

# Critical Review of Core Courses and Curriculum

Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2018

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## Project Overview

The Department of Health Behavior & Health Education (HBHE) at the UM School of Public Health manages a Masters of Public Health (MPH) program with approximately 80 students each year and 30 credits of required HBHE courses. Both students and faculty identified modifications to the curriculum as the key priority area to advance our DEI efforts to create a more inclusive, equitable, and justice-oriented environment for all members of our department. We proposed to develop and pilot a tool that can be used by faculty within the department to review their own syllabi to identify opportunities for modifications to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. *Using the tool, we reviewed six syllabi for courses across both the masters and doctoral curriculum.* In addition, we identified opportunities to engage historical and structural underpinnings of inequities in the curriculum more broadly.

## Project Leads

- Paul Fleming, Asst. Professor UM-SPH
- Jessica Milne, MPH student UM-SPH
- Amel Omari, PhD candidate UM-SPH
- Melanie Ward, PhD candidate UM-SPH
- Amy Schulz, Professor UM-SPH
- Alexis Stanton, MPH student UM-SPH

## Key Insights / New Questions

- **Key Insights**
  - There are untapped opportunities for faculty to share inclusive teaching strategies with each other.
  - Many faculty appreciated the opportunity to have their syllabus reviewed
  - Syllabi are a limited view of a course. We still need to identify ways to review actual in-class sessions, lectures, or assignments.
  - Feedback can acknowledge faculty's strengths and skills.
  - Multiple perspectives are needed to provide feedback on diverse DEI criteria.
- **New Questions:**
  - To incorporate a perspective on structural inequities into the curriculum, should we add a new course or better infuse these issues into existing classes?
  - What are the challenges to more fully incorporating inclusive teaching strategies and a structural inequities perspective (i.e., time, philosophical differences? other?)

## Artifacts

***"This is so helpful--it's useful to have the opportunity to really think through these important issues and how they might be approached in both documents (syllabus) and activities (assignments, classroom activities)."*** - Senior Faculty member

### Syllabus Review with Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Lens: Items for Consideration

#### SYLLABUS AND COURSE CONTENT

*Are diverse and critical perspectives/authors/foci represented in syllabus?*

*Is a focus on communities of color/disparities/inequities integrated throughout?*

*Is there syllabus flexibility? For example, portions of the syllabus that can be responsive to student interests*

*Is there clarity in language? For example: equity vs. inequality, gender vs. sex*

*Do discussions of marginalized communities include a strengths focus?*

*Considering historical perspectives*

*Choose course materials with a range of abilities in mind*

#### SYLLABUS POLICIES & EVALUATION

*Flexible assignment options for sensitive material and/or to accommodate accessibility challenges*

*Incorporate evaluation early to be responsive*

*Preparation, debrief, and options for sensitive course content*

#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS

*Problematicize essentializing discourse*

*Bridging academia & community – connecting to people*

*Building relationships as a foundation for harder conversations in classrooms*

*Mechanisms for assuring all voices have space to be heard*

*Guest speakers: community members/connecting with the community*

## Resources

- U-M Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT). "School of Nursing Inclusive Teaching Strategies: Reflecting on Your Practice."
- CRLT. "Overview of Inclusive Teaching." Accessed at: <http://crlt.umich.edu/overview-inclusive-teaching-michigan>
- University of Washington. "Online Course Accessibility Checklist." Accessed at: <https://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/faculty/online-course-accessibility-checklist/>

## Next Steps

- Share our resource with CRLT and other UM-Public Health faculty
- Raise prospect of MPH curriculum review with the MPH curriculum committee
- Incorporate our review criteria into formal course reviews now mandated by our Dean's office
- Continue to share resources with faculty on best practices for inclusive teaching and incorporating a structural inequities lens