

A webinar series brought to you in collaboration with:



Creating an Inclusive Online Learning Environment

Creating an Inclusive Online Learning Environment with introductory remarks from [Michael Benitez Jr.](#), followed by a panel of featured faculty [Kelly Hogan](#), [Darvelle Hutchins](#), and [Viji Sathy](#). Moderated by [Charity Peak](#), academic director at ACUE.

[00:00:46] All right, everybody, welcome to our webinar. We're excited that you are here with us.

[00:00:57] Welcome to today's online discussion, Creating an inclusive online learning environment, I'm Charity Peak, regional director for academic programs at the Association of College and University Educators, or ACUE, together with our collaborative partners. We are proud to bring you this. Bring this series to life. Before we dive into today's topic, I'd like to review our agenda and establish a few participation guidelines. We'll start with a brief keynote from Dr. Michael Benitez Jr. Before asking our panelists to introduce practices and strategies for creating an inclusive online learning environment. And we'll reserve most of today's session about thirty five minutes for discussion and a Q&A with you. Our goal is to have an interactive conversation focused on this topic with practical ideas and suggestions for your online teaching. Please pose your questions using the Q&A function that we will moderate and discuss with our panelists. Toward the end of the hour, we'll share how we can continue the conversation online and share some additional resources to support your teaching. I also want to let you know that we'll be asking for your feedback as our time comes to a close. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts so that we can be sure to continue providing you with the most relevant resources. I'd like to welcome Dr. Michael

Benitez, Jr., to our discussion today to help us set the stage for our discussion of inclusive teaching practices. Dr. Benitez serves as vice president for diversity and inclusion at Metropolitan State University, Denver. Over the last two decades, Dr. Benitez has served higher education in different capacities, including academic and student affairs, diversity, equity and inclusion, EEO and title nine clients and of course, teaching. Dr. Benitez has authored book chapters and articles on student identity, hip hop culture, cultural centers, cultural and ethnic studies, institutional research and campus climates and faculty development. He's co editor of the anthology *Crash Course Reflections* on the film *Crash* for critical dialogs about race, power and privilege, and has contributed to online magazines, scholarly databases, books and journals. Dr. Benitez has been recognized with multiple leadership and scholarly awards throughout his career and continues to serve as one of higher education, leading and transformative change makers and DGI leaders.

[00:03:31] Dr. Benitez, welcome.

[00:03:44] For an introduction, it is really an absolute pleasure to be here hanging out with all of you. And ACUE, thank you for the invitation. Well, OK, I see. I just got a muted sign, so I'll go again. Thank you Charity for the invitation and thank you. You know, to the ACUE team for permitting this opportunity for me to be here and hang out, with you all. and this very important session on inclusive teaching. Thank you for your kind words and remarks. And I also want to say introduce myself in my native tongue and name. {Michael introducing himself in native language} of Arapaho descent, And I'm coming to you from Cheyenne and Arapaho lands, to which, you know, I acknowledge that this is the territory and that we're in constant collaboration. So with that said, wow, you know, what a time, right, everybody? What a time. Here we are in 2020, dealing with something that we never thought in our lifetime would be possible with respect to a pandemic and having to really shift our game and shift how we do things, shift how we think about things and really stepping into this moment that can be so, so difficult and challenging and hard for everyone, but even more particularly for the communities, to students, faculty alike who, you know, are trying to figure out how to do it best, how to serve our students best, how to take care of ourselves at this very particular time. All these questions that go into inclusive teaching. And so instead of the question, that is why, you know, why is inclusive teaching important and why is it necessary? Perhaps the more critical question, a more inclusive question is how do we continue to rupture current understandings in particular, and even practices that are often grounded in dominant comfort, that are often grounded in very conventional ways that we get used to? How do we frame and provide, you know, different critical approaches to actually advocating inclusive teaching and equitable outcomes? And I have to remind all the times when I work with faculty and staff in my role that this is not about us. It's partially about us with respect to how we execute and step into the work. But this is about the students that we serve. This is us understanding that so many of our students show up to us so differently with different circumstances and with different ideas, different learning styles and in some cases even challenges depending on folks backgrounds, that it's important that we invite students into our institutions, into our classrooms. And we also understand that we're doing it for the extension of the

missions of the schools that we serve and that we're really, really fully there for them. Right it's not just about different approaches to teaching that account for diverse needs and backgrounds, but is for all of our students. And it's more so about adapting and adopting, teaching in ways that create learning spaces we're all students feel valued with. They feel validated and they feel like you've been attentive to their needs as well as their struggles. And it's really up to us to ensure that we all that we can all do our part to ensure their success and their access to learning and succeeding in equitable ways. And so the need to become familiar at this particular moment is really no more important than ever to try different ways, different modes to acknowledge, especially at this moment, the pain that comes with it, the suffering that comes with it, the resilience that could come with it, the uplifting that could come with it, the possibility and the dreams. I was in a session not long ago with the Gardner Institute and we decided to kind of flip the script. And one of the professors said, you know, instead of this being a pandemic, how can we make it a pandemic of love? How can we step in as faculty who love teaching? This is why we do what we do, lovingly being there for students, helping students learn, cook, creating with them be their best selves during this difficult period in particular. So when I think about inclusive teaching, one of the most important things to understand for us as we step into this particular moment is taking responsibility. So much about inclusive teaching is us taking responsibility and being accountable for our own teaching. We are shifting and learning and being vulnerable. Right. Being vulnerable is so key. Sometimes, we look at that as this thing. That's a no no. But the reality is students will respond better when they see the human and the human side of us as well, that we validate and we acknowledge our students there at, how they show up, where they come from, as much as we acknowledge and validate where we are at and how we show up. Right. That we step into this with courage and that we do so with a constant understanding and opportunity for learning and growth. Right. If we're not continuously learning and growing, then we pause. Right. And I recall I contributed to an article, it was now 2017 with some colleagues. But what we created as the Northwest Five Consortium for Supporting Faculty of Color, we authored an article on AACU called, You know, someone that looks like me. Right. And the whole idea is supporting students of color in this case by supporting our faculty of color. But the whole thing is that if we better support our faculty and we better support each other, through that we better support students. And this is our moment. And the ways in which we step into this moment. Right. We all have something to contribute. And we're here ensuring that our students can stay on track and to also be successful and thrive at this moment that we demonstrate humility. Right. That we really think about the intentions we show with. But the impact that we may have, but that we also own that and that we're able to step back and reflect and then step back into the teaching. And in some cases, for some students, they may be able to really run with this. And we don't have to be structured but maybe for other students, you know, they require more structure. And we want to be able to to look into those ways in setting that up for them as well, that we really listen generously and we respect each other's perspectives that we value and that we affirm and that we respect our humanities the different ways in which we show up with all our different experiences and subjectivities intersecting subjectivities that allow us to show up the same moments and differently and other times that we collaborate and we feel comfortable reaching out across the aisle and enlisting assistance and

support from one another. Right. One of the biggest killers, I think, of inclusive teaching through my years doing it is at times intellectual arrogance. Let me, I want to say that again. Intellectual arrogance, our ability to not recognize that when we don't know something, it's OK to ask. And yet we want to not recognize it. And when we try to do it, then we don't do it. We do it with the best intentions, but we don't do it with the right heart in place. We don't combine our full selves to actually do this in collective and comprehensive, holistic ways. And we got to show up with a spirit of openness. Right. This is a mutual endeavor. When we step into this role as faculty members in as scholars, as teachers, we do so with an understanding that we're in this together and that there and that and that we must also recognize that together means accounting for the different ways in which systems don't necessarily operate the same for everyone. So how do we step into that form of support for each other as well? So I bring as I bring this particular opener and Keynote to a close. I want to remind all of us in particular, I want to remind us that, you know, part of why this work matters in particular is because it allows us to understand the value that that difference offers also to our learning. For example, here I am working with some colleagues and we've decided that, you know, one of the ways we value our faculty is by pairing them with trained TA's or different forms, SI: supplemental instruction, students or even learning assistance, but intentionally pair them and also offered the training to the students to be able to feel like they could step into the classroom. And it's a whole creative environment and a whole participatory environment. The students who are assisting faculty are not only learning from the professors, but the professors are also learning from the students. For the moment, and especially as we all get on the same page, that we have a capacity for self awareness, self assessment of our own biases and beliefs and how that impacts minoritized, marginalized and other BI-PAC and underrepresented communities within the spaces, but that we're particularly attentive and have a consciousness about the dynamics and having when people from different groups interact can come together. Here's the reality. Sometimes we have folks who come from, you know, very rural communities and they'll show up to one space and they'll be like, oh my God, this is the most diverse space I've ever seen. And then you have people who come from incredibly diverse communities like urban communities and will show up to the same space and say, oh, my God, this place is so white or so male or so this. And you know what the reality is? They're both right and they're both coming onto the space to to to recreate what their space can look like. Lastly, so important as we move forward then that we acknowledge and account the role power and culture play in human society and relations and the ways in which we are situated as microcosm learning microcosms of that particular relationship between power and culture. And having that appreciation and ability to adapt to different styles and to different communications, and the thousand learning styles. So with that said, I just wanna say thank you for having me to our panelists that you're about to encounter were incredibly wonderful professors and teachers.

[00:13:55] So looking forward to also learning from you and to all again. Welcome. It's been a pleasure. Thank you for trusting me with your time. And let's be better than Nike. Let's get to it. Let's do it. That's what we do. Thank you all. Have a great session.

[00:14:14] Thank you so much, Dr. Benitez, and thank you for setting the stage for this conversation today. But most of all, thank you for reminding us that this is about students. And that's what we are focused on, is how can we support students and being successful. I'd now like to introduce you to our panelists. I want to start with Viji Sathy. She's a professor at the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience and Special Projects Assistant to the dean of Undergraduate Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Kelly Hogan is the Associate Dean of Instructional Innovation for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's College of Arts and Sciences, the University's Quality Enhancement Plan director and teaching professor in the college's biology department. And then Darvelle Hutchins is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri. He currently serves as a diversity strategist at TADS Telecommunications Inc. Darvelle, let's start with you. How are you creating inclusive online learning environments in your courses?

[00:15:26] Thank you so much and I really appreciate the opportunity to be here. One of the ways that I go about really creating an inclusive culture is I think that it's so important to set the tone for your course. For me, I give accounts to the fact that we're in a global pandemic right now. We're experiencing so much civil unrest and racial injustice right now. And then we're also experiencing that political divide that we see in the media. And so it's so important to really shape the communication that is going to happen among the students within your course. And I do that by setting community norms. And you might see this as community rules are things that we would abide by or that we agree to commit to as participants in this course. And so I start with a set of six foundational rules that I put in place. And the first one that I ask for students to just demonstrate a respect for difference, realize that we all come into the course with different identities, different perspectives, different values and beliefs. And it's so important to acknowledge that and to ask students to respect the differences that are in that space. The second role is to assume good intentions. We all, as I mentioned, come from different backgrounds. We have different paths, right? We're socialized into the world differently based on our upbringing. And so we might say some things in the course that may not be as inclusive or things that may be triggering. But to assume that participants have the best intentions in mind, and to be able to have that dialog, to make sure that all students feel comfortable while they're in the course, that they're able to engage to their fullest potential. And so I think the goal is really to allow the full student, their full selves to exist in that space. I think the third point is to just respect confidentiality in any course that you take. This is very tough for students right now, really entering into this online space. It's so new to them. And so it's important to allow for anything that they were to share in this space if they were to open up in this space. Right. For us to protect that information. Right. And to really respect our peers. And so it's so important for them to know that this is a safe space for learning, for growing and a safe space to make mistakes. I think that sometimes students will often fall into the assumption that to be in this course, you have to know all the content. You have to be the perfect student. But that's the exact opposite. You're in this course because you need to learn the material. And so this is the space right, where you make those mistakes and that you can then translate to the workplace and you can grow from those experiences. The fourth point that I make is just to be generous. This is an online space

and it's so new to students. And it's important for them to be very descriptive. Right in their responses is it's important for them to be engaged. And so really provide the students with their own feedback. And as a community, we want to agree that we are going to put our best and our all into the chorus and that we're not just going to skate by in the chorus. Right. That we're truly invested into the learning experience because I believe that you truly get out of the course what you put into it. The fifth point is to be patient. We are all at different stages in our journey. Right. And sometimes we need that time to reflect, to learn and to grow. Right. And we need to hear from others perspectives. And so, you know, we may not learn as fast as others. And so we want to be patient. And then the fifth point that I want to mention is just to respect deadlines. I ask students. I say life happens. Right. But when things are going well adhere to those deadlines, because a lot of times when we are facilitating discussion, whether it be synchronous or synchronous, we're asking students to post a response. Right. And then to allow time for their peers to reply. And that's only made possible when we've established those deadlines. So allow the students to post their initial response and then we give their peers time to reflect on that response. And then they're there. Then they're then able to reply to that. And so it's important to have those rules in place. And I would say that after I establish or send those guidelines to the students. I ask, students reflect on this. Let me know. Do you agree to this? Do you abide by these roles? And what additional rules might you want to add to that? And so after I get students' feedback, I basically tie students' feedback in terms of pieces or norms that they want to see added into those community roles. And then I add those in. And then at the end, once I collect our responses, I then post an announcement and I say, hey, here's to a new set of community norms and guidelines. Right now, we're established by myself as well as your peers. So it's more of a co-process right now shaping the communication and that environment. So that is how I set the tone for the course. And I encourage you all to think about implementing that in your courses.

Charity Peak [00:19:51] Awesome. Thank you, Darvelle, I really appreciate you reminding us about the value of setting community norms that can sometimes be uncomfortable, but it's important for people to know we have a safe space for learning. Kelly, what about you? Could you tell us more about how you ensure all students feel included in your online learning environments?

Kelly Hogan [00:20:09] Sure.

Kelly Hogan [00:20:10] Yeah. And as we think about Darvelle's comments, you know, we can set the best intentions and we can set community norms, but then sometimes when we're going through the course and maybe some of us are mid semester right now, I know I am. What if things don't seem to be going according to plan? Right. So maybe, for example, you're teaching a synchronous class online like I am. You find out that students are sent to a breakout room, but then you go to that breakout room or you find out that they aren't engaging with each other while other groups are. And maybe that's not fitting the norms of how you set the class. And so what do you do? And I think we have to make sure we don't take offense to what's happening. And as Darvelle said, we want to assume good intentions about our students. And so I'm a scientist and I like

to try and just really kind of approach all problems the way I would as a scientist. So next slide, I really think it's important to sort of investigate what's going on in this room because it's not happening across all rooms. So I would take a moment and ask students, you know, what, what's going on? And I don't want to be feeling punitive. I want to try and engage in the norms. And what we set at the beginning of this semester and keep coming back to. So investigating would be number one. Number two, I would summarize the problem for myself, but to do that, I need some information. Right. So let's say in this scenario, I found out that the students tell me that they don't know what they're supposed to be doing in this breakout room. They discuss with me their confusion. And then somebody says, well, we got confused. And so we turned off our cameras and we figured we'd just wait for the breakout rooms to end. OK. So they're being honest about what's going on. Now I know what the problem is. So step three, I can plan a possible solution. And for me, I always come back to this word structure. I want to provide more structure. And in this case, the activity needs more structure. They're not getting the instructions they need when they need them. And therefore, they're not being held accountable to doing the work, the other groups are doing. And by providing these instructions, I can help not only this group of probably other groups I don't even know are needing this kind of structure. So as a take home around or a key point around this, structure helps everyone. But it certainly doesn't harm those that don't need it. So some groups made it through that activity without the extra instructions. I need to think about the groups that don't have that, and I'm not going to harm the ones that didn't need it. So some strategies for what we might do as an example solution with this situation would be first to set up a Google Slide document that assigns each to each breakout room to a number on that slide. So this is one solution. It doesn't have to be the only. But if you're gonna use a Google Slide, then you want to make sure everybody has the link so you can post the Google Slide link into the chat. But you can also use your learning management system so that they know exactly where to find these types of links for every class. And then on the first slide, you can put detailed directions that each group can access at any point, they need to go back to the directions that they can. And then while students are working, you can be outside of all those breakout rooms, scanning that document, looking at slides two through fifteen or however many students you may have? And you can see which groups are not working on the document. And you can visit those groups and determine if there is a problem there. So you can spend your time now going and finding more issues and problem solving to make sure that everybody feels included in that learning. And so as a scientist, I would just repeat, investigate, summarize the problem and plan a solution. And it's OK that everything isn't working exactly as planned because that's teaching.

Charity Peak [00:24:11] Awesome. It's so critical to have these classroom management tips. I think many of us know how to manage a room by getting closer to students when they're not on task and redirecting them. But I think many faculty are sort of at a loss about how to manage this new environment or teach it. So thank you for those incredibly practical tips. Viji. How about you? How do you promote inclusivity in your courses?

Viji Sathy [00:24:40] Great.

Viji Sathy [00:24:41] Yeah. So I think one way that we can think about promoting inclusivity is to think about how we connect with our students in checking with them about how the course is going. So, as Kelly mentioned, you know, we're in the midst of our semester here. So this might be a good time if you are a few weeks in or halfway in to be thinking about getting some feedback from your students. So some midterm feedback is really helpful. And some of you I know are engaging and getting more than midterm feedback, getting feedback more regularly from your students, maybe even weekly, but getting some input from them. And you can think about ways to do that. That's an ongoing format. So inviting them to consider a form, for example, that they could fill out throughout the semester if they have a suggestion for how something might go or giving them an opportunity, especially anonymously, to offer suggestions to you. And then the other part is a more structured feedback format for that midterm point. And I love doing that because what it does is it conveys to the students that you're wanting to get their input at this time about how things are going. And you need to do a bit more than that. You actually need to respond to that feedback as well. So one thing that I like to do when I think about that prompt is I like to use it as an opportunity to be teaching my students about how to give feedback. And oftentimes our students are asked to evaluate courses, for example, at the end of a semester, but they don't really get much training in that. So the midterm allows me to say, here are some examples of things that you might like to offer at the end of the semester, for example. But to give them a way to model some of that. And I use some prompts that are really focused a lot on the resources. So, for example, what aspects of the course And then I might list what I provide. So videos, if it's quizzes, assignments like list everything that you're putting together. And what that also does is it lets them know that there's more to the course than just you writing that you've built an infrastructure behind your course, that they're also evaluating as part of the course. What aspects of the course do you find helpful? What aspects are working well for you and should be continued as they are? So that's one question. And then another question is what changes should be made to the course and to the way the course taught? What can I do differently to make the course a more valuable learning experience for you? And this question allows them to give you some suggestions. But it again, it focuses on the learning and your role in helping them with the learning. So you're partners in this learning endeavor. So having these questions allows them to be very focused on the feedback. It's not about you as the instructor. It's more about the learning experience and how it can be enhanced. And like I said, you should be prepared to not only read those pieces of input, and I encourage you to collect that information anonymously and to read it and to share it back with your students in some form. I often will take a bit of a class session to report back what I learned from them from this feedback, and I summarize it for them in a few different ways. But one of the things that I also want to encourage you to think about is that you're going to get a variety of feedback and some of it is going to be contradictory. So that's perfectly fine and normal. And I think you should share that with your students so that they understand that if they didn't like X, Y and Z, that there were some other classmates that did like X, Y and Z. And maybe that's why it's not on the chopping block, for example. So really conveying the full scope of what was benefiting students. And then after you share, I, I would encourage you to make at least one change, at

least one. But you could probably make more than one change. Try to think about things that would not detract from something that you've set up with your students, something that's too onerous for you to take on. But making those changes also conveys to the students that you are willing to meet them where they are. And you can make those changes because it reflects the needs of that community of learners. And you're not going to just plow through the material and the course the same way that you have every other semester. Right. So there are a lot of different ways in which you engage in this process that not only educates them about the evaluation, but gives them a chance to give you feedback that you're going to respond to any change you make. And hopefully their add ons to the course that feel helpful to students will be very valued by them. They'll really take that to be a sign of good faith that you're encouraging them to learn the material and you're wanting to do that by making these changes. And then the last thing I would say is that it's also a good time to remind them what they could be doing to improve their learning in the course. So, again, that this is a partnership in learning and that you're going to make some changes. But maybe they might need to make some changes as well to help meet the learning objectives of the course.

Charity Peak [00:29:31] Awesome. I love this idea of not only soliciting feedback from your students, but also sharing the feedback back with them or showing them how to receive feedback in a productive way as well. Part of that being making changes to your course that reflects what their input was. That can be really value added. Great. So we are going to shift gears now and we're going to solicit some questions from you all. So if you have questions, feel free to put them in the chat and then we want to hear your ideas. Viji, just the follow up question, how do you incentivize students to actually submit those midterm evaluations for the course? Do you do it anonymously? Usually their response rate is really low. So how do you get students to engage with that activity?

Viji Sathy [00:30:26] Yeah, that's a great question. Well, when we're meeting in person, I do it in class. And so that's one way to make sure that they're doing it right. I give them all a quiet time to respond to that and then I'll collect it there. But if we're online, you could drop a link to a Google form, for example, into the chat window, and you could give them the time to actually do that work. I think that's really important because if you just say, oh, this is an add-on, please do it when you have time. You're not going to hear from everybody. And for me, it's especially as a statistician, I'm always thinking about the representation of that feedback and making sure that it is encompassing the group of students as much as possible. And that's a lesson I can share with them, that having the full set of responses is more helpful to me in making changes than just a subset of responses.

Charity Peak [00:31:15] Awesome. Do either of you Kelly, Darvelle, or Michael? Do you have any insights about mid course feedback? Any ways that you give or receive that feedback in your courses?

Darvelle Hutchins [00:31:29] Yes, I would say for me, our university runs on a quarter system. So it's about 10 weeks for each quarter. And typically what I do is during weeks

three as well as weeks nine, I will ask students to or I will require the students to submit a reflection essay. And so they actually receive course credit or points for completing an essay. And really, I'm just interested in gauging where they are in the course of things that they find it beneficial on, what they perceive to be opportunities, things that they are struggling with. And so I ask a series of questions that really get at potential challenges as well as what they're really enjoying about the course and allows for me to make changes early on in the course. If I need to. But at the end of semester or end of term, feedback allows for me to consider changes that I can adapt for future quarters. And so I do make that a part of their course requirements. And I think there's something about when you attach points to it, students really think about it. Right. And they really take their time to reflect and to really give you just that in-depth feedback. That's really great for me because it helps me to understand the specific challenges. But it's also great for them because it improves their overall learning experience, because then I can be able to adjust them, make changes as needed.

Charity Peak [00:32:46] Yeah, and you're right. You don't have to wait all the way to the midterm. You can ask a few weeks in . And in fact, maybe we need early feedback before we make a change. Anybody else have input, input about mid-course feedback?

Michael Benitez [00:32:58] I you know, I echo that.

Michael Benitez [00:33:00] I echo that and I am going to add just what has been said, because it is phenomenal feedback. I'll just add that intentionality matters enough for me in cultivating a relationship with students. I break them in the group during class. Very similarly, I don't weigh into mid. I may have two, maybe three weeks or four weeks. Or if I see their students maybe struggling and actually break them into groups and have them engage in that conversation, that's a part of class. But also offer me that feedback very directly. But be OK with it. Suspend my disbelief and be OK with receiving that feedback, which I think for a lot of faculty at times could be challenging in that kind of open public learning space. But again, it can be so valuable so that students can also validate themselves with respect to where they're at and how you can be responsive to them. So welcome them to chime in. By way of voice and integrating that in a very structural way goes a long way for them.

Charity Peak [00:33:54] Awesome.

Kelly Hogan [00:33:57] And I'm using feedback in my synchronous course right now really quickly. You know, just it's easy to put the link in the chat. And even if it's not required, they're all right there. And I got some feedback the other day in three minutes. Sent them into a breakout room to do something, read the feedback, and was able to, you know, provide some comments immediately. So it's easy to do that a couple of times in the semester. And, I use a Google form, but I see someone in the chat was saying they use the poll in zoom. There's so many quick ways you can get some really quick feedback. And it just shows that you care and that matters the most to them.

Charity Peak [00:34:34] That's right. They just want to be heard. So I think that's really valuable. We have some participants who are asking about differentiated instruction in classes, especially when students bring different levels or types of communication skills, preparation, and previous knowledge of the subject matter. How are you all handling differentiating your instruction with a wide variety of students?

[00:35:02] Can I start with some ideas here? I teach a class where I require students to do some work before class and engage during class. And I find the before prep time is a place where students can spend the amount of time they need working on something where they might need an hour and another student might only need 10 minutes. And that's a place where they can take the time they need to dive in. And then ideally, when we get together, we can spend our time working on problem solving, the kinds of things we want to do together collaboratively and with an expert in the room. But hopefully we all come to that lesson somewhat prepared and somewhat on a more level playing field when we get there. And so I think using class time, using prep assignments is a way to help with some of those differences.

Darvelle Hutchins [00:35:58] I will say that for my courses and to piggyback off of you is what I do in my classes, I really try to work to make the rubric very clear and very specific in terms of what it is that I'm looking for and how students are going to be graded in the course. And so I teach a very basic level coms 101 or public speaking class right now. And in that class, there are developmental assignments that I give to my students. And so maybe for the first rubric, I'm asking them to identify a project site. And so I might say the purpose of this task is to identify an organization that you would like to study. And then the second thing that I'm looking for is what are three strings or three opportunities that you see for this organization from a diversity and inclusion perspective. And for those assignments, I'm not really looking at the students writing style or their ability to creatively express themselves or anything like that. And so that's how I actually work to try to reduce or eliminate bias. As I say that if this student fulfills what I'm looking for in the rubric, they're going to get the flow points on the assignments, because I realize that some of my students are seniors and some of them are freshmen. Right. And so part of me is having to remove a lot of the bias that I have about different grade levels, bias that I have about their organizations of choice. Right. And say I'm only interested in what the assignment calls for. And so that's how I sort of navigate or address that.

Charity Peak [00:37:29] One sort of spin on this question is not only how are you differentiating your instruction, but also how are you ensuring that students interact with one another when they have different perspectives? Sometimes I think in the online environment, the same individuals respond to the same individuals in a discussion board. And so do you all have any strategies about how you might be mixing them up or making sure that they are really, truly receiving a bunch of different perspectives in your online course?

Michael Benitez [00:38:03] Yeah, I know for me, when when I when I teach courses here, especially at the last institution, I was OK with them, very intentional with making

sure that we create different groups for different dynamics and different ways that they could come together in those spaces to assure that that engagement is happening and that they're responding to each other. But across the spectrum, the more comprehensively I know that one thing, the last piece that I've done and it's worked really well. Students have really loved it because it brings them into the construction of the classroom. And in the course, as I always leave 10 percent of my syllabus empty for the students to fill in. And, you know, sometimes I do it at the beginning, but depending on the class, they may not feel comfortable. I had that situation happen before and after about a month in and they got sort of kind of their heads wrapped around the concepts in some areas. Then we kind of started to fill in that 10 percent. But it also puts them in groups and allows them to be the creators of that knowledge production space and sharing in that sort of reciprocity of learning with each other. And that has been, you know, pretty well received.

[00:39:13] Nice. Can I just add one? One thing that I think is really difficult, at least in the culture in America, at least. It is very individualistic, right. So the idea that there's a sort of competition or potentially scarce resources in terms of who can have the knowledge? I think that it's helpful to remind your students that that's not how you perceive your course to work. And maybe you might need to actually articulate this to them, that your goal is for all of your students to learn the material and that they are to help each other with that, that everyone can succeed in the course. And that is your goal for everyone to succeed in the course so that they don't come into this thinking, you know, only I can make an A in this class or only certain people will make an A in this course that you're really thinking about collectively learning the material and encouraging students to see the strengths that they have in their peers. And in the same way that we embrace diversity in our classroom to help them see that that diversity will help them be better thinkers in the space and that they should embrace that as an asset in their classroom as well.

Charity Peak [00:40:21] Awesome.

[00:40:23] You know, I love that idea this semester. I have students doing a lot of peer reviewing of each other's work, and so I assign them who they'll be peer reviewing and it's constantly changing. So they're getting exposed to each other. And I don't do any grading after that first peer review round, they get to revise again. They might even go through two rounds of it. And in my mid semester feedback, I prompted very broadly what's helping you learn. And, you know, probably. 18 out of 20 students said something along the lines of my peers. I'm learning a lot from my peers perspective. So when it is structured that way and it's repeated, they see the value of it.

Charity Peak [00:41:03] Yeah, it's important to have that structure in place and set those expectations ahead of time that this is your philosophy about that. That's excellent. What about, there's a lot of questions from participants about technological access. So we have students all across the board right now. Some are using their mobile devices. Some have full studios set up in their apartments. But how are you

bridging this divide between making sure that everybody has equitable access to your material and to you?

[00:41:41] I can start us off with that one, I think. One thing I think about is when I put my materials out to make sure that they're accessible in whatever devices they might be using that material in. But acknowledging to my students and acknowledging to my students that if anything is inaccessible to you for whatever reason. Here are the ways in which you can contact me or your peers. If you've got a discussion board, maybe there's a way you can share materials. But just letting them know that you expect that there might be some hiccups related to technology in the course, but you're going to work with them to overcome those hiccups and that you are a partner in that learning and that you'll help them. And then. And then I think just be creative about how you might accept things from students. I've had students who can't get enough assignments uploaded. So I say, OK, we'll just text me an image of the assignment. I'll upload it myself. No problem. So really, just thinking through, like, well, all I need is this. So how might I get it from the student? And making sure they know ahead of time that you're going to do that with them, that you're not going to leave them on a lurch, letting them try to figure out how to make that happen for themselves.

Charity Peak [00:42:49] Awesome, other insights?.

Darvelle Hutchins [00:42:50] I love all of those practices that you're doing for your students, and I take a similar approach because my course this semester or this quarter is asynchronous. I also make myself very accessible to the students. And so in addition to having Zoom meetings, I do my Zoom office hours twice, two hours a day, twice per week. I do that. And then students also have my cell phone number. And so basically what I did was I downloaded a Google number. And so I may turn that on from 9:00 a.m. until about 7:00 p.m. and students can call me whenever they get ready throughout the day. And I answer the phone if I'm able to. And if I'm not, I return the call right away. So that's something I also do. And then I also let students know that if you're not able to make the office hours that I've sort of set in place, I'm also willing to meet at whatever time that's convenient for you. And so I make that arrangement in terms of their assignments because students have contacted me. They're like, hey, I don't have access to the textbook. What can I do to get the readings done? And so I've done things such as listing all of the power points for the readings ahead of time online so that those are accessible to the student. But then I also emailed resources to the students and helped them to come up with different work arounds with a textbook, even if that's me taking my own notes. Right. And sending them to the students saying, hey, I realized that for the first couple of weeks it's going to be a struggle. But here are my notes. Do with it what you will. Hopefully this is a help to you. And if they encounter any issues when it comes to canvas or whatever learning system that you might be using, I typically refer or provide the number, under one of the announcement links so that they can contact technology or I.T. services and then any other resources that would be helpful for them throughout the course. In regards to technology, I also post those under a resource tap that I have built into my canvas site.

[00:44:39] Awesome. Kelly, there's a specific technological question about you sharing a Google doc or anything like that, like how do you help them participate in the zoom session if they're also using their mobile device or, you know, how do you bridge that gap specifically?

Kelly Hogan [00:44:57] Meaning that everybody might not be on a laptop where it's easiest. Is that?

Charity Peak [00:45:02] Yes. Yes. Yeah.

[00:45:08] Well, I have to say, our students all do have laptops through our university.

[00:45:14] So that is not usually a struggle for me unless a student has a broken laptop. So I have to admit, I haven't run into a lot of that with my own students. But, you know, things are breaking and I think our devices are tired of all of this, too. And I do want to say this semester of 20 students, but I usually teach three or four hundred at a time. So last spring I was teaching four hundred students. And when we talk about accommodations or diversity and devices and all of these things, it's so much harder when you have 400 students for all of these tiny exceptions. And so I would say, you know, if students can do this on a phone, they should. But if it's a struggle where they're waiting for a device to come back to them, a better device. You know, we have to build some of these accommodations into our core structure because I can't answer 400 different emails at any time of day. Like, there are just certain limitations to what I can do. And so, you know, allowing students to miss deadlines and no questions asked, building some grace into things, these are the kinds of things we need to brainstorm when we teach hundreds of students at a time.

Charity Peak [00:46:26] Absolutely. There's a there's a lot of questions about turning the camera on. So how do we feel about this? You know, do we ask students to do or not do when it comes to turning their camera on? Tell us more about what your thoughts are.

Michael Benitez [00:46:44] I think I think for me, I'll begin I'm OK with it.

Michael Benitez [00:46:49] It depends what the class size is, obviously, and what I'm trying to accomplish, but it depends really on what type of exercise of activity I'm engaging. I don't have one way or another, but I'm very explicit at very particular moments when I need everyone to be on board. Sometimes to turn on. So I think the idea that has been suggested to really be as clear as possible and how we articulate our expectations. Moment to moment. It's really helpful. And then after that's done, also be very explicit about, OK, you can now if you like to go ahead and turn cameras off, if that's your preference. But I'm also understanding to some places I know I've run with students who don't have the bandwidth, for example, to go on and they just rather stay engaged then to lose connection, for example. So they may need to turn that off. So, again, there's also a trust factor that goes into this. A good faith effort or stepping into that really matters. Back and forth when doing this with this work.

[00:47:50] And I'll add that I think along with the what is your exercise or activity you're doing with your students, is it necessary to see them on the camera to do whatever that is? I'd also ask yourself why you want that? That visual cue. Is it? Is it really because it's helpful to see their face, their expressions when they're making an argument and to know who's about to step into a conversation and then great. Then you might want to set that up with your students early on to say this is what these are the kinds of activities we're doing in the course. What do you think would facilitate that? And they'll come to the idea of having their cameras on. Right. And so then it doesn't feel like a top down. It just feels more like we as a community of learners have decided for discussion. Cameras on is most helpful, but always accommodating someone whose bandwidth doesn't allow or that, you know, with no judgment. You don't have to have it on. It's OK if you don't want to have it on, but it can be helpful in certain situations. And then the other part I'd say is if it's just about your comfort level, like I don't like looking at those little black boxes, then you need to not require students. That's that's about you. That's not about them and their learning. That's your comfort level. And if you want if it helps you and you feel you've built enough trust with their students, ask them to post a picture of themselves in that little black window so that they have that cue of who you are. Get to know names. I mean, that is helpful to identify names and faces. But really think about your intention behind asking for those cameras on. And lastly, if it's about tracking who's actually with you on a certain thing, having the visual cue isn't as failsafe for understanding that people can certainly have their cameras on and not be with you mentally. So think about other ways in which you can gauge their learning that don't require that visual cue. And you're making a lot of assumptions about what engagement looks like.

Darvelle Hutchins [00:49:41] yea, that is really important.

Darvelle Hutchins [00:49:43] I will also add to that my classes, asynchronous. So I think it's a little bit different in that when my students post or upload speeches like they have to have a camera on. But I will say that if I were doing a synchronous course, that I would make an option on. The reason being is that a lot of times, especially in the current circumstance, we don't know as students living situations, we don't know. We're asking them to do something that they're just not comfortable with doing right now. And then there could also be a situation where I am sharing a room with a sibling or are all the kids are at home right now. And so maybe having that camera on is more of a distraction to the cause as opposed to having it off. And so I think it should be optional. But I think if we were to ask students to turn the camera on that we should explain the benefit of doing so and saying that, hey, having your camera on really allows for your peers to get to see you. It allows for them to see your physical cues. Right. And it helps with the communication breakdown or for them to process what it is that you're saying. But at the end of the day, as I mentioned, that I think there's value in having that to be an optional tool for students in it.

[00:50:46] Can I add to it just when we think about the value of synchronous versus asynchronous? Now, it may not be totally under our control. And what our universities

have told us to do. But, you know, if you're going to lecture to students, then maybe that's best made a video and letting students watch that asynchronously where they can be comfortable and using synchronous time for collaboration and feedback. And, you know, if the students don't have their camera on, you can still get that kind of feedback because they can use chat. They can use polling. They can use their voice. I mean, there's so many ways to know somebody is engaged. And Zoom has these great tools now even where they can give thumbs up and reactions. So, you know, if it's under your control, I would say think about the tool that you have in front of you to end and use it wisely when you need to be synchronous and you need engagement. Make sure you provide lots of opportunities and ways for that engagement to occur.

Charity Peak [00:51:47] Awesome. Yeah, I think we just miss seeing our students. Sometimes I think we as faculty do, but I want to see your beautiful face. We want to see that somebody is out there. So I can appreciate that. There are also some questions about assessment and especially this is somewhat related, but related to participation. Do you all assess participation? Do you give points for that? What's your sense about participation in assessing?

Darvelle Hutchins [00:52:22] Well, for me, what I do is I track participation for the first couple of classes, and so typically I'm if I notice that a student has not attended the first class, I'll reach out. And then if they have not attended the second week and then at that point I reach out and say, hey, right now I'm going to have to drop me from the class because there's no participation. But beyond that two week mark, I don't really track participation. If the assignments are great. If they're not in, I will send a quick note to the student, but I'm expecting for them to have filled all the course requirements by the end of the course. And that's the way that I do it, there are weekly deadlines for the course. So if the work is not done by then, I do tell students that at the end of the semester that there might be points deducted that will count towards their final grade. And so that's basically I kind of take it from an individual basis or depending on what the situation is. But I try not at all costs to deduct points from the student.

[00:53:22] I would say I have large classes, so it can be difficult to quantify participation when you have a large class. What you don't want to do is have it be based on how much a person is speaking in a breakout room or, you know, any kind of squishy way of being able to to put a number on something that you absolutely can't moderate, even if you have a T.A or an undergraduate learning assistant in the room who might be trying to do that. That is very difficult without a lot of analytics around it to figure out how to fairly get points for that. But, you know, using polling systems, if students are answering poll questions and that's your form of participation, I'd say, you know, that's what I do in my classes. So they're so frequent in a class session that I just say you need to answer, seventy five percent of the polls in the class to be considered participating well in the class session. And some of them count, you know, in getting them correct. But a lot of them are just I want you to try and I want you to just give me an answer. And that's participation. Right. So really thinking through the structure of that, just showing up to the Zoom session. Isn't participation. It is really engaging in whatever the discussion points are, the questions are, and thinking about how to convert that. And then also

asking your students if it's fair game to say, how do you think you're participating? How's your participation going? Weigh in yourself about. Are you as engaged as you should be? Do you want to be? What can we be doing to improve the situation for you?

[00:54:50] And this is one where I'm particularly mindful of culturally responsive teaching, right, and sustainable teaching in particular as sort of an inclusive strategy and depending on the classes. Obviously, I'm a post-colonial scholar in nature, in the field of education, more so. So when I think about participation, I'm also redefining and embracing what definitions of engagement and participation look like and for a lot of students in particular at this time, it's one thing when they're in class and they're feeling like. I know, you know, filling the whole imposter syndrome type of thing, or if they believe they do not belong. And so even allowing them an opportunity to engage and participate. So off line or through an email or through a message of sorts, but then also working with them and kind of re-confirming for them when they bring up good points, they hey, you know, this actually a good point to bring up in the class someday, how about next time we try that and so I think for me is also stepping into that that particular ask, empowering them to do so, but not penalizing them so, so much. I also function in a very general way of what participation grade looks like with points, but really individualizing that and adapting it to each of the students that and what their needs look like.

[00:56:17] It really frightens me when I see a syllabus that says, like 20 percent participation and no definition of what that means because that is where bias is going to creep in. And as a self-declared introvert, I would not be talking in a class like that. And so I think all of my panelists have given great ways of breaking some of that. But it is so common to see a syllabus. It's just those 20 percent participation, as if they'll know it when they see it. And that is a danger. So we have to avoid those kinds of things.

[00:56:47] I love that. And some people feel more comfortable communicating asynchronously because they've had more time to think about what they want to say. Some people are petrified to be on a screen. Synchronously. So there's all different kinds of reasons for why people choose to participate in the online environment. So those are really, really important points. Unfortunately, we are out of time. And I would love to just continue chatting with you all. As we come to a close, we invite you to enter one word into the chat to describe today's session. We definitely thank our partners for their support. We thank our panelists for their time today. And we invite you to continue the conversation online. On our website you're going to find additional resources from today's conversation, including a video recording and transcript of today's discussion, a full chat transcript and additional resources. Please join us next Friday, especially October 9th at noon Eastern Standard Time, as we continue the conversation on inclusive teaching practices. We will be joined by Jose Bowen, Santiba Campbell, Kristina Ruiz-Mesa and Farrah Ward. So we're super excited about that. So thank you, everyone, for your participation. Thanks again to our panelists and our partners. Everyone, stay safe and have a great online class.