

Meaningful Interaction & Inclusivity in the Classroom

ELI and CSP Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2015

Participants

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Project Goals

Investigate means to encourage an interactive and inclusive classroom environment

Develop strategies to enrich student engagement in overall university life

Share best practices, tips, and ideas with a broader university audience

Explore ways to animate student sharing of personal narratives

How goals were achieved:

Planned meeting schedules and agendas, and developed textbook and meeting budget

Created an ongoing CTools project site for sharing resources: readings, handouts, CRLT materials, website links, videos, recommended readings, writing assignments, and strategies for the classroom

Shared successful teaching techniques

Discussed specific readings relevant to fostering inclusivity in the classroom

Identified invisible classroom conflicts

Shared ways to present academic writing to a diverse population in an inclusive and engaging manner

Project Overview

English Language Institute (ELI) & Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP) both teach (historically) marginalized populations on the UM Ann Arbor campus

ELI International graduate students English is their second language	CSP Domestic & international undergraduates Underrepresented populations
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BOTH
High achievers
Historically marginalized
Difficulty accessing relationships (academic & informal) outside of unit
Difficulty navigating linguistic and/or cultural barriers
Unfamiliarity with UM's complex academic systems
Difficulty developing a sense of belonging

Faculty Role: to provide guidance, support, and information to enable access to the many resources available on campus

The group of 9 faculty from ELI and CSP met 5 times (February – April, and September – October, 2015).

We discussed our pedagogical approaches and the challenges in teaching diverse student populations.

We shared strategies, best practices, and reading resources through a CTools project site.

We engaged in critical reflection on our respective teaching practices, understanding our own identities and how those play out in the classroom.

IGR facilitator Kelly Maxwell ran a hands-on workshop focusing on role play practices and skills and strategies for promoting inclusivity in the classroom. This workshop was open to other faculty members of our specific units.

Project Outcomes

"If I Ran the Zoo," a writing assignment inviting students to share their perspective on the issues of inclusion, campus climate, and diversity at UM – specifically asking them to describe the most important change(s) he or she would make to the way the University operates.

"Outsiders: Inside the Institution," a writing exercise and classroom discussion examining inclusive/exclusive discourse.

"Engaged Learning: Gardening and the Community," an inclusive learning-designed course getting students out into the local Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti/Detroit community gardens. Examined socio-cultural differences and barriers between student participants and the local communities and their sub-cultures.

One of our members reported on "The Tangled Web of Diversity and Democracy," last March's panel discussion on exclusionary practices in academe sponsored by the English Department Writing Program.

In May we were invited to a Diversity Institute luncheon, where participants in various diversity initiatives discussed problems faced by often unacknowledged marginalized student populations, including multilingual speakers.

We also heard a report on the Residential College's "Black Lives Matter" class visit by President Schlissel and Dean Dillard. Students, the president and dean, and a community representative presented their views on topics such as the university's structuring of its Race and Ethnicity course requirement, and the current absence of diversity education/training procedures for new faculty.

Results

Explored practical and engaging ways to promote inclusivity in the classroom

Learned that reflecting upon teaching practices inspired and re-energized instructors and departments

Identified "invisible" groups: economically disenfranchised, veterans and other "nontraditional" students, students, faculty, and staff with disabilities, 1st generation students, students who identify as multi-racial, LGBT

Encouraged students to talk to each other

Learned to ask questions—listen—listen again

Acknowledged there is no effective change without student involvement

Acknowledged there is no effective change without institutional support

Recognized need for faculty, staff and students to get mentoring and training

Recognized importance of inclusivity training workshops from the top down (President to first-year student)

Next Steps

Maintain CTools Resources project site

Meet to plan and implement a more complex study of inclusivity practices in the classroom

Present teaching experience narratives (written and/or multimedia) and research at a conference, and use collected narrative experiences to inform teaching practices

Invite students to keep a reflective journal recording classroom experiences of times they felt included and when they didn't

Run "Reflecting on Comfort Zones," an inclusivity/exclusivity interactive writing activity based on the "Beloit Mindset List"

Design and run a one-day syllabus writing retreat

Work more closely with MESA and other student communities, learn from their experiences and leadership