Empowering the Instructor: Improving Faculty instructional practices to enhance classroom engagement and academic success of diverse student learners

November 16, 2022

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Thank you for inviting back to another Texas Pathways Institute.
HOW WILL WE ENGAGE TODAY?

Please be open to new ideas and conversations.

Please think about how this talk applies to you?

Please have a pen & paper ready.

Please get your cell phone and send this text message: luisponjuan439 to this number: 22333
This is WHO I AM: Afro-Cuban, Cisgender male, First-born son to Luis & Martha Ponjuán, Immigrant, Naturalized U.S. Citizen, Bilingual learner and speaker, First-generation Undergraduate graduate and a University of Michigan Doctoral recipient, Brother, Uncle, Father, & Friend.

This is WHAT I DO: Researcher, Collaborator, Advocate, Ally, Mentor, Teacher, Servant Leader, Scholar, & Lifelong learner.

This is WHAT I STUDY: Latinx/a/o students & males, Community Colleges, JEDI, & College Teaching.
Recently, the Texas Higher Coordinating Board reaffirms their commitment to creating a higher education strategic plan to “Build a Talent Strong Texas” that prepares the next generation workforce. There is ample evidence that faculty instructors should develop better instructional practices to improve the educational experiences of diverse learners.

It is important that we focus our efforts to educate, empower, and encourage our community college faculty members to actively contribute to the academic success of diverse learners to achieve a “Talent Strong Texas”.
What have we learned at the institute?
Our faculty members understand the importance of classroom instruction to improve academic success of diverse learners.

- Yes, our faculty understand our diverse learners: 9
- Somewhat, I think our faculty members want to help diverse learners: 52
- Not sure, I think our faculty members have different views about diverse learners: 17
- Not really, I think we need to really reframe and address how our faculty members help diverse learners succeed: 8

**Interpretation**

This underscores that more work needs to be done to help faculty members address the unique learning needs for diverse learners in the learning environment.
A National conversation about Faculty Instructional practices

LUMINA ISSUE PAPER

SCALING HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT OUTCOMES: Evidence from the Tennessee Board of Regents

By Jessa Valentine, Ph.D., and Derek Price, Ph.D., DVP-PRAXIS LTD

February 2021
We need to understand how teaching-related High Impact Practices shape the educational experiences for diverse learners.
Community College Faculty members are part of the puzzle to improve the academic success of diverse learners.
We all need to invest and commit to helping our diverse learners in Texas community colleges to **THRIIVE** (to prosper, to flourish).
The framework to guide how we help diverse student learners to **THRIVE**

### JEDI ELEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justice (Honor &amp; Dignity)</th>
<th>Equity (Best Conditions)</th>
<th>Diversity (Visible &amp; Invisible Traits)</th>
<th>Inclusion (Words &amp; Behaviors)</th>
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### Sense of Belonging

### Student Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspirations (Hope)</th>
<th>Achievement (Success)</th>
<th>Attainment (Credentials)</th>
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While many of faculty members may understand and appreciate this graphic, we must reflect on how our teaching contributes to student outcomes.
Why do faculty members matter?
Faculty members are critical links between institutional goals and student academic success.
Reflecting on teaching practices requires us to explore how we see and understand our teaching beliefs and attitudes.
Teaching and Learning in a Texas Pathways Framework

The fourth pillar of the Texas Pathways strategy outlines the essential practices necessary for ensuring students are learning.

**Pillar 4: Essential Practices**

4(a). Program learning outcomes are aligned with the requirement for success in further education and employment outcomes targeted by each program.

4(b). Students have ample opportunity to apply and deepen knowledge and skills through projects, internships, co-ops, clinical placements, group projects outside of class, service learning, study abroad and other active learning activities that program faculty intentionally embed into coursework.

4(c). Faculty programs assess whether students are mastering learning outcomes and building skills across each program, in both arts and sciences and career/technical programs.

4(d). Results of learning outcomes assessment are used to improve teaching and learning through program review, professional development, and other intentional campus efforts.

4(e). The college helps students document their learning for employers and universities through portfolio and other means beyond transcript.

4(f). The college assesses effectiveness of educational practice (e.g., using CCSSE or SENSE, etc.) and uses the results to create targeted professional development.
Interpretation
This is an important result because it highlights the gap in proposed ideals and the reality of actual understanding and implementation of those ideals. More translation from theory to practice is needed.
In order to help diverse student learners, THRIVE through our teaching practices we need to address three primary areas:

I. **Our implicit bias and blind spots**
II. **Our interpersonal relationships with diverse learners**
III. **Our teaching practices in diverse learning spaces**
I. We all have implicit bias and blind spots with our diverse learners
Community college faculty members must learn about perspective taking, self-reflection, and cultural humility to improve as equity-minded instructors for our diverse learners.
II. We need to understand our interpersonal relationships with diverse student learners
Students are less concerned about how much a faculty member knows about their subject matter. They want to know how much the faculty member cares about them.
You don’t have to be a Sage on the stage, you simply need to be a caring instructor
KNOW YOUR STUDENT’S NAME
Know and use their correct name
III. We need to reflect and reframe our teaching practices in changing classroom environments.
Online instruction requires more effort and attention to create trust & rapport with diverse learners.
How should community college faculty members communicate to marginalized students to improve their sense of belonging in the classroom?
MICROAFFIRMATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

We should communicate positive, subtle and overt micromessages through verbal and non-verbal language that recognizes and validates a marginalized person or group in supportive and affirming ways, because it allows them to feel seen, valued, included, motivated, respected, heard, and encouraged.

(National Partnership in Equity, NAPE).
Microaffirmations allow diverse student learners to hear and see that faculty care, listen, and respect them.

- Say their name
- Know their story
- Learn to listen
- Confront microaggressions
- Encourage them to share
- Appreciate funds of knowledge
- Create safe spaces
- Humility & compassion
We need to better prepare our faculty members to be effective instructors for diverse learners.
We can’t achieve the Pillar 4 Essential practices, if faculty members don’t reflect on their teaching beliefs and attitudes towards diverse & marginalized students.
Resistance to change concerns

- Faculty who are unwilling (non-empathetic) to change.
- I'm afraid the faculty members who have been there for a long time will refuse to change with the current needs of students.
- Faculty have validity to change.
- Faculty not responding.
- Buy In.
- Not being able to make them change/adapt to high impact practices that impact diverse students in a positive way.
- Continued resistance.
- Implicit bias.
- Resistant to change and self-reflection.
- Resistance to change.
- Faculty resistance.
- Faculty will be closed minded.
- The ones who are doing it well will be the main ones who want to learn more.
- Cultural resistance to change.

Pedagogy concerns

- Faculty who are hyper-focused on 'holding students accountable.'
- Connection is greater than content.
- We’re teaching our students how to teach not only by WHAT we teach but HOW we teach them.
- Finding the time and space to help them advance in their work.
- Some of our faculty truly believe they relate well to students despite what students stated about those interactions.
- Growing normalization of ethnocentrism.
- Their own stress levels impacting the classroom.

Faculty workload/bandwidth concerns

- Faculty not feeling like this is an additional task rather than part of what they do.
- Faculty are feeling overwhelmed by the large number of existing initiatives and may be resistant to change or further professional development about change.
- Sustaining commitment.
- Faculty are tired and they need support, encouragement, resources, too.
- Time.

Institutional policy concerns

- Hiring practices due to accreditation. Hiring subject matter experts over those with Masters/Doctorates in Education.
- Lack of effort or buy in from staff to help diverse learners and...lack of courageous conversations or consequences for them not doing so.
- The staff to train the faculty.
- Moving past inertia. Getting faculty onboard to understand and care about why this matters. Why this is the foundation to student’s understanding the content and overall success.
We must work to understand the educational experiences of marginalized students in the classroom and beyond.
All great achievements require courage, action, time, patience, trust, honest communication, and individual humility.
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