THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Diversity and Inclusiveness in the Classroom

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With the increase in diversity at institutions of higher education, campus communities are now commonly comprised of individuals from many backgrounds and with diverse experiences as well as multiple and intersecting identities. In addition, many campus constituents have social identities that historically have been underrepresented (e.g. Black/African Americans, Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic, Asian American/Pacific Islanders, Natives Americans, LGBTQIA+ folks, international students and employees, people with diverse religious affiliations, veterans, non-traditional students, women, first-generation college students, and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds). The University of Arizona does not differ from other institutions when it comes to diversity. Considering race and ethnicity alone, currently the UA has over 40% students of color. The multiplicity of the groups mentioned above form a valuable part of our student body.

Diversity poses both challenges and opportunities for a college campus. One place where this is certainly true is the college classroom. With respect to challenges, faculty and students continuing to experience conflict and tension related to the different views, perceptions, and backgrounds represented in the classroom. Here are some potential examples:
- a heterosexual students claiming that LGBTQIA+ individuals do not have the right to exist, using their religion to justify this claim
- a faculty member expecting a Latinx student in the classroom to educate the rest of the class on the topic of Mexican immigration patterns
- male students continuously disrupting the class by directing sexist comments at a female teaching assistant
- a White student threatening an African American student over views on affirmative action

These kinds incidents of cultural and personal misunderstandings – in addition to institutional discrimination, inadequate or no training for faculty on issues of diversity, and a lack of preparation of students for engaging in productive classroom discussions – contribute to a picture of tense college campuses and classrooms waiting to be disrupted as a result of these and other incidents.

That said, there are instances where faculty have used and are using diversity in the classroom as an opportunity or asset to enhance teaching and learning. For example:
- an instructor who organizes a fishbowl discussion of male students to discuss their attitudes toward women after a student makes a controversial remark in class
- a faculty member teaching students about the difference between a debate and a dialogue in order to have productive expressions of free speech and thereby enhancing the learning process
- students receiving and learning about ground rules for classroom discussions related to respect, free speech, and personalizing the issues

In sum, the prospects of diversity involve using the multiple perspectives, cultures, languages, and other characteristics that different social identities bring to the class as assets or tools in

creating greater understanding and knowledge about these issues. This task is not easy and requires special skills and techniques.

This document is intended to be a resource for addressing difficult or challenging topics in the classroom. No faculty is required to utilize the guidelines. It is merely suggestions for faculty who want to engender the broadest possible perspectives, opinions, and experiences and to maximize free speech in the classroom.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Inclusive Excellence requires that we create inclusive learning environments that are attentive to issues of diversity. Issues related to differences manifest themselves across all courses, assignments, curriculums, and pedagogies. Faculty play a major role in creating and promoting an inclusive learning environment. This guide includes suggestions for addressing issues of diversity and inclusiveness in the classroom.

INCLUSIVENESS MATTERS

How, what, and who we teach matters when it comes to diversity and inclusiveness. The books, readings, case studies, word problems and examples presented in the classroom can either include diverse communities by drawing on the history, culture, and experiences of different groups, or they can exclude those same communities by obliterating them from the curriculum. It goes without saying that teaching tools have to be selected carefully to be sensitive and validating to diverse communities as opposed to stereotyping and offending.

SOCIAL IDENTITY

The social identities of each faculty member influences how students perceive and receive them. Research suggests, for example, that women of color and white women receive low teaching evaluations in those courses where diversity is the central topic. International faculty members get complaints from students about their accents. Faculty of color have to work harder than White faculty at establishing credibility in the classroom. The issue is not that there is something inherently wrong with these social identities themselves. Rather, these are symptoms of the various social and power dynamics that play out in the classroom.

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF

It is important to understand yourself as a faculty member. Getting to know your own biases, hot buttons, pedagogical style, issues about which you are passionate, privileges, likes and dislikes, and other personal characteristics will only help you in dealing with classroom issues.

NO APPREHENSION

Just because there is tremendous diversity in the classroom does not mean you should be apprehensive about it and fear that at any moment you will make a mistake. You are not expected to know the dynamics, history, and experience of every social identity in your class. Simply acknowledge that there is diversity, do your best to address issues that come up, apologize and correct mistakes whenever possible, and proceed to teach. Make an effort to educate yourself.

Preparing Students for Addressing Diversity in the Classroom

Students enter higher education without the tools to engage in classroom discussions or to interact with other students, in particular with students from diverse backgrounds. Below are some examples of tools/exercises that can be utilized to prepare students to engage in classroom dialogues.

Tools/Exercises for Preparing Students To Interact in the Classroom

Four Corners Exercise: Divide students into four groups based on their dialogue engagement style. Corner #1: Students who share a lot in class; Corner #2: Students who only talk when they are particularly motivated by the topic; Corner #3: Students who talk only when called on by the professor; and Corner #4: Students who don't talk at all in class. Have the students discuss different types of communication in their small groups as well as large group processing

Active Listening Exercise: Roleplay with another person (student) the dynamics of bad listening (e.g., interrupting, getting side-tracked, showing signs of inattentiveness) while that student talks about a topic (e.g., describing her high school). Next, roleplay the same scenario but this time practice active listening (e.g., ask questions for clarification, agree, shake your head in agreement). Break the students in dyads and have them practice active listening with each other.

Ice Breakers: Getting students to become familiar with each other can decrease conflict and tension in the classroom. The more students get to know each other, the less likely that they will disrespect each other. The web offers plenty of resources related to ice breakers that can be used in the classroom.

Mixing Students: It is important to constantly mix the students so that they can get to know everyone in class, not just those they are comfortable with. Students, like most, are creatures of habit who tend to sit in the same spot next to the same student week after week. Again, ice breakers are a good way to create greater interaction among students.

Strategies for Engaging Students

Modeling: Modeling is a technique that can be used to establish a climate of non-defensiveness and honesty. For example, a heterosexual facilitator might relate his own growth and development with respect to understanding different sexualities (e.g. going from having bias towards the LGBTQIA+ community to cultivating an understanding and appreciation for members of this group). Another facilitator might relate a story about how she used to fear African Americans, but then actively confronted this bias and learned that her fears had never been warranted. Modeling sets up the conditions for participants to, in an honest way, begin to recognize, acknowledge, and examine their own issues.

Storytelling: During intergroup dialogues, the use of stories is a powerful technique for creating consciousness and awareness. Through storytelling, participants learn to bond and understand each other on a personal/individual level. The objective of storytelling is for students to gain a deeper understanding of the different groups to which their peers belong. Stories are interesting

and convey emotion, history, pain, joy, spirituality, friendship, forgiveness, and other ideas. They are an effective tool in intergroup dialogue for explaining constructs, engaging participants, eliciting emotions, and breaking down barriers between groups.

Metaphors: A metaphor as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them" (Webster's Dictionary). Like stories, metaphors are also tools that assist students in dialogue, helping them express themselves and their perspectives in interesting and deep ways. For example, participants might be asked to use a metaphor to describe their understanding of race relations in America. Someone might provide the following metaphor: "Race relations in America remind me of the relationship between the earth and the sky. The earth represents ethnic/racial minorities, which sends water (e.g., diverse cultures, perspectives, opinions) to the clouds through the process of evaporation, making the sky look beautiful. For their part, clouds (which remind me of Whites) return the water back to the earth and enrich it. Both the earth and the clouds are equally important and need each other in order to live and make life interesting."

Group work: Small group interaction is a good technique that allows participants to become more acquainted and to share ideas with a few other students. Some students are reluctant to raise issues in large dialogue groups. Small groups are an excellent way to help these students in particular to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. Small group work allows for everybody to participate and represents an opportunity for participants to teach each other.

Collages/Art Work: Collages and other forms of art tap into students' creative and visual side. Here students might be asked to create a collage depicting intergroup relations or intergroup concepts and ideas. After completing their project, students might be asked to present and explain their art pieces.

Fish bowl discussions: Fishbowl discussions entail placing all members of one group (e.g., African American students) in a circle in the center of the room surrounded by students without that identity (e.g. students who are not African American). The facilitator leads a discussion with the center group for a specified amount of time (e.g. 20 minutes), while everyone else listens. Then, the groups switch places and those originally in the outer circle are led in their own facilitated discussion while the those originally in the inner circle listen. Finally, both groups come together and as a whole discuss any issues that emerged from the fishbowl discussions. This is a great strategy as it creates a space for greater understanding of other students' perspectives and experiences.
For many participants, this is their first opportunity to "listen in" on a discussion involving groups that they normally don't get to hear.

Reflection sessions: Reflection sessions are designed to get individual participants to think at a deeper level about experiences, issues, or concepts. Through questions, exercises, and other techniques, participants critically examine their thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, and the change process on the way to gaining a better understanding of groups, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. Critical to this process is an examination of the dynamics of taking action toward change.

Journaling: Journaling is one form of reflection that takes the form of writing. Journaling allows students to write about issues confidentially. This confidentiality encourages students to explore issues of diversity in a very honest way.

Personal and Group Affirmation: Creating a safe space for students for engaging in dialogue about challenging topics is vital in promoting positive intergroup interactions. Some ground rules might include:
- *One Diva, One Mic*: Do not interrupt others. Only one speaker should talk at a time
- *Confidentiality*: Encourage students to continue these conversations outside of class with their peers; however, make sure that students do not disclose the names of students who shared in class. In other words, they can share the idea without saying whose idea it was.
- *Oops/ouch*: If a student feels hurt or offended by another student's comment, the hurt student can say "ouch." In acknowledgement, the student who made the hurtful comment says "oops." If necessary, there can be further dialogue about this exchange.

For more ground rules for classroom discussions, see page 7.

Ground rules help students feel comfortable being honest. Students should be affirmed for being open, honest, and vulnerable about their perspectives and experiences. This contributes to promoting mutual respect and trust among group members.

Visual Imagery: Visual imagery involves using various techniques (e.g. media or guided prompting) to encourage students to imagine they are "in someone else's shoes." For example, a facilitator might have students imagine that they are in a foreign country where they do not know anyone personally and where they are unfamiliar with the language or culture. After the students process their experience of this imagined scenario, the facilitator might relate the imagined scenario to an applied cultural situation. For example, students can be prompted to think about the experience of Native American students who attend college off of their reservation and have to adjust to a very different cultural environment.

Guidelines for Classroom Discussions

It is important to establish ground rules for dialogue, interaction, and behavior at the beginning of each course. This is critical because it will validate students from diverse backgrounds, create trust in you as an instructor, and establish a safe space for interaction. Moreover, if conflict emerges, you can always refer the students back to the rules of engagement.

- While setting ground rules, explain that the idea is to create a safe, caring, and respectful atmosphere.

- Explain why conversations about diversity are important. It is all of our responsibilities to be engaged in dialogue about oppression, bias, power, and other topics related to living in a multicultural world. These conversations are a part of a healing process between members of our community. Hopefully, we leave each discussion with deeper understanding and a renewed hope for the future.

- Explain that sharing is voluntary, meaning that students can share their perspectives and experiences to the degree that they are comfortable.

- Explain that sharing should be based on one's own feelings, experiences and perceptions. Students should not be expected to speak on behalf of or represent an entire race, culture, gender, etc. In expressing viewpoints, students should try to raise questions and comments in way that will promote learning, rather than defensiveness and conflict in other students. Thus, questions and comments should be asked or stated in such a way that will promote greater insight into and awareness of topics as opposed to anger and conflict.

- Explain that students' views may vary, and that the most important part of intergroup dialogue is creating a space for the exchange of different feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. While this allows students to express their opinions, they are also accountable for the ideas that they share. Name calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counter-productive to successful teaching and learning about topics.

- Explain that students should avoid quick judgments. Rather than jumping right to criticism, encourage students to practice active listening and to seek to understand another student's perspective.

- Encourage students to avoid getting tied up in debate and argument. It rarely changes anything or anyone and tends to ultimately inhibit open sharing.

- Encourage students to practice active listening and to give full attention to whomever is talking.

- Discourage the devaluation of emotions and feelings. We may laugh and cry together, share pain, joy, fear and anger.

- Explain that in dialogues, every makes mistakes. What is most important is that we use these moments as occasions for learning and forgiving.

Example of Guidelines

1. Dialogue is a two-way process; it involves balancing deep listening and open honest sharing.

2. Everyone is encouraged to speak.

3. Be respectfull particularly when speaking to each other.

4. Risk trusting other people with your feelings and experience.

5. Share what feels comfortable for you – don't go beyond that.

6. You do not need a clear position or to be an expert; it is okay to be confused or to change your mind.

7. People who listen more than they speak often have more of value to share.

8. Try to be present for the full process as absence can have a negative impact.

8. If you feel uncomfortable, you may need to take time out, but let the facilitator know.
9. At some point in time, we may need to agree to disagree and move on to another topic.

10. Feel free to ask if you don't understand.

11. Dialogue is not about agreement it is about deepening understanding.

12. Question what you hear and what you think.

13. Keep an open mind.

14. Help and support each other throughout the process.

Dialogue vs. Debate

Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together towards common understanding.
Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.

In **dialogue**, the goal is to find common ground.
In **debate**, the goal is to win.

In **dialogue**, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning and find agreement.
In **debate**, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes participants' points of view.
Debate affirms each participant's own point of view.

Dialogue reveals assumptions for re-evaluation.
Debate defends assumptions as truth.

Dialogue promotes introspection in considering one's positions.
Debate promotes critique of the another person's positions.

Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any original solutions.
Debate defends one's own positions as *the* best solution and excludes other options.

Dialogue promotes an open-minded attitude – an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.
Debate promotes a close-minded attitude – a determination to be right.

In **dialogue**, a person contributes their thoughts knowing that other people's reflections will help improve those thoughts rather than destroy them.
In **debate**, a person contributes their thoughts and defends them against any challenges to prove that they are right.

Dialogue calls a temporary suspension of one's beliefs.
Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.

In **dialogue**, one searches for fundamental agreements.
In **debate**, one searches for glaring differences.

In **dialogue** one searches for strengths in another person's positions.
In **debate** one searches for flaws and weaknesses in another person's positions.

Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.
Debate involves countering other positions without considering another person's feelings and how the interaction belittles or deprecates the other person.

Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that they can put them into a workable solution together.
Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.

Dialogue remains open-ended.
Debate implies a conclusion.

Microaggressions in the Classroom

Microaggressions are "the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions are a challenge on our college campuses, in particular in college classrooms. Students might experience microaggressions based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, disability, age, socio-economic status, and other diverse dimensions. Microaggressions from faculty towards students may manifest as inappropriate jokes, malicious comments, singling-out students, setting exams and project due dates on religious holidays, and stereotyping. Microaggressions are often unintentional and unconsciously committed by faculty. Stated differently, microaggressions are <u>not</u> being committed by spiteful and bigoted professors who want to intentionally hurt students from diverse groups, but rather are undertaken at the unconscious level by well-meaning and caring professors. Nevertheless, the effects on students who are the recipients of microaggressions include anger, frustration, and withdrawal. The bottom line is that microaggressions can create hostile and unwelcoming classroom environments.

The purpose of this discussion is to create awareness of microaggressions in the classroom committed by faculty towards students. It is important to note here that students also commit microaggressions against other students, and faculty must also be vigilant about those incidents. Both students and faculty play a role in and are responsible for creating safe and inclusive classroom environments. The following two sections contain information about definitions pertaining to microaggressions as well as specific examples of microaggressions. It is important to recognize that microaggressions are not germane to social science classes, but occur in courses representing different disciplines (e.g., math, physics, biology). The concluding section offers specific suggestions for faculty on how to recognize and combat microaggressions in hopes of working towards building inclusive classrooms.

Definitions of Microaggressions

- **Microaggressions**: The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership (Sue et al., 2007)

- **Microinsults**: Behaviors, actions, or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, or demean a person's group or social identity or heritage (Sue, et. al. 2007)

- **Microinvalidations**: Actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of people who represent different groups (Sue, et. al. 2007)

Examples of Microaggressions

- Continuing to mispronounce the names of students after they have corrected you time and time again
  Professor: "Is Jose Cuinantila here?"
  Student: "I am here, but my name is Jesús Quintanilla."

- Scheduling tests and project due dates on religious or cultural holidays
  "It has just been pointed out to me that I scheduled the mid-term during Rosh Hashanah, but we are okay because I don't see any Jewish students in the class."

- Setting low expectations for students from particular groups or high schools
  "Oh, so Robert, you're from Pine Ridge High School? You are going to need lots of academic help in my class!"

- Calling on and validating male students and ignoring female students during class discussions
  "Let's call on John again. He seems to have lots of great responses to some of these problems."

- Using inappropriate humor in class that degrades students from different groups, including mocking different accents
  "I have a joke for you: There was a Jew, a Mexican, and a Black. The Mexican says to the…"

- Expressing racially charged political opinions in class assuming that people with those racial/ethnic identities do not exist in class
  "I think illegal aliens are criminals because they are breaking the law and need to be rounded up and sent back to Mexico."

- Singling students out in class because of their backgrounds
  "You're Asian! Can you tell us what the Japanese think about our trade policies?"

- Hosting debates in class that place students from groups who may represent the minority opinion in class in a difficult position.
  "Today we are going to have a debate on immigration. I expect the three Latino students and plus two others to argue in favor of immigration. The rest of you will provide arguments against immigration."

- Denying the experiences of students by questioning the credibility and validity of their stories
  "I've eaten and shopped plenty of times in that part of town and it's nothing like you describe it. How long have you lived there and who are you hanging out with?"

- Assigning class projects that are heterosexist, sexist, racist, or promote other oppressions

"For the class project, I want you to think about a romantic relationship that you have had with a member of the opposite sex. Think and write about your observations."

- Not respecting students gender pronouns, especially students who use gender neutral pronouns
  "Alex, you use 'they/them' pronouns. No, that's too confusing. They is plural. I'm going to use him for you."

- Using heterosexist or sexist examples or language in class.
  "Atoms sometimes attract each other like this male and female here. At the same time, atoms sometimes repel each other like these two males here."

- Assigning projects that ignore differences in socioeconomic class status
  "For this class, you are required to visit four art galleries located in the downtown area. The entrance fees vary, but I am sure you can afford it."

- Assuming that all students are from the U.S and fully understand American culture and the English language (i.e., be aware that there may be international students in the class)
  "What do you mean you have never heard of The Cosby Show? Where have you been hiding?"

- Discouraging students from working on projects that explore their own social identities
  "If you are Native American, I don't want you to write your paper on Native Americans. You already know everything about that group and besides you will be biased in your writing."

- Asking people with invisible disabilities to identify themselves in class
  "This is the last time that I am going to ask. Anybody with a disability who needs extra help, raise your hand!

- Ignoring student-to-student microaggressions, even when the interaction is not course-related.
  Student: "Don't be retarded! That party this weekend was so gay."
  Professor: says nothing

- Making assumptions about students and their backgrounds:
  - Latinx/Chicanx students
    "You're Latino, and you don't speak Spanish? You should be ashamed of yourself!"

  - Asian/Asian American students
    "I know who I'm calling on a lot to work some of the math problems in this class – Mr. Nguyen!"

  - African America/Black students

> *"Mr. Summers! We just read about poverty among Blacks in America. Does this fit your experience and can you tell us about it?*

- o Native American students
  "Many Native American tribes are in favor of using casinos to increase revenues and many others are against it. Mr. Begay, as a Navajo what are your thoughts?"

- o Jewish or Muslim students
  "Oh, your Muslim! Can you tell us about what the Palestinians think about Jewish settlements in the West Bank?"

- o Non-Traditional Students
  "All you millennials are on Facebook, so I will post the evite for the class project on the site."

Suggestions for Interrupting Microaggressions

Be cognizant that microaggressions are also directed by students against other students. Be prepared to interrupt those incidents, too. Even if you are not sure how to address the climate issue in the moment, it is appropriate classroom management to stop problematic behavior immediately. You can follow up with individual students or the entire class later, after reflecting and/or consulting with colleagues on how best to do so.

Here are some tips for disrupting microaggressions in the classroom:

Example Microaggression
A student says to an Asian person: "You're all good in math. Can you help me with this problem?"
Example Intervention
"I heard you say that all Asians are good in math. What makes you believe that?" *Inquire*: Ask the speaker to elaborate. This will give you more information about where they are coming from and may also help the speaker to become aware of what they are saying.

Example Microaggression
You notice that your female student is being frequently interrupted during a class discussion.
Example Intervention
"I think Emily brings up a good point. I didn't get a chance to hear it all. Can Emily repeat it?" *Reframe*: Create a different way to look at the situation.

Example Microaggression
In a discussion related to race, a White student turns to a Black student and says: "When I look at you, I don't see color."
Example Intervention
"So you don't see color. Tell me more about your perspective. I'd also like to invite others to weigh in." *Re-direct*: Shift the focus to a different person (particularly helpful when someone is being asked to speak for their entire race, cultural group, etc.)

Example Microaggression
Someone makes a joke that is racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.
Example Intervention
"I didn't think this was funny. I'd like you to stop."

References:
UCLA Diversity & Faculty Development. "Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the
Messages They Send" in *Diversity in the Classroom*.
academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf

Other Suggestions to Faculty for Addressing Microaggressions in the Classroom

- Work to create a safe environment for all identities in the classroom by establishing
  ground rules and expectations regarding discussions about and presentations on issues of
  diversity.

- Debates are one technique that instructors often use in class to explore and get students
  engaged in issues. However, it is important to distinguish between debates and dialogues.
  Debates are about people discussing issues and competing to see who has the "best"
  response. They have the explicit assumption that someone will win and someone will
  lose. Dialogues, on the other hand, are about achieving greater levels of understanding by
  listening to each other as we delve deeper into issues. In the end, whichever technique
  you use, make sure that you establish ground rules and set the context for the activity.

- If you are going to express your political opinions in the classroom, understand that there
  is a risk of silencing students who do not agree with your views. As a faculty member,
  when you express your views to students you are doing so out of a position of power.
  That is, students may be afraid to express themselves given that they know your position
  on an issue and that their grade may be on the line. Similarly, be aware of how balanced
  you are in challenging student opinions that do or do not agree with your own.

- If you are going to bring in guest speakers, make sure that your objectives are clear in
  bringing those individuals to class—clear to you, to the class, and to the guest. If the
  reason is to introduce a particular perspective, try to balance the discussion by inviting
  different guest speakers or assigning readings with other perspectives.

- It is okay to use humor in class. However, make sure that it is appropriate humor that
  does not target or degrade any student in the class or group of people overall. Classrooms
  are for engaging issues and learning concepts and new ideas. Classrooms are not for
  having students, faculty, or guests mock or denigrate people.

- In those cases where students do have the courage to contact you and point out that they
  were offended by a remark that you made or an action that you undertook, listen to them.
  As previously indicated, given that you are in a position of power, it probably took a lot
  of courage for them to raise the issue with you.

- Know that there are resources at on campus to support you in addressing microaggressions in the classroom, such as the Office for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence.

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Validating Students of Color

Research in higher education demonstrates that students of color often have to contend with campus climates that are less than welcoming, familiar, or hospitable. Acts of insensitivity, misperceptions, miscommunications, stereotypes, and hostile or degrading acts are part of such climates that send invalidating messages to students of color (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). In addition, there is often a mismatch between the culture and background of students of color and that of predominantly White institutions (Yosso, 2005).

These environments impact students' decisions about staying or leaving college, in turn affecting rates of retention. Many colleges and universities have developed services and initiatives that attempt to support and affirm students as they negotiate the environments described above. Cultural centers, diversity offices, affinity group academic advisors, cultural programming, and mentors are but a few of the support structures in place to assist students of color as they pursue their education.

Factors that impact the success of students of color are numerous and complex. One of those factors is validation. Validation refers to the active affirmation of students for their skills, talents, culture, presence, and contributions to a college or university by faculty, staff, and students. The theory of validation was first proposed in 1994 by Dr. Laura Rendon, Professor of Higher Education at the University of Texas at San Antonio and is based on research that suggests that students of color feel reassured and validated when faculty and staff are caring, show concern, acts as mentors, advocate for them, and acknowledge their cultural backgrounds (Rendon, 1994). Validating experiences include faculty and staff doing the following:
- Encouraging students to keep trying and succeeding
- Recognizing students for their academic success
- Taking time to learn students' names and pronounce them correctly
- Making sure that the students' cultural backgrounds are included in the curriculum
- Reaching out to offer assistance to students

Dimensions of Validation
Validation as a theory has several dimensions that address both the academic and interpersonal aspects of being a student (Rendon & Linares, 2011). First, it places the responsibility for validation on faculty and staff. Coaches, instructors, counselors, financial aid advisors, student affairs professionals, library staff, and administrators all have a role to play in validating students of color. Second, it is important to raise students' academic self-esteem and recognize their capacity to succeed. Third, students who are validated tend to increase their involvement in college, a known factor that leads to persistence and success (Astin, 1984). Fourth, the acknowledgement that students can get validation in and out of the classroom is essential. Here the role of leadership opportunities, student organizations, community service, and other out-of-class activities play a central role. Fifth, validation is a process that spans the four to five years that students are in college. Thus, whether the student is new or getting ready to graduate, the process of validation is important to students. Finally, and closely related to the fifth dimension, is the recognition that validation is extremely important to non-traditional students, especially during the first days and weeks of college.

What Can Faculty, Staff, and Administrators Do to Practice Validation?
UA faculty, staff, and administrators can validate students of color in many ways. Below are examples of how to affirm students with the overall objective of promoting their success at UA:

- When addressing groups of students of color, recognize their academic success, their presence on campus, and their contributions to the UA community.
- Hold students of color to the same standards and expectations as white students. At the same time, recognize that some marginalized students need additional resources and support to be successful. Refer students to resources on campus that can support their success on campus or address their issues.
- Insert diversity into your curriculum to ensure that students of color see themselves in the assignments, materials, books, and examples.
- Avoid the language of "deficit thinking" (e.g. minority, disadvantaged, lack of cultural capital, culturally-deprived, at risk etc.) when talking about students of color. Use "asset-based" language such as talented, gifted, culturally-rich, and scholars of color.
- Highlight the accomplishments of students of color. Identify a talent or skill in a student and acknowledge those gifts. For example, be sure to provide positive feedback on academic work. Encourage students of color to continue using their talents by pursuing graduate degrees.
- Mentor and guide students of color. Some students of color are first-generation college students. Recognize that these students might not know how to navigate the terrains of higher education. Provide these students with resources and guidance as requested. In class, when reviewing your syllabus with everyone, explain terms like "office hours" and avoid using acronyms.
- Educate yourself about different groups and their cultures, especially as they relate to your students. At the same time, do not make assumptions about your students' cultural backgrounds and experiences.
- Be an advocate for a student of color.
- Be aware of scholarships, internships, or conferences geared towards students of color so that you can share these opportunities with them.
- Attend events organized and sponsored by ethnic/racial student organizations and encourage all of your students to also attend. Accept invitations to speak at events sponsored by ethnic/racial student organizations.
- Write letters of recommendation for students of color who are applying for scholarships, pursuing graduate education, or seeking a job.

Validation can be a powerful concept for addressing issues of persistence and success for students of color. It is most effective when provided by faculty or staff whom the students trust and are sincere in providing the affirmation. Validation is good for all students and should be practiced widely, especially with students of other diverse backgrounds (i.e. women, LGBTQIA+ students, veterans, students with disabilities, etc.).

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