WEAVING PROMISING PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE INTO THE HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Higher education is faced with an increasingly diverse student body and historic opportunities to foster inclusive excellence, meaning a purposeful embodiment of inclusive practices toward multiple student identity groups. Although the benefits of inclusive excellence are well established, college faculty often cite barriers to promoting it in classrooms, and this creates an opening for faculty developers to support them in weaving promising practices for inclusive excellence into their teaching. This chapter highlights the practices of inclusive faculty and the methods faculty developers can use to promote inclusive excellence along five dimensions: (1) intrapersonal awareness, (2) interpersonal awareness, (3) curricular transformation, (4) inclusive pedagogy, and (5) inclusive learning environments.

Institutions of higher education have become increasingly diverse in the past thirty years (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999), during which time research has established the benefits of diversity in higher education (Baez, 2004; Chang, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003). Nonetheless, not much has changed in terms of overall approaches to students (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999). Diversity efforts continue to be fragmented, with an evident disconnect between diversity and educational excellence (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).
Initiatives fostering inclusive excellence are particularly critical for reinforcing the academic resiliency of students who have been historically marginalized in educational systems, notably students of color, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered, women, and students with disabilities. Inclusive excellence means a purposeful deployment of inclusive practices toward multiple student identity groups (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). The benefits of inclusive excellence include increased student academic, diversity, and civic outcomes. Improved academic outcomes are evidenced in higher educational aspirations, motivation, and self-confidence, heightened creativity and innovation, and stronger critical-thinking and problem-solving skills (Milem, 2003). Furthermore, inclusive excellence positively affects diversity outcomes such as experiences with diversity, cultural awareness, and commitment to issues of equity (Milem, 2003). Finally, inclusive excellence leads to a higher level of civic engagement and a more informed citizenry (Milem, 2003).

The focus on inclusive excellence in the higher education classroom is a recent phenomenon in response to changing demographics. As a result, limited research exists on inclusive classroom practices in higher education. Much of the theoretical foundation for inclusive excellence derives from three decades of K–12 educational research illuminating inclusive pedagogies and techniques to create a multicultural curriculum (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004). Even though significant differences exist between K–12 and college students—for example, student development, educational policies and testing, and institutional contexts—we believe that the K–12 literature can inform higher education because we have successfully applied techniques tested in K–12 in our own college classrooms.

Inclusive excellence is vital because faculty and students do not leave their values, cultures, genders, and ethnicities at the door when they enter to teach and learn (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005). Rather, they bring all of those identities with them into the learning experience. However, many educational experiences in the classroom are based on the white, heterosexual, male culture, often leaving students of color, women, and members of gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities isolated in their learning (Chism, 1994; Maher & Tetreault, 2003). Faculty are often unaware of their bias in favor of the dominant culture (Chism, 1994), and in many instances their adherence to the dominant culture creates a barrier to learning (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2003).

Although many institutions promote inclusive excellence, faculty members often cite barriers to implementing inclusive practices. In our faculty development experience, instructors cite barriers such as their own perceived lack of competence in diversity related aspects of curriculum
and pedagogy, the lack of resources and time, and their fear of the unknown. Instructors also blame the persistence of homogeneous classrooms in which students are unaware of their own identity and may resist instructor attempts to diversify the curriculum, as well as their lack of skills for managing classroom conflict. They also see classroom size and layout as inhibitors to authentic classroom dialogue. Finally, they fear that students from diverse identity groups may experience cultural and social isolation, and tokenization and requests to speak as native informants (hooks, 1994) or objects of research and study. Furthermore, because they are encouraged to be color-blind in the classroom (Rosenberg, 2004), faculty are concerned about being labeled as radicals if they promote inclusive excellence (Shor & Freire, 2003). Finally, they have little support and training in implementing inclusive excellence (Kumashiro, 2006).

Five Dimensions of Inclusive Excellence

These concerns and others underscore the need for faculty developers to build faculty confidence and skills in incorporating inclusive practices. In response, we have developed a framework for inclusive excellence that has five dimensions: (1) intrapersonal awareness, (2) interpersonal awareness, (3) curriculum transformation, (4) inclusive pedagogy, and (5) inclusive learning environments. The following sections describe promising practices of inclusive faculty along the five dimensions, summarized in Table 12.1. In addition, we propose methods that faculty developers can use to facilitate faculty learning and adoption of such practices.

Intrapersonal Awareness

Inclusive faculty members are reflective practitioners. Self-reflexivity (Kumashiro, 2006) is a critical component of learning about and embracing difference (Banks, 2004), and it requires personal awareness of one's own worldview. This awareness grows when faculty critically examine their ideas, assumptions, and values; articulate where and how their worldview has developed (Elenes, 2006); and share their own background and experiences with students. It is also fostered when they expand their knowledge of other cultures. According to Geneva Gay: “Ignorance of people different from ourselves often breeds negative attitudes, anxiety, fears, and the seductive temptation to turn others into images of ourselves. . . . [The] inability to make distinctions among ethnicity, culture, and individuality increases the risk that teachers will impose their notions
Table 12.1. Practices for Inclusive Excellence

Intrapersonal Awareness
- Actively commit oneself to the process of self-actualization
- Increase personal awareness of one’s own worldview
- Critically examine own ideas, assumptions, and values, and how those beliefs have an impact on one’s pedagogies
- Articulate where and how worldview has developed
- Share own background and experiences with students
- Expand knowledge of the other through readings about diverse cultures and identity groups, and immersing oneself in diversity
- Develop awareness of how their beliefs, cultures, and privileges influence curriculum and pedagogies
- Invite students to provide feedback on the instructor’s facilitation of discussions and academic assessment

Interpersonal Awareness
- Create opportunities for interpersonal dialogue where multiple perspectives are honored
- Invite students to share cultural experiences with faculty and peers
- Validate students’ experiences by engaging in empathetic listening and asking questions openly and constructively
- Assist students in identifying differences and similarities in opinions
- Be aware of nonverbal communication
- Engage students in creating classroom norms reflective of diversity, and revisit norms often
- Facilitate dialogue between students using a coconstructed framework of classroom norms
- Promote an academic perspective during critical discussions
- Develop and practice conflict resolution skills
- Recognize both overt and covert forms of conflict
- Foster opportunities for group work

Curricular Transformation
- Integrate multiple identity groups into the curriculum through inclusion of cultural histories, local histories, and contributions
- Use culturally accurate curriculum, books, and teaching tools
- Incorporate multiculturalism throughout course content
- Reflect critically on whom the curriculum includes or excludes
- Review curriculum for hidden forms of oppression and make appropriate changes
- Include local histories

Inclusive Pedagogy
- Recognize students’ personal experiences as worthy knowledge
- Elicit and build on students’ funds of knowledge
- Invite students to share their knowledge in multiple ways
- Collaborate with students as coconstructors of knowledge
• Establish critical dialogues with students
• Incorporate noncompetitive, collaborative assignments and group work
• Facilitate large and small group discussions
• Use formative assessments such as journal writing and portfolios
• Include assignments such as life history interviews, personal stories of survival, and autobiographical writing that will diversify and personalize learning
• Engage students in debate, student-led discussion, read-alouds, and experiential learning activities
• Foster student choice

Inclusive Learning Environment
• Build opportunities for authentic interactions among students
• Demonstrate caring through attitude, expectations, and behavior
• Demonstrate pride in student achievement
• Engage in supportive outreach efforts
• Demonstrate respect through inclusion of multiple identity groups
• Pronounce students' names correctly
• Learn about students' backgrounds, social identities, and learning styles
• Identify and build on students' interests
• Meet with students outside of scheduled class time
• Provide constructive feedback
• Avoid actions that promote tokenism
• Consistently challenge racist and prejudicial remarks

Inclusive faculty expand their knowledge of other cultures through reading about diverse cultures and identity groups (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Kumashiro, 2006) and immersing themselves in diverse cultures (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 1999).

In addition, faculty enhance their intrapersonal awareness when they learn how their beliefs, cultures, and privileges affect their curricular options and pedagogical decisions (Banks, 2004; Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Sfeir-Younis, 1993; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Inclusive faculty members reflect on their curriculum and pedagogies and the powers and privileges they reinforce (Rendón, 2004). Rendón suggests three questions to guide this reflective process: (1) To what extent does the curriculum privilege majority and minority students? (2) Who is excluded and included in the curriculum? and (3) What are the politics of knowledge in the classroom?

Faculty developers can play a key role in helping faculty develop intrapersonal awareness. First, they can give instructors opportunities to examine their personal identities and privileges. Through this examination, faculty can recognize that their own worldview is not universal and can
begin to encourage students to share their worldviews. To the extent instructors view the classroom as value-free, this can be a difficult process, particularly in the hard sciences, where there is often a "right" answer. However, even in disciplines such as math and science, a student's worldview often mediates his or her understanding of concepts and ability to apply new knowledge (Civil, 2002; Clark Orey & Rosa, 2006; Diez Palomar, Simic, & Varley, 2007; Gutstein, 2006; Noblit, Hwang, Seiler, & Elmesky, 2007). For example, mathematical discourse is often viewed as a universal language, yet one's interpretation of the concepts can vary according to one's problem-solving strategies and the presence or absence of culturally relevant referents. In addition, religious beliefs and cultural understandings can call scientific knowledge into question. Although much of the research on the impact of culture on math and science knowledge has been done in K–12 contexts, faculty developers can find in it concrete, discipline-specific examples of how a student's worldview affects understanding of concepts and can ask instructors to make connections to their own classes.

In addition, faculty developers can suggest resources to help faculty expand their knowledge of their students' diverse experiences and guide them in adjusting their curriculum and pedagogies accordingly, starting with one course. These resources can lead faculty to redefine what it means to teach and learn on the basis of diverse student experiences. Equally important, faculty developers can provide ongoing, structured opportunities for reflection through dialogic interactions between faculty. These experiences help faculty view the development of intrapersonal awareness as a dynamic process that evolves continuously throughout one's teaching career.

*Interpersonal Awareness*

Inclusive faculty recognize the importance of developing interpersonal awareness in their classrooms. It motivates them to furnish opportunities for classroom dialogue where multiple perspectives are honored and students are invited to share their cultural experiences, thereby validating those experiences (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay, 2000; hooks, 1994). Of course, just the act of saying something out loud does not automatically guarantee that students will deem their experiences "validated"; faculty must also respond by engaging in empathic listening, asking questions openly and constructively, helping students identify differences and similarities in ideas, and attending to nonverbal behavior (Billson & Tiberius, 1994). Inviting students to share their experiences can help faculty build relationships with and among their students.
Inclusive faculty also ensure that students agree to classroom norms for communication, including those that honor diversity (Diouf, 1998; Elenes, 2006; Sfeir-Younis, 1993; Stone Norton, 2008). Diouf (1998) recommends that faculty and students cocreate these norms at the beginning of the course and revisit them throughout the term. Stone Norton (2008) puts forward eight group norms that can create an inclusive learning environment:

1. Everyone has the right to be heard.
2. Be respectful while still being critical.
3. No name calling.
4. One person speaks at a time.
5. Maintain confidentiality.
6. Hold yourself and each other to high standards of excellence at all times.
7. Have the humility to recognize that you do not know everything and that everyone can stand to improve.
8. Recognize that everyone will start from different bases of knowledge.

Group work is another highly effective tool for facilitating inclusive interpersonal interactions (Rosser, 1998). Felder and Brent (1996) reported that students of color who participated in group work exhibited greater academic achievements than those who did not. However, even though group work can facilitate dialogue between students, any conflict that erupts must be channeled appropriately, lest it damage interpersonal connections.

Rather than minimizing conflict, inclusive faculty foster academic disagreement (Osei-Kofi, Richards, & Smith, 2004), which allows more ideas to enter the sphere of learning. In fact, they embrace conflict in several ways: by preparing ahead for conflict resolution (Chesler et al., 2005; Stone Norton, 2008); by encouraging (if not demanding) students to respect and appreciate those who disagree with them (Elenes, 2006); by acknowledging the value of learning through a crisis (Kumashiro, 2003); by recognizing and engaging both overt and covert forms of conflict (Sfeir-Younis, 1993); and by physically reorganizing the classroom to deal with negative intergroup dynamics, such as rearranging desks or assigning seats (Chesler et al., 2005). Another conflict-mediating technique is encouraging students to keep an academic perspective during critical discussions, by reminding them to "learn to discuss the philosophies at an abstract and not personal level" (Elenes, 2006, p. 251; Stone Norton, 2008). Instructors must recognize
however, that this can be difficult for students who have been marginalized in our society. Their experiences are often painful and hard to discuss on an abstract level. In response, Stone Norton (2008) suggests having students identify the characteristics of good and bad discussions by answering three questions: What is a good discussion? What is a bad discussion? When and how does a discussion turn into a fight? Instructors should also invite their classes to give them feedback on their discussion facilitation (Billson & Tiberius, 1994; Chickering & Gamson, 1994).

Faculty developers can support faculty in developing their interpersonal awareness in a number of ways. First, they can create opportunities for dialogue on issues of equity (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 1999). Of course, they must also participate in the dialogue (Tuitt, 2003; Lawrence, 1997), model empathic listening, ask questions openly and constructively, identify differences and similarities in ideas, and attend to nonverbal behavior. Second, they can present examples of multiple perspectives across disciplines to illuminate diverse student experiences and worldviews, such as varying approaches to disease and wellness. Third, they can engage instructors in coconstruction of classroom norms for discussions that are responsive of diversity. Fourth, they can recommend strategies to facilitate group work and manage academic disagreement, personalization of discussions, and overt and covert forms of conflict.

**Curriculum Transformation**

Inclusive faculty transform learning through curriculum content changes (Tuitt, 2003), integrating into the curriculum multiple identity groups (not just black and white) in the form of cultural histories and contributions (Banks, 2007; Chesler et al., 2005; Knight, Dixon, Norton, & Bentley, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Osei-Kofi et al., 2004) and using culturally accurate curriculum, books, and teaching tools (Banks, 2007; Gay, 2000; Yosso, 2002). They go beyond superficial multiculturalism (Rios, Trent, & Castañeda, 2003) that molds, distorts, and devalues the lived experiences of communities of color by incorporating multiculturalism throughout a course, not just in one lesson or at the end (Stone Norton, 2008; Tuitt, 2003). Furthermore, they review the curriculum for hidden forms of oppression such as stereotyping, inaccurate generalizations, and historical omissions and make appropriate changes (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006). They also recognize students' personal experiences as worthy knowledge (Elenes, 2006; González, 2001; Matusov & Smith, 2007; Yosso, 2006) and introduce local histories into the syllabi (Danigelis, 1998).
Faculty developers can facilitate curriculum transformation by helping faculty find curricular resources that integrate multiple identity groups and multiple perspectives, such as culturally accurate curriculum models, books, and websites (Tuitt, 2003). For faculty in the physical sciences, they can give examples of culturally responsive pedagogy, social justice endeavors, and advocacy for equity in areas such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Ares, 2008; Johnson, 2005; Mertens & Hopson, 2006). Faculty developers can coach instructors to use an inclusive lens when examining course syllabi and finding spaces where the curriculum can be improved through a multicultural lens and local histories. Finally, they can help instructors identify overt and subtle forms of oppression in curricular materials.

Inclusive Pedagogy

A large body of research supports the notion that promising curricular and pedagogical practices that benefit historically marginalized students also benefit all students (Anderson, 2002; Mahendra, Bayles, Tomoeda, & Kim, 2005). Inclusive faculty use pedagogy that builds on students' funds of knowledge and supplements the cultural practices and information that students need to succeed academically and socially (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2001; Tuitt, 2003). They rely on teaching methods that enhance the engagement, motivation, and learning of historically marginalized groups—methods that usually invite the whole student into the learning process (Tuitt, 2003). Inclusive pedagogy positions instructors and students as coconstructors of knowledge. It also encourages faculty from the dominant culture to invest time and energy in establishing critical dialogue with underrepresented students and giving them a sense of who they are as individuals when they enter the classroom (Vella, 2002).

Inclusive pedagogy encompasses a variety of specific assignments and in-class activities. It embraces noncompetitive collaborative assignments (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), large and small group discussions (Chesler et al., 2005), journal writing (Chesler et al., 2005), debates (Danigelis, 1998), portfolios (Chism, 1994), student-led discussions (Frankel, 1993; Moya-Raggio, 1993), life history interviews of those from a different culture, autobiographical writing (Delpit, 2006), and experiential learning activities (Kolb, 1994). It endorses giving students choice in assignments (Chism, 1994), sharing personal stories (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay, 2000), and reading aloud in class (hooks, 1994).

Of course, faculty developers consider training faculty in new, effective methods such as these to be part of their job. They can teach faculty how
to elicit and build on students’ background knowledge by using diagrams, graphic organizers, and other visual representations. They can model ways to facilitate small and large group discussions and engage students in coconstruction of knowledge, moving from teacher-centered approaches to student-centered approaches. Furthermore, they can encourage instructors to incorporate new practices that are responsive to diverse identity groups and advise them on how to implement these practices.

**Inclusive Learning Environment**

Inclusive faculty use curriculum and pedagogies to transform learning environments into ones where “all perspectives are welcome” (Elenes, 2006, p. 249) and where “everybody believes that they can contribute to discourse” (p. 257). This includes caring for and respecting students, building professional relationships with them, and ensuring safe learning environments.

Inclusive faculty truly care about their students (Brookfield, 2006; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). As Geneva Gay (2000) explains, “Caring is one of the major pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy for ethnically diverse students. It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students’ human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities” (p. 45). Instructors demonstrate caring when they empower students to succeed both academically and personally (Delpit, 2006), hold high academic expectations for all students (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2006; Gilmore, Smith, & Kairaiuak, 2004), show pride in their achievements, and engage in sustained supportive outreach (Stone Norton, 2008).

In their research, Garrison-Wade and Lewis (2006) characterize a respectful instructor as one who is friendly and helpful and who does not embarrass the students. “Too often teachers forget that respect is important,” they caution. “Once respect is lost, it is nearly impossible to regain” (p. 154). According to Nicolet (2007), “Respect and dignity must be operationalized nouns because the authentic endeavor of giving and receiving respect and dignity is what makes a learning community work effectively” (p. 218). In Simmons’ terms: “Respect is given by acknowledging your humanity, as well as theirs. Respect comes by seeing all of your students’ cultures, races, and ethnic characteristics not as ‘minority,’ but as parts of the norm/mainstream. Respecting who they are means respecting their differences in gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, sexual preference, country of origin, native language, and age. Respecting who they are means they will respect you” (2006, pp. 49–50).
Faculty create an inclusive learning environment by building relationships with students and empowering them to participate in the learning process. To build relationships with students, they must remember and correctly pronounce their names (Stone Norton, 2008); learn about their backgrounds, social identities, and learning styles (Chesler et al., 2005; Weinstein et al., 2004); recognize them as holistic individuals (Tuitt, 2003); and identify their passions to use as motivators (hooks, 1994). Additionally, inclusive faculty mentor students (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006) and meet with them outside of class (Stone Norton, 2008; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

Instructors make safe environments when they “empower students by legitimizing their ‘voice’ and visibility” (Gay, 2000, p. 49)—that is, they build students’ self-esteem through constructive feedback and encourage them to share their opinions. Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (1995) identify seven characteristics of constructive feedback: (1) based on agreed standards, (2) specific and constructive, (3) prompt, (4) frequent, (5) positive, (6) personal, and (7) informational rather than controlling. This feedback should include telling students in front of their peers when an answer is correct and in private when it is incorrect, using examples to help them identify their mistakes (Stone Norton, 2008).

Other teaching behaviors that foster safe learning environments include reiterating questions in multiple ways, furnishing alternative methods for asking questions, and treating all students equally (Stone Norton, 2008). Equitable treatment encompasses avoiding tokenism (Gurin et al., 2003) and addressing students’ racist and prejudicial remarks immediately (Billson & Tiberius, 1994; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Tuitt, 2003). According to Gurin et al. (2003): “The worst consequence of the lack of diversity arises when a minority student is a token in a classroom. In such situations, the solo or token minority individual is often given undue attention, visibility, and distinctiveness, which can lead to greater stereotyping by majority group members” (p. 35).

Inclusive faculty avoid tokenism by asking open-ended questions to the entire class, by setting up the class norm that individuals speak only for themselves, and by asking students to share personal experiences only when they have previously shared those experiences with the class on their own accord (Stone Norton, 2008). Because they firmly believe that racism and prejudice are not welcome in the classroom, they interrupt racist and prejudicial remarks immediately (Tuitt, 2003; Vacarr, 2003). In addition, they pose questions about such comments to the entire class for discussion and cite research that disproves racist claims (Stone Norton, 2008).

Faculty developers are vital in helping faculty create inclusive learning environments because instructors may not be aware of their actions
that undermine such environments and make students feel tokenized. To help faculty adjust their practices, faculty developers can offer student accounts of learning environments characterized by caring, respect, professional relationships, and safety, as well as student accounts of unresponsive and unsafe environments. They can also suggest and encourage ways to develop and maintain inclusive learning environments, such as recognizing student progress, correctly pronouncing students' names; avoiding tokenism, accommodating different learning styles, engaging students through their interests, providing constructive feedback, and interrupting expressions of racism and prejudice.

**Institutional Challenges to Inclusive Excellence**

No matter how committed they are to promoting inclusive excellence, faculty developers may face challenges in institutional cultures that prioritize research and scholarship over teaching. In such settings, tenure and promotion committees may not consider inclusive teaching in their decisions, and norms may discourage challenging instructors' teaching practices. Furthermore, faculty in the physical sciences may regard their disciplines as neutral and value-free, thereby exempting them from inclusive practices. Even faculty developers may be unaware of their own non-inclusive values, attitudes, and behaviors, in which case institutions must ensure their developers receive training in the practices of inclusive excellence.

Despite these challenges, faculty developers are in a position to significantly influence institutional change by fostering inclusive excellence. They can create opportunities for faculty to become reflective practitioners who redefine the meaning of excellence and take action to promote inclusive practices. And through their work with faculty, they can reach hundreds if not thousands of students and possibly other faculty who recognize the positive results of inclusive excellence.

Williams, Berger, and McClendon (2005) contend that, even though individuals foster inclusive excellence, it is equally important that an institutional framework exist to encourage large-scale organizational change, such as a sustained and substantive effort to infuse inclusive excellence across university practices—from promotion and tenure to organizational structure and leadership, targeted resources, and accountability mechanisms. Specifically, leaders in higher education must move from rhetoric to action by involving the entire campus community in the work of infusing diversity and excellence (Milem, Chang,
In the absence of such efforts, faculty developers may find themselves engaged in a process of transformation focused on one faculty member at a time. Ultimately, inclusive excellence is fostered by individual efforts and university commitment to transformational change.

Conclusion

Higher education faculty and students are caught in a cycle that reinforces inequity. As Tatum (2003) puts it: "We cannot be blamed for learning what we were taught. Yet as adults, we have a responsibility to try to identify and interrupt the cycle of oppression. . . . We have a responsibility to seek out more accurate information and to adjust our behavior accordingly" (p. 141).

We maintain that faculty developers are vital to interrupting the cycle of inequity. They can be catalysts for faculty to weave inclusive excellence into their practices. After all, the tools for inclusive excellence benefit students and faculty alike, and students from dominant cultures also benefit academically from practices suggested for diverse students. Faculty developers should familiarize themselves with the range of promising practices and infuse them in programs that enhance the overall effectiveness of teaching. In particular, they should keep in mind that instructors who teach inclusively will increase student success overall.

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