**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at C.A.S. of Quinnipiac University**

**Steps for improving DEI in the classrooms and beyond**

Based on the results from our qualitative survey, we would like to share some immediate steps to re-think our learning/teaching spaces, strategies, tools, relationships, and so on. This is a living document that will change throughout time with your cooperation and feedback. **Please feel free to add suggestions** [(Link to the living document)](https://quinnipiacuniversity-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/msscauso_quinnipiac_edu/EYxrDNJcwM1Eq7ivwE_TLYwB0g9QiVCcrbBcwblyxIihFg?e=s0o21z). We truly hope this is helpful!

1. **General advice** on teaching inclusively:
   1. Anti-Racism / Racial Justice: Teach (ABL): <https://libraryguides.quinnipiac.edu/c.php?g=1116200&p=8154680>
   2. Anti-Racism in Medicine, Nursing, & Health Sciences: Pedagogy (Netter Library) <https://libraryguides.quinnipiac.edu/c.php?g=1050948&p=8220757>
   3. Link to other sources:
      1. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-make-your-teaching-more-inclusive/>
   4. Our students experience life in complex, fluid, and diverse ways!! Why not learn from them how to think about them. A simple way to learn might be to use open and anonymous surveys that students can submit with feedback about our own practices and the ways in which we can improve our classrooms. These spaces can democratize the classroom and create wonderful opportunities to listen.
2. **Implicit biases and microaggressions:** What does this mean? We all have unconscious thoughts or “stereotypical” ideas which shape our decisions and actions. Sometimes these are markedly different from our expressed beliefs. Often, during everyday informal interactions, these implicit biases result in unintended microaggressions. One way of identifying these biases is to analyze whether a statement reinforces dominant ideas of inferiority that are related to broader forms of structural violence. At the same time, just listening and learning from those affected is extremely important. Good news: biases can be understood and changed.
   1. Link to sources:
      1. Microaggressions in the Classroom - Powerful student reflections on the microaggressions they experience and the effects of these microaggressions. Faculty describe how they handle microaggressions by students in class or when they commit one themselves, starting at 12m29s. <https://youtu.be/ZahtlxW2CIQ>
      2. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
      3. <https://www.vox.com/2014/12/26/7443979/racism-implicit-racial-bias>
      4. <https://communityactionpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CAPwhat-is-IB.pdf>
      5. <https://www.rit.edu/diversity/sites/rit.edu.diversity/files/2020-08/Microaggressions_in_the_Classroom.pdf>
3. **Choose language carefully**: This should address the usage of verbal language and language on educational materials including slides, textbooks, and other resources. For example, avoid using the “N” word! (According to our surveys, students have witnessed faculty using the “N” word in the classroom, which is unacceptable even if professors are referencing old documents or literature that uses it. There is no need to reproduce racism just to be faithful to a text).
   1. Link to sources:
      1. <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/guidelines-for-achieving-bias-free-communication>
      2. <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/guidelines-inclusive-language>
      3. <https://seeds.sproutsocial.com/writing/inclusive-language/>
4. **Tokenism:** What is tokenism in the classroom? It is the reliance on a person of a particular group to continuously represent the views and opinions of that entire group. Oftentimes, tokenism also entails advertising this person as representative of particular groups while ignoring their voice and calls for change.
   1. Link to sources:
      1. <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article/figure?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1008210.g002>
      2. <https://recatalyst.org/716/news/for-students-of-color-tokenism-in-the-classroom-takes-a-toll/>
5. **Pre-judging and punishing:** As we know, students are often dealing with personal struggles that are not known or visible to us as faculty. It is so easy to make assumptions about why a student is late with an assignment or why a student is doing poorly on exams, but we can all take a moment to listen more attentively and openly and minimize blaming.
6. **Reproducing injustices:** Since some of our students might be facing disproportional obstacles and difficulties due to social and structural issues such as racism, poverty, discrimination, etc., the pre-judgment of the student and their punishment could even lead to the reinforcement of even more disproportionate obstacles. Thinking about our role as Professors while taking into account this problem might help us to listen more attentively and to provide more opportunities when they are needed.
7. **Syllabi**: use inclusive language; state course policies using positive terms (not punitive); consider retitling “office hours” to ‘student support hours;” add a land acknowledgement and discuss it in your first class; add title IX and other resources for students; do you have literature by authors with different backgrounds, experiences, methodologies, etc.? Choose course videos and readings that capture the lived experiences of people from different races, genders, ages, classes, and cultures. Consider adopting open-access resources in the classroom and making these resources available to students through Blackboard.
   1. Link to sources:
      1. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-create-a-syllabus/>
8. **Tone policing:** “a conversational tactic that dismisses the ideas being communicated when they are perceived to be delivered in an angry, frustrated, sad, fearful, or otherwise emotionally charged manner” (see link below for reference). This form of violence relies on stereotypes of people who are regarded as “emotional” and those who are understood as “rational” or “civilized,” disproportionally affecting racialized minorities and silencing their voices without listening to their arguments.
   1. Link to sources:
      1. <https://metro.co.uk/2021/08/19/what-is-tone-policing-how-is-it-used-to-silence-people-of-colour-15112525/>
9. **Gaslighting**: “This occurs when one begins to question their own sanity and reality because they are being manipulated by others. This type of psychological abuse causes people to second guess their experiences, emotions, knowledge, judgment, memories, and ultimately their humanity” (see link below for reference). This issue was reported in our survey by students, faculty, and staff, whose experiences were denied even as they happened in front of their eyes. In some cases, this can be connected to biases and issues emerging from racism, sexism, ableism, etc. This is also connected to a reported feeling of isolation because the denial of other’s reality often makes them feel alone and invalidated. That this is a shared experience shows that we need to listen more carefully to the people who suffer issues and do not see current policies as solving their situation in the classrooms and beyond.
   1. Link to sources:
      1. <https://www.diverseeducation.com/opinion/article/15108651/racelighting-a-prevalent-version-of-gaslighting-facing-people-of-color>
10. **Supporting accommodations**: Be sure to let your students know how they can communicate any accommodations they may need in your class. Communications of this sort should be private, and preferably in writing to ensure clear understanding. Some accommodations are less frequent and/or institutionally recognized in the letters written by the Office of Student Accessibility, but anonymous surveys can ask students whether they have accommodation preferences that might help us to create a much more effective learning space for everyone.
    1. Link to sources:
       1. <https://www.perkinselearning.org/technology/blog/tips-handling-academic-ableism-classroom>
11. **Representation:** Underrepresented students do better and are more likely to persist in their field when they have role models, either in person or mentioned and depicted in classroom materials. If standard textbooks reinforce whiteness, straightness, masculinity, and ability, discuss this with students and provide more inclusive supplementary materials – or use and Open Educational Resource and allow students to update it with more inclusive representation.
    1. Link to sources:
       1. [Disrupting Androcentrism in Social Psychology Textbooks : A Call for Critical Reflexivity](https://www.awryjcp.com/index.php/awry/article/view/7)
       2. [The Syllabus is a Boys' Club: The Paucity of Woman Authors in Journalism Course Materials](https://aejmc.us/spig/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2020/11/TJMC-Heckman-Homan-Syllabus-Boys-Club.pdf)
       3. *OpenStax:* [We believe textbooks should be diverse and inclusive. Here's what we're doing about it.](https://openstax.org/blog/we-believe-textbooks-should-be-diverse-and-inclusive-heres-what-were-doing-about-it)
       4. [Teaching Between the Lines: Representation in Science Textbooks](http://libraryproxy.quinnipiac.edu/login?url=https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2020.10.010)
12. **Gender inclusivity in your classroom**: For a classroom to be a true space of exploration and growth, every person within that class needs to feel safe and respected. Recognizing the impact of your language of gender, sex, and/or sexuality is a great way to enhance inclusivity and improve learning within your classroom. Language and power relations are important factors in the constructions of gendered or sexualized identities because they might sustain biases or create more belonging and inclusivity. If these relationships and social constructions can empower us or undermine us, why not allow your students and colleagues to tell you how to achieve the former?
    1. Basic concepts and discussions:
       1. Sex: this is often understood as a biological category (i.e., gonads, chromosomes, genitalia). Sex is often assigned at birth and includes male, female, transgender, or intersex, but does biology entail behavior and/or identity? Does the connection between biological variables and identities use correlations that oftentimes reinforce stereotypes? This is a complex discussion, but understanding that there are important debates about this should at least signal to us that we ought to be careful on how we assume “sex.”
       2. Gender Identity: As most feminist scholars point out, gender tends to be the social and hierarchical construction of “masculine” and “feminine” identities. To avoid some of the biases and the impositions that emerge when we pre-determine identities for others in binary and hierarchical ways, we can think of gender as much more fluid, changing, and complex. People might re-construct their identities in many different ways that they can tell you about if you respectfully create spaces for them to introduce themselves.
       3. Sexuality entails definitions of who someone is attracted to romantically, physically, and intellectually, but this is also oftentimes assumed within the “masculine” and “feminine” binaries and within notions of biology. This creates impositions and biases that exclude other forms of identities and sexualities. Again, people might experience sexuality in fluid and diverse ways, do not make assumptions or impose.
    2. Simple Steps toward gender inclusivity
       1. Pronouns are a public way in which people are referred to in place of their name (e.g. "he" or "she" or "they" or "ze" or something else). Do not assume that you know a person’s pronoun, and do not assume that pronouns are binary. Instead, learn your students’ pronouns.
       2. Names: Many people might go by a name in daily life that is different from their legal name. In the classroom, we should aim to refer to people by their preferred names. Faculty and staff can invite students and colleagues to share what pronouns they use, but sometimes asking each student for their pronouns in public can cause issues because heteronormal patterns make others feel minoritized and even excluded. So, you can ask for a letter of introduction or an introduction card on the student’s desk. Some strategies are more respectful than others. You can also share your own preferred pronoun(s) in e-mail signatures, Blackboard course pages, on slides, syllabi, etc.
          1. Source: <https://lgbtq.umd.edu/good-practices-names-and-pronouns>
       3. Address your class avoiding binary gender terms such as “ladies and gentlemen.” Most might know this, but we can also avoid marginalizing language such as using “men” when referring to “humanity.”
    3. Resources:
       1. <https://crlt.umich.edu/blog/gender-inclusive-practices-your-teaching>
       2. <https://lgbtq.umd.edu/good-practices-names-and-pronouns>
       3. <http://thesafezoneproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/SZP-Language-DO-DONT-Handout.pdf>
       4. <https://www.gsws.pitt.edu/resources/faculty-resources/gender-inclusive-non-sexist-language-guidelines-and-resources>
       5. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
       6. <https://www.theequalityproject.org.au/blog/lgbtiqa-inclusive-language-guide>
13. **Universal Design for Learning**: “The UDL Guidelines are not meant to be a “prescription” but a set of suggestions that can be applied to reduce barriers and maximize learning opportunities for all learners. They can be mixed and matched according to specific learning goals and can be applied to particular content areas and contexts. In many cases, educators find that they are already incorporating some aspects of these guidelines into their practice; however, barriers to the learning goal may still be present. We see the Guidelines as a tool to support the development of a shared language in the design of goals, assessments, methods, and materials that lead to accessible, meaningful, and challenging learning experiences for all.”
    1. Link to sources:
       1. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/about-graphic-organizer>
14. **Making mistakes:** Since the struggles of students, faculty, and staff in our community are incredibly diverse and complex, it is very difficult for any of us to understand what others face in their homes, institution, town, country, etc. Hence, inclusive interactions and teaching entail a constant process of learning. Moreover, we all might make mistakes, reproduce tropes, enact biases, misunderstand others, etc. If this happens, we can always check in with students or colleagues privately, apologize, and learn. Notions of reflexivity and self-problematization might help us to think about our own learning processes.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at the College of Arts and Sciences, Quinnipiac University:**

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