STRATEGIES FOR GREATER INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM: LGBTQ+

"Inclusive teaching builds upon an instructor's basic instinct to ensure all voices are heard and that all students have a chance to participate fully in the learning process by digging a little deeper into why participation imbalances exist."

—*Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning*

This guide offers simple suggestions for building a more diverse classroom. The goal of inclusive teaching is to support student engagement with subject material by addressing the needs of all students, regardless of background or identity.

Diverse perspectives can enrich student learning by:

- Inspiring stimulating discussion;
- Expanding approaches to new and ongoing issues; and
- Putting learning within students' own contexts and allowing them to explore those contexts.

Students are more motivated to take control of their learning when their perspectives are recognized — when they are encouraged to draw relevant connections between the material and their own lives and to voice their unique concerns (Ambrose 2018).

Inclusive Introductions

Indicate your chosen name and personal pronouns in your welcome email and/or Blackboard announcement. Including a link to This Is Me may also help ease anxiety about how introductions will be handled when students come to class.

For On-Ground Classes

Allow students to introduce themselves on the first day instead of assuming that their legal name on your roster is their chosen name.

If you do call roll with your printed roster, use last names only and ask students to provide their chosen first name (if a chosen name is already indicated, use it).

Distribute blank sheets of paper, and instruct students to fold them in thirds. Have them write their chosen first name and pronouns on the center panel, then stand the paper up in front of them like a nametag. This eliminates the need to call roll, and the nametags can be reused throughout the semester to help everyone remember one another's names/pronouns.

For Online Classes

Use the Introduction Discussion Board to ask:

- What is your chosen name? (This can vary from your legal name.)
- What are your personal pronouns? (e.g., she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, xe/xem/xyrs)
  – Provide an example, such as: "Hi, everyone! My chosen name is Dr. Nic, and I use she/her/hers pronouns.")

For All Classes

Discuss the importance of asking, rather than assuming, a person's chosen name and personal pronouns, as well as the importance of using them.

- There are many reasons a person may use a different name than their legal name (nickname, prefer middle name, trans students, etc.)
- Highlight Tri-C's This Is Me initiative both on your syllabus and in class.
  Suggested language for syllabus:
  – This Is Me: Identifiers such as name, gender and personal pronouns are core factors in many individuals' sense of self. In alignment with the College's goals and values as an inclusive institution, the newest update to the employee and student information forms include fields to indicate personal pronouns, prefixes and gender identity. Instructors, advisers and administrators will see these values on class rosters, advising rosters and other administrative pages. Learn how to update your chosen name, personal pronouns and/or gender identity at tri-c.edu/thisisme.

In-Class Inclusion

- Avoid using gendered language to address students (e.g., "ladies and gentlemen," "boys/girls," "guys/gals," "Mr./Ms.," "sir/ma'am").
  – Use gender-neutral greetings like "friends," "everyone," "y'all" or "greetings, earthlings" instead.
- When referring to other students in class, avoid gendered pronouns unless you have asked them explicitly about their personal pronouns (i.e., "he/she").
  – You can also use "they" as a singular pronoun. It's been accepted for centuries!
- Avoid using gendered language in class examples and test questions (e.g., "actors/actresses," "waiter/waitress," "he/she").
  – Use words like "scientists," "writers," "artists," "scholars" or "they/them" instead.
- Avoid grouping students by gender.
  – Use birthdays, pet preferences, etc. instead.
- Assign books, articles and films produced by LGBTQ scholars and/or that include LGBTQ characters.
- Make your ally status known by taking the Safe Zone Ally training and displaying your Safe Zone Ally logo in your office, on your syllabus or in your email signature.
- Encourage students to attend LGBTQ+ activities on campus (e.g., Safe Zone training, Lambda GSA meeting) and consider attaching extra credit to it.
- As a low-stakes first assignment, ask all students to email you from their Tri-C email account to answer the following question: "What do I need to know about you as student?"

Addressing Resistance

- Inclusive curriculum supports a student's ability to empathize, connect and collaborate with a diverse group of peers and encourages respect for all.
- Teaching LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum acknowledges the reality that many students come from LGBTQ-headed families, have LGBTQ+ family members and friends or identify as LGBTQ+ themselves.
- All students deserve to see themselves in their curriculum, including those who identify as LGBTQ+.
- Address any instances of deliberate misgendering or discriminatory action by students immediately, referring them to Tri-C's anti-discrimination policies. If the actions continue, file a Behavior Intervention Report.

Resources

Sexual Orientation and Gender Equity Council (SOGE)   Lambda Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA)

Safe Zone   Office of Diversity and Inclusion