking clearly and translating any confusing academic terms.

The college experience **differs drastically** from most high schools.
Help students make the **leap**.

How do college freshmen view the transition to college?¹

- Students perceive college classes as more rigorous and challenging.
- Students aren't prepared for the amount of time needed to succeed.
- Learning is more self-directed with less direction from faculty.
- Students have a higher level of responsibility for doing work and reading.
- Faculty have high expectations for quality and timeliness of work.

Students expect faculty to tell them what to do, when and how to do it, provide study guides, teach everything in class, reach out when grades fall, or give students answers when they get stuck. Faculty who don't do these things may be **perceived as uncaring** or may send a message that students don't fit in.

What to Know

- **Be transparent** about your teaching methods and why things are done differently.
- **Help students** see these changes as a part of their learning process.
- Provide students with a **road map for success** in your course.
- **Teaching freshmen?** Tell them how your course **may be different** than high school.

Let students know that mistakes and failure are a normal part of college rather than a sign that they don't belong.

Set the Stage for Success

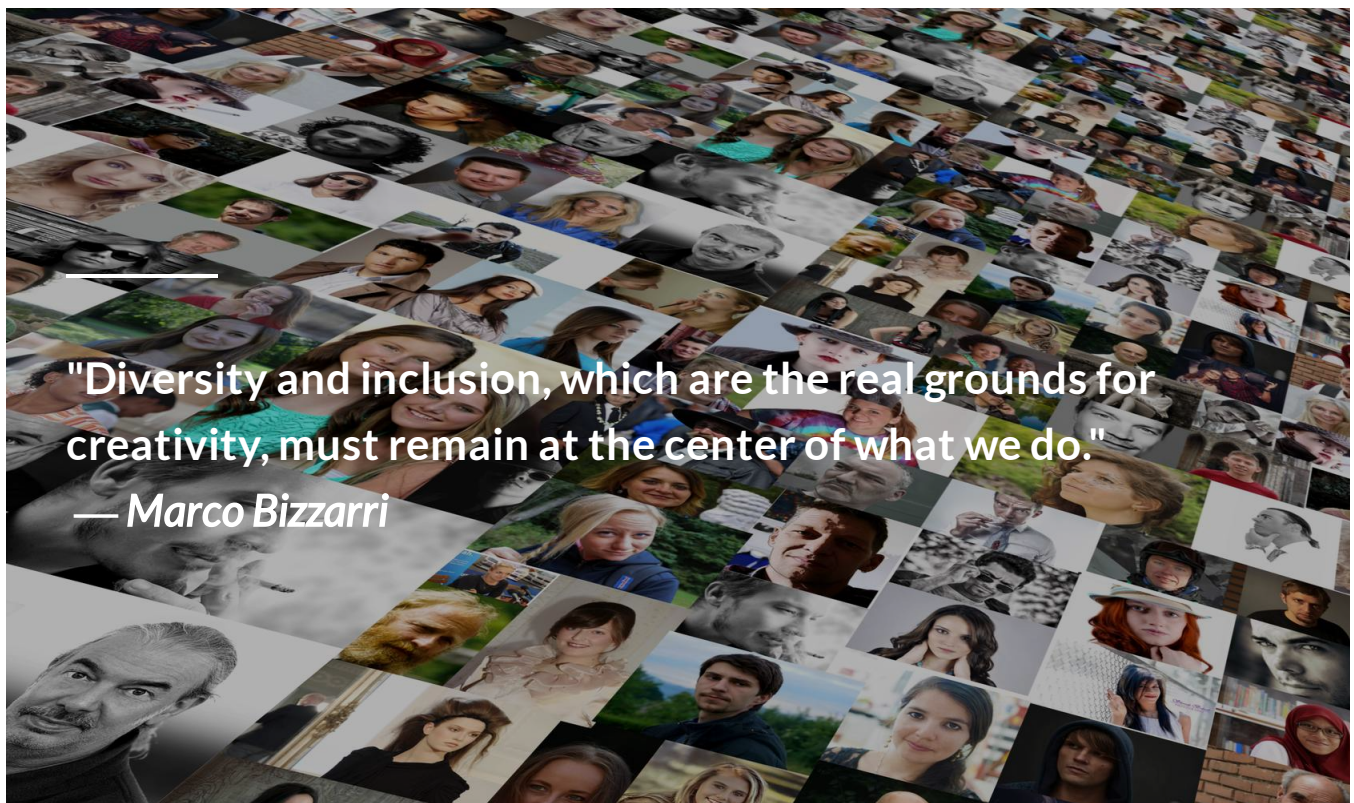
Keep these tips in mind to help your students make the transition successfully:

- Reinforce your desire to help students succeed.
- Explain classroom policies and how they improve the classroom experience.
- Begin the semester with a “field trip” to your office or set up a time for each student to come by early in the semester.
- Create one-minute essays that allow students to get their thoughts down before participating in a discussion.
- Create reflection papers that allow students to share thoughts privately with you.
- Create a classroom community by having students get to know others in the course.
- Create online discussions where students post questions and help each other find answers.
- Use regular, low-stakes quizzes to get a better understanding of where students struggle and to help get them back on track early.
- If students ask for help, but you want them to think a problem through, be sure to give them pathways to find the answers and let them know that they can come back to ask more questions if needed.

Sources

¹ Appleby, D.C. (2014). "How do college freshmen view the academic differences between high school and college?" Psychology Teacher Network. <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/ptn/2014/08/college-freshmen.aspx>

Microaggressions



Understanding Microaggressions

Faculty often feel overwhelmed by the wide range of diversity issues that affect learning. We want to improve student learning without hurting or alienating student. One step is to familiarize ourselves with things that can create an unwelcoming environment.

Microaggressions are everyday things we do that **communicate negative messages** to **marginalized people.** ¹

Microaggressions cut across all social identities including race, ethnicity, relation, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability status, socioeconomic class, national origin, and other important social dimensions.²



Here are a few examples:

- Asking students with non-Anglo names to shorten or choose a nickname rather than learning to pronounce them.

- Saying “I’m glad to see the ladies did well on the exam since women don’t usually perform well on math tests.”
- Signaling out a student with hijab. “You’re a Muslim. What do you think of US policy in Iraq?”
- Telling a student with a disability, ""Wow, I'd hate to be you" or "I could never deal with that."
- Requiring assignments that ask students to describe how they spent their “Christmas Break.”
- Assuming that students from another country won't do well in certain classes or don't speak English fluently.

Unintentional pain still hurts and can create an unwelcoming or hostile environment for students.

Resources

- [Microaggression Examples](#)
- [Recognizing Microaggressions](#)
- [Addressing Microaggressions in the Classroom](#)

Sources

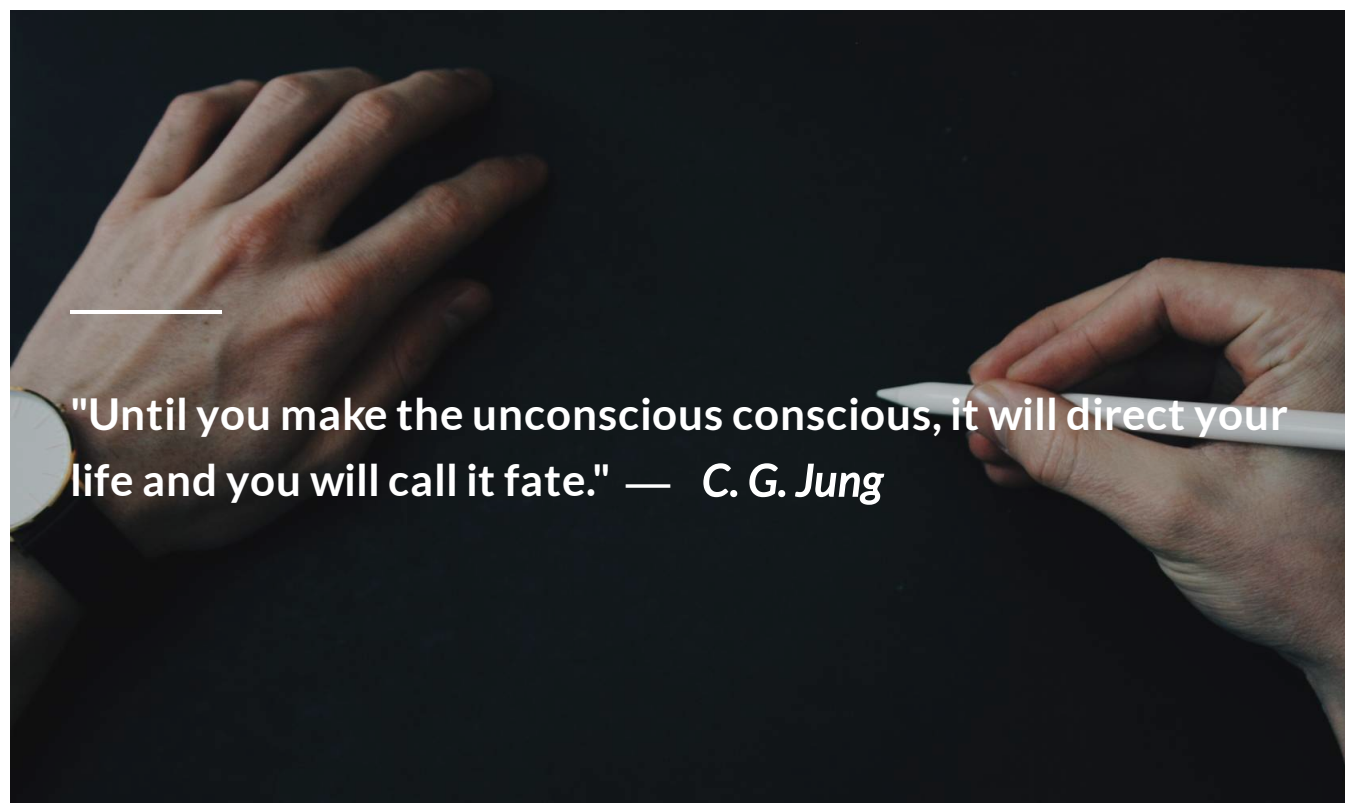
¹Sue, D. W. (2010) Microaggressions: More than Just Race: Can microaggressions be directed at women or gay people? Psychology Today. Accessed at

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

² Addressing Microaggressions in the Classroom. The Intercultural Center. St. Mary's University, California. Accessed at

<https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/Addressing%20Microaggressions%20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf>

Understanding Bias



“Implicit biases often stand in opposition to a person's stated beliefs. ”

-Shane Safir

In a 2009 survey, what percentage of students reported perceived bias in the classroom?^[5]

☐ 25%

☐ 50%

☐ 75%

SUBMIT

Addressing cultural diversity in the classrooms starts with an honest exploration of personal views and attitudes in general.

Unfortunately, implicit or unconscious bias impacts everything from classroom discussions to grading. Even when we feel as though we are impartial, we may fall short of our own self-perception.^[1] We can truly believe we are treating others equally, but our actions may not reflect our intentions.

We need to ask ourselves what assumptions we have about...

- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Ability
- Culture
- Appearance
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

How might those assumptions impact our treatment of students?

- We might assume students from certain backgrounds don't write well.
- We might assume political attitudes or affiliations.
- We might assume students with disabilities are less capable.
- We might assume certain groups have stronger academic abilities.
- We might assume certain personality traits (argumentative, meek, quiet).




student looking into the distance

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat “occurs when one fears being judged in terms of a group-based stereotype.”^[6]

Students who have experienced or are expecting bias might suffer from increased stress, impaired performance, or a reduced sense of belonging in the group or field.^[7]



“Bias is a natural part of human behavior...But professors have an obligation to their students to try and overcome their natural biases and provide all students with equal opportunities^[4]”

-Marta Segal Block

The **good news** is that even if our bias is unconscious, our response can be purposeful. For example:

- Covering names on student papers or tests while grading can reduce the likelihood of evaluating based on a set of preconceived notions about a student.
- Providing critical feedback with a positive comment about having high standards and being confident that students can meet them is linked to significantly higher rates of student revisions.^[2]
- Compliment students without demonstrating surprise at their success.
- Invite open and honest feedback from students throughout the semester.
- Get to know students as individuals as much as possible.
- Use discussion and questioning methods that include everyone equally.

Resources

- [Awareness of Implicit Biases – Yale Center for Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Responding to Difficult Moments – University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching](#)
- [Disrupting Implicit Bias – Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning](#)

Sources

[1] Banaji, M. R., Bazerman, M. H., & Chugh, D. (2003). How (un)ethical are you? *Harvard Business Review* 81(12), 56–64.

[2] Yeager, D. S., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., Brzustoski, P., Master, A., Hessert, W., Williams, M. & Cohen, G. L. (2014). Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide Critical Feedback Across the Racial Divide. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*

[3] Safir, S. (2016). 5 Keys to Challenging Implicit Bias. *Edutopia*.
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/keys-to-challenging-implicit-bias-shane-safir>

[4] Block, M.S. (2016). Can Professors Prevent Bias in the Classroom? *HigherEdJobs*.
<https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=1106>

[5] Boyson, G., et al. (2009). Incidents of Bias in College Classrooms: Instructor and Student Perceptions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 2(4) 219–231.

[6] Murphy, M.C., Steele, C.M., & Gross, J.J. (2007). Signaling threat: How situational cues affect women in math, science, and engineering settings. *Psychological Science*, 18(10): 879–885.

[7] Good, C., Rattan, A., & Dweck, C.S. (2012). Why do women opt out? Sense of belonging and women's representation in mathematics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(4): 700–717.

Steele, C.M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5): 797–811.

Teaching to the Individual



"The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases."

— C.G. Jung

Teaching for diversity means **teaching to the individual**. By taking an interest in students' experiences, interests, beliefs, and goals, you take the most important step in making students feel that they can succeed in college.

Get to Know Your Students

Names Matter

Nothing makes us feel as unique as our own name. Names are important to us, so it is important to treat them with respect.

- **Do:** Try to learn the names of your students as early in the semester as possible.
- **Do:** Find out what name students prefer to use.
- **Do:** Create name tents to help you remember.
- **Do:** Ask for help pronouncing names.
- **Don't:** Comment on names that seem unusual.
- **Don't:** Ask students to change or shorten names that are hard to pronounce.



The Prof is a Person? Who knew?

Many faculty feel a need to keep up the appearance of being professorial, but letting students get to know you can help break down barriers.

Spend time the first day sharing what you like about your discipline, your own experiences as a student, and even some details about your life. This allows students to see you as approachable and less intimidating.

Making Connections

It is great when students feel comfortable with their faculty member. It is even better when they feel a connection to each other.

Community does not just “happen.” It comes from **building a culture of trust**, demonstrating a **value for each individual**, and creating **opportunities for connections** between students.

Here are some ways to help build community:

- Use icebreaker and other activities to help students learn more about their peers.
- Encourage students to get to know each other in small group discussions.
- Use the students’ names when you call to set the example.
- Ask students to respond to others before sharing your views.
- Create a buddy system where two or three students can share information and notes.
- Use Blackboard discussion boards and groups to connect students outside of class.

Avoiding Assumptions

No matter how objective we may try to be, many of us inevitably believe, either consciously or unconsciously, the stereotypes about various groups. Stereotypes are most evident for things we see, such as racial background or physical disability. What assumptions do we make?

- A Latino student is first-generation.
- A woman without a headscarf must not be Muslim.
- Someone in a wheelchair wants extra help.

Some identities aren't obvious or visible. Examples include LGBTQ students, students from a particular religious background, first-generation students, or students from a low-income background.



To Share or Not to Share

Not all students feel comfortable sharing their identities, and **forcing students to do so is unacceptable**. Even if a student discloses a part of their identity or experience with you, be sure you have their permission before sharing it with the rest of the class. Every student has

a right to decide what, when, how, and to whom they will disclose information about their identity.



"You're Muslim, Hazem! Tell us what you think of that policy."

It is very important not to single out any student to speak for an entire population.

Ask students for their opinion as an individual. This helps maintain a classroom environment based on mutual respect and courtesy.

Classroom Discussion



"To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well."
— *John Marshall*

The Classroom as Community

Classroom discussions create crucial moments of understanding and critical thinking. The **atmosphere you establish** in your classroom is as important as your rapport with each individual student. Students need to understand how **discussion fosters learning** and **feel safe** voicing their opinions.

Learning Outcomes

Discussions should relate directly to course learning outcomes. Start by identifying how these conversations improve student learning in your course. Be sure to tell students how these interactions help them learn. If you are grading discussions, be sure to share the criteria or rubric.



Students bring a complex range of attitudes and habits about how to interact into classroom environments. For example:

- Some K-12 experiences didn't foster robust classroom discussions.
- Some students are extremely eager to express their views.
- Some may be used to more blunt or forceful communication.
- Some may only speak when asked.
- Some may want to formulate ideas in writing before speaking.

- Some may want to avoid controversial topics like race that could offend others.

Instructors need to find a middle ground between a classroom environment in which anyone can say anything and one that privileges only certain people or views. While students should be able to respond freely in discussion, you have a responsibility to address personal attacks. Control the classroom climate and watch the dynamics occurring during discussions.

Setting Ground Rules

Before you begin discussions, establish class ground rules. These can be rules that you create prior to class, guidelines the class creates together, or a combination of both. Having students help set the rules allows them to feel more invested in keeping them.

Here are some sample rules:

- We agree to wait our turn to speak and will not interrupt.
- Speak your point efficiently. No grandstanding.
- We agree not to personally attack or belittle another student.
- We agree not to use language that perpetuates stereotypes.
- We agree to listen before formulating our response.
- We understand the difference between fact and opinion.
- We acknowledge that particular groups have been historically misrepresented.
- We agree to practice forgiveness when mistakes are made.
- We agree that discussions are about learning.

Ignoring or Singling Out

Nothing damages our sense of belonging like being ignored or singled out. For example, in a discussion about African American women's experiences with poverty, a faculty might feel that she does not want to put the one African American woman in the class on the spot and avoids eye contact with her or doesn't call on her. This may make the student feel like her voice isn't valued in the class.

On the other hand, the faculty might see this moment in class as an excellent opportunity to make the student feel that her opinion counts by calling on her. The student may feel that the faculty member wants her to represent the opinion of African American women. In reality, she may disagree with other African American friends on the issue and may not want to speak up. She might also think that the faculty member assumes she must come from a poor family.

Seems like a no-win situation!

The answer is to use discussions strategies that include all students from day one. If students feel early on that they are treated as individuals and their opinions count on all issues, they will be more likely to feel comfortable sharing views.

Writing Prompts

Calling on random students or those with raised hands favors more extroverted or outspoken students. Some people need time to create response. To ensure equal time:

- Offer a few questions to start the discussion.
- Have students write answers in a one-minute reflection.
- Have students share with someone near them.
- Call on students to discuss their answers.

Following this strategy will help students feel increased confidence in their answers, and gives them time to practice and modify their answers before sharing.



Anticipate Problems

We know certain topics generate heated debate, so we have the opportunity to prepare our students. Imagine comments that could be insensitive, emotional responses to sensitive topics, or common misinformation about a given subject.

Guiding Discussions

We want students to engage to learn, not cause harm. Faculty take responsibility to ensure an appropriate learning environment for all students in the class. When comments attack or malign a particular group (such as race, religion, or sexual orientation) those comments potentially threaten some students. Faculty shouldn't ignore remarks, or change the subject. Take issue with the statement made and remind the whole class that such statements are hurtful and do not further the pursuit of knowledge.

Challenge a harmful statement's validity by pointing to statistics or studies that challenge stereotypes. By letting students discover statistics, you can teach important information literacy skills, critical thinking skills, and correct incorrect and harmful assumptions.

Students should never attack each other personally. Most often, the kinds of attacks students make on each other come from their perceptions of each others' backgrounds and experiences. Students accuse each other of not having "the right" to speak on an issue because they do not have the experience needed to speak about the issue. Remind students that while personal experience can be a valuable resource, it remains only one example that other personal experiences may contradict.

The Syllabus



"It's in the syllabus."
— *Professors everywhere*

Modern syllabi tend to look more like legal contracts than an outline of course goals. Give your syllabus to someone who does not work in a university setting.

- Do they understand it?
- Does it contain jargon that needs explaining?
- Are the learning outcomes clear?
- Are the assignments well defined?

- Are the expectations reasonable?

A syllabus should guide students through the course like a map. If the map is confusing, students will get lost before the end.

Integrate Diverse Perspectives

Many faculty have begun to incorporate diverse perspectives into their courses. Often, however, the intention to make a syllabus feel more inclusive can have the opposite effect by sectioning off “the woman’s perspective” or “the African American writer.” Often, these are found at the very end of the course, making them feel tacked on. It can feel like an empty tribute or prop tacked onto the same old stuff. Instead, try to integrate the diverse perspectives throughout the semester and in all different aspects of your course.



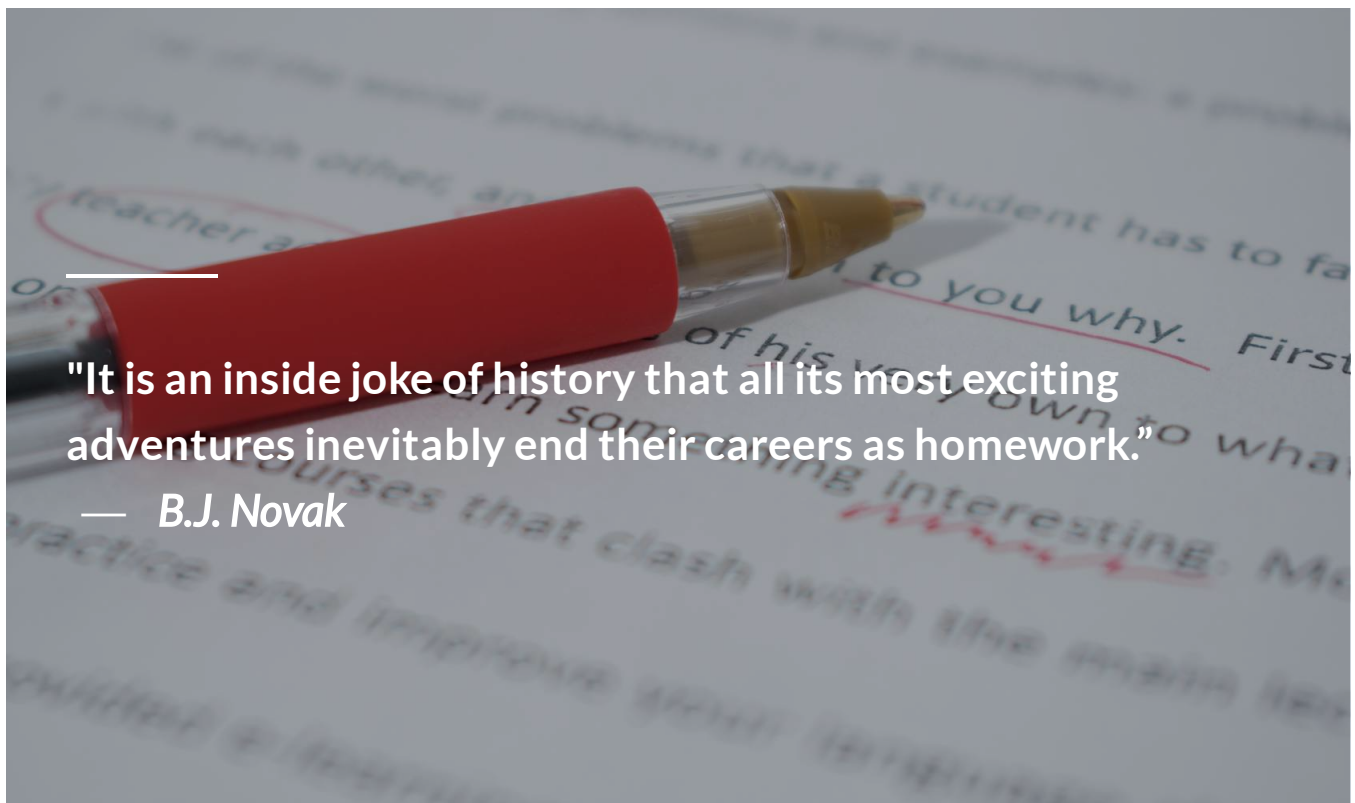
Improve the Look

If you want students to engage with your syllabus over and over again, consider redesigning it to have a bigger visual impact. Here are some ideas:

- Add some images.
- Reduce the amount of text.
- Use simple language.
- Use icons.
- Think brochure, not list.
- Consider how it looks on a mobile device.

Consider an electronic syllabus with hyperlinks to websites, assignments and calendar reminders. Creating interactivity and adding utility makes students more likely to make it tool for regular use.

Assignments



Assignments

Student work should increase and assess the learning. Assignments should:

- Be clearly defined in easy to understand terms.
- Ask students to apply concepts and skills emphasized in the course.
- Allow students to explore the connections between course content and their own interests and experiences.

- Be accessible and relevant to all students

Avoid assignments that exclude or disadvantage certain students because of group identity or background. The assignment could cause students to perform poorly, and send the message that subject or field isn't welcoming to people like them.

Timed Tests

For many students, performing under pressure—such as a timed, in-class compositions or exams—has a negative impact on their performance. Be sure to allow plenty of time for students to think through their results. Ideally, they should have time to answer and check over their responses.

If you aren't required to have an in-class exam, consider take-home tests that could be administered through Blackboard. Remember that students with physical or learning disabilities may require more time or special facilities to complete assignments or tests.



Participation Grades

Participation grades can benefit people on the more extroverted side of the personality spectrum. Consider these ways to include shy or reserved students when making participation a significant portion of a grade:

- Be transparent with your grading criterion.
- Make sure that students have the chance to participate in small groups.
- Keep them informed of their participation grade throughout the semester.

Transparent Grading

No matter what kind of assignments you give, provide detailed information about how you will grade the work. This becomes particularly important for students who may already be sensitive about their status at the university. When students see a set of grading criteria that appear objective, they will more feel a greater sense of accomplishment when getting a good grade and understand the reasons when getting a lower grade.

If possible, give students an example of a good student paper or journal writing, and show them why it works. Give explicit feedback on early assignments that will help students to improve on future assignments. When possible, allow students to rewrite for a better grade, since this kind of practice will help them improve their writing.



Writing

Writing is one of the most important skills students need to master to be prepared for the workforce. Students come to college with various levels of writing experience. Some students write for pleasure while others have a deep fear of writing. If your course includes a substantial writing component, be sure to provide students with opportunities to improve. Offer a chance to revise and resubmit their work, or have it peer-reviewed.

Nonstandard English

The issue of nonstandard English is controversial. It can affect how students from various backgrounds learn and feel a sense of belonging. It can also affect their success after college. Teachers can recognize that students' speech may reflect their personal "discourse communities" like their hometown or peer groups. At the same time, students in basic composition courses are taught to use conventions accepted within professional communities such as business, social sciences, natural sciences, or humanities. Instructors in these types of courses may discourage dialect and nonstandard English because these kinds of speaking or writing can put the student at a disadvantage in the working world.

On the other hand, some faculty are less concerned with convention than encouraging personal expression. In these cases, they may encourage students to adopt the speaking and writing style that best reflects their identities. These types of assignments can help students value their backgrounds and understand the diversity of linguistic cultures in the United States.

As a faculty member, you need to decide the extent to which you want to emphasize particular writing standards in your courses and make very clear what you expect from students' writing.

If you do find that a student needs assistance in writing, suggest that the student make an appointment at the UTSA [Writing Center](#). Staff can administer private or group tutorials on particular skills, help students to organize their papers, or help them to revise drafts.

Hispanic Students



UTSA benefits from a vibrant and diverse population. In 2016, more than half of enrolled students at UTSA were of Hispanic origin. The following sections describe some general traits of these students, and provide suggestions for faculty in helping these students succeed in the college environment.

Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano?

The federal government identifies UTSA as a “[**Hispanic Serving Institution \(HSI\)**](#),” but there are different ways to refer to those who identify in this complex group including:

“Latino/a/x,” “Chicano/a/x,” or “Hispanic.” The term Latino refers to people with a shared Latin American culture. Because it is a gendered noun, many people use the “x” to denote gender neutrality. In Texas, the term “Chicano” is used by Mexican Americans as a way to express a shared culture and identity. It is a great idea to get to know these various terms and their origins. [The Exploratorium](#) has a useful guide that provides background.

We use the term “Hispanic” here in this guide, but it is important to be aware that different people may have their own preference.

A Diverse Population

The Hispanic population includes cultural, linguistic, geographic, and physical diversity. Even among those with Hispanic heritage, the decision to identify as Hispanic is a personal one. A student who is the child of recent immigrants may be more closely tied with their family’s Hispanic culture than a fourth generation Hispanic.

It is impossible and misleading to attempt to articulate a definitive Hispanic perspective. As noted earlier, no one Hispanic student, just as no one person from any group, can aptly speak for the entire population.

Additionally, Hispanic students may be mistaken for White students or, self-identify on surveys as White. Many come from mixed racial backgrounds. Others may have married into a Hispanic family.



Family

Some Hispanic students may be very closely connected to their immediate and extended families. They may work part-time and/or full-time in order to support their families while in school, in addition to covering their own college-related finances and costs. A family occasion that might be considered optional in one culture may be an important obligation in their culture.

Myth vs. Fact

Myth: *All Hispanic students speak Spanish*

Fact: *Knowledge of Spanish varies greatly.*

- Some Hispanics may not speak any Spanish.

- Some speak Spanish, but don't read or write in it.
- Some students prefer Spanish over English.
- Some students may also choose to alternate between Spanish and English while speaking, often within a single utterance.

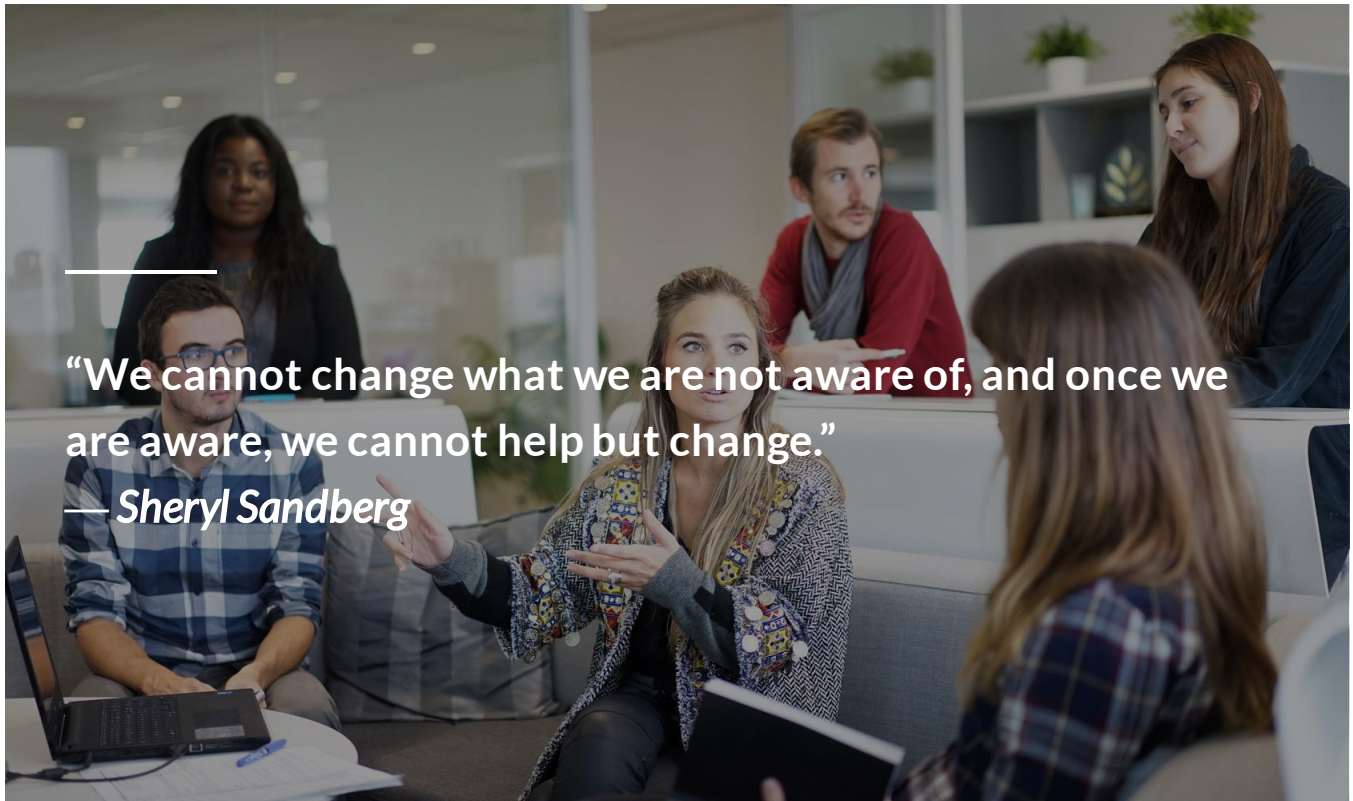
In classroom:

- Respect language preferences and identities.
- Be clear about your requirements for speaking and writing assignments.
- Do not penalize, censure or express disapproval, either verbally or non verbally when students speak Spanish, or other languages in the classroom.

Additional Resources

- [Heritage Institute – Overcoming Stereotypes by Building Professional Skills](#)
- [The Chronicle of Higher Education – All Together: The Role of Latino Families in Higher Education](#)
- [Journal of Public Management and Social Policy – Facilitating College Success Among Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions: Multiple Perspectives Yield Commonly Shared Diversity Goals](#)
- [League for Innovation in the Community College – Barriers to Academic Success: A Qualitative Study of African American and Latino Male Students](#)

Gender



Research shows that gender impacts interactions in a college classroom. For instance, studies by linguists show that female students are more likely than male students to exhibit the following characteristics in their classroom communication style:

- Give their statements less loudly, and at less length.
- Present their statements in a more hesitant, indirect, or “polite” manner.
- Use “I” statements (“I guess...” “I was wondering if...”).
- Qualify their statements (“sort of” “I guess”).

- Add “tag” questions (“isn’t it?” “don’t you think?”).
- Ask questions rather than give statements.
- Use intonations that turn a statement into a question.
- Accompany statements with smiles or averted eyes rather than more assertive gestures, such as pointing.
- Apologize for their statements (“I may be wrong, but...”)¹.

These behaviors often lead to the perception that the students are less rigorous in their ability to think critically and lacking in intellectual sophistication. Additionally, professors may be more likely to engage with students who are more assertive or self-confident.

Here are some things you can do to help create an unbiased environment:

- Avoid sexist language in discussions, lectures, and materials.
- Call out sexist language or assumptions that come up in class.
- Give male and female students equal attention in class, feedback, advising, and mentoring.
- Invite quiet students to the discussion and moderate to keep aggressive students from taking control.
- When selecting materials, include research, work, or stories from both genders in class.
- Address behavior such as interrupting that allows some students to dominate.

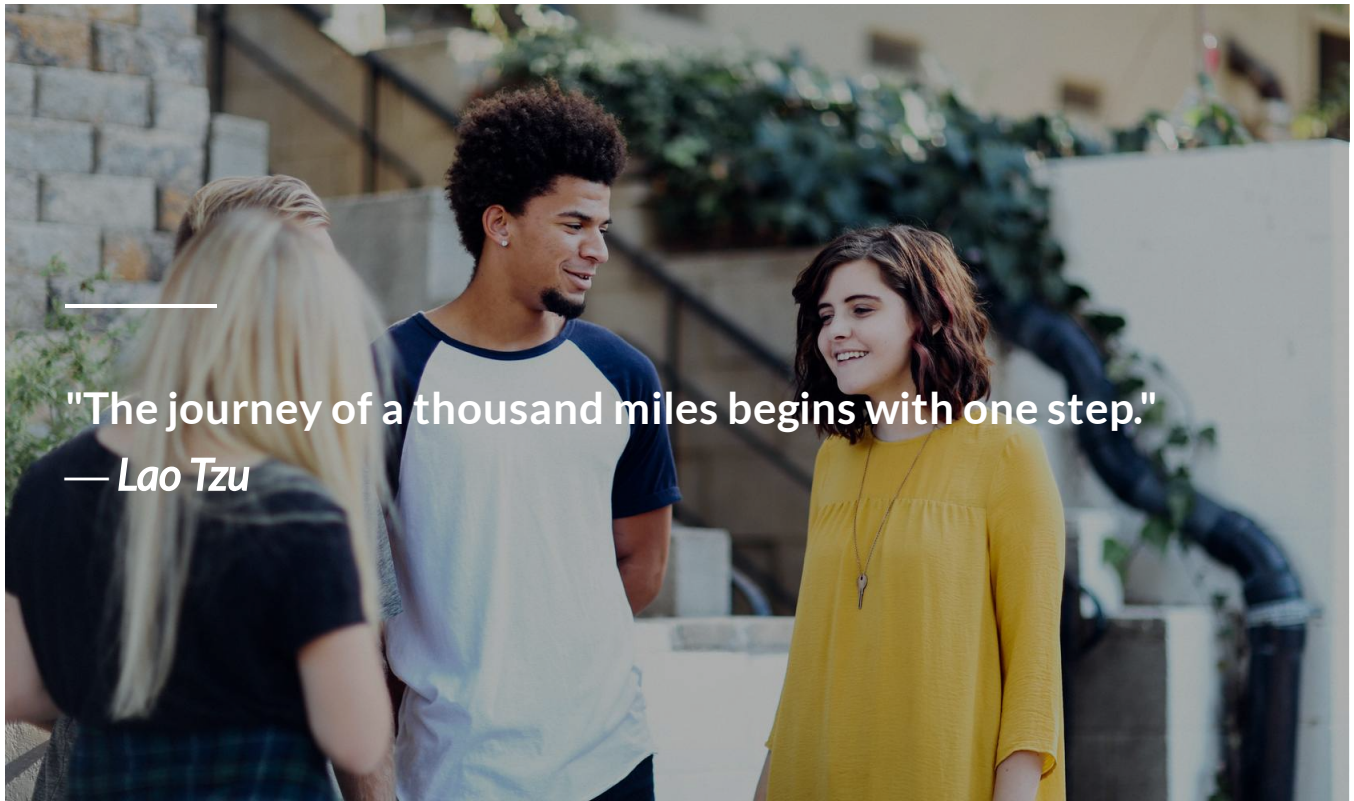
Resources

- [University of Virginia Center for Teaching Excellence – Gender Dynamics in the Classroom](#)
- [American Sociological Association – The Role of Gender in College Classroom Interactions: A Social Context Approach](#)
- [CBE Life Sciences Education – Gender Gaps in Achievement and Participation in Multiple Introductory Biology Classrooms](#)

Sources

- Loevinger, N. (1994). Teaching a Diverse Student Body. University of Virginia.

First-Generation Students



"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."
— *Lao Tzu*

Almost half of the students at UTSA are the **first in their families to attend college**. First-generation students face unique challenges in making the transition from high school to college and ultimately attaining a bachelor's degree.

First-generation students may be **less familiar with social norms** and processes that may be familiar to students whose parents or family members attended. As a result, first-generation students are less likely to be retained from one year to the next and graduate.¹ Faculty need to

be aware of the challenges these students face and understand how to help first-generation students be successful in their first college courses.



Is it worth it?

Some first-generation students decide to go to college to earn a degree and enhance job opportunities. Some enroll to help financially or bring honor to the family.

Some families may not understand if college is worth the money, time, and family separation. Through the college transition, students may also embrace ways of thinking, acting, and speaking that are unfamiliar to families and home communities.

What to Know

- First-generation students may be more likely to arrive on campus with less academic preparation than traditional college-goers.
- They may not have enrolled in college immediately following their high school graduation.
- They may come from high schools that experience lower graduation rates or have less students that are college bound.
- They may be less well-off financially than traditional students, therefore need to work during college and many need financial aid.
- They may not have professional role models at home and seek them in the academic world through their peers and faculty.
- They worry about those they have left at home and many try to provide financial support for their families while in school.

Belonging Matters

Feelings of uncertainty can make students question if they belong in college. To counteract this, first-generation students need good mentors, peer support, and reinforcing messages highlighting that challenges, struggles, and mistakes are normal.



Faculty Matters

Research shows that positive interactions with faculty and other college personnel are correlated to increased academic success and satisfaction with the academic experience (Kuh et al. 2006).

It is important that first-generation students understand where they can find information and assistance. Faculty can connect students to campus support.

Faculty can provide a good foundation for these students by helping them build confidence, giving effective feedback on their progress and encouraging their in-class participation.



Use these strategies in the classroom to help first-generation students succeed:

- Teach study skills.
- Create clear expectations.
- Use rubrics for grading.
- Organize study groups.
- Develop strong relationships.
- Talk about your own first-gen experience.
- Promote grit.
- Let students know that struggling is normal.

Campus Support

UTSA provides specific resources for first-generation students. The University's [First 2 Go & Graduate](#) (F2G&G) initiative emphasizes graduation as the goal. F2G&G's innovative features include the creation of a first-generation faculty to first-generation student coaching program, F2G&G peer mentors, and a F2G&G Council comprised of students and faculty.

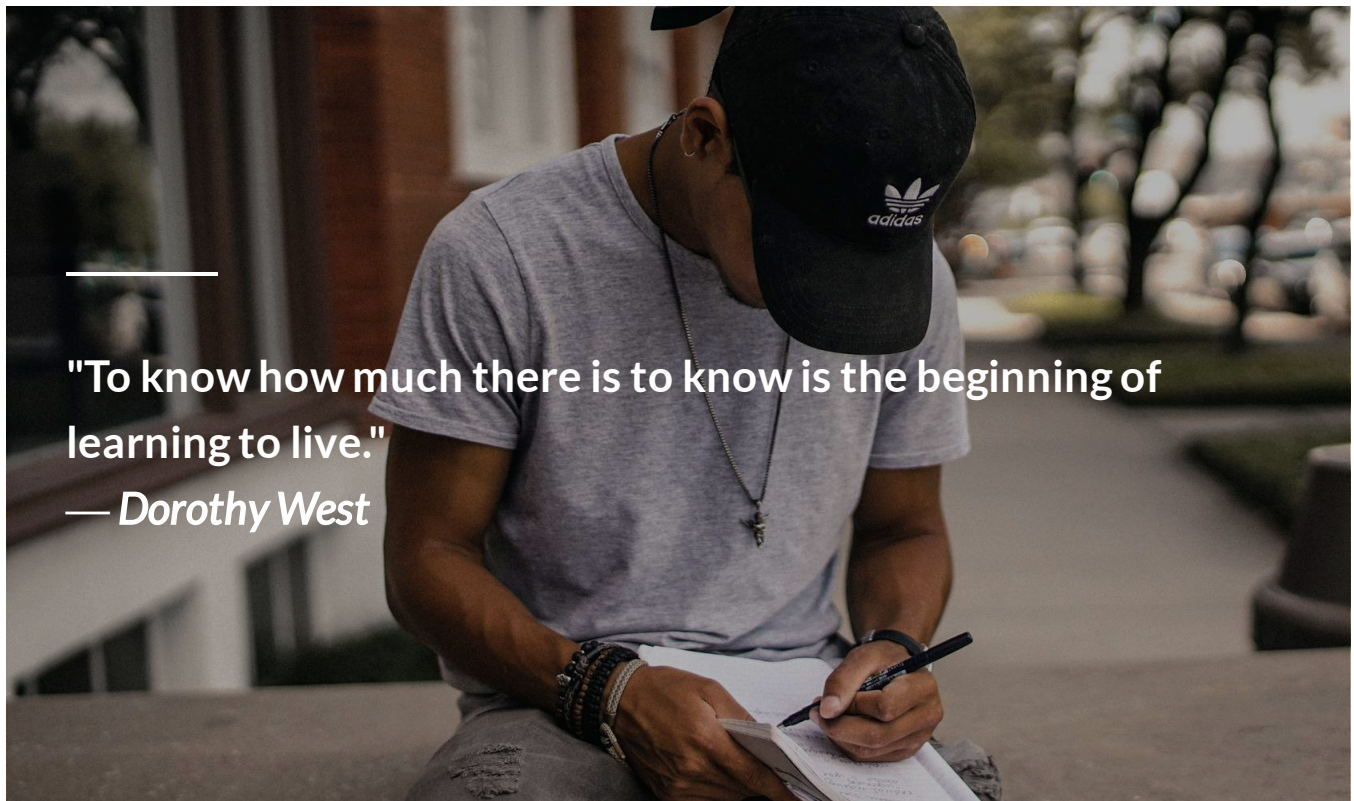
Resources

- [Inside Higher Ed – Who's in First \(Generation\)?](#)
- [Heritage University Institute for Student Identity and Success – Breakthrough Strategies Videos](#)
- [National Postsecondary Education Cooperative – What Matters to Student Success: A Review of the Literature](#)
- [The Washington Post – First-Generation College Students are Not Succeeding in College, and Money Isn't the Problem](#)
- [Knowles Science Teaching Foundation – Do I Belong Here? The Struggles of our First-Generation Students](#)
- [ImFirst.org](#)
- [Vanderbilt University – Teaching First-Generation College Students](#)

Sources

1 Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J.A., Bridges, B.K., & Hayek, J.C. (2006, July). What Matters to Student Success: A Review of the Literature. Commissioned Report for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success: Spearheading a Dialog on Student Success. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Black Students



In Fall 2017, what percentage of the UTSA student body was Black?

- ☐ 9%
- ☐ 15%



27%

SUBMIT

Black students are socially, economically, geographically, and culturally diverse. They may come from urban, suburban, or rural communities. Many may have parents or grandparents who are recent immigrants. Some are international students.

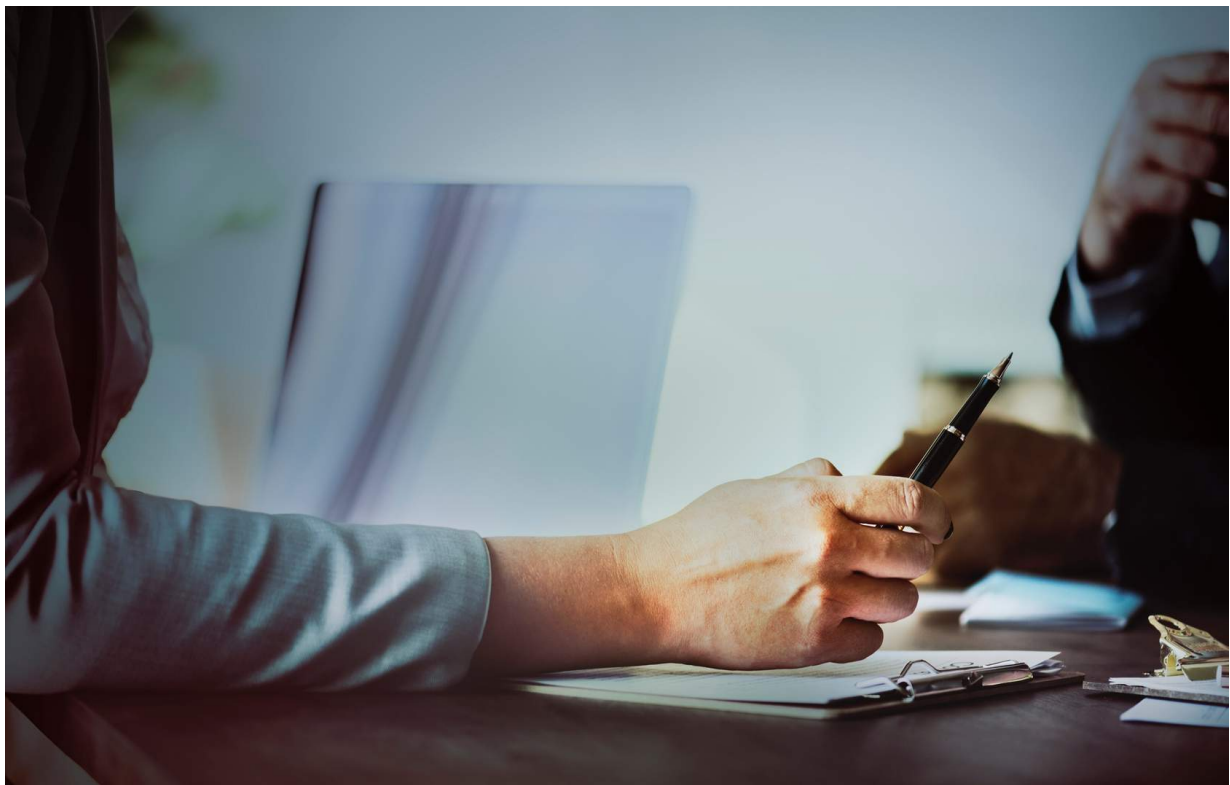
Confronting our assumptions

Even when we don't intend to, we may hold assumptions about a student's background. We may make assumptions about black students' socioeconomic background, academic preparation, writing abilities, musical or stylistic preferences, or opinions on political or social topics.¹ Confronting these assumptions is crucial to removing them as barriers to treating students fairly. Here are some ways to start:

- Ask students: Create opportunities for anonymous student feedback with a Blackboard survey.
- Ask fellow faculty: have a colleague or your [Teaching and Learning Consultant](#) observe your class.
- Check your grades: Look for trends in how you are grading students of color.
- Give feedback that reflects your high standards AND your belief that students can meet them.²
- Include diverse perspectives, authors, and researchers throughout the course, not tacked on at the end.

The "Black" Perspective

A well meaning instructor hoping be inclusive may encourage Black students to share their perspectives. Singling out Black students to be the “voice of Black America” is inappropriate and unhelpful, because there isn't a monolithic Black perspective. No student should be asked to speak for all members of his or her “group.” The student might feel they are expected to express a certain sentiment widely believed to be “the opinion of Black America.” In fact, their view may not conform to the expectations of others. This can create an awkward experience for the student. Use a method of calling on students that ensures that Black students are called on regularly on all topics.



Mentoring Matters

Research shows that Black students benefit significantly from strong mentoring relationships with faculty. "Students of color who were involved with faculty outside of the classroom had higher classroom performance."³ Mentoring creates a sense of belonging and connectedness that improves persistence to a degree.

Resources

- [League for Innovation in the Community College – Barriers to Academic Success: A Qualitative Study of African American and Latino Male Students](#)
- [Penn State University – Why Mentoring Matters: African American Students and the Transition to College](#)
- [Strategies and resources about stereotype threat](#)

Sources

1 Banaji, M. R., Bazerman, M. H., & Chugh, D. (2003). How (un)ethical are you? Harvard Business Review 81(12), 56–64.

2 Yeager, D. S., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., Brzustoski, P., Master, A., Hessert, W., Williams, M. & Cohen, G. L. (2014). Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide Critical Feedback Across the Racial Divide. Journal of Experimental Psychology.

3 Booker, K. & Brevard, E. (2017). Why Mentoring Matters: African-American Students and the Transition to College. The Mentor.

Military Affiliated Students



Military City, USA

Because of our numerous military bases and large numbers of active and retired service members and their families, San Antonio has earned the nickname “Military City, USA”.

Military-affiliated students make up 14% of UTSA’s student population and include active duty military members, military veterans, military reserve members, National Guard members, ROTC students, and dependents of active duty military. These students bring unique life experiences to our campus environment, which enhance the diversity of our classrooms and activities

Military-affiliated students are a diverse and adaptable group. Children of service members may have relocated numerous times, giving them a diverse educational experience. They may have lived in not only multiple cities, but also multiple countries. They may have had to play multiple roles in their households.

The transition that occurs when a service member deploys, separates or retires can impact not only his or her academic performance, but that of family members as well. Instructors should not be hesitant to reach out to these students if they see them falling behind.



Less than 1% of the U.S. population serves.



- There is a powerful dedication and solid bond to their brothers and sisters in the profession.
- They are goal-oriented and mission-focused with a strong sense of teamwork.
- They have broad life and cultural experiences, as well as global perspectives.
- They take their roles seriously whether it is in the military or as a student.
- They are usually more mature, and may be older than the average age of other students.
- They take pride in independent thinking.
- They have different goals than traditional students and may be competitive.
- They are used to a highly-structured environment.

Students who have served in the military, or are currently serving, may bring vast experiences into the classroom. At the same time, they may be hesitant to discuss experiences from their time in the service and should not be forced to do so.

Some service members may be used to following specific directions and may be uncomfortable with assignments that provide little guidance or specifics.

Like many first generation students, some veterans may feel a sense of difficulty fitting in with traditional college students.

Approximately 30% of returning military personnel have a mental health diagnosis. Some veterans may prefer to sit in the back of the classroom or avoid having their back to the door. They may need to leave class unexpectedly.¹

Campus Resources

The [VetSuccess On Campus](#) program is a collaborative effort between UTSA and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure a supportive on-campus environment for student veterans. The main focus is to assist UTSA student veterans in navigating through college as well as helping our veterans to secure gainful employment after graduation.

The [UTSA Student Veteran Association](#) is open to all veterans, active duty, students, faculty, and staff at UTSA. The main focus is to serve and advocate for the student veterans and their family members to foster *esprit de corps* among our student members. It provides comprehensive information, support, networking, professional opportunities, mentoring programs, academic support, and guidance to aid veterans and their families in their intellectual and professional pursuits at UTSA.

[Veterans Certification Office](#) staff go through extensive training as well as attend multiple conferences in order to stay current with legislative issues and changes within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The main focus is to serve our students in the most effective and efficient way possible so they may achieve their educational goals. They ensure that eligible UTSA students receive their federal educational benefits, send certifications of enrollment to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the students and act as a liaison for the Student Veterans Association on campus.

Resources

- [Working with Student Veterans 101](#)
- [AACU – Enhancing Veteran Success in Higher Education](#)
- [Arizona State University – Military Students Offer Tips to Help Incoming Peers at Arizona State](#)
- [VA Campus Toolkit](#)
- [Berkeley College – Veteran Stories Help Berkeley College Professors Foster a Deeper Understanding of Military Students](#)

Sources

1 Working with Student Veterans 101. <https://www.slcc.edu/veterans/docs/working-with-student-veterans-101.pdf>

LGBTQ Students



Gender and sexual orientation should be viewed as a spectrum and faculty should understand that students may self-identify in a variety of ways. Collectively, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students may encounter a multitude of experiences that intentionally and unintentionally marginalize their identities.

LGBTQ students may have to determine whether or not to share their identity in class. If a student decides to “come out” to the class, he or she may fear or face hidden or open

hostility. Snickers, overtly homophobic comments and statements of distaste for these students may be common in the classroom, even in a culture that no longer accepts such language or actions about racial or gender differences.

Such comments can be especially hurtful in a situation where the student is still struggling with his or her sexual orientation.



Here are some ways you can enhance the success of LGBTQ students:

- Don't assume a student's identity.
- React firmly to homophobic remarks in the classroom.
- Don't force students to "come out".
- Don't reveal student identities without permission.
- Consider using terms such as spouse, partner or significant other rather than terms that assume heterosexuality.

- Refer back to the ground rules to protect all students.

Campus Resources

[UTSA's Student Center for Community Engagement and Inclusion](#) provides resources for LGBTQ students and their allies. The center coordinates the Ally Program, a training program for faculty and staff to learn about and be effective advocates and supporters of LGBTQ students, faculty and staff on campus.

Additional Resources

- [Center for Ethics Education, Fordham University – LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum and Classroom Climate](#)
- [Higher Education Today – LGBTQ Students on Campus: Issues and Opportunities for Higher Education Leaders](#)
- [American Association of American Colleges and Universities – Applying the Seven Learning Principles to Creating LGBT-Inclusive Classrooms](#)
- [University of Connecticut – Creating LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum and Classroom Spaces at Colleges and Universities: A Guide for Faculty/Instructors](#)
- [Temple University – LGBTQ Inclusivity Assessment](#)
- [Faculty Focus – Contemporary Classroom Advice from a Transgender Student](#)

Students with Disabilities



How should you handle a student with a disability in your class

- ☐ Make an announcement and ask if anyone in the room needs special accommodations.
- ☐ Offer accommodation, but only once the student has explained what their disability is and what they need.



Meet students and provide reasonable accommodations once you have received official notice from the UTSA Student Disability Services office

SUBMIT

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 11% of all college students report having a disability¹. To meet the needs of these students, UTSA has developed a support service program through the office of [Student Disability Services \(SDS\)](#).

UTSA is committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation. With the passage of federal legislation titled the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens in the United States.

It's the Law

You, as a faculty member, are **required by law** to provide "**reasonable accommodations**" for **equal access to students with disabilities**, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Each faculty member is encouraged to become familiar with relevant federal legislation regarding the rights of students with disabilities. Remember, accommodation isn't just good teaching practice, it's the law.



UTSA Student Disability Services

[UTSA Student Disability Services](#) is located in MS 3.01.16 at the Main Campus and room FS 2.448 at the Downtown Campus and is dedicated to providing an array of services for the student with a disability as well as assist faculty and staff in the implementation of accommodations in the classroom as well as all classroom-related student programs throughout campus.

You will receive notifications regarding a student with a disability and appropriate accommodations to guarantee equal access. Relying on the expertise and guidance available from Student Disability Services will simplify your compliance with the law. Each student will have a unique set of abilities and disabilities requiring unique accommodation(s). These may include but are not limited to:

- Extended time on all examinations.
- Reduced distraction environment for exams.
- Note-taking assistance and/or copies of notes.
- Use of tape recorder in class.
- Preferential seating in the classroom.
- Alternative electronic text formats.
- Sign language interpreter or captionist in class.
- Readers or scribes for tests.
- Large print material or use of CCTV.
- Audio loop (assistive listening device).
- The freedom to change positions or take breaks in class.
- Absentee or tardy leniency.

If a student mentions any physical or mental concern to you as a faculty or staff member, please immediately refer them to Student Disability Services. You should not collect their documentation, letters from doctors, psychological testing or the like. That is the job of the Student Disability Services staff. Once the student registers with the disability services office, faculty will receive a letter of disability verification and a listing of required accommodations from one of the counselors in SDS.

Faculty roles and responsibilities.

Faculty have the right to:

- Request verification of eligibility for any requested accommodations by SDS.
- Expect the student to initiate accommodation requests.
- If the student is taking his or her tests at SDS, expect SDS to administer exams in a secure and monitored environment.

Faculty have the responsibility to:

- Identify and establish essential functions, abilities, skills, and knowledge of their courses and evaluate students on this basis. Students with disabilities should meet the same course expectations as their peers.
- Provide accommodations only to students who are registered with SDS. It is NOT your responsibility to provide accommodations to students who are not registered with SDS.
- Use a syllabus statement and class announcements to invite students to disclose their needs.
- Act immediately upon getting a student's request for accommodations by contacting SDS (if unsure about request), by providing the service or by meeting with students to further discuss the accommodation.
- If a student needs alternative media, please provide SDS with syllabi, textbooks, course packets, etc., well before classes begin (at least 4–8 weeks prior to the start of the semester is recommended) in order for students with disabilities to use alternative media when all other students have course materials.
- Work to ensure that all audio–visual materials used in class are captioned for students with hearing impairments, made with auditory description in some way, or that written transcripts will be provided.
- Clearly communicate your testing procedures with the student and with SDS.

For teaching suggestions for students with certain disabilities, refer to [Accessing Education: A Guide for UTSA Faculty and Staff](#).

What to Know

- Students should not be made to feel that their accommodation is a bother to you or to other students in the class.
- Students with learning or other disabilities are as intelligent, motivated and hard working as other students in class.
- Students have a right to participate equally in classroom activities and learning experiences.
- Students have a right to privacy regarding their disability and with whom they share it.

Resources

- [Vanderbilt Center for Teaching – Creating accessible learning environments](#)
- [OK Higher Ed – Best Practices for Mental Health](#)
- [National Council on Disability – Mental Health on College Campuses – 2017](#)
- [Nat'l Alliance on Mental Illness – Managing Mental Health in College](#)
- [Association on Higher Education and Disability – Resources for Students and Parents](#)
- [National Center for College Students with Disabilities Clearinghouse and Resource Library](#)
- [Accessing Education: A Guide for UTSA Faculty and Staff](#)
- [UTSA Student Disability Services](#)
- [UTSA Testing Services](#)
- [UTSA Counseling Services](#)

Sources

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=60>

International Students



"I truly believe the only way we can create global peace is through not only educating our minds, but our hearts and our souls."

— *Malala Yousafzai*

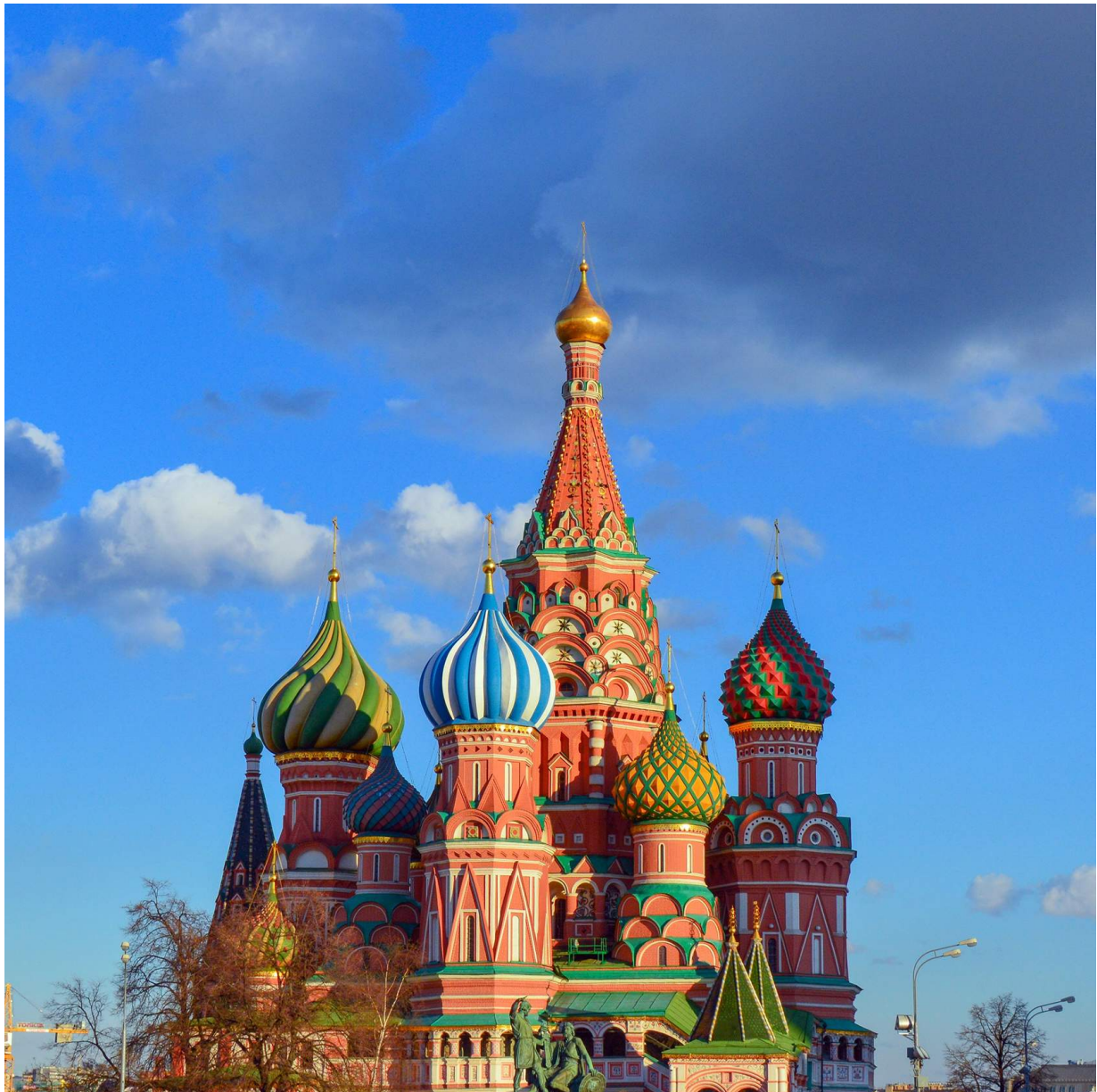
International students make up 5% of UTSA's student population. Students come from countries and cultures across the globe, speaking multiple languages and bringing diverse experiences and perspectives to the classes they attend.

Adapting to Discussion

Many international students express surprise that teachers expect active participation in discussion, and even make it part of the grade. Many international students come from

educational backgrounds that value lecture-style presentations over class discussion, and it may take these students a number of weeks at the beginning of their stay in the U.S. to find the courage to speak in class.

Connecting personally with international students at the beginning of the course provides an opportunity to talk about expectations and challenges. Some students may need a device to help translate difficult terminology. Some students may need to write down a response before they answer a question out loud in class. Other may have travel obligations, and may request flexibility.



Belonging

International students may struggle to find a community or a sense of belonging in the classroom. Make an effort to create a sense of community and get to know your students personally. Students may need time and help adapting to American customs, especially when working in groups with other students.

When asking a student about his or her experience, be sure not to ask a student to act as a representative of his or her country.

Support for International Students

UTSA supports international students through the [International Gateway](#). Services include [International Admissions](#), [ESL Services](#), and [International Student Services](#). Help is available for visas and immigration issues, driver's licenses, health insurance, employment, housing, and more.

Resources

- [U.S. News and World Report – 3 Surprises for International Students at U.S. Universities](#)
- [Tolerance.Org – Strategies for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Prejudice](#)
- [Tomorrow's Professor – Adjusting to American Universities](#)
- [Education Research International – International Students' Challenge and Adjustment to College](#)

Asian American Students



The percentage of Asian Americans who drop out of high school or don't graduate on time is...

☐ 11%

☐ 22%



33%

SUBMIT

Asian American students have diverse backgrounds and experiences. Students may trace their family origins to nations such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, the Philippine Islands, Samoa, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

Asian American students may have immigration experiences and cultural roots in another nation, or they may be multi-generational Americans with little or no connection to any other country.



Unfortunately, research indicates that Asian American students may constantly be treated as foreigners, whether they have just arrived in the United States or if their family has been here for generations.⁵

Stereotyping Asian Students

Be aware of the following stereotypes:

- Assuming students must be great at math or science.
- Assuming students will choose medicine or engineering as a career path.
- Students and faculty assume school work comes easily.
- Faculty are tougher when grading students' work.
- Assumption that Asian students will be quiet in class.
- Assuming students have pushy or demanding family members.
- Assuming a wealthy background.
- Assuming self-reliance.⁴

Did you know Asian American students are:

- More likely to seek medical leave.¹
- More likely to go on academic probation. ¹
- More likely to report difficulties with stress, sleep, feelings of hopelessness.²
- Less likely to graduate in four years.²

- Less likely to seek counseling support.³

How can we help?

- Treat each student as an individual, making as few assumptions as possible.
- Provide students an opportunity to reflect and report in throughout the semester.
- Get to know students and talk to them about their personal goals.
- Consider hiding names when grading papers to avoid judging student work based on stereotypes.

Resources

[Model Minority Stereotype for Asian Americans](#)

Sources

1 Cornell University (2004). Asian and Asian American campus climate task force report.<http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/downloads/campusInitiatives/mentalhealth/AAATFreport2004.pdf>

2 Ly, P (2008). Caught between two cultures. In *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*.
http://diverseeducation.com/artman/publish/article_11578.shtml

3 Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
(http://www.cacf.org/resources__mythsfacts.html)

4 Catholic Campaign for Human Development, 2004 Poverty USA Campaign
(<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/pusainsert.pdf>)

5 Wong, P., Lai, C.F., Nagasawa, R., & Tieming, L. (1998). Asian Americans as a model minority: self-perceptions and perceptions by other racial groups. *Sociological Perspectives* (41/1) http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/SOC217_PIMENTEL/asians3.pdf

Toyama, J., (1988). Asian-Americans on campus: Insights into the “model minority” experience. In Adams, M. & Marchesani, L. (Eds.), *Racial and cultural diversity, curricular content and classroom dynamics: A manual for college teachers*. [handbook] Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts.

Native American Students



"There is but one secret to success: never give up."
— Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Native American students represent what percentage of college-going students in the United States?^[i]

☐ 1%

☐ 5%



7%

SUBMIT

Native American students come from a variety of Native American tribes. Students from each tribe have their own cultural heritage of which they are proud; each with their own language and customs, and their own history.

Students face archaic perceptions about Native Americans as a group, coupled with ignorance of their history and culture. Many class discussions and course materials omit Native American history, perspectives and contributions.

As with Hispanic students and Black students, Native American students may choose to refer to themselves using different terminology. They may refer to themselves as American Indians, indigenous peoples, or use the name of their particular tribal nation.



Indigenous Peoples

In addition to the Native American tribes in the United States, many students identify with indigenous communities in Central or South America as well as Canada. In some cases, students may still speak or write a native language. Encouraging students to speak about their culture and customs offers an important learning opportunity for the entire class.

Native American students face numerous barriers to success in higher education. They are often first generation students who may lack role models, have dependents at home, and are more likely to live in poverty.¹ Only 39% of Native American students graduate within 4 years.²

Just as with other underrepresented student populations, a sense of belonging is strongly tied to academic success. In the classroom, create opportunities for community building, encourage student involvement in socializing and student clubs, and provide office hours options and flexibility that works around their care-taking and work responsibilities.^[i] Give students a chance to introduce themselves and talk about their culture. Whenever possible, include Native American and indigenous perspectives in the classroom.

Resources

- [The Journal of Higher Education – It's About Family: Native American Student Persistence in Higher Education](#)
- [American College Personnel Association – Elevating Native American College Students' Sense of Belonging in Higher Education](#)
- [NPR Education – How is the Native College Experience Different?](#)
- [George Fox University – The Transculturation of Native American College Students](#)

Sources

1 Elevating Native American College Students' Sense of Belonging in Higher Education. (2015). College Student Educators International. <http://www.myacpa.org/article/elevating-native-american-college-students-sense-belonging-higher-education>

2 Knapp, L. G., Kelly-Reid, J. E., & Ginder, S. A. (2012). Enrollment in postsecondary institutions, fall 2011; Financial statistics, fiscal year 2011; and graduation rates, selected cohorts, 2003–2008. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Nontraditional Students



A quarter of UTSA's student population is 25 years or older. Many of these students are married, parents, and/or work full-time. Some are students who enrolled as traditional students, but had to leave for various reasons and are now returning to complete a bachelor's degree. Others are changing careers or returning from military service. They may be dealing with children, older parents, mortgages, jobs, marriages or divorces while they study for a degree. Nontraditional

students have different demands on their time and attention than the average undergraduate.



**Nontraditional students:**

- May feel a sense of alienation in the classroom due their different life experiences.
- May have personal and professional timelines that do not match that of a traditional, eighteen-year-old, first time enrolled college students.
- May worry about how other students will interact with them.
- May relate differently to faculty who are closer to their own age and have similar personal responsibilities.
- May feel impatient with younger students.
- May have difficulties fitting in with classroom groups.
- May struggle to share their student experiences.
- May have less exposure to recent technologies and the communication habits of their younger colleagues.
- May need to re-acclimate to study habits and classroom norms.
- May have outside priorities that conflict with classroom responsibilities.

Faculty can help nontraditional students succeed by:

- Using problem-centered teaching methods that apply concepts to real-life tasks.
- Offering assignments that increase the learner's sense of control over the learning process.
- Harnessing their work and life experiences in discussions and assignments.

- Signaling your understanding of family and work commitments.
- Building a sense of community in your classroom to bridge age and experience gaps.
- Highlighting campus activities designed for families.

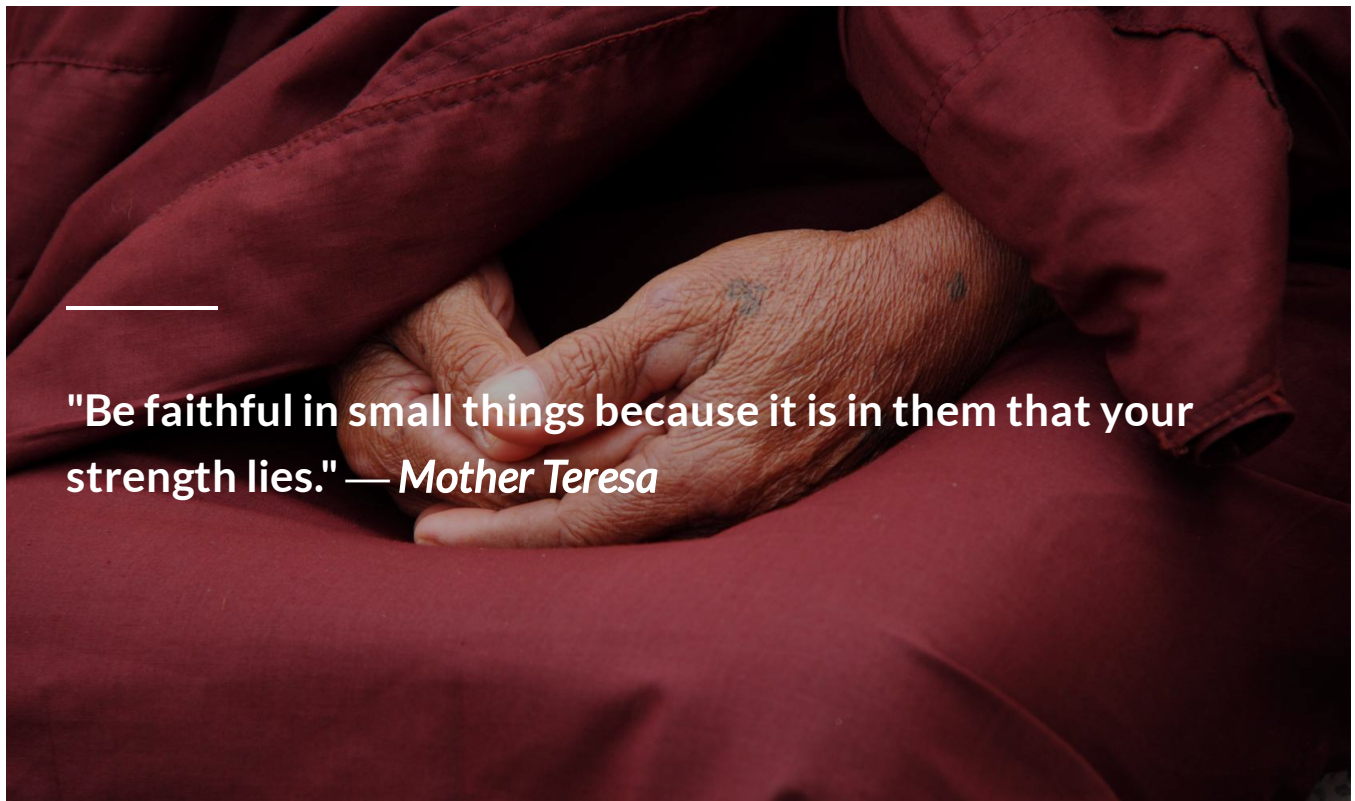
Resources

- [National Center for Education Statistics – Who is Nontraditional?](#)
- [Association of American Colleges and Universities – Research on Adult Learners: Supporting the Needs of a Student Population that is No Longer Traditional](#)
- [American Psychological Association – The Nontraditional Student](#)
- [NPR Education – Shaken by Economic Change, Nontraditional Students are Becoming the New Normal](#)

Sources

Candy, Philip. C. 1991. Self-direction for Lifelong Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Religious Identity



The diversity of UTSA's student body also includes diversity of religious beliefs. Some students display their faith through accessories, attire, or carrying religious texts. Others do not show any outward display of their beliefs, but this does not mean they do not hold them strongly. Avoid making comments about religious dress or artifacts that students may or may not choose to wear. Different people practice their religions in a multitude of ways.

Because of the religious diversity in the U.S. and the strength of some of your students' faith, religion can surface as a topic in any class. Criticizing the beliefs or practices of any religion when such a criticism is not important to the content of the course can unnecessarily alienate

students who hold those beliefs. Alternately, discussing religion when it is not important to the content of the course can alienate those who do not identify with or practice any religion or worship any deity.





Accommodating Religious Observance

In the U.S., many, although not all, Christian holy days fall on official university holidays. This can put non-Christians at a disadvantage since classes are usually held on their religion’s major holy days, such as Yom Kippur or Ramadan.

Faculty must excuse and not penalize a student who is absent due to observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Faculty should review the [UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures; Chapter 5, Section 9](#) and [The Texas Education Code and Administrative Code](#) sections that provide information about Student Absences on Religious Holy Days.

Consider holding office hours, asking for a volunteer to share notes, or offering alternate activities to help students stay on top of classwork while observing their faith.

CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS	HINDU HOLIDAYS	JEWISH HOLIDAYS	MUSLIM HOLIDAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christmas – celebrates the birth of Jesus• Ash Wednesday – a day of atonement that falls 40 days before Easter• Good Friday – Commemorates the Crucifixion of Jesus• Easter – Commemorates the resurrection of Jesus			

CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS	HINDU HOLIDAYS	JEWISH HOLIDAYS	MUSLIM HOLIDAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divlai – Hindu New Year Festival of Lights 			

CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS	HINDU HOLIDAYS	JEWISH HOLIDAYS	MUSLIM HOLIDAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rosh Hashanah – Jewish New Year Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement Hanukkah – Military victory of the Maccabees Passover – Exodus of the Jews from Egypt 			

CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS	HINDU HOLIDAYS	JEWISH HOLIDAYS	MUSLIM HOLIDAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ramadan: celebrates the 9th month in the Muslim calendar in which the Qur'an was revealed Eid-ul-fitr: Last day of Ramadan Eid-ul-Ahza – End of the "hajj" or pilgrimage to Mecca Eid-ul-maulid-in-nabiy: Prophet Mohammed's birthday 			

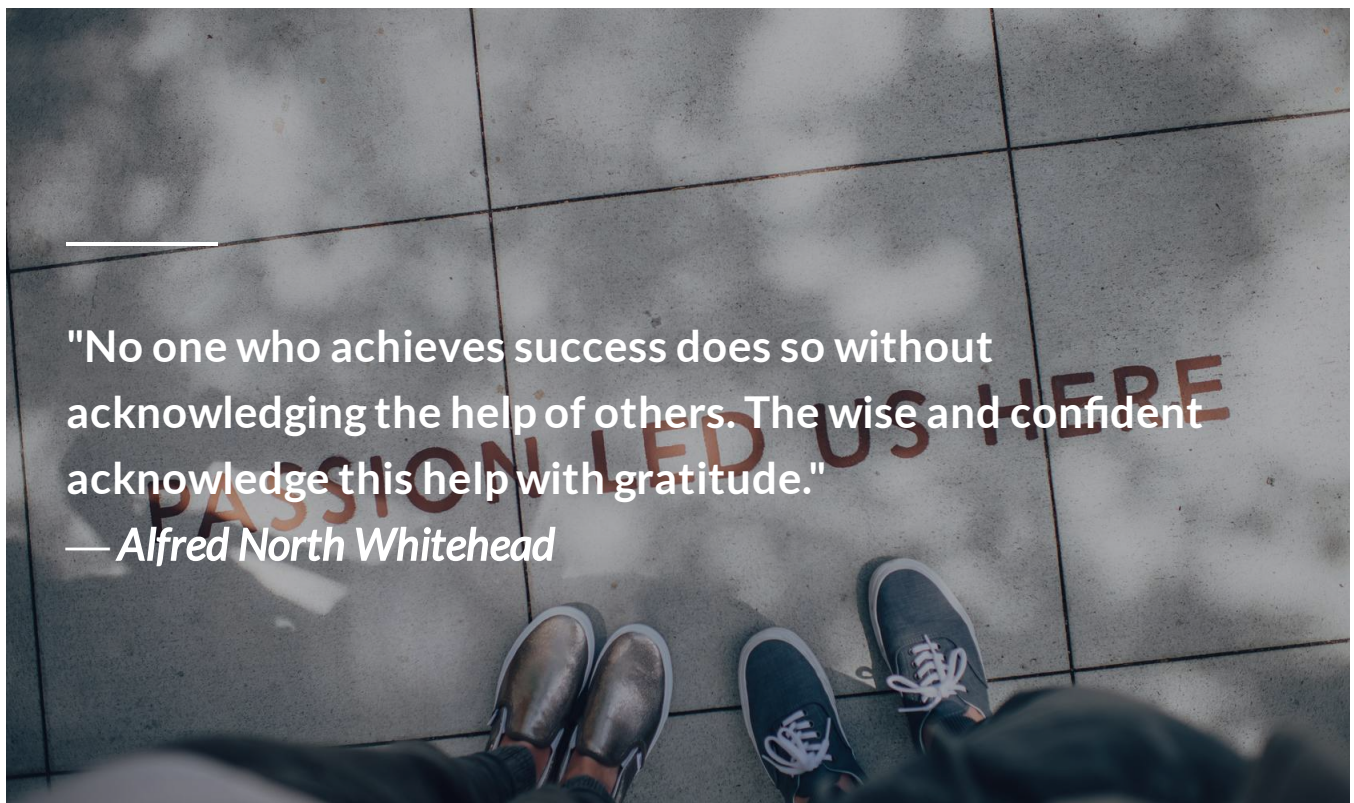
This list describes some of the most commonly celebrated religious holidays. It should not be considered an inclusive list. Other faiths, denominations, and disciplines may include additional dates. For example, dates and observances for Russian Orthodox Christian students may differ from those of protestant Christian students.

Many potential clashes of values in the classroom and the world come from differing religious backgrounds. Beliefs often inform students' cultural and political views. Do not comment on religious beliefs unless such critique is part of the class content. One can examine the reasons for a political conclusion without offending the person who has reached such a conclusion. Here, establishing an initial “contract” with your students to show respect for others becomes useful, both in the way you handle the topic, and as a reminder to your students.

Resources

- [North Carolina Central University – What Students Think About Religious Diversity](#)
- [Interfaith Youth Core – Emerging Interfaith Trends: What College Students are Saying About Religious Diversity](#)
- [USA Today – College Students Divided on God, Spirituality](#)
- [Pew Research Center – Religious Landscape Study: College Graduates](#)

Final thoughts



Inclusive teaching offers all students the opportunity to engage as full participants in a diverse community of learners. It is about respect, appreciation, and belonging. We value our faculty's commitment to creating exceptional educational opportunities for all UTSA students. If you would like to continue this conversation, or are interested in a teaching consultation, visit UTSA TLS at <http://teaching.utsa.edu>.

The authors of this guide, Mary Dixson, Ph.D. and Shelley Howell, Ed.D. would like to thank Paul Rodriguez, TLS Faculty Fellow and the members of the UTSA Faculty Learning Community on Diversity and Inclusion for their contributions to this guide: Kristabel Agüero, Paul Ardoin, Orlando Bolanos, Lapetra Bowman, Sara DeTurk, Claudia Garcia-Louis, Mark Giles, Norma Guerra, David Han, Anne Hardgrove, Matthias Hofferberth, Sue Hum, Carolyn Luna, Lee Mason, Terri Matiella.

This guide builds on existing works and shares the resources of others. We are grateful for all organizations that freely share their knowledge, and in particular, the generosity of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill whose initial work [Teaching for Inclusion: Diversity in the College Classroom \(1997\)](#), inspiration for this guide.

While this guide is tailored specifically for UTSA faculty, others are welcome to use and share the content, as long as credit is given to UTSA and the authors.

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