

# Teaching Tip Tuesday

## Inclusive Classrooms

A student's success in a course is directly tied to their experience in the classroom. In an **inclusive classroom**, students and their instructors work together to establish a space in which all participants feel supported, included, and safe to express their concerns, ideas, and viewpoints. By definition, such an environment values and encourages diversity of experience and opinion. In spite of the value of authentically inclusive classrooms, many faculty are unsure how to effectively establish them. Here are some handy tips for fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment

- 1 Learn and use preferred names.** Taking time to master the pronunciation of a name demonstrates respect.
- 2 Grade with consistent standards.** Hide the identity of students while grading, and be sure to use a rubric to ensure consistent application of standards. This prevents bias and the perception of bias.
- 3 Highlight the contributions of diverse scholars in your field.** In this way, your course will reflect a diverse society, and demonstrate respect for the contributions of all.
- 4 Ensure that all course materials are fully accessible.** Use closed-captioning, alternative text, and formatting styles on all relevant materials.
- 5 Establish ground rules for respectful communication.** In addition to written guides for discussion etiquette, be sure to model both how to acknowledge differences in experience and thought, and ways to respectfully disagree.
- 6 Remember not to be flippant.** What you view as playful is often perceived by students as snark. Model earnest and respectful communication with students.
- 7 Make eye-contact with multiple students.** When making eye-contact with students during class, make sure that you are not avoiding particular students.
- 8 Avoid alienating struggling students.** Phrases like "Plain to see" or "Obvious to everybody" decrease the sense of efficacy of struggling students, leading to perceptions of lack of respect for their difficulty with material.
- 9 Normalize asking for help.** Model how to ask for help, or discuss times when YOU have asked for help. Be aware that there are cultural and gender differences in how proactive students are in seeking help.
- 10 Institute a formal meeting protocol.** Meeting with ALL students one-on-one after the first assignment or exam helps put struggling students in the path of aid without singling them out.