

Teaching Tip Tuesday

Facilitating Belonging By Providing Safe Spaces

Safe Spaces and Inclusion

Student success is negatively impacted when students feel excluded, harassed, threatened, or discriminated against. Current political discourse may exacerbate feelings of isolation and oppression for many LGBTQIA+ students. To ensure the best possible outcome for all students, instructors strive to provide inclusive classroom environments. This should include providing Safe Spaces, in which students are free to express their unique identities in a judgement-free environment. You can provide safe spaces in and outside of the classroom.

How to Provide Safe Spaces

Attend Training

Learning about how to be an ally to members of the LGBTQIA+ community is a great first step toward being inclusive. Training can help you to better understand the preferred language to discuss issues of gender and sexuality, and will provide insight into LGBTQIA+ identities and issues.

Display a Safe Zone Placard

Letting students know that they can confide in you about their identities and experiences demonstrates that you are committed to fostering an inclusive environment. Advertising your allyship can also signify to students a safe harbor in the event of harassment.

Call out Microaggressions

LGBTQIA+ students are subjected to harassment and microaggressions. Microaggressions are intentionally and unintentionally delivered slights, insults, and invalidations that produce a hostile environment. They often involve endorsement of heteronormative or gendernormative culture, expressed discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQIA+ identities or experiences, denial of homophobia and transphobia, and othering. If you witness microaggressions taking place, use your position of power and privilege to shine a light on them. Take a moment to ask the offender to clarify their meaning, using the opportunity to highlight how the comment, however intended, can be destructive.

Join FSGSA

The Faculty/Staff Gender and Sexuality Association is a visible presence on campus that brings together gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender, and questioning individuals and their allies across all areas of the university for the purpose of reducing fear, prejudice, and discrimination.

For more information on Safezone Training, visit: <https://www3.uwsp.edu/citl/Pages/SafeZone.aspx>