

Leveraging Diversity in Smaller Classes



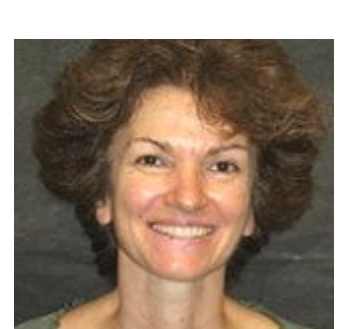
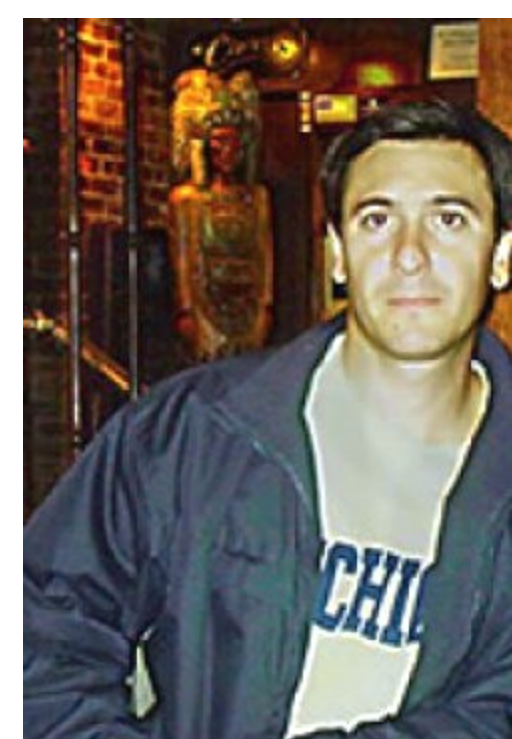
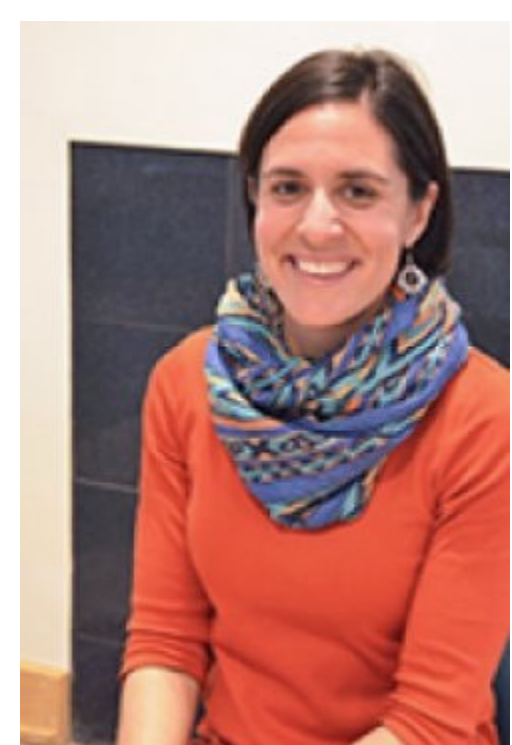
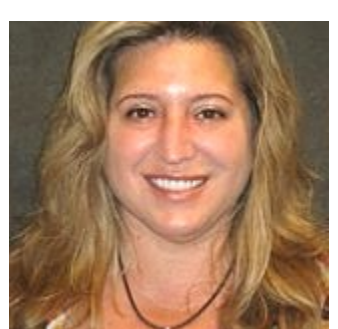
Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2015

Project Overview

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) underwent a pilot project during Winter 2015 that reduced the maximum number of students in its Spanish languages classes from 24 to 18. The reduction of students in classes brought about important questions to analyze: How will we navigate the classroom space when differences and diversity become more visible? How can we leverage student diversity in smaller classrooms? To begin working through these questions, CRLT facilitated a workshop for 20 instructors within RLL to discuss strategies for more inclusive teaching practices in the language classroom.

Participants

Participants in this project included elementary language coordinators in French and Spanish, Spanish Lecturers and GSIs and the Director of Elementary Language Programs in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. There were 20 participants who attended the initial workshop.



Key Insights

- Instructors gained awareness of students' varying social identities and how they might affect students' learning
- Instructors gained confidence in how to pose challenging questions more productively and how to reframe class discussions in such a way that:
 - requires students to think more profoundly about course concepts
 - encourages students to use more nuanced vocabulary
- Instructors developed and implemented classroom climate surveys to gather feedback from their students
- Instructors developed self-evaluations for students to assess how they contribute to a 'caring community of learners'
- Instructors developed self-evaluations for themselves to be consistently mindful of their contribution to a 'caring community of learners'
- Instructors took away ideas for creating more inclusive teaching materials and classroom activities:
 - Ice breakers
 - Partner and group activities
 - Power points to include images of all cultures, races, ethnicities
- Director of Elementary Language Program incorporated ideas presented at workshop in several ways:
 - Orientation programming for new instructors (lecturers and GSIs) in the Fall
 - Pedagogy seminar for new GSIs teaching in RLL
 - Continued workshops on the topic of 'Inclusive Teaching Practices'
 - Handouts with strategies to leverage small class sizes

Artifacts

- Classroom Climate Surveys
- Instructor Evaluations and Self-Evaluations; Student Self-Evaluations for Classroom Climate
- Handouts with suggestions for leveraging small class sizes (with respect to diversity and in general)

"I enjoyed hearing about the research showing that greater structure in the classroom can lead to greater inclusivity and that students learn more in collaboration with others, and working with diverse groups of people."

"I was inspired by the workshop. We are all different, so let's welcome it and talk about the positive aspects of our differences!"

Resources

- CRLT (as facilitators of the workshop)
- CRLT handouts and activities:
 - 'Classroom Climate: A Continuum'
 - 'Reflection Identities'
 - 'Sample Guidelines for Classroom Community for Languages'
 - 'Redistributing Voices'
- CRLT's website:
 - <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching>
 - <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching/inclusive-teaching-strategies>
- *Whistling Vivaldi* by Claude Steele



Next Steps

- Continue to offer workshops/brown bags to encourage further discussion of inclusive teaching practices
- Bring instructional faculty (lecturers) and professorial faculty (tenure track) together to share:
 - Common challenges to inclusivity in language, literature and culture classes
 - How each group navigates 'hot topics' in the classroom
 - How to create a more unified approach to strategies for inclusivity in pedagogy
- Lead book readings for instructional faculty and professorial faculty