

# Building Inclusive Businesses Starts in the Business Classroom

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# Intro & About Me

- Background
- Teaching & Center work
- What I've learned through University roles, SME work, and book authoring

# Questions for Today:

- What do we mean by inclusion?
- What does inclusion require?
- What are 3 hallmarks of an inclusive environment?
- How can we build students' CR competencies?

# What do we Mean by Inclusion?

- Inclusion means that everyone feels that they matter, that they are a part of the group, and that their needs have been considered
  - Think about a time you felt included
  - Think about a time you did not feel included
  - Which one felt better?

# What does Inclusion Require?

## 1. Fostering connections, breaking down walls

- Making people comfortable
  - We avoid what we don't know; we stick with the familiar
  - We can't innovate if we miss out on the most interesting and rich opportunities
- Nurturing a learning culture
  - If we want people to build relationships, then they must truly know one another
  - Knowing more about someone / learning something new is never a bad thing
  - Learning about someone's favorite movie/food doesn't change yours or harm you

## 2. Intentional, consistent, daily effort

- Inclusion is an ongoing process, not a one-time task
- We all need repeated reminders
  - Idea: daily debate activity

# Three Hallmarks of an Inclusive Environment

1. You've been considered
2. You are valued
3. You get to make mistakes

# Hallmark 1: You've Been Considered

In the first days of class, we have myriad opportunities to show students that we have considered what they might need and how we might best support them.

- Syllabi and other course documents
  - Pronouns
  - Resources for special needs (e.g., nursing mothers)
  - Sincere, open line of communication
- Grading policies
  - Honor different abilities/personalities/abilities
  - Idea: 80/20 policy for participation and quizzes
- Classroom assignments, assessments, activities, and events
  - Food options – provide something for everyone
  - Research a religious observance calendar and avoid scheduling important due dates/activities

# Hallmark 2: You are Valued

Throughout the semester, we have myriad opportunities to show students that their identities, experiences, and perspectives matter and are valued.

- Provide representation
  - Use guest speakers who represent the diversity in your classroom
  - Use diverse speakers as examples of success in your discipline/field. Highlight their accomplishments, rather than the fact that they represent a particular group
  - Vary the roles people play, look for and intentionally avoid biases and stereotypes
- Make inclusion a normal part of every conversation
  - Build it in as a part of graded activities
  - Model asking questions related to inclusion across all topics
- Do the work
  - Don't expect students to teach you about diversity and inclusion
  - Minoritized groups often don't receive the press/attention that dominant groups receive. It's our job as professors to seek out the examples, both in person and in the news, to share with our students.



# Hallmark 3: You Get to Make Mistakes

Throughout the semester, our classrooms provide myriad opportunities for students (and ourselves) to practice being inclusive and to get it wrong. These instances provide rich, teachable moments.

- Create a culture of continuous learning
  - Remind students that it's ok to make mistakes here
  - Use their mistakes as teachable moments
  - Use their successes as teachable moments
  
- Model that you, the professor, make mistakes and are always learning
  - You will get it wrong, often
  - What matters is that you show a sincere desire to continuously improve
  - Ask about inclusion in course evals (informally, if you can't build in formal questions)
  - Use your past mistakes as stories to help students learn

# How We Can Build Students' Career Readiness Competencies

In addition to weaving the (3) hallmarks into our policies, procedures, cultures, and activities, we can provide students with a set of practical, applicable tools to carry into the workforce. Here are some of my favorite tools to pass along to students:

- The art of having conversations with people who are not exactly like us
  - Journalism skills (TED Talk – *10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation* – Celeste Headlee)
  
- The art of finding information, expertise, and representation
  - It's not about knowing everything; it's about knowing where to find the information/who to ask
  
- The art of building inclusion into the decision-making process
  - I give students a simple rubric (and model/practice it often in class):
    1. Who might be left out in this situation
    2. Who might unfairly benefit in this situation?
    3. Whose needs might we have failed to consider in this situation?

# A Final Point

## ➤ Advocacy

- In work life, as in university life, we are all responsible for advocating for our needs

## ➤ Culture

- As professors/managers, we are responsible for building cultures where our students/employees feel comfortable engaging in this advocacy

# Summary

- Inclusion happens when everyone feels that they matter, belong, and are valued
- Three hallmarks of inclusive environments are:
  1. You've been considered
  2. You are valued
  3. You get to make mistakes
- We can use the classroom to build students' CR competencies
- We should balance teaching advocacy skills and teaching the importance of building cultures that support advocacy

What questions can I answer?

What stories would you like to share?