Caring for Students Playbook:

Getting Started With Key Terms, Challenges, and Approaches

everylearner everywhere

OLC ONLINE LEARNING™ CONSORTIUM

Achieving the Dream™

Contents

Introduction

This resource serves as a companion piece to the **Caring for Students Playbook's Six Recommendations for Caring for Students**, and provides a foundation for the approaches and methods offered therein. The content offered here begins by setting the groundwork for rooting instruction in diversity, equity, and inclusion before focusing on the challenges students are experiencing as they pursue their education in our current climate. It concludes with offering approaches that support engaging culture, acknowledging trauma, and meeting the needs of all learners.

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This companion piece to the Caring for Students Playbook is a collaboration between the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), Achieving the Dream (ATD), and the Every Learner Everywhere Network. It is designed to provide instructors with concrete strategies that can be implemented to support students during this exceptionally challenging time in their lives and beyond as we enter a post-inoculation world.

We would like to thank the contributors who helped to guide the initial work on this playbook — Dr. Lynette O'Keefe and Ms. Kate Lee McCarthy. We would also like to extend a thank you to those who reviewed this playbook and offered their feedback to make this a useful and actionable guide for instructors across the globe — Tia Holiday, Rachael Durham, Laurie Heacock, Kelly Delaney-Klinger, Patricia O'Sullivan, and Tynan Gable.

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Key Terms in Caring for Students

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) forms the foundation for developing and delivering courses that provide caring, supportive environments for all students. But what is DEI and how can it be applied to teaching and learning?

DRIVING QUESTIONS

As you reflect on the recommendations within this section, we invite you to reflect on the following key reflection questions, using the answers to help develop a concrete road map of actions to take right away, in the near future, and as an ongoing practice:

- **As I design and facilitate my courses, how do I acknowledge privilege, integrate diverse perspectives, and celebrate assets?**
- **How can I identify and mitigate barriers to help make an inclusive learning environment for my students?**
- **What can I do to help students feel like they belong to our institution and in my courses?**

Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic forced many institutions of higher education to take stock of their diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, processes and practices. Institutions made intentional and targeted investments to ensure that their most vulnerable students had what they needed to stay enrolled, access course material, and connect to student support resources. For many colleges and universities, the global and national events of spring 2020 prompted them to renew their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work to bridge the digital and social divide among their student body. In order for DEI work to be fully effective and to have the ability to transform the student experience, it must occur outside and inside of the classroom and affect structural, procedural, and attitudinal changes.

HOW ARE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION DEFINED?

https://deiexperthub.org/definitions

Diversity: Having different types of people from a wide range of identities with different perspectives, experiences, etc. (Source: Merriam-Webster)

Equity: Removing the predictability of success or failure that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor (such as race), examining biases, and creating inclusive environments. (Adopted from: National Equity Project)

Inclusion: Putting diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection – where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create value. (Source: Diversity Journal)

Diversity

As student populations increase in relation to race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, age, language, religion, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more, it is important to create space in readings, assignments, and classroom processes that reflect and validate students' diverse identities.

Here are some ideas to get started:

- acknowledge privilege through courageous conversations;
- shift from a color-blind perspective to one that acknowledges race consciousness; and
- move from deficit thinking to asset thinking.

Equity

Where diversity initiatives speak to access and representation, equity initiatives highlight the need to interrogate and dismantle the structural racism and systemic poverty that reproduce historic and persistent inequities that manifest in teaching and learning processes.

Currently, equity is a trendy buzzword in education, and it is often misused and more often misunderstood. [The University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education] has created a short series of images to help illuminate the concept of equity in a way that informs action that is aligned with the principle and distinguishes it from other related values:

Images Source:
https://cue.usc.edu/about/equity/

The terms “equity” and “equality” are often used interchangeably but understanding the distinction between these two concepts is critical to resolving issues that minoritized students face in the classroom. While many educational programs and interventions strive for equality, this implies that there is a level playing field and if everyone is treated the same, everyone will have what they need to be successful. Equality does not take into account that some students have to navigate ineffective institutions, discriminatory policies, structural barriers, and inadequate academic and social supports in order to secure an education. These images also show the limitations of diversity as an end goal since increasing access to a biased and racist system does not remove the predictability of success associated with students’ social or cultural identities. The broken ladder and the repaired ladder images speak directly to the central aspect of equity that requires educators to identify, critically evaluate, and change the policies and practices that students experience as inequitable barriers to their persistence and success.

Equity-minded teaching practices offer targeted support to students that address and mitigate the specific barriers they encounter by providing resources that meet their needs. Equity has the power and potential to significantly impact academic, economic, and social opportunities of students who have been at best ignored and at worst treated unjustly throughout their educational experiences. Equity work requires thoughtful and intentional effort to identify and address specific issues that targeted groups or individuals experience in the learning environment.

What can be done at the course level to support equity in students’ learning experiences? Equity-minded practice requires educators to acknowledge that traditional academic curricula privileges students who have academic, social, financial, and cultural advantages. As institutions of higher learning were intentionally built for Eurocentric, upper-class, Christian males, it is important to identify ways to include students’ diverse backgrounds, experiences, interests, and ways of knowing to create more equitable student outcomes. To take this into account in your teaching, you might try:

- Naming and identifying specific groups, as well as acknowledging intersectionality instead of using coded language;
- Transitioning from a traditional, one-size-fits-all curriculum to one that supports culturally responsive teaching practices (See the section “Discover New Approaches for Caring for Students” later in this resource); and
- Acknowledging white fragility and adopting anti-racist practices.

Inclusion

Inclusion involves authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes and activities in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources. To do this, consider ways to integrate strategies into your teaching that support students in feeling like they belong in higher education and help them gain the skills they need to be successful in this environment. You can promote caring through inclusion by:

- Helping students to overcome imposter syndrome and sharing stories of self-doubt;
- Reducing stereotype threat and supporting students' sense of value, belonging, growth mindset, and metacognition; and
- Decreasing microaggressions and offering micro-affirmations.

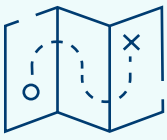
WHAT CAN INSTITUTIONS DO TO SUPPORT DEI?

Diversity: To support the work instructors are doing in their courses, institutions must also increase diversity efforts. Institutions can do this by hiring instructors who reflect the student population and inviting a wide range of students' identities into campus-wide initiatives and governance to empower different perspectives in decision-making.

Equity: Institutions can help instructors in this work by providing professional development events to create awareness and assist with implementation of equity-minded teaching practices. Beyond this, "colleges must routinely scrutinize structural barriers to equity and invest in equity-minded policies, practices, and behaviors that lead to success for all students" (Achieving the Dream, 2021).

Inclusion: Institutions can encourage instructors, staff, and students in reflecting on unconscious bias and managing unconscious bias through mindful inclusion.

ACTION ROAD MAP



The following steps can be taken as a means of familiarizing yourself with approaches that support diversity, equity, and inclusion:

NOW	NEXT	LATER
Support your students who may be struggling with imposter syndrome by sharing your own story of self-doubt.	Analyze your course content and activities, updating them for a diversity of perspectives and lived experiences.	Work with your institution to create a culture that supports a growth mindset.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power, and Privilege**
  This guide provides a training framework, focusing on context and activities, to enable productive discourse around issues of diversity and the role of identity in relationships.
- **Everyday Ableism: Unpacking Disability Stereotypes and Microaggressions**
  This video discusses how stereotypes and microaggressions shape the disability experience and inform our personal and professional behaviors and attitudes.
- **Why Gender Pronouns Matter**
  This video examines the importance of using pronouns to show support, acknowledgment, and respect for one's gender identity.
- **EDUCAUSE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources**
  In this resource, EDUCAUSE supports individuals in educating themselves on DEI practices and cultivating DEI within teams. In addition, EDUCAUSE also addresses DEI and Empowering Students.
- **The Anti-Racist Discussion Pedagogy**
  This is an introductory guide on how to build an anti-racist pedagogy in any discipline through instructor reflection, clear communication guidelines, and inquiry-based discussion.

Key Challenges for Students

In the current higher education landscape, students are experiencing heightened academic, financial, and social-emotional challenges. Underlying each of these challenges is a focus on equitable access and success, and in the current environment, equity is more critical than ever — and the intersections of academic, financial, and social-emotional support are in the spotlight.

Many instructors are aware of these challenges and have engaged in supportive student care practices prior to the pandemic. However, COVID-19 has seen these challenges increase, and on top of new professional demands in remote and online teaching, working from home and/or being prepared to (again) rapidly shift work environments, and managing personal stressors, helping students through these challenges can seem a daunting task.

DRIVING QUESTIONS

As you reflect on the recommendations within this section, we invite you to reflect on the following key reflection questions, using the answers to help develop a concrete road map of actions to take right away, in the near future, and as an ongoing practice:

- **What academic challenges are students in my courses most likely to encounter and what resources can I share to support them?**
- **How can I make content and technology choices in a way that does not create financial barriers for students in my courses?**
- **How can I incorporate social and emotional wellness into my courses?**

Academic Challenges

As the pandemic began, institutions shifted their operations virtually. In some cases, this meant that institutions developed processes and redesigned their services (e.g., library, tutoring, centers for students with disabilities, teaching and learning centers) to support students academically practically overnight.

The onset of COVID-19 in spring 2020 resulted in a rapid shift to emergency remote teaching, which provided academic continuity, but strained academic supports that were previously campus-based and often unable to include intentional design for effective online teaching and learning. Additionally, both students and instructors faced challenges with effective use of technology and access to adequate devices and Internet connections. These challenges were addressed in detail in the *Delivering High-Quality Instruction Online in Response to COVID-19: Faculty Playbook*. An updated version of the Faculty Playbook, *Optimizing High-Quality Digital Learning Experiences*, is available on the Every Learner Pillar Resources page. This resource, the *Caring for Students Playbook,* provides a more nuanced focus on equity-based academic instructional practices through a lens of holistic care of students.

Financial Challenges

Adequate financial support for tuition, fees, and living expenses has always been a key piece of equitable access and optimal opportunity for student success. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic impact, both immediate and ongoing, has increased financial need and underscored the critical role that financial support plays in addressing equity gaps.

Federal, state, and local/institutional initiatives responded to the pandemic quickly, and many institutions were able to provide additional financial support to students as well as meet needs with regard to technology required for remote learning. However, economic disparity and insecurity continues to impact students, particularly students who are poverty-impacted, first-generation, and racially minoritized.

Ongoing financial support and awareness of the economic landscape is necessary to address need, equity, student access and student success. While instructors are not in a position to directly impact financial support, it is important to be aware of the financial challenges that may exist for students and be able to connect them with existing resources to support them. Instructors can be key connectors between students and support, such as emergency resources that the institution offers. Additionally, normalizing the use of support by addressing it as a part of the student journey can reduce stigma and make students more comfortable seeking support when they need it.

Socio-Emotional Challenges

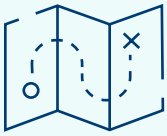
While institutions have provided socio-emotional support for students, these efforts have also needed amplification during the pandemic as students have an increased need to seek physical and mental health services remotely. Overall

need has increased and is particularly evident among student populations that are disproportionately impacted by the health crisis, economic instability, and racial tensions present in the current social climate.

As an instructor, you can support students' social-emotional well-being through awareness of the challenges and connecting students with available resources and, more directly, through implementing teaching practices that proactively create optimal and equitable learning environments.

Integrating institutional supports that address academic, financial, and socio-emotional challenges into courses and related coursework is a key step for supporting students as they engage with their challenges. Read more about how to do this in the action road map below and in the Caring for Students Playbook: Six Recommendations for Caring for Students.

ACTION ROAD MAP



The following steps can be taken as a means of familiarizing yourself with approaches that provide support for students as they face their challenges:

NOW	NEXT	LATER
Post a message in your LMS course site encouraging self-care and reach out to students who may be struggling.	Integrate the use of institutional support services (e.g., Writing Center or tutoring) into a course assignment or bring guest speakers from support areas into your class.	Work with your institution to create a resource module for your LMS course site that all instructors can use to increase student awareness of institutional supports.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Lessons from Formerly Incarcerated Students During COVID-19**
  This article explores how institutions can assist instructors in supporting formerly incarcerated students through professional development opportunities that address social justice, psychological impacts, and the digital divide.
- **COVID-19 Response for Students Who are Homeless or With Experience in Foster Care**
  This guide shares concrete tips and resources that can be used to support students who are homeless or in foster care to promote health and educational success.
- **Increasing Access to Financial Aid for Homeless Youth in COVID-19**
  This website provides background information regarding unaccompanied homeless youth, common causes, and how COVID-19 has exacerbated challenges for this population.

Discover New Approaches for Caring for Students

As you consider how to support students as they overcome their challenges and work to apply diversity, equity, and inclusion to your teaching, you may find adopting the subsequent approaches to be useful. These approaches focus on reflecting on one's teaching practices and implementing strategies that support engaging culture, acknowledging trauma, and meeting the needs of all learners.

DRIVING QUESTIONS

As you reflect on the recommendations within this section, we invite you to reflect on the following key reflection questions, using the answers to help develop a concrete road map of actions to take right away, in the near future, and as an ongoing practice:

- **As I design my course and interact with students, am I engaging their social and cultural identities, individual experiences, and prior experiences?**
- **As I facilitate my courses, am I recognizing my students' emotional and physical well-being?**
- **Are my students able to access and participate in meaningful learning opportunities?**

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching engages the social and cultural identities of students in the design of the teaching and learning process by involving students' lived experiences and prior knowledge. Teacher educator Zaretta Hammond defines culturally responsive teaching as:

> *An educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in a relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning." (Hammond, 2015, p. 15)*

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an instructional equity approach that utilizes inclusive curriculum design in ways that connect the socio-emotional and information processing realms.

To apply culturally responsive teaching to your courses, you can start by reflecting on culture as a cognitive tool, analyze how culture and diversity are portrayed and positioned in the curriculum, and examine how students' cultures and lived experiences are positioned in the curriculum.

Reflect on culture as a cognitive tool

Cultural displays are often included in the curriculum as tangential or surface-level "feel good" features an effort to engage or motivate students. However, you can position cultural knowledge as a cognitive tool to support performance and scaffold learning in your courses in multiple ways, through culturally responsive pedagogy. This approach requires paying persistent attention to the social and cultural capital that African American, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, first-generation, poverty-impacted, English language learners, non-gender conforming, and other minoritized students bring to the learning process. Culturally responsive pedagogy creates space within the curriculum that includes and/or invites cultural displays (norms, values, beliefs, language, tradition and art, etc.) in the teaching practices and learning activities of the course in meaningful and authentic ways. By foregrounding students' culture in course materials, assessments, and teaching processes, you create opportunities for students to connect new material to their prior knowledge and existing cultural schemas, which strengthens comprehension and retention (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

As an asset-based approach that engages and validates students' culturally bound prior knowledge, culturally responsive pedagogy calls for learning about students' cultures and backgrounds in ways that traditional teaching does not. Once equipped with a deeper understanding of students' cultures and prior knowledge, you can intentionally design a curriculum that centers cultural knowledge in ways that support and scaffold learning.

As with any culturally informed practice, culturally responsive teaching begins with engaging in self-awareness work to uncover biases, taking an honest inventory of your intent and impact of anti-racist practices in each aspect of your pedagogy, as well as assessing to what extent the structure, policies, and processes within your course privilege subgroups of students (Cochran, et al., 2017; McNair, Bensimon, Malcolm-Piqueux, 2020).

The Cultural Responsiveness Self-Assessment instrument offers a bank of questions that guide introspection into equity-minded teaching practices. Another useful resource to determine areas of strength and opportunity for situating culture as a cognitive tool in your course is the Beyond Celebrating Diversity: 20 Things I Will Do to Be an Equitable Educator list. This list from the Equity Literacy Institute describes the paradigm shifts that culturally responsive design requires.

Analyze how culture and diversity are portrayed and positioned in the curriculum

Traditional curriculum reflects and privileges the Eurocentric, male, middle-to-upper class, and Christian experience by presenting this perspective as normative. Culturally responsive curriculum design expects that educators disrupt that narrative by interrogating their curriculum and evaluating the voices that are represented in the curriculum. A fundamental process is to survey the curriculum to determine who is represented in the curriculum. This can be accomplished by an assessment of the race of the authors of the assigned readings, the gender of the key figures in the discipline that is featured, or the intersectionality of the social identities of the characters in the texts.

The NYU Metro Center developed the Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, which can be used to analyze how culture and diversity are portrayed and positioned in the curriculum. The Scorecard can help guide you in taking a deep look into the content of the curriculum to critically analyze whose knowledge the curriculum privileges, and if and how different groups are being portrayed. This tool is organized in three sections: *Representation, Social Justice* and *Instructor's Materials* and can be customized to the context of various disciplines and courses.

Examine how students' cultures and lived experiences are positioned in the curriculum

Many high-impact and evidence-based practices such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and service learning provide ample instructional opportunities to center and amplify cultural knowledge. Each of these active teaching methodologies provide agency, choice, and space for students to take ownership of their own learning and focus on questions or problems that relate to their culturally embedded lives and/or their community.

As an instructor, you can play a powerful role when your teaching models the use of different cultural examples, validates various ways of knowing, calls out deficit-based ideologies, or connects content to an issue of injustice. Through intentional use of culturally relevant information, you can invite students' cultural and lived experiences into the teaching and learning process. This can be achieved by including a requirement within an authentic assessment that involves students to assess the content in relation to cultural dynamics and/or social justice issues. It is important to explicitly communicate that cultural knowledge is viewed as a credible source in order to counteract the years of messaging that many students have received that their cultural knowledge is not welcomed as a part of the learning process.

Rockford Aguilar-Valdez (2015) developed a Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons/Assignments that serves as a guide to assessing an assignment on a few key dimensions of culturally responsive pedagogy. The instrument includes criteria for voice, differentiation, access, connection, higher order thinking, social justice, and equity/decolonization.

Trauma-Informed Teaching

As Karen Costa notes in her popular post Cameras Be Damned, CDC data estimates that two-thirds of your students in any course you teach are in the category of humans who have a history of trauma. This means that those students are individuals who have "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being [1]." The CDC offers six guiding principles developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that should guide the creation of trauma-informed learning experiences:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment voice and choice
6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues

Costa's recent presentation at an Online Learning Consortium conference helped define trauma-informed teaching practices in higher education. She has also developed a trauma-informed teaching checklist that can guide you. Along with the CDC guiding principles, these are excellent places to get started if you are new to trauma-informed teaching.

Engage empathy

There are so many factors that impact our students' daily lives, and it is not possible to control them all. However, as educators, applying empathetic principles to instruction and the learning experience can sometimes be enough. As Costa notes in her work, there are considerations for the scope of an educator's practice in trauma-aware learning spaces. For example, while educators can be empathetic to student needs, they should not consider themselves counselors or therapists for their students. Further, while educators can (and perhaps should) assume that there is likely at least one student in their classroom at any given time with a history of trauma, they should not place themselves in the role of investigator or diagnostician, sussing out those traumatic experiences. Understanding and respecting your scope of practice is important for the well-being of both the students and you as the instructor.

Another way to engage empathy is to start each class session with an intentional time of reflection, a check-in, of sorts. A few prompts you may consider:

- On a scale of 1–10, with 1 being "awful" and 10 being "amazing" how are you doing today?
- Share one word to describe how you're feeling today as we start our work together.
- I am _____ for class today.

Consider flexibility in your syllabus and assignments and co-create whenever possible

Knowing that assignments are not "all or nothing" can help create the sense of safety that the CDC recommends, especially in online environments. One way to help normalize a safe and approachable online learning environment is by incorporating elements of humanizing online education, a concept popularized by Dr. Michelle Pacansky-Brock. Consider ways to design your course that provide students with choice in how they demonstrate their learning. Giving students options to choose between voice, text, and video formats can increase their intrinsic motivation. This infographic, How to Humanize Your Online Class (Pacansky-Brock, T&L Innovations @ CI, n.d.), offers additional ideas for how you can design your courses.

Beth McMurtrie shared tips about trauma-informed teaching strategies in an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education titled, What Does Trauma-Informed Teaching Look Like? Individuals who have experienced trauma also find comfort in the feeling of having some control over their environments and autonomous choices.

- What assignments might lend themselves to seeking student input? Are there opportunities to build open pedagogy into the learning experience by co-creating the discussion or writing prompts with your students?

- Is ungrading an option for your course? Dr. Jesse Stommel's work in ungrading prompts us to interrogate why we grade and what outcomes we're hoping to achieve. He also prepared this ungrading FAQ, which offers a look at some ways that, as a pedagogical practice, it might serve as a means for inviting your students into their educational experience. Inside Higher Education published a recent article highlighting different faculty experiences with the practice, and what they took away from it.

Invite sharing, set boundaries

There are ways you can help foster safer spaces for your students to share online by setting boundaries and prioritizing care in your online classroom. For example:

- Consider employing alternatives to requiring cameras for students to prove engagement in class. Employ polls, discussion prompts, and other means when possible.
- Encourage acceptance and celebration of diverse perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and identities.

Guide and model positive interactions and the importance of the breakthroughs that can occur from difficult conversations or challenging our biases. Critical dialogue does not always feel good while it is happening, but the outcomes and shared understanding are worth the effort it takes to participate and model them. ASCD offers this helpful resource for creating safe digital spaces and, while it is written with K-12 teachers as the primary audience, the same techniques can apply to digital, blended, and face-to-face higher education classrooms as well.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources will provide you with more information about Trauma-Informed Teaching:

Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education: A Guide
This guide is intended to raise awareness of trauma in postsecondary education institutions, help educators understand how trauma affects learning and development, and provide practical advice for how to work efficiently with college students who have been exposed to trauma.

Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning in Times of Crisis
In this presentation, Janice Carello explains what it means to be trauma-informed, why it is important to college educators (especially during times of crisis), what TI college teaching looks like, what you can do to be more TI, and what you can do moving forward.

Developing a Trauma-Informed Lens in the College Classroom and Empowering Students through Building Positive Relationships
This paper emphasizes the importance of creating a safe and empowering environment in college classrooms regardless of what subjects we teach.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of educational guidelines that reduces barriers to learning and takes into consideration learner variability. A critical cornerstone of the UDL guidelines is providing choices for students to personalize their learning experiences while simultaneously providing them with the tools and strategies they need to become expert learners.

You can apply UDL to your teaching by facilitating the development of expert learners, designing course content using UDL principles, and reflecting on how UDL strategies align with socially just educational practices.

Facilitate the development of expert learners

UDL guidelines highlight the importance of developing expert learners. Meyer, Rose, & Gordon (2014) define expert learners as being purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal-directed.

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) proposes 5 Tips for Fostering Expert Learners.

1. Support relevant goal-setting by establishing SMART goals (specific; measurable; attainable; relevant; and timely) as a framework.
2. Communicate high expectations for all and recognize variability, and try using "wise feedback".
3. Promote disciplinary expertise, such as modeling and discussing with students how subject matter experts engage in their discipline.
4. Focus on the process, not just the outcome. Provide mastery-oriented feedback by focusing effort, persistence, and the development of strategies that can be employed when students face challenges.
5. Guide self-reflection by integrating reflection activities into your course to activate prior knowledge, and foster metacognition and competency.

Design course content using UDL Principles

The UDL framework is organized into three principles which are aligned to learning networks in the brain: the affective network, the recognition network, and the strategic network. All three of these networks must be activated in order for learning to take place (Novak & Thibodeau, 2016).

Multiple means of engagement — the Affective Network

The affective network is responsible for learners' motivation and interest in learning, it is the "why" of learning. Try employing the following strategies (CAST, 2018) to activate this network:

- Invite students to participate in the design of course activities.
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect and give feedback on the activities in the course.
- Design activities that are socially and culturally relevant as well as contextualized to students' lives.
- Ensure that content and activities are appropriate for different racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups.
- Foster a welcoming and inclusive class environment.

For more strategies that activate the affective network, visit CAST's resources on Multiple Means of Engagement.

Multiple means of representation — the Recognition Network

The recognition network is responsible for how learners gather and make sense of information they see, hear, or read. It is the "what" of learning. Consider the following strategies to activate this network (CAST, 2018):

- Provide written transcripts and captioning for audio and video content.
- Ensure you include descriptions (text or spoken) for all images, graphics, video, or animations.
- Activate prior knowledge or provide important prerequisite concepts with demonstrations or models.
- Use graphic symbols with alternative text descriptions.

For additional strategies that activate the recognition network, visit CAST's resources on Multiple Means of Representation.

Multiple means of action & expression — the Strategic Network

The strategic network is responsible for the planning and performing of tasks. This network is associated with the "how" of learning. Consider trying some of these strategies to activate the strategic network (CAST, 2018):

- Provide alternatives for students to respond to assignments where appropriate and relevant. When possible, give them the choice of alternative modalities which can include audio, video, or text.
- Use prompts and feedback that will develop self-monitoring and reflection skills.

- Assess student work with rubrics and provide examples of assignments that can serve as models for students.
- Expand executive function by scaffolding assignments with checklists, graphic organizers and notetaking guides.

For additional ideas on how to activate the strategic network, visit CAST's resources on Multiple Means of Action and Expression.

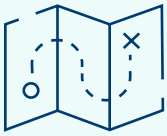
Reflect on how UDL strategies align with socially-just educational practices

The UDL guidelines are focused on removing barriers and personalizing the learning experience and they also support the development of more equitable learning environments. Chardin and Novak (2021) propose six important steps that align UDL with socially just educational practices:

1. **Identify the Barriers:** The first step in this process focuses on holistically identifying the barriers that exist for students. It is important to think beyond barriers associated with ability and/or language and recognize that barriers of race, class, gender, religion, and sexual identity may exist as well.
2. **Embrace Variability:** In order for the experience to be genuinely equitable, provide students with options so they can choose how they will demonstrate their learning and engage with the content.
3. **Reflect on Biases:** Biases come in different forms and everyone has them. They are not always explicit so consider evaluating how they may be present in instructional practices and/or course content. (See the earlier section on Key Terms, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)
4. **Expect Discomfort:** Equity work is about leaning into conversations that address issues of privilege, race, class, gender identity, religion, sexual identity and ability. Discussions about these topics need to be normalized so that educational systems can be transformed into equitable, brave spaces for all learners.
5. **Amplify Student Voice:** UDL is about choice and voice. Educational spaces and systems need to be welcoming and celebrate differences so that students are empowered to amplify their voices and share their experiences.
6. **Take Action:** Reflect on and evaluate your own thinking, practices, culture, and intentions. Chardin and Novak stress the importance of valuing impact over intention when striving to transform the classroom into a welcoming and inclusive space.

Discover New Approaches for Caring for Students

ACTION ROAD MAP



The following steps can be taken as a means of familiarizing yourself with approaches that put student care into practice:

NOW	NEXT	LATER
Engage empathy by beginning your next class or module with a short check-in.	Design a piece of your course to amplify student voice and increase student choice.	Work with your teaching and learning center to provide instructional development opportunities on approaches and strategies that support all students.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students**
  In her book, Zaretta Hammond references findings of neuroscience research and explores the brain-based teaching approach to culturally responsive instruction. The author also has a blog titled, Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain.

- **Six Guiding Principles to a Trauma-Aware Approach**
  This infographic, developed to train Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response employees to increase their responder awareness, lists the 6 guiding principles of the trauma-informed approach taught during the training.

- **Disability as Diversity**
  A Faculty Focus article by Lilah Burke underlining that although colleges and universities are "making progress on efforts to serve disabled students, they have been slow to recognize disability as an identity group."

- **UDL Progression Rubric**
  A useful self-assessment tool to gauge one's practice with implementing UDL. The rubric identifies three levels of progress: Emerging, Proficient, and Progressing.

- **Universal Design in Higher Education: Promising Practices**
  This digital book provides an extensive list of examples of applications of UD in higher education. Article submissions for the book are peer-reviewed by members of the Universal Design in Higher Education Community of Practice.

Conclusion

Understanding **key terms** (i.e., diversity, equity, and inclusion), **challenges** (i.e., academic, financial, and socio-emotional), and **approaches** (i.e., culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed teaching, and universal design for learning) is an integral foundation to putting student care at the center of our learning experiences. With this knowledge we now encourage you to visit — or revisit — the **Six Recommendations for Caring for Students Playbook**. This playbook provides practical recommendations, concrete strategies, and resources that can further amplify your efforts in putting equity-focused, inclusive teaching into practice.

About the Supporting Organizations

Every Learner Everywhere is a network of twelve partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work to advance equity in higher education centers on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institution practices and market trends. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org.

The **Online Learning Consortium (OLC)** is a collaborative community of higher education leaders and innovators dedicated to advancing quality digital teaching and learning experiences designed to reach and engage the modern learner — anyone, anywhere, anytime. OLC inspires innovation and quality through an extensive set of resources, including best-practice publications, quality benchmarking, leading-edge instruction, community-driven conferences, practitioner-based and empirical research, and expert guidance. The growing OLC community includes faculty members, administrators, trainers, instructional designers, and other learning professionals, as well as educational institutions, professional societies, and corporate enterprises. Learn more at onlinelearningconsortium.org

Achieving the Dream (ATD) leads a growing network of more than 300 community colleges committed to helping their students, particularly low-income students and students of color, achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity. ATD is making progress in closing equity gaps and accelerating student success through a unique change process that builds each college's institutional capacities in seven essential areas. ATD, along with nearly 75 experienced coaches and advisors, works closely with Network colleges in 45 states and the District of Columbia to reach more than 4 million community college students. Learn more at achievingthedream.org and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.