

Inclusive Teaching

Incoming college students from underrepresented groups express the same interest in STEM careers as majority students, but they have much lower continuance in STEM majors and lower graduation rates. Part of our responsibility as instructors is to align our teaching practices with evidence-based instructional methods that address this issue of retention. Research shows that increased course structure improves learning, retention, and success of **all** students, but **especially benefits** those students that are first generation or from underrepresented groups. A nice summary of best classroom practices from the Chronicle of Higher Ed is [here](#), as well as an example of a 2020 PNAS [article](#) on the positive effect of best practices. [Here](#) is a bracing read to deepen your understanding of how a faculty member can play a role addressing inequities and societal disparities in our classrooms.

To make significant differences in diversity, equity, and inclusion in our department, we need a focused, sustained effort to improve our overall culture. We need to work together to make that happen (e.g., pgs. 57-58 of this [report](#)). We can and should take pride in promoting and rewarding practices that serve the needs of all students better. To that end the following changes are proposed to our teaching practices and culture:

Expectations for all Biology classes:

1. The syllabus should be posted on Canvas before the first day of class (ideally a week before the first day of class). The syllabus should include the dates for exams, dates when major assignments are due, and the overall grading scheme for the course, i.e., weighting of individual assignments and assessments, and final grading scale. Changes to dates and/or assignments should be communicated to students in a clear and timely fashion.
2. Regular learning outcomes should be provided to students so they can track their progress towards the course's learning goals. These can be provided by the instructor before each class meeting, developed by the students as a formal part of their course navigation, or communicated as highlighted points during lectures and/or lab materials. These learning outcomes should be stated in clear, discrete, and measurable language (i.e., not words like "Understand" or "Appreciate", but rather "Demonstrate an understanding of...through..."). A good place to start is [here](#).
3. All graded assessments in the course should be matched with these learning outcomes and communicated to students so that they can track their own progress towards course goals.
4. All scores should be posted quickly (e.g., within 1-2 weeks) on Canvas so that at any point in the semester, students clearly know how they are performing in the course in terms of a projected final letter grade.
5. Information should be provided in the syllabus regarding Counseling Services, Title IX, Accessibility Resources, and Academic Integrity and Misconduct, and a statement in the syllabus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Consider including additional resources for underrepresented student groups, including student affinity groups (e.g., UC LGBTQ Alumni and Friends Network). See examples in the UC Syllabus template doc.
6. Instructors should provide identifiable office hours and office location in the syllabus.
7. Instructors should respond to student emails within 1-2 business days and post this in the syllabus.

Recommendations for all Biology classes:

1. Instructors should develop and maintain an atmosphere of belonging for all students right from the beginning. Resources to get you started are [here](#) and [here](#).
2. All course elements should be designed for accessibility. This is called Universal Design, which you can read about [here](#) and [here](#). UC's policy and some resources are [here](#).
3. The bulk of class time should be spent with students directly involved in activities that increase their ability to achieve the course's learning outcomes. This can be done by incorporating more active class

periods (i.e., students are engaged by working on authentic work of the discipline). One easy way to start is to add one activity to each class (e.g., have students work in small groups to predict the pattern of data one would expect based on a key hypothesis/theory in a novel experimental context). Further examples and suggestions can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Afterwards, decide if each activity can be improved, or should be deleted and replaced. Each subsequent semester additional activities can be added, making the transition incremental and achievable. One good eventual goal is to never have the professor talking more than 15 minutes at a time.

4. Daily no- or low-stakes assessment should be used that allows both students and the instructor to measure achievement towards course learning outcomes with little impact on the final grade. Some examples include asking no stake Personal Response System questions, giving low-stake quizzes, etc.
5. Activities should allow students to practice with exam-level problems, with feedback, prior to actual exams.

The department will work to help support faculty as they work to meet these expectations and suggestions moving forward. Both the Undergraduate Programs and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committees are committed to supporting faculty in this way. Faculty are also encouraged to reach out to colleagues who are already employing these techniques in their classes to share tips, success stories, and visit each other's classrooms for inspiration and to provide constructive feedback. Only through nurturing a culture of inclusion will our department excel in this critical area, and thereby meet the educational needs of all of our students!

Sample statements for syllabi

(can be modified as desired)

Accommodations and Accessibility Statement:

If you are a student needing accommodation related to your participation in this course, including identified visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, communication disorder, and/or specific learning disabilities that may influence your performance in this course, you should meet with the instructor *before* any exams or assignments are assigned to arrange for reasonable provisions to ensure an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. At the discretion of the instructor, some accommodations may require prior approval by Accessibility Resources (513-556-6823).

Respect in the Classroom:

To create an effective learning environment, we consider it of the utmost importance that we show respect to our fellow students and to the instructor. To this end, *you must turn off all cell phones before class begins* and remain attentive during class. If any student exhibits disrespectful behavior, we will ask her/him to leave the classroom so the other students in the room can learn in a suitable environment. We are more than willing to answer questions via email, but please include your name within the email along with a suitable subject line. We generally respond within a day, so if you do not receive a response by then, please check the composition of your message or see one of us after class (note that sometimes Canvas does not send messages with attachments for certain students if their account is not configured properly).

Academic Integrity Statement:

The University Rules, including the Student Code of Conduct ([UC Student Code of Conduct](#)), and other policies related to academic integrity will be enforced. Any violation of these regulations, including acts of plagiarism, data fabrication, cheating, or violations of ethical or professional standards will be dealt with swiftly. If you are unclear on what exactly constitutes violations of these conduct expectations, be sure to check with me first or consult with the [UC Integrity Guide](#) and [UC Student Code of Conduct](#). As part of the College of Arts &

Sciences Two Strike Policy, if there any indication of academic dishonesty, we are required to report it automatically to the College of Arts and Sciences and UC's Office of University Judicial Affairs, following all required procedures. If a student has been found responsible and sanctioned for academic misconduct previously, the sanction for another such violation will be more severe and he/she will automatically receive a letter grade of "F" for the course. Please note that we hold academic integrity to be of the utmost importance in our university community and a trait that must be exemplified by every UC graduate.

Title IX

Title IX is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of your actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Title IX also covers sexual violence, dating or domestic violence, and stalking. Please be aware that if you disclose a Title IX issue to me, I am required to forward that information to the Title IX Office. They will follow up with you about how the University can take steps to address the impact on you and make you aware of your rights and resources, although you can choose whether you wish to talk with the Title IX Office staff. Their priority is to make sure you are safe and successful here. If you would like to make a report of sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence, or if you would like to know more about your rights and resources on campus, you can consult their website at www.uc.edu/titleix or contact the office at 556-3349.

Counseling Services:

Students have access to free counseling and mental health care through the University Health Services (UHS). Do not hesitate to talk to me or contact them directly if you need help. After hours, students may call UHS at 513-556-2564 or CAPS Cares at 513-556-0648.

Learning Assistants:

You are encouraged to take advantage of the Learning Assistants (LAs), who are associated with this course. The LAs will speak and help you during class. I will post additional information on Canvas if any of them will be available to tutor outside of class.

Supplemental Instruction:

You are encouraged to take advantage of the Supplemental Instruction outside of class. The Supplemental Instructor will have review sessions outside of class time that will help you with learning the material. I will post to Canvas information regarding the Supplemental Instructor's review sessions and office hours.

Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

Diversity and inclusion are important to me, and in both school and work environments diverse groups have been shown to produce better results. To that end, I have the following goals for the class as a whole and for your individual group:

- everyone is allowed to feel they can work and learn in a safe and caring environment.
- everyone respects varied races, ethnicities, classes, genders, physical and mental abilities, and sexualities.
- everyone matters and thus all individuals are to be respected and treated with dignity and civility; and
- everyone shares the responsibility for making our class a positive and better place to live, work, and learn.

OR

This class is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom and human dignity. Diversity in all forms is something we welcome, we foster, and we prize. We believe that honest attempts to understand the perspectives of others facilitates learning, and we will strive to achieve this goal at all times. We strongly disavow discrimination -- including harassment -- on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex or gender identity, disability, age, sexual orientation, or veteran status. We expect that each of us will hold one another accountable for maintaining these ideals.