

Employing Equity-minded & Culturally-Affirming Teaching Practices in Virtual Learning Communities

Notes 07-31-2020 from CORA webinar of March 26th featuring Dr. Luke Wood and Dr. Frank Harris

I. Equity

“Equity refers to heightened focus on groups experiencing disproportionate impact in order to remediate disparities in their experiences and outcomes.” (Students of Color, Former Foster Youth, Food and Housing Insecure, Students with Disabilities, Formerly Incarcerated).

II. According to Bensimon (2007) Equity-mindedness entails:

- A. recognizing the ways in which systemic inequities disadvantage minoritized people in a range of social institutions or contexts (education, employment, healthcare, the criminal justice system, etc.)
- B. (re)framing outcome disparities as an indication of institutional underperformance rather than students’ underperformance;
- C. not attributing outcome disparities exclusively to students or perceived deficits in students’ identities, life circumstances, or capabilities;
- D. critically reflecting upon one’s role and responsibilities (as a faculty member, student affairs staff, administrator, counselor, institutional researchers etc.).

III. Challenge in Online Environment

- A. We teach the way we were taught
- B. We ignore the diversity we don’t see, which makes our environment more hostile to students of color—because our default approach is optimized for white cultural norms.

IV. Modality

- A. Asynchronous success outcomes are 4% lower than Synchronous and 7% lower than F2F

V. Strategies: Be Intrusive

- A. Ask students their experience online
- B. Ask students what tech they use (mobile phone, laptop, pc, non, hotspot needed)
- C. Email orientation with video of yourself (be enthusiastic and positive and affirming)
- D. Provide asynchronous alternatives
- E. Record all classes
- F. Make success in the course transparent
 - 1. What will it take to be successful in this class?
 - 2. What resources are available (tutoring, websites, study guides)
 - 3. How should I approach the readings? Study for exams? Take notes?
- G. Use assessment strategies that focus on continuous improvement and progress toward demonstrating proficiency by the end of the course.
 - 1. Smaller assignments with lower points total
 - 2. Non-text-based assignments and activities (multimedia, speeches, debates, role plays)

- 3. Incorporate effort into grading
- 4. Personalize your feedback
- 5. Offer alternative grading option (P/NP)
- H. Performance Monitoring
 - 1. Catch problems as they happen and before they get out of control
- I. Intervene
 - 1. Early warning system
- J. Help Seeking
 - 1. Recognize that some students of color will not seek help because of the stigma associated with it.
- K. Referrals
 - 1. Connect students with people (not services) using a warm handoff

VI. Be Relational (Grounded in Trust, Mutual Success)

- A. Demonstrate authentic investment in students' success
- B. Humanize yourself (small windows into your worlds)
- C. Facilitate engagement in academic and non-academic matters
- D. Learn at least one thing about each student that is outside the classroom
- E. Convey a positive regard for students
- F. Intentionally reject deficit perspective about students' intellectual capacity or fit for college
- G. Validation and positive messaging are critical. Students must hear, "you belong", "you will be successful in my class".
- H. Hold high expectations for performance

VII. Be Culturally Relevant and Affirming

- A. CRT Course texts that feature material including students of color
- B. CRT Variable Assignments featuring universal design and are graded via diverse assessment techniques
- C. CRT Course Images featuring not just white images but diverse images
 - 1. Mirror Artifacts expose students to racially salient images that highlight their contributions to society (Bracken and Wood)
- D. Hold high expectations for performance

VIII. Be Community Focused

- A. Be present in all aspects of the course and model engagement you expect of your students
- B. Establish community norms
- C. Encourage students to share their camera during synchronous class sessions
- D. Provide opportunities for students to engage outside class
 - 1. Study groups

2. Group projects
 3. Virtual media hookups
 4. Social media class sites
- E. Sharing perspectives where students share their stories
- F. Collaborative learning to...
1. Build community
 2. Share personal perspectives
 3. Realize the knowledge they already have
 4. Learn from each other
 5. Assume leadership roles

IX. Be Race Conscious

- A. Be intentional to provide opportunities to engage racial and equity issues within the context of the course
- B. Give students the tools they will need to productively engage in racial dialogue in the course
- C. Make sure you have the tools needed to facilitate dialogues
- D. Stay present in the dialogue, monitor it regularly, and intervene when necessary