Integrating Diversity & Critical Thinking to increase Student Success

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FYE COURSE

A perfect intervention for increased success

A perfect intervention for increased student engagement

A perfect intervention for a foundation of learning
An Effective FYE Course

Should focus on the whole person

Makes it the quintessential “student centered” course

From: More than a Stand-Alone Course: Potential Campus-Wide Benefits of the First-Year Seminar
Why have an FYE Course?

Benefit to Institution

- Retention

- Increased student satisfaction

- Connection to the institution
Why have an FYE Course?

During the first year of college, students report the most change, the most learning and the most development (Flowers, 2001; Doyle, Edison & Pascarella, 1998; Light, 2001).

Academic habits established by students during the first year of college are likely to persist throughout their remaining years of college (Schilling, 2001).

From: Thriving in the Community College & Beyond
Strategies for Academic Success and Personal Development
Keys to Success

In addition, there are four particular forms of interaction have been found to be strongly associated with improving student performance:

- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Student Interaction with a Guidance Counselor
- Student Interaction with a Mentor
- Student/Student (Peer) Interaction
Keys to Success

Further, research studies demonstrate that students’ success is heavily influenced by the quality and quantity of their interaction with faculty members outside of the classroom. More specifically, student-faculty contact outside of class is positively associated with the following student developments:

- Improved academic performance
- Increased critical thinking skills
- Greater satisfaction with the educational experience
- Stronger desire to further education beyond high school
- Involvement in own academic and personal success
- How students interpret messages received from family, school, and community
- Making choices that are in the best interest of their success
To best accommodate the student success process, a teacher must understand the unique characteristics a student possesses. In addition, an educator must also know that individual uniqueness comes from a multi-layered cultural background.

The following model represents the four essential elements a teacher needs to understand and appropriately react to when working with students from varying backgrounds. This model demonstrates that students bring a variety of background knowledge with them (family and community) when they enter a formal educational environment.
Student Success

However, the school has its own culture that is formed by the leadership and the teachers. How that knowledge is transmitted (i.e., pedagogy and curriculum) will be a determining factor as to how this culture is perceived by the student, the community and the family.

The paradigm suggests that if all of the parts are assisting one other, there is a greater chance for the student to achieve academically, emotionally, socially and physically. However, if one of the parts fails to respect or interact with any or all of the others, the success of the student may be hindered.
Four Elements of Success

- Family Involvement
- School Involvement
- Student Involvement & Comprehension
- Community Involvement

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Role Families Play

Primary agents of socialization, perpetuating social class status, life-styles, values and cultural histories

Primary agents for self-esteem and self-efficacy

Primary care-givers

Primary economic support, etc.
Family Involvement

Research shows there is a direct correlation between family involvement and student success.

This relationship exists regardless of race/ethnicity, parents’ level of education, or class.
The Future of America

Although minorities now make up approximately 1/3 of the population, they are expected to be the majority by 2042 and projected to be 54% of the population by 2050.

By 2023, minorities will comprise more than half of all children.
The Future of America

The population of non-Hispanic whites is expected to be only slightly larger by 2050 than in 2008.

This group is projected to lose population in the 2030s and 2040s and comprise 46% of the population by 2050, down from 66% in 2008.
In contrast, the Hispanic population is expected to triple from 46.7 million to 132.8 million during the 2008-2050 time period.

The black population is expected to increase from 14% in 2008 to 15% in 2050.

The Asian population is expected to increase from 5.1% in 2008 to 9.2% in 2050.
Awareness

• Become aware of your own belief system.

• How do you know what they truly are?

• Are you willing to acknowledge them?
Acknowledgment

• Can you acknowledge the affect your beliefs have on others?

• Are they positive or negative?

• How do you know?
Acceptance

• Has the ability to understand how beliefs affect your job, family, and community

• Understands how belief system may be transmitted to others

• Recognizes the short and long-term effects of beliefs
Action

- Where do you go now?
- Development of an action plan
- Use knowledge gained from Awareness, Acknowledgement, and Acceptance to move forward
Culture

• “Culture” can be broadly defined as a distinctive pattern of beliefs and values that develop among a group of people who share the same social heritage and traditions.

• Culture is the whole way in which a group of people has learned to live.
Dimensions of Culture

- Language
- Economic
- Aesthetic
- Ecological
- Sociological
- Philosophical

Political
Geographic
Scientific
Anthropological
Psychological
Theological
Climate vs. Culture

Although the concepts of climate and culture are often used interchangeably, they are uniquely distinct from one another.

Climate has been defined as the “current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (Bauer, 1998, p. 2).

Culture refers to the deeply embedded patterns of values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the way in which an institution behaves (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).
Objective is defined as:

not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice; based on facts; unbiased: an objective opinion.

being the object of perception or thought; belonging to the object of thought rather than to the thinking subject.
Subjective is defined as:

existing in the mind; belonging to the thinking subject rather than to the object of thought

pertaining to or characteristic of an individual; personal; individual: a subjective evaluation.
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND ITS CAUSES
Interesting fact

The number of Americans who are over six feet tall totals less than 15%.

The percentage of corporate CEOs over six feet tall totals almost 60%.

When age and gender are taken into account, an inch of height equates to approximately $789 annually in salary.

The last President with below average height was William McKinley in 1896 and he was referred to as a “little boy” by the press.
Research on bias

Much research has been done in the area of bias and it all points to the same conclusion: Our unconscious beliefs and the attitudes and biases we hold about ourselves and one another affect how we view and treat diversity.
What is Diversity?

• Refers primarily to differences among groups of people, that, together, make up the whole of humanity

• “Commitment to recognizing and appreciating the variety of characteristics that make individuals unique in an atmosphere that promotes and celebrates individual and collective achievement”
This list represents some of the major dimensions of human diversity, it does not represent a complete list of all possible forms of human diversity. Also, disagreement exists about certain dimensions of diversity (e.g. whether certain groups should be considered races or ethnic groups.)
Valuing Diversity

• A process that embraces the richness of difference within our society. Valuing diversity recognizes that all groups have contributed to the American experience, and that all contributions have given America its strength and edge.
Why is it important?

• Research studies have demonstrated a link between interactions of students with a diverse group of peers and increases in a number of student learning outcomes: intellectual and self-confidence, openness to diversity and challenge, critical thinking, leadership and cultural knowledge, moral reasoning, and the development of a pluralistic orientation.
Social Interaction/Collaboration

- A particular form of interpersonal interaction that has been found to be strongly associated with improving students’ performance in college and their motivation to complete college is student to student (peer) interaction.
Student-Student Interaction

• A study of over 25,000 college students revealed that, when students interact with each other while learning, they achieve higher levels of academic performance.

• Another study, which involved in-depth interviews with more than 1,600 college students, revealed that one particular study habit shared by almost all students who struggled academically: they always studied alone.
Diversity Strengthens Development of Learning & Thinking Skills

• Research consistently shows that we learn more from people who are different from us than we do from people who are similar to us (Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzeni, 2005).
Diversity Strengthens Development of Learning & Thinking Skills

• Research on first-year college students shows that students who experience the highest level of exposure to different dimensions of diversity (e.g. interactions and friendships with peers of different races, or participating in multicultural courses and events on campus) report the greatest gains in:
  • thinking complexity – the ability to think about all parts and all sides of an issue (Gurin, 1999),
  • reflective thinking – the ability to think deeply (Kitchener et al., 2000), and
  • critical thinking – the ability to think logically (Pascarella et al., 2001).
Diversity Increases the Power of a Liberal Arts Education

• There is no way to gain a global perspective without understanding human diversity.

• Another perspective that should be developed as part of a liberal arts education is a national perspective, which involves understanding and appreciating your own nation.

• Because of the increasing diversity of the U.S., “multicultural competence” – the ability to understand cultural differences and to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds – has become an important liberal art skill that is critical for success in today's world (Pope et. al., 2005).
Diversity Promotes Creative Thinking

• Experiencing diversity can enhance your ability to think creatively.

• Diversity experiences supply us with different thinking styles that can help us to be aware of our own cultural framework.

• These experiences also help us to be aware of our perceptual “blind spots” and avoid the dangers of group think – the tendency for tight, like-minded groups of people to think so much alike that they overlook the flaws in their own thinking – which can lead to poor choices and faulty decisions (Janis, 1982).
Diversity Enhances Career Preparation & Success

• Whatever career you may choose to enter, you will likely find yourself working with employers, employees, co-workers, customers, and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

• Successful career performance in today's' diverse workforce requires sensitivity to human differences and the ability to relate to people from different cultural backgrounds who work in the U.S. and across different nations (National Association of Colleges & Employers, 2003; Smith, 1997).
Diversity Stimulates Social Development

• Interacting with people from a variety of groups widens one’s social circle by expanding the pool of people with whom one can associate and develop relationships.
Diversity

• A major goal of appreciating diversity is to promote more equitable and treatment of all people and reduce prejudice or discrimination toward particular groups of people.

• Diversity is also a learning experience that strengthens the quality of an individual’s education, career preparation, citizenship, and leadership in a democracy.
Diversity

Students should understand appreciating diversity involves:

• Acknowledging differences – being aware of them
• Accommodating differences – dealing with them in a fair, non-prejudicial or discriminative way
• Cultivating differences – capitalizing on them to enrich learning and personal development
Introducing the topic of diversity may immediately trigger a defensive reaction in some majority students in anticipation you are going to “guilt” them or their ancestors.

Although some instances of overt prejudice and discrimination are clearly unethical or illegal, some cases take place without full awareness or malicious intent.
Learning Experience vs. Guilt Trip

• Unconscious prejudicial tendencies may be rooted in our evolutionary history and involve a deeper understanding of our biological, anthropological, and psychosocial roots.

• Diversity awareness and appreciation is not just an exercise in “political correctness;” it’s a subject that is just as intellectually challenging, thought-provoking, and self-illuminating as learning other scholarly subjects.
Diversity vs. Competency

• “DIVERSITY refers to variation in populations, such as race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, disability, age, language and gender; while COMPETENCY refers to the ability to understand and respond effectively to student needs based on these variations. Thus, diversity is a feature of the population, and competency is a measure of effectiveness.”

ASAP of New York State
Staircase to Cultural Competence

Cultural Sensitivity

Bias
Stereotyping
Prejudice
Discrimination

Cultural Acceptance
Cultural Acknowledgement
Cultural Action
Cultural Competence

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Cultural Sensitivity

- An understanding that our internal biases have affected those around us, both those we know personally and those we do not
Cultural Awareness

• An awareness of your own cultural biases and affects they may have on yourself and others
Cultural Acknowledgment

• The act of acknowledging the differences that exist between individuals, races, and entire cultures, and viewing those differences as positive rather than negative.
Cultural Acceptance

• Valuing cultural differences and similarities, and viewing the differences as positive
Cultural Action

• The process of recognizing differences and responding to them in a positive manner; it represents an advanced step in the process of becoming culturally competent.
Cultural Competence

• How you apply your values as a professional
• How you apply your values as an individual
Cultural Competence

• The ability to appreciate cultural differences and to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds
What can professors do to promote diversity?

- Set aside class time for students to work together and learn about each other so that they appreciate the diversity each person brings to the class.

- Use other individuals as resources during your class that students may be able to connect with.

- Never tolerate disrespect for one another no matter what issue is being discussed or how heated a debate may get.
What can professors do to promote diversity?

• Allow students to share their personal histories.

• Have students bring an artifact of their cultural background to class and describe its significance in their life.

• Require or give extra-credit assignments for students to engage in co-curricular experiences relating to diversity awareness.
First Year Student Learning Outcomes

• Specify how students are expected to change as a result of participating in the course:

  • Attitudinal Outcomes (e.g. changes in attitude toward diversity)

  • Behavioral Outcomes (e.g. increased participation in diverse campus activities)

  • Cognitive Outcomes (e.g. increased knowledge about the forms of diversity and how it relates to higher-level thinking)
Incorporating Higher Level Thinking

• Ask students to write a one-minute paper in response to a question posed by you.

• Or, reverse the steps and have students write a one-minute paper first, then have them discuss their written responses. This strategy encourages students to engage in reflection, sending a signal to students that they should take time to gather their thoughts before expressing them.
Incorporating Higher Level Thinking

• Create cognitive dissonance or disequilibrium in the minds of students with respect to course concepts and issues.

• The following practices are recommended as strategies for inducing cognitive disequilibrium among your students:
Incorporating Higher Level Thinking

- Persuade students to buy into a certain position, then immediately proceed to “turn the table” and expose its flaws.
Incorporating Higher Level Thinking

• During class discussions, raise questions that call for multiple student perspectives (e.g. Would someone else like to express an opposing viewpoint?)

• At the end of class discussions, assign a one-minute paper that asks students if there was any point made or position taken during today’s class session that they strongly question or challenge.
Incorporating Higher Level Thinking

- Invite and encourage students to disagree with ideas you present in class or that are presented in the text.

- Invite guest speakers to visit class who hold differing perspectives with respect to a course topic or issue.
Incorporating Higher Level Thinking

- Tape TV programs involving debates or panel discussions among authorities who hold differing positions, and stop them at key times or junctures to engage the class in class discussion.
Applying Higher Level Thinking

- Play the role of devil’s advocate to help students see the limitations associated with different arguments and positions.
Applying Higher Level Thinking

• Have students engage in “reverse thinking” by asking them to switch their original position on an issue being discussed in class.

• Have students research and prepare to defend both sides of an issue then randomly assign them to argue for one side of the issue.
And Now...The Future

Z

Generation Z – “The iGeneration”
Generation Z Characteristics

18% of the population
grew up as young children during 9/11
grew up during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq
familiar with the unpredictability of safety in public spaces
likely to travel far to find a job after college
Mistrust in prevailing political systems
Generation Z Characteristics

Formative years were during the rise of the World Wide Web.
Instant-gratification due to technology.
No memory of (or nostalgia for) pre-Internet history.
Takes the Internet for granted.
Accepts as a norm services such as internet forums, email, Wikipedia, Google, search engines, MySpace, Facebook, imageboards and YouTube.
Mass collaboration via Net Communities.
Lack of privacy.
Generation Z Characteristics

breakdown of traditional courtship and dating will bring interesting marital situations
the most home-schooled generation
the most medicated generation
end of traditional social graces
The complete digital generation
A bunch of smart cookies
References


Alcohol and Substance Abuse Providers of New York State


References


PSEG Diversity Definition. Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG) is a publicly traded (NYSE:PEG), Energy services company. Newark, NJ.


