Promoting Learning through Diversity: The Inclusive Classroom
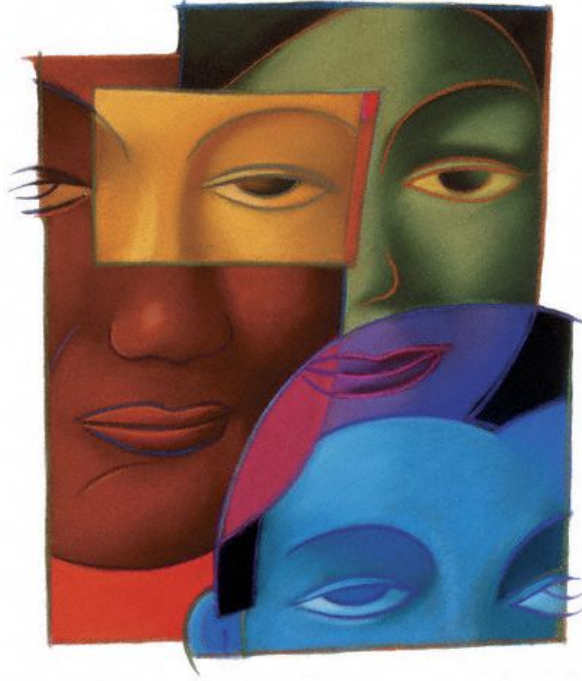

Module 2 Scenario

Consider this scenario:

During the first meeting of a math class, a GSI announces that the course will be graded on a curve. As the students move into small groups to work through a problem, the GSI hears two students complaining to each other that there are so many Asian students in the course it will "raise the curve." The GSI and several other students overhear the comment.

How should the GSI respond?

? Ignore the comment, since it was not addressed to the GSI and it occurred apart from the portions of the class session where the GSI addressed all the students together.
No. Even though this wasn't said to the GSI directly, the comment reflects a stereotype that can negatively affect students, so you want to make sure you address it.

? Ask the students who voiced the complaint to come to office hours to talk about what they said.

Not exactly. To support any students who may have been affected by the comment, and to set the expectation of respectful speech, you should discuss the stereotyping comment with all the students, not just the students who made it.

Speak to the students who voiced the complaint, take a few moments during the next class meeting to name and dispel the stereotype and explain to everyone the purpose of the grading curve and how it works.

Right. You need to address the stereotype with the group as a whole in order to establish clear expectations for respectful speech in your class. But to avoid catching the students who voiced the complaint by surprise, you should try to speak with them first. Explain that while they may have meant no harm, their comments can negatively impact other students and are not acceptable in your class. Tell them that you don't plan to point them out personally, but that you do need to discuss the issue of stereotypes with the entire class so that everyone is clear that discriminatory talk will not be tolerated in your classroom. It's important to note that even seemingly positive stereotypes (Asian students do well in math) can have detrimental effects by virtue of putting undue pressure on the target of the positive stereotype to perform academically at a certain level. In the remote environment, you may not hold frequent synchronous meetings with all of your students, and such a comment may appear in other places, e.g., on an asynchronous discussion board. In these cases, it is still important to follow up with students who make discriminatory comments and to convey the same message about the harms of stereotypes to all of your students. You may choose to do this in a bCourses announcement or email.

This is one of many scenarios GSIs may face in the course of their teaching. We will return to the options presented here later in the module.

Preview of Module 2 (Page 3 of 31)

Working amid the varied backgrounds, perspectives, and knowledge of a diverse community enriches the learning environment and contributes to students' social development. Conversely, experiences of discrimination limit learning and restrict students' equal access to education. As an instructor at UC Berkeley, part of your job is to create a classroom or lab or studio environment in which students can thrive and benefit from the campus's diversity.

Topics

In this module, **Promoting Learning through Diversity: The Inclusive Classroom**, you will examine

- the diversity of UC Berkeley students;
- advantages and challenges of learning in a diverse environment;

- strategies and resources for promoting an inclusive academic environment; and
- relevant policies and laws.

Learning Objectives

After exploring these topics, it is hoped that you will be able to take steps and find resources to meet the following objectives:

- explain to a colleague why GSIs should strive for an inclusive academic environment;
- identify instances of discrimination, stereotyping, and harassment in the learning environment;
- develop informed and measured responses to discrimination, stereotyping, and harassment in the learning environment;
- develop pedagogical and professional-development practices that promote inclusion and support equity for all students;
- refer to federal legislation and campus policies on nondiscrimination based on protected categories; and
- identify campus resources that can help you and your students learn more about ways to build and benefit from an inclusive learning environment.

Student Diversity at UC Berkeley (Page 4 of 31)

As is the case in U.S. higher education generally, Berkeley students have a myriad of different backgrounds and experiences. Dimensions of diversity can include:

- racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds
- socio-economic backgrounds
- previous educational experience
- gender identification
- sexual orientation
- military service
- student parents
- disability
- religion
- age
- immigration status
- prior incarceration
- cultural practices, beliefs, and orientations

The statistics and survey responses on the following pages highlight the diversity in UC Berkeley's undergraduate and graduate student populations. The identity of any individual draws uniquely on multiple intersections among these factors. As you browse through the data, think about how the diversity they reflect might shape students' experiences of the learning environment.

Student Diversity at UC Berkeley - Continued (Page 5 of 31)

The following statistics illustrate the diversity of UC Berkeley's student population:

Category	Undergraduate		Graduate	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Total Enrolled	31,352		11,833	
Female [1]	16,794	54	5,403	46
Male [1]	14,329	46	6,286	53
White [1]	7,495	24	3,935	33
Asian / Pacific Islander [1]	12,413	40	2,194	19
Hispanic / Latino(a) [1]	4,850	15	1,004	8
African American [1]	1,083	3	478	4
American Indian/Alaskan Native [2, 6]	138	<1	67	<1
Decline to State Race/Ethnicity [1]	1,387	4	723	6

International [1]	3,986	13	3,432	29
California Resident [1]	23,650	75	5,232	44
First-Generation College Students [1]	8,211	26	n/a	n/a
Pell Grant Recipients [1]	7,961	25	n/a	n/a
Transfer Students [2]	6,270	20	n/a	n/a
Student Parents [7]	300	n/a	n/a	8
Age 25 or Older [2]	1,881	6	n/a	n/a
Students with Disabilities [3]	2,495	8	200	2
Student Athletes [4]	873	2.8	9	n/a
Student Veterans or Active Duty Military Service Members [5]	126	0.4	155	1.3

In addition to showing the diversity among UC Berkeley students, these statistics also allow us to contrast the diversity profile of the graduate student population with that of the undergraduate population. Among graduate students there are significantly lower percentages of California residents, female students, and Latinx students; and there are significantly higher percentages of international students, male students, White students, and student parents.

Sources

[1] Data on sex, race/ethnicity, international student status, first-generation status, Pell Grant recipients, and California resident status are from the UC Information Center's 2019 Fall Enrollment data. Percentages are rounded. Race/ethnicity categories are of domestic (U.S.) students only. The UC Information Center classifies male/female as gender rather than sex. Female and male totals do not add up to the total number of students enrolled because 229 undergraduate students and 143 graduate students declined to state their gender.

[2] Office of Planning and Analysis, Undergraduate Students Fall 2019 Fact Sheet

[3] Disabled Students' Program, 2020. The percentages are calculated based on counts provided by the program and enrollment figures for undergraduate and graduate students. Percentages are rounded. These figures do not include students with disabilities who have not sought services from the Disabled Students' Program.

[4] Athletic Study Center, 2020. Percentage calculated from counts provided by the Athletic Study Center using undergraduate student counts for 2019.

[5] Office of the Registrar, 2020. The figures include veterans or active duty members of the Armed Forces or Coast Guard for the 2019-2020 academic year who self-identified and provided proof of their military affiliation.

[6] Graduate Division, UC Berkeley Graduate Profile 2019-2020

[7] Approximate number from Student-Parent Program, August 2020.

Additional Facts about Diversity at UC Berkeley (Page 6 of 31)

The Office of Planning and Analysis (OPA) regularly conducts the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). Here is a sampling of responses to the 2020 survey, the most recent available, to supplement the diversity statistics just presented.

- About 74% of UC Berkeley undergraduates responding to the survey were born in the United States.
- About 63% of the respondents consider English their native language. Another 21% learned English before the age of 6, 10% between the ages of 6 and 10, 4% between 11 and 15, and 2% after turning 16.
- 35% of respondents indicated that their mother was born in the U.S. and 36% that their father was born in the U.S.

- 18% of the respondents described their social class as low income or poor; 16% as working class; 32% as middle class; 31% as upper-middle or professional-middle class; and 3% as wealthy.

Source

Office of Planning and Analysis, [UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), 2020](#).

Advantages and Challenges of Learning in a Diverse Environment (Page 7 of 31)

Research has shown that in the context of an inclusive environment, diversity can foster a broad range of social and intellectual perspectives that enhance the cognitive and social development of students.

Social Development

Meaningful engagement with diverse peers has positive effects on college students' attitudes and values.

- Learning about groups different from one's own can decrease prejudice and racial bias.
- The magnitude of these effects increases considerably when students have the opportunity to interact with diverse groups in class. [1]

Other attitudinal benefits include higher levels of motivation, more self-confidence, increased engagement with the class material, and greater interest in the wider social world. [2]

Intellectual Development

Diversity has been shown to affect cognitive tendencies and cognitive skills. Cognitive tendencies are styles of thinking or intellectual habits that contribute to critical thinking. In this respect, students who have engaged in intergroup dialogue are more willing to identify

commonalities across differences, question their own certainties, and seek multiple causes for any given phenomenon rather than just one. [3]

Students' analytic capacities also improve. Students develop the ability to integrate multiple perspectives, improve their conflict-resolution skills, and sharpen their problem-solving capacities. [4]

These are valuable skills and attitudes that can prepare our students to succeed in a world that increasingly depends on cross-cultural interactions and intercultural understanding.

Sources

[1] Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp. 2006. "A Meta-Analyitic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (5): 751–83. For an explanation of the various mechanisms through which intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and their relative significance, see Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp. 2008. "How Does Intergroup Contact Reduce Prejudice? Meta-Analytic Tests of Three Mediators." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 38 (6): 922–34.

[2] Chang, Mitchell J., Nida Denson, Victor Sáenz, and Kimberly Misa. 2006. "The Educational Benefits of Sustaining Cross-Racial Interaction among Undergraduates." *Journal of Higher Education* 77 (3): 430–55; Gurin, Patricia, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, and Gretchen E. Lopez. 2004. "The Benefits of Diversity in Education for Democratic Citizenship." *Journal of Social Issues* 60 (1): 17–34.

[3] Bowman, Nicholas A. 2010. "College Diversity Experiences and Cognitive Development: A Meta-Analysis." *Review of Educational Research* 80 (1): 4–33. See also Gurin, Patricia and Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda. 2006. "Getting to the What, How, and Why of Diversity on Campus." *Educational Researcher* 35 (1): 20–24.

[4] Bowman, 2010; see also Antonio, Anthony Lising et al. 2004. "Effects of Racial Diversity on Complex Thinking in College Students." *Psychological Science* 15 (8): 507–10, and Pike, Gary, George Kuh, and Robert Gonyea. 2007. "Evaluating the Rationale for Affirmative Action in College Admissions: Direct and Indirect Relationships between Campus Diversity and Gains in Understanding Diverse Groups." *Journal of College Student Development* (48): 1–17.

The UC Berkeley My Experience Survey (Page 8 of 31)

In the spring semester of 2019, UC Berkeley participated in the My Experience Survey as an update to the 2013 Campus Climate Survey. The My Experience Survey was sent out to Berkeley faculty, staff, and students; 12,000 responded, including around 8,000 students, over 800 Senate faculty members, and over 2,700 staff. These are some of the key findings:

- 25% of respondents experienced exclusionary behavior and felt uncomfortable on campus. This figure is higher, in some cases by twice as much, for underrepresented and minority populations.
- 56% of the undergraduates who answered the survey stated that exclusionary behavior came primarily from other undergraduate students.
- 21% of undergraduates said this behavior occurred in a class or lab or clinical setting.
- 48% of undergraduate students said that they thought faculty pre-judged their abilities based on perceived identity background. For African Americans, the figure was more than two in three.

In the 2013 survey,

- 61% of students thought that incorporating issues of diversity and cross-cultural competence more effectively into the curriculum would positively affect the climate for diversity at UC Berkeley.
- 68% of students thought that increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue among students would also have a positive impact. [1]

[1] These questions were not included in the 2019 My Experience Survey.

Sources

UC Berkeley My Experience Survey Report, 2019 (pdf).

UC Berkeley Campus Climate Project Final Report, 2014 (pdf).

Challenges for Building a More Inclusive Classroom Environment (Page 9 of 31)

As we learned in Module 1, GSIs are responsible for managing the sections they lead. As part of their instructional role, GSIs monitor student contributions to class activities, encourage student participation, and address problems when they arise.

Keep in mind that 21% of undergraduates said that the exclusionary behavior they witnessed or experienced occurred in a class or lab or clinical setting. While GSIs were rarely identified as the source of exclusionary behavior, the GSI role comes with a responsibility to respond to incidents that are discriminatory or intimidating in class.

The following pages introduce different types of incidents that could happen during class activities.

- Stereotypes and Stereotype Threat
- Discriminatory Language

- Discriminatory Behavior and Hostile Environment

Source

[UC Berkeley My Experience Survey Report, 2019 (pdf)](#).

Barriers to Inclusion: Stereotypes and Stereotype Threat (Page 10 of 31)

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are beliefs about the characteristics or capacities of individuals based on a perceived or actual group membership. In the classroom context, these beliefs take the form of judgments about a student's capacity to perform academically given their class, race, gender, age or other markers of group identity.

Two examples of stereotypes are the view that men are better at math than women, or that student athletes are less committed to their academic work simply because they are athletes.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat involves "being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" [1] or "being judged by [a] negative stereotype" [2]. Research has found that if someone is part of a group that is associated with poor performance on a kind of task, invoking the negative stereotype before they perform the task negatively affects their performance as compared to a control condition in which the stereotype threat is not activated. Simply hearing an implied stereotype about a group to which one belongs can alter academic performance.

Stereotypes can be negative or positive. The claim that "Asians excel at math" presented in the opening scenario of this module is a positive stereotype. Positive stereotypes can also be problematic, in that they place undue pressure or expectations on members of a particular group; this has been shown to hamper performance. Consider the effects of the "Asians excel at math" stereotype upon a student who identifies as Asian, who struggles with math and does not expect to perform well. [3] Not measuring up to the stereotype threatens performance in this case. Similarly, a statement such as "Women are more polite than men in class discussions" may seem complimentary, but, in fact, it sets up unequal expectations for behavior in class.

Sources

[1] Steele, Claude M. and Joshua Aronson. 1995. "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69 (5): 797–811.

[2] Spencer, Jeven J., Claude M. Steele, and Diane M. Quinn. 1999. "Stereotype Threat and Women's Math Performance." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 35 (1): 4–28.

[3] Cheryan, Sapna and Galen V. Bodenhausen. 2000. "When Positive Stereotypes Threaten Intellectual Performance: The Psychological Hazards of 'Model Minority' Status." *Psychological Science* 11 (5): 399–402.

Addressing a Stereotype (Page 11 of 31)

So what would be the GSI's best response to the opening scenario of this module?

During the first meeting of a math class, a GSI announces that the course will be graded on a curve. As the students move into small groups to work through a problem, the GSI hears two students complaining to each other that because there are so many Asian students in the course it will "raise the curve." The GSI and several other students hear the comment.

Which option below would you recommend?

- Ignore the comment, since it occurred apart from the portions of the class session where the GSI addressed all the students together.
- Ask the students with the concern to come to office hours to talk about what they said.
- Speak to the students who voiced the complaint, take a few moments during the next class meeting to name and dispel the stereotype, and explain to everyone the purpose of the grading curve and how it works.

The first option is not acceptable because even though the comment was not directed toward the GSI or the class in general, it was heard by several members of the class. If the statement stands without comment, students who identify as Asian or Asian-American may experience negative effects of the stereotype. Further, if the GSI lets the stereotype go, other students may feel that such talk is acceptable in the class. This may make some class members who have frequently been subjected to stereotypes feel alienated, and alienation will harm the learning environment.

The second option is a partially good choice, but as with the first option, it lets the stereotype stand, indirectly condoning discriminatory language and leading to negative effects on students and the classroom learning environment.

The third option is best because it addresses the speakers' misconception directly but also addresses stereotypes and assumptions in the public forum of the classroom in which they were

spoken. Talking about stereotypes lets the students know that the GSI cares about them as individuals in the class. Further, explaining how the grading curve works will minimize any misconceptions about the grading system.

Check Your Understanding (Page 12 of 31)

Consider the following scenario:

You divided students into groups of five for a semester-long research project. During this process, you notice that a few students who are assigned to a group with a member of the Cal men's basketball team roll their eyes. After class, these same students approach you to voice concerns that the athlete's demanding practice and travel schedule might affect his contributions to the group's work and their project grade. One student even wonders aloud about athletes' college preparation and expresses resentment over what he sees as preferential treatment the University affords its athletes.

How might you best handle this situation?

? Redistribute the groups so that the athletes in the class work together.
No. Isolating the athletes would be unfair and is not likely to improve any group's performance. Moreover, a GSI doing this would reinforce the students' faulty assumptions about student-athletes.

? Schedule a meeting with the student-athlete to find out how serious he is about his coursework.
This would not be appropriate. There is no reason to assume that student-athletes are any less serious than other students. It might be useful to have a talk with all the students, not just the athletes, about ways for groups to work effectively on the project.

? Remind the students that it is important not to make assumptions about other students' commitment to their academic work and help them establish shared expectations, a schedule, and division of labor for the group work.
Right. It is important to counter the students' negative view of student-athletes, while also supporting their desire for effective group work.

Scenario Revisited (Page 13 of 31)

The previous scenario involves a kind of discrimination that student-athletes have frequently faced on campus. A recent campus task force found that student-athletes often feel "stereotyped by faculty," "not taken seriously as students before one even has a chance in a class," and "often needing to hide their identity as a student-athlete." In some cases, a racial or ethnic bias is also involved. [1]

In the scenario, it is important that the GSI show support for the student-athlete by questioning the students who have made a discriminatory assumption and by challenging them to work out their collaboration, negotiating a group schedule, and using collaboration tools as appropriate.

University Guidelines for Resolving Scheduling Conflicts

It does sometimes happen that scheduling conflicts arise between students' extracurricular activities and their academic requirements. This applies to student-athletes, but also to musicians and others. The University has a set of guidelines for addressing such scheduling conflicts.

Students with extracurricular commitments must inform the faculty member (or a GSI designated by the faculty member), in writing, by the end of the second week of the semester, of any scheduling conflicts between their extracurricular activities and academic requirements for the course (such as class attendance, exams, project due dates, and participation in lab sections or field trips). Students are also required to present a written proposal for how they will fulfill the course requirements for which there is a scheduling conflict. The policy suggests several ways students can meet academic requirements while they are away. The policy also calls on instructors to accommodate students' extracurricular activities unless instructors "clearly articulate the specific pedagogical reasons that prevent accepting a proposed accommodation." [2]

GSIs should consult with the Instructor of Record (the faculty member in charge of the course) about these requests because it is the Instructor of Record who is ultimately responsible for making such decisions. However, in some cases, the faculty member may delegate decisions to a GSI, so it is important for GSIs to understand and act in accordance with the policy.

Sources

[1] [Chancellor's Task Force on Academics & Athletics: Final Report and Recommendations, 2014 (pdf)](#)

[2] [Academic Senate Guidelines Concerning Conflicts with Academic Requirements, 2014 (pdf)](#)

Sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise discriminatory views are sometimes overt; however, they often manifest themselves in subtle cues or attempts at humor.

Consider this scenario:

On a bCourses discussion board, one of your students expresses dislike for a story you assigned, and derisively refers to it as "really gay."

Is this language problematic?

N No, because the student is not referring to a person and you can't be sure there was intent to demean anyone.
Incorrect. Even though the student may not intend to refer to any classmate, or to gay people in general, the word "gay" is pejorative and offensive in this context.

Y Yes, because the student is using the word "gay" in a negative, pejorative way.
Right. Even though the student may not intend to refer to any classmate, or to gay people in general, the word gay is pejorative and offensive in this context.

Expressions like this one, which may seem to be humorous or innocent, are also sometimes used to convey conscious slights or outright hostility. The use of such expressions burdens members of the referenced groups by forcing them to assess whether they are being slighted. Research associates this kind of burden with reduced performance and adverse health outcomes. [1]

Source

[1] Woodford, Michael R., Michael L. Howell, Perry Silverschanz, and Lotus Yu. 2012. "'That's So Gay!': Examining the Covariates of Hearing This Expression among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual College Students." *Journal of American College Health* 60 (6): 429–34.

Discriminatory Language: Intention vs. Impact (Page 15 of 31)

To understand whether and how a comment – whether shared in a class meeting or in an asynchronous activity such as the bCourse discussion board – may be offensive, it is important to distinguish between the speaker's *intention* and the *impact* of the speaker's words on listeners. In the previous scenario, even if the student who posted the comment did not intend to be hostile to anyone, it is likely that others found the pejorative use of the term "gay" offensive (i.e., the comment assumes that "gay" means something negative and so marginalizes people who identify as gay). The comment can therefore have a negative impact on the learning environment.

GSIs in their teaching role should be prepared to address student comments that discriminate against others to keep the learning environment inclusive to all students. With this in mind, which action on the GSI's part would best handle the situation?

Ignore the comment, since it wasn't intentionally hostile.
Incorrect. The derisive use of the word should be dealt with. It's the impact it can have on others, not the intention of the speaker, that should determine how the GSI will respond.

Contact the Office of Student Conduct.
This would be an overreaction, unless the comment is part of a larger pattern of insulting or abusive language and the offending student refuses to acknowledge the issue.

Set up a meeting to speak with the student, and mention that although they may have not intended it, using "gay" as a pejorative term can be offensive and harmful. Ask the student to rephrase their idea in a way that makes their point without marginalizing anyone.
Correct. Encouraging appropriate language while identifying and discouraging harmful speech addresses the problem.

Tokenism (Page 16 of 31)

Consider this scenario:

In a class meeting, a GSI asks the one Black student in their course section to "explain for the class why the slogan 'All Lives Matter' is offensive to Black people."

Does the GSI's request risk discriminating against the Black student?

Yes, it does.
Correct. Singling out this student to respond to the question forces the student to "represent" a group. The GSI should treat the topic in a way that does not place the burden of explanation on the African-American student.

No, it does not.
Incorrect. Singling out this student to respond to the question forces the student to "represent" a group. The GSI should treat the topic in a way that does not place the burden on the African-American student to give an explanation.

Why is this the case?

This scenario is an instance of **tokenism**. Tokenism forces an individual to serve as a representative for a group to which they belong. Tokenism in this case also mistakenly assumes that anyone sharing a perceived group identity holds the same perspective on a topic.

Unless a student volunteers, do not call on them to be a representative of a particular group (racial, ethnic, generational, social, religious, gender, etc.). Instead, respect all students foremost as individuals, while honoring the richness of their backgrounds.

Discriminatory Behavior and Hostile Environment (Page 17 of 31)

Discriminatory behavior can affect a person's employment or education, unreasonably interfere with a person's work or educational performance, or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment.

Discriminatory behavior can include microaggressions, discriminatory language such as slurs, stereotyping, harassment (for example physical, verbal, graphic, or written), and more blatantly exclusionary actions. Please note that this can play out during a class session or during learning activities outside of class.

When sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent, discriminatory behavior can create a hostile learning environment, in which the student who is directly impacted by the discriminatory behavior is not the only person affected. Others witnessing it are also affected, so it puts educational access more broadly at risk.

While GSIs at the University are not expected to be experts at determining a "hostile environment" in the technical sense, they should nevertheless cultivate an awareness of behaviors that can contribute to a hostile learning environment.

On the positive side, there are many ways GSIs can promote an inclusive classroom climate. We will suggest several in the following pages. The strategies that promote inclusion are not "extras," but are simply good educational practice and are useful in any field.

Strategies for Promoting an Inclusive Academic Environment (Page 18 of 31)

In order for every student to benefit from the wealth of student perspectives in the classroom and to enhance learning, the instructor must use techniques that get all students actively involved and ensure that all students feel respected.

The next several pages will present strategies to help you meet this goal by enabling you to:

- Help students understand your expectations for their participation.
- Become more aware of your biases.
- Know your students and get their input throughout the semester.
- Treat all students equitably.
- Diversify teaching methods to include different learning modalities.
- Rethink and diversify what is included in classroom participation.
- Discuss issues of inclusion with your teaching colleagues.

Help Students Understand Expectations for Class Interactions

(Page 19 of 31)

In Module 1, "GSI Ethics and Professional Responsibilities," we recommended that you create community agreements, either in advance or with your students, to communicate expectations around students' interactions in the learning environment. We gave the following example of a set of community agreements:

In this course section, it is essential to promote fairness and equal participation so that everyone has the same chance to learn and so that we can all learn from one another. Practices that promote this type of learning environment include:

- Being open to views different from our own
- Listening to everyone's ideas whether we agree or not

- Trying to learn from other people's perspectives, even if we do not agree with them
- Monitoring ourselves so we don't hold the floor for too long and dominate discussion
- Coming to section well prepared to participate in learning activities
- Discussing as a group any discriminatory language or stereotypes that come up in class
- Having once spoken, allowing for others to speak before speaking again
- Working collaboratively and learning from one another

It is expected that all students will use these practices.

We also introduced another approach, working with the students in the first week of the term to create a set of shared agreements for class discussion. In courses that directly address issues people have strong feelings about, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or politics, it becomes all the more significant for class members to take part in establishing guidelines that promote inclusion and community.

See the GSI Teaching & Resource Center online Teaching Guide for GSIs to find some excellent methods for establishing community agreements.

Using Community Agreements (Page 20 of 31)

Consider this scenario:

You lead a discussion section in which a few of the men in the class routinely dominate the discussion. Several other students raise their hands, following the agreements for participation agreed upon by the class. Yet these particular men ignore the agreements, monopolizing the discussion section without pausing for the students who are signaling their intent to speak to be called on.

What can you do to make this situation better?

Review the class community agreements for discussion and why they are in place. Good answer. This should help to reorient the balance of the discussion and make the class a more equitable place for all.

Ask the dominating students to leave the classroom. No. The goal is to encourage all voices, not prohibit any one group from participating.

Prohibit the dominant students from talking. No. While it is often appropriate to ask for input from students who have not yet spoken (e.g., "I'd like to hear from those who have not yet spoken more than once today"), prohibiting certain students from speaking is not a long-range solution to the problem, and is likely to anger

students. The goal is to increase participation by all, not prohibit any one group from participating.

Become Aware of Your Biases (Page 21 of 31)

Your unconscious biases affect your interactions with students. Biases and assumptions are deeply ingrained, and they often go unnoticed by the individual holding them. There are several things you can do to become aware of biases that you hold.

Questions for Self-Assessment

You can examine classroom dynamics for biases or preferential treatment by asking yourself the following questions.

Belief questions:

- Do I hold different expectations for what a student can learn or accomplish based on factors such as race, ethnicity, age, language use, gender, previous academic experience, etc.?
- What beliefs do I hold about certain groups of students, based on their backgrounds (for example athletes, sorority/fraternity members, ROTC, particular majors, religions, etc.), that might bias my thinking about them as students?

Behavioral questions:

- Which students do I call by name? Which do I not?
- What proportion of students of a particular race, ethnicity, nationality, or gender do I call on to answer questions?
- Do students of one gender participate more frequently than others? Do students from a particular race, ethnicity, age group, or nationality participate more frequently than others?
- Do interruptions occur when students are talking? If so, who is interrupting and who is being interrupted?
- Do I respond in the same way to all students? For example, am I positive and encouraging to all, or do I react in a specific manner to students of a particular race, ethnicity, nationality, or gender?
- Do I establish eye contact with certain students more than others?
- Do I avoid calling on students who are non-native English speakers? Or students who have disabilities? If so, why? What assumptions am I making?
- Do I tend to face or address one side of the classroom more than the other?
- Do I use different gestures, facial expressions, or postures when speaking with students of different races, ethnicities, nationalities, or genders?

- Do I assess differently the work of students whose political or religious beliefs vary from mine? Do I use the same degree of open-mindedness and rigor as I use with the work of students whose beliefs are consonant with my own?

You might print a copy of these questions for your reference to help you remain mindful of creating an inclusive remote learning environment throughout the semester.

PDF Version for Printing

Arrange to be Observed or Video-Recorded in the Classroom

Another way to identify teaching practices that do or do not foster an inclusive academic environment is to be observed or video recorded while teaching. You can arrange for a teaching consultant from the GSI Teaching & Resource Center to video record one of your class sessions. Alternatively, you can request that a GSI Center teaching consultant or a faculty member or peer observe your teaching in the classroom (without video recording). Provide the observer with the same list of questions and have them assess these areas of your teaching. Consultation, classroom observations, and video recording are free services to UC Berkeley GSIs. For more information see Consultations for Graduate Students on the GSI Teaching & Resource Center website.

Ongoing Awareness: Keep a Reflective Teaching Journal

Keeping a teaching journal can assist you in recording and contemplating particular behaviors and interactions in the learning environment. In the journal, ask yourself the questions on the previous page after you finish teaching — while the class period is fresh in your mind — to see how well you have succeeded in creating an inclusive classroom.

There are several ways to open communication with individual students and solicit their input. At the beginning of the semester, use a brief survey form to ask your students about their experience with the course's subject matter, their goals in the course, and any obstacles making it difficult for them to achieve those goals. You might also ask all your students to meet with you briefly in office hours to discuss these questions. Sample pre-course survey forms can be found in the [Pre-Semester Preparation](#) section of the online [Teaching Guide for GSIs](#).

At various points in the semester (for example, a few weeks in, or after the first midterm), give an anonymous survey to ask students what aspects of the class are helping them learn and what might need to be changed to enhance their learning. For example, ask for specific comments on classroom dynamics, and solicit student comments on the opportunities that you have provided for participation and inclusion. In addition to using this feedback to make appropriate changes, share this information (without using any information that could disclose a student's identity) with the entire class during a subsequent class meeting so that students can see the differences that may exist in their experiences of your section. Students benefit from recognizing that, for example, others in the class don't share their opinion of group work.

You can also ask students to write a brief reflection in the last few minutes of a session about class dynamics of your section and whether they feel that the class is adhering to the community agreements established by the class and communicating respectfully. This may be especially helpful if a critical incident occurs in class, or you receive student input indicating an experience of exclusion.

Ideas on how to improve teaching and learning and sample forms for midterm assessment of teaching can be found in the online [Teaching Guide for GSIs](#).

Treat All Students Equitably (Page 23 of 31)

Consider this scenario:

In a history class, the GSI has a difficult time understanding a non-native English speaker. At the beginning of the semester, the GSI made a serious effort to focus and tease out what the student was saying, but after several attempts and a few miscommunications, the GSI began feeling embarrassed. The GSI stopped calling on the student but made it a point to encourage him to come to office hours.

Was the GSI's approach appropriate?

Y **Yes.**

Incorrect. Refraining to call on the student when they raise their hand deprives them of the opportunity to participate in class discussion, develop and refine their ideas, and contribute to peer learning. This hinders equal access to education.

N **No.**

Correct. Depriving the student of the opportunity to participate in class discussion hinders their ability to express, develop, and refine their views. As a first step, don't be ashamed to respectfully ask the student one or more times to repeat their statement because you couldn't understand them. If the issue persists, have a frank conversation in private with the student and express that while you really want to interact with them and involve them in class conversation, you're still having a hard time understanding them. The key here is to convey that you genuinely care and build a sense of mutual trust. On the basis of this, you can ask the student to speak more slowly, point them to ESL resources on campus, and ask them if they think there's anything else you can do to give them the space and time to convey their ideas in section.

Recommendations

- Make yourself and your course materials available equally to all your students. Check in with students to make sure they can access all of the course resources.
- Give fair treatment to all students when you evaluate their work.
- Give all students the same amount of time to complete an assignment (except as an approved academic accommodation for students with disabilities — this issue will be covered in Module 3).
- Require the same number and kinds of assignments from each student.
- Before you begin to grade, develop a grading rubric* with standards that will be applied to the evaluation of every student's work.
- De-identify students' work before grading when possible. This is called "anonymous grading." For example, have students use their student I.D. numbers instead of their names on work to be evaluated. In using the bCourse Speed Grader function, you can select the option "hide student names in the Speed Grader." Other online grading systems may have the same functionality.

* Examples of grading rubrics can be found in the GSI Teaching & Resource Center's online Teaching Guide for GSIs.

Bear in mind that all of your students will not necessarily learn best through the same kinds of activities that you do. Research shows that students benefit from exposure to a full range of teaching methods that use different modalities (for example visual, auditory, or kinesthetic experiences). While individual students often do hold particular learning preferences, having them process their learning in a variety of ways promotes deeper learning by recruiting multiple areas of the brain. It also reinforces their knowledge in different contexts.

Some activities to increase variety in learning modalities include

- incorporating visual materials,
- providing mini-lectures,
- assigning short in-class writing activities,
- encouraging students to move or use the board,
- asking students to manipulate objects,
- staging debates or role-plays, and
- breaking the class into small groups.

Small-group projects, in particular, can engage students who are not comfortable speaking in a larger group.

Guidance on ways to implement these and other teaching strategies can be found in the Teaching Discussion Sections (a chapter of the GSI Teaching & Resource Center's online Teaching Guide for GSIs), and in the Teaching Effectiveness Award essays featured on the GSI Teaching & Resource Center's website.

Rethink Participation (Page 25 of 31)

In addition to diversifying teaching methods to enhance learning, instructors should also avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to class participation. If participation is defined solely in terms of how often a student speaks up in class, some students will be at a distinct advantage or disadvantage. Some students may come from cultures that value listening more than speaking.

How do you define class participation? Do you take into account the fact that some students may feel more confident participating in small-group discussions while others are more comfortable speaking to the entire class? Does your definition of class participation privilege some students

over others? Have you considered different types of activities that could constitute class participation?

Here is how one GSI encouraged diverse forms of class participation to create a more inclusive environment:

"My discussion section syllabus states: Different people have different ways they best participate, all of which are valid: active listening, thoughtful preparation, sharing a well-formulated idea after a long pause, helping a classmate understand a concept, coming to office hours, bringing news articles to class." [1]

In most cases faculty, in their role as Instructor of Record, are responsible for assigning grades; therefore, it is important to have a discussion with the faculty member about how they would like you to define student participation if it is graded. Make suggestions if you feel that the participation part of the grade should be broadened to include more than speaking in class.

Source

[1] Encouraging and Affirming Diverse Forms of Class Participation by Paul Dosh, former GSI. His essay won a GSI Teaching Effectiveness Award.

Give Input to Your Instructor of Record and Fellow GSIs (Page 26 of 31)

If you receive feedback from students that something in the course has struck them as exclusionary or discriminatory, bring their concern to the attention of your fellow GSIs and the Instructor of Record. If you or your students believe that relevant perspectives are missing from the course, bring that feedback also to the attention of the instructional team.

If you have the opportunity to give input on course policies, readings, assignments, or essay and exam questions, be mindful to suggest language, policies, readings, questions, and examples that reflect a variety of perspectives and do not discriminate against any particular group.

Relevant Policies and Laws (Page 27 of 31)

Now that you are familiar with creating an inclusive learning environment, we will briefly introduce policies and laws that were written to respond to and combat historically experienced discrimination based on physical ability/disability, gender, or sexual orientation, and racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, generational, or national affiliations.

- Title VI: Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2009, Title II (ADA)
- Academic Adjustments for Pregnancy (California AB 2350)
- University of California Nondiscrimination Statement
- UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct

We will look at these laws and policies in the next few pages.

Federal and State Nondiscrimination Laws (Page 28 of 31)

Title VI: Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI, 42 U.S.C. §2000d et seq., was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

As President John F. Kennedy stated in 1963,

Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races [colors, and national origins] contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes or results in racial [color or national origin] discrimination.

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)

The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2009, Title II (ADA)

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by state and local governments and by private entities that serve the public (see [Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services](#)). Module 3 explains in detail GSIs' responsibilities with respect to disability, including academic accommodations.

Academic Adjustments for Pregnancy (California AB 2350)

Under California law, pregnancy is explicitly understood as a potential area of discrimination against women:

It is the policy of the State of California, pursuant to Section 66251, that all persons, regardless of their sex, should enjoy freedom from discrimination of any kind, including, but not limited to,

pregnancy discrimination as described in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681, et seq.), in the postsecondary educational institutions of the state. [1]

The federal Title IX legislation referred to will be addressed in detail of Module 4 of this course.

In some cases, a student's pregnancy may necessitate an academic accommodation. (Again, the topic of academic accommodations will be covered in Module 3.) Students in this situation may apply to the Disabled Students' Program for a Letter of Accommodation for a temporary disability.

Source

[1] AB 2350, as amended, Bonilla. Equity in Higher Education Act: Prevention of Pregnancy Discrimination

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University of California Nondiscrimination Statement

The University of California, in accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy*, physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services**. The University also prohibits sexual harassment.

The University prohibits discrimination against any person employed; seeking employment; or applying for or engaged in a paid or unpaid internship or training program leading to employment with the University of California. In addition, the University prohibits harassment of an employee, applicant, paid or unpaid intern, volunteer, person participating in a program leading to employment, or person providing services pursuant to a contract. The University undertakes affirmative action, consistent with its obligations as a federal contractor.

For employees, this policy applies to all employment practices, including recruitment, selection, promotion, transfer, merit increase, salary, training and development, demotion, and separation. The University will not discriminate against employees or applicants because they have inquired about, discussed, or disclosed their own pay or the pay of another employee or applicant. For students, this policy applies to admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities. [1]

The Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) is UC Berkeley's official unit for reporting incidents of harassment on the basis of protected categories.

* Pregnancy includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth.

** Service in the uniformed services includes membership, application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services.

UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct

As the following excerpt relates, harassment by students is also a violation of the [UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct](#):

V. GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINE

102.09 Harassment

Harassment is defined as conduct that is so severe and/or pervasive, and objectively offensive, and that so substantially impairs a person's access to University programs or activities that the person is effectively denied equal access to the University's resources and opportunities. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, conduct that is motivated on the basis of the person's race, color, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, ancestry, service in the uniformed services, physical or mental disability, medical condition, or perceived membership in any of these classifications. Pursuant to section 104.90, sanctions may be enhanced for conduct motivated on the basis of the above classifications.

Student Employees

When employed by the University of California, and acting within the course and scope of that employment, students are subject to the University of California Policy on Sexual Harassment.

Otherwise, the Campus Code of Student Conduct (Section V. 102.09 above) is the applicable standard for harassment by students.

Sexual harassment is treated in detail in Module 4 of this course.

Sources

[1] Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination, [Nondiscrimination Policy Statement](#).

[2] [UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct](#).

University Resources

The information below is included in the [Annotated Campus Resource List](#).

GSI Teaching & Resource Center

301 Sproul Hall

510-642-4456 or gsi@berkeley.edu

The GSI Teaching & Resource Center, an academic unit in the Graduate Division, provides pedagogical support for GSIs. Programs include teaching conferences, workshops, course improvement grants, teaching awards, confidential consultations, the GSI Professional Standards and Ethics in Teaching Online Course, the Certificate Program in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and the Language Proficiency Program for GSIs who do not speak English as a native language.

Programs and services for GSIs:

Consultations with GSI Center Staff

Certificate Program in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Resources of particular interest:

Online Teaching Guide for GSIs

The following sections of the Teaching Guide are referenced in this module:

Grading Rubrics

Improving Your Teaching: Conducting a Midterm Evaluation

Creating Discussion Guidelines

Working with Student Writing

Encouraging and Affirming Diverse Forms of Class Participation

Teaching Effectiveness Award essay by Paul Dosh, former GSI

This is one of more than 200 one-page essays by outstanding GSIs identifying and responding to a problem they encountered in a class, laboratory, or section they taught.

UC Berkeley Office of Planning & Analysis

The Office of Planning & Analysis collects data about the Berkeley campus from many sources and makes it available for institutional research and decision-making.

Key Campus Statistics

Links to Berkeley Fall Enrollment Data, Berkeley Undergraduate Profile, Berkeley Graduate Profile, and other data sets.

UC Berkeley Campus Climate Project Final Report, 2014 (pdf)

UC Berkeley My Experience Survey Report, 2019 (pdf)

Multicultural Education Program

The Multicultural Education Program is an initiative of the Division of Equity & Inclusion that provides teaching and learning resources to help create a positive campus climate for diversity.

Classroom Tools

This page links to selected tools to assist with creating inclusive classroom environments and engaging with diversity topics.

Gender Equity Resource Center (GenEq)

202 Cesar Chavez Student Center

510-642-4786 or geneq@berkeley.edu

GenEq is a campus community center providing programs, services, and resource information about gender, sexual orientation, sex and gender identity, sexual and relationship violence, and bias-related incidents. It is a program of UC Berkeley's Division of Equity and Inclusion.

Resources for Classrooms and Groups: Creating Inclusive Classrooms for Trans* and Gender Expansive Students

Links to a tip sheet giving guidelines for setting an inclusive tone, adapting to students' name and pronoun usage, and respecting their confidentiality.

Center for Student Conduct

203 Sproul Hall

510-643-9069 or studentconduct@berkeley.edu

The Center for Student Conduct supports the mission of the University by administering the Campus Code of Student Conduct, which lists sexual, racial, and other forms of harassment as grounds for discipline.

Social Justice & Diversity Resources

Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD)

685 University Hall

510-653-7985 or ask_ophd@berkeley.edu

The Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) is responsible for ensuring the University provides an environment for faculty, staff, and students that is free from discrimination and harassment on the basis of protected categories including race, color, national origin, gender, age, and sexual orientation/identity. OPHD monitors and evaluates campus efforts to meet requirements under University policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment, and applicable federal and state regulations.

OPHD has the responsibility to implement procedures for providing prompt and effective responses to complaints of hostile work/academic environment, sexual or racial harassment, or other discrimination concerns. Further, the office has oversight responsibility to initiate, coordinate, or conduct investigations into claims of violations of campus policy in all areas of discrimination against protected categories. The scope of this responsibility is campuswide, covering faculty, staff, and students. The Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination provides education about issues of discrimination, equity, and the effects of discrimination and unequal treatment on the campus climate. Their services are available to faculty, staff, and students.

Title IX and Title VI Officer

Consultation, advising, and/or reporting: ask_ophd@berkeley.edu or 510-643-7985

Provides policy information and guidance when responding to incidents of possible sexual or racial harassment, and other forms of discrimination. Directs and coordinates campus education and training efforts for faculty, staff, and students, specifically in sexual/racial harassment prevention, and generally, on issues of equity and campus climate concerns. Provides in-person education and training for academic departments and administrative units.

University Nondiscrimination Policy

Berkeley Human Resources: Reports of Discrimination, Harassment, or Retaliation

510-643-8996 or idcr@berkeley.edu

The Human Resources division has a process to assist UC Berkeley employees who believe they have been subjected to discrimination on a protected basis.

Berkeley International Office

International House, 2299 Piedmont Ave., 2nd floor

510-642-2818

The Berkeley International Office provides programming, consultation, immigration, and advocacy services for international students and scholars.

International Community at Cal

The information above is included in the Annotated Campus Resource List.

Module 2 Wrap-Up and Quiz (Page 31 of 31)

As you have learned in this module, you have an important role as a GSI in creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment. By communicating the value of diversity and nondiscrimination in the academic setting, and by building that value into your GSI activities,

you can help foster an atmosphere of trust and inclusion that supports learning for all of your students.

In this module, **Promoting Learning through Diversity: The Inclusive Classroom**, you have explored the following topics:

- the diversity of UC Berkeley students;
- advantages and challenges of learning in a diverse environment;
- strategies and resources for promoting an inclusive academic environment; and
- relevant policies and laws.

Review

In the course of exploring these topics, it is hoped that you now are able to take steps and find resources to meet the following objectives:

- explain to a colleague why GSIs should strive for an inclusive academic environment;
- identify instances of discrimination, stereotyping, and harassment in the learning environment;
- develop informed and measured responses to discrimination, stereotyping, and harassment in the learning environment;
- develop pedagogical and professional-development practices that promote inclusion and support equity for all students;
- refer to federal legislation and campus policies on nondiscrimination based on protected categories; and
- identify campus resources that can help you and your students learn more about ways to build and benefit from an inclusive learning environment.

If you wish, we invite you to respond to a variety of questions this module raises or see what others say about the module content. In the bCourses window or tab, use the Discussions tool in the left navigation menu; from there select the Module 2 discussion. Or use this link to the bCourses Module 2 Discussion page. Discussion is optional. Please note: Your postings will not be anonymous.

After you finish reviewing, please move on to the Module 2 quiz, linked below.

Module 2 Quiz

The quiz for Module 2 will help you master the material by connecting the concepts introduced in the module and applying them to new scenarios. In addition to demonstrating your command of the course content, we hope this activity helps prepare you to clarify issues at play and discern the best plan of action in the situations you may face as a GSI.

You must score an 8 or higher out of 10 on this quiz. If your score is under 8, you are allowed to retake the quiz up to four times (that is, you have 5 attempts total). If you exhaust your five attempts and still have not passed, please contact the GSI Teaching & Resource Center (gsi@berkeley.edu) for assistance. Please click the link below to open the Module 2 quiz.

[Go to Module 2 Quiz](#)