Faculty-Student Collaboration in Promoting Inclusive Classroom Dynamics in Higher Education

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Forum for Advancing Reed (FAR)
October 22, 2022
In an inclusive college classroom, students and faculty are encouraged to take risks and feel discomfort as they challenge themselves, promote engagement and belonging, and create shared ownership in their own active learning.

At Reed, it involves teaching with high expectations coupled with scaffolding so that students are able to reach them.
Synergy between Elements in the College Classroom

- The college classroom – what hooks (1994) calls “the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12)
- Social-psychological perspective
- People (instructors, students)
- Physical and psychological space
- Course content and methods of instruction
- Dynamics between students and faculty
Instructors

- Intersecting personal and social identities
- Expectations for themselves and their students
- Biases and prejudices
- May feel unprepared to deal with the discomfort inherent in a diverse and inclusive learning environment
- Growth mindset (Dweck, 2006)
Instructors

- Self-reflection on one’s identities and biases
- Partnering with students (e.g., student consultant for teaching and learning program)
- Creating a faculty learning community
Students

● Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017): competence, autonomy, belonging

● Approaches to learning (Schrader, 2004): mismatch between students and professor’s approach

● Worries, doubts, uncertainties
  ○ Stereotype threat (Steele, 2010)
  ○ Belonging uncertainty (Walton & Cohen, 2011)
  ○ Impostor phenomenon (Bernard & Neblett, 2018)
Learning Environment

● Structural and symbolic learning space (Cheryan, et al., 2014)

● Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018)
  ○ Multiple ways for:
    ■ students to engage with the material
    ■ course content to be represented to students
    ■ students to demonstrate their knowledge
Inclusive Content and Methods of Instruction

- Infuse perspectives and authors from varying backgrounds, promote inclusion and anti-racism (e.g., Gay, 2018)

- Collaborative Learning
Class Dynamics: Preparation

- Promote belonging
- Encourage a growth mindset
- Collaboratively develop classroom guidelines
- Clarify perceptions and clear up misperceptions (e.g., Buttrill, 2018; Oleson, et al., 2018a, 2018b)
- Manage and minimize unproductive discomfort (e.g., not belonging, not smart enough, assumptions based on identities, uncomfortable dynamics, Vinton, 2016)
- Create productive discomfort
“Productive discomfort is a moderate level of intellectual or psychological disturbance that students experience as they engage with difficult materials in a learning environment. Instructors can intentionally create it through certain pedagogical approaches, or it can be a side effect of engaging with controversial topics, especially with a diverse group of students. Creating discomfort that is productive for the learning of all students involves instructors thoughtfully considering social justice and equity issues in their classroom.” (Oleson, 2021, p. 84)
Class Dynamics: In-the-Moment Strategies

- Dealing with emotions and hot moments
- Silence and cold moments
- Navigating difficult conversations
- Coming back in a future class
Thank you to Reed for Funding this Research

Internal Funding

- Blair Wellensiek and Karl Peters Faculty Research Fund
- Ester Hyatt Wender Fund for Collaborative Research in Psychology
- Initiative Grants in Undergraduate Research
- Opportunity Grants
- Stillman-Drake Funds
- Summer Scholarship Funds

External Funding

- American Philosophical Society Franklin Research Grant
Thank You.

I encourage you to reach out - koleson@reed.edu

Questions?

Cherry Blossoms in Eliot Circle, from Reed Facebook page
References


References


