

Teaching Tip Tuesday

Fostering Equity in your Courses

Although many people use the terms interchangeably, equity is not the same as equality. **Equality** means treating all students the same way. This can be problematic, because each student has a unique set of life circumstances and lived experiences, so that equal treatment does not lead to equal results. In contrast, **equity** in the classroom means addressing the specific needs/conditions of each student, with the intent eliminating avoidable differences between groups. Rather than focusing on equality, **equity is about being fair**, eliminating biases, and lowering barriers to the educational success of **ALL** students. Here are some strategies for increasing equity in your courses:

Eliminate Positional Bias in the Classroom

To prevent inadvertent preferential treatment for students in the front of the class, consider moving through the classroom as you lecture, interacting with students in all seating positions. When possible, rearrange seating into pods, eliminating the “front” and “back” distinction of rows.

Provide Flexibility

One size does NOT fit all. Consider how you can provide students with different means of accessing content (video, powerpoint, lecture, reading) and different means of demonstrating knowledge (writing, presenting, testing).

Grade Blindly

Biased creeps into grading as we come to “expect” a certain level of performance from particular students. Have students identify their work by student number, rather than name, or use anonymous grading in Canvas to increase fairness in evaluation.

Use Standards-based Grading

Inclusion of points for attendance, participation, effort, or extra-credit work can reduce the grades of many students from economically disadvantaged, non-traditional, and ESL backgrounds, since their attendance and participation may be compromised by life-circumstances, but their learning may not be. Basing grades solely on the achievement of specified learning goals reduces barriers to success.

Model Inclusive Behaviors

Students of all backgrounds achieve at higher levels when they feel valued and respected. Model inclusive language in your course, and address inappropriate remarks by students, detailing how the remarks cause harm. Highlight the contribution to your field of scholars from diverse backgrounds. Refrain from assumptions about students’ prior knowledge and experiences.