

# Dueling Epistemologies? Implementing a Critical Model of Faculty Development in Teacher Education

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## Abstract

*Teacher beliefs are mediated and lived in the dialectic of teacher education and teacher practice. We reframe this dialectic of teacher preparation as faculty preparation, as many faculty are not prepared for the rigors of teaching, and most are not trained in the ethics of their profession. We propose a critical model of faculty development that primes teacher educators to cultivate authentic teacher beliefs and professional integrity. The model embraces five components that: 1) situate faculty development in professional and ethical standards; 2) align faculty diversity competencies with the institutional mission; 3) embrace guiding principles for undergraduate education; 4) contextualize faculty development; and 5) challenge through reflective discourse.*

Teachers' beliefs are constructed in the context of sociocultural experiences, defined by Flores (2001) as personal, theoretical, and pedagogical. The idiosyncratic knowledge acquired by teachers in their daily work also influences their beliefs (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; McDiarmid, 1990; Tamir, 1991) that ultimately impact instructional decisions and approaches (Flores, 2001). This essential connection among beliefs and behavior is further explored by Reybold (2002) who argues that epistemic assumptions drive reasoning and generate "behaviours and actions that correlate to ways of knowing" (p. 547). This "pragmatic epistemology" (p. 539), which originates in cultural models of truth and value, composes everyday reasoning and decision-making (D'Andrade, 1987).

While classroom teacher experiences both in and out of the classroom are known to influence the development of professional beliefs and subsequent classroom behaviors, there is considerably less known about faculty epistemologies and their influence on the construction and development of teachers' beliefs. Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) explored faculty beliefs in relation to notions about 'good' teaching and learning, teacher's role, course design, and student outcomes. They found that teaching conceptions were context-dependent. Likewise, Kember and Gow (1994) noted a significant correlation between mode of instruction and approaches to learning. College students tended to use surface, extrinsically motivated approaches for studying when the typical mode of instruction within the department reflected a knowledge transmission orientation. Conversely, departments with a learning facilitation orientation encouraged college students to use deep, intrinsically motivated approaches for studying. Certainly, these studies with faculty members reinforce the importance of exploring the connection between belief systems, instructional practices, and impact on their college students.

Educational experiences structure a cognitive apprenticeship in which learners develop an emerging professional identity that persists into professional practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For teacher candidates, this socialization process

is situated initially in the higher education experience. This early socialization orients the teacher candidate to the profession in terms of skills, attitudes, and standards of ethical conduct (Brim, 1966; Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). It stands to reason that faculty beliefs about practice shape this apprenticeship experience of teacher candidates through curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation choices. However, teacher socialization is not restricted to the higher education setting; it is situated also in the lived experience of a local classroom setting.

This article examines the dual zones of mediation (Kegan, 1979) where beliefs about teacher education are constructed and lived: teacher education and teacher practice. These beliefs are often contradictory, with one promoting a distant but necessary pedagogy and the other disconnecting practice from theory. We argue this dialectic between university socialization and classroom experience creates an ethical tension of practice that diminishes teaching effectiveness. We reframe this conflict of beliefs associated with *teacher* preparation in terms of *faculty* preparation, noting that faculty—particularly early career and adjunct faculty—are often grossly unprepared for the rigors of teaching and mentoring, and few are trained in the ethics of their profession (Reybold, 2003; Sheeks, 2005). In fact, “for too many individuals, developing the capacity for teaching and learning about fundamental professional concepts and principles remain accidental occurrences” (Gaff, Pruitt-Logan, & Weibl, 2000, p. x). Professional ethics are defined by Corey, Corey, and Callanan (1998) as standards for moral conduct in that profession. How, then, can teacher educators facilitate critical thinking and ethical reasoning in their student protégés? Building on this literature and our own experiences as faculty in education, we offer a critical model of faculty development that primes teacher educators to cultivate authentic teacher beliefs and professional integrity. Moreover, one can argue that knowledge of diversity and best practices is an ethical issue that needs to be addressed in all teacher preparation programs.

### **Epistemology as Action in Teacher Education: A Disconnect?**

Most research on teacher beliefs is situated in the extensive works of Baxter Magolda (1992), Perry (1981), Schommer (1990), and Schommer-Aikins (2004) that characterize beliefs as epistemological perspectives. Epistemological beliefs are defined as the “individual’s views on what knowledge is, how it can be gained, its degree of certainty, and the limits and criteria for determining knowledge” (Brownlee, Purdie, & Boulton-Lewis, 2001, p. 247). Generally, dimensions of epistemology include the nature of truth, justification of authority, and reasoning processes, with ethicality being tacitly embedded in one’s belief system.

One of the roles of teacher education is to socialize teacher candidates into the profession. In essence, teachers’ “ethical values are implicated in their relationship with their students, ... their approaches to subject matter, and reflected in their own and their students’ stance toward the nature of knowledge” (Lyons, 1990, p. 167). However, throughout this socialization process commencing in the teacher education program and continuing as a member of the profession, teacher candidates themselves are faced with ethical dilemmas such as the implementation of best practices and the inclusion of diversity. Thus, faculty members must provide insight and guidance for understanding these conflicts and how they can be resolved. Faculty members also face a dilemma since often they lack knowledge in the area of diversity and implementation of best practices. Therefore, they need to engage in professional development that will help them understand how such ethical dilemmas arise from epistemological disconnects.

#### *Epistemological Disconnects*

Considerable research points to a widely recognized disconnect between theory and practice in teacher education (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Kennedy, 1997; Richardson, 1990; Rodríguez, 1993), resulting in an ethical conflict for teacher candidates. What they experience in an actual classroom does not match what they have learned at the academy (Flores & Riojas-Cortez, 2005). For example, teacher candidates often have a romanticized view of what a classroom should be; this view prevents them from understanding the realities that teachers and students face everyday in the K-12 classroom. Additionally, teacher candidates may have been placed in a classroom where the cooperating teacher’s philosophy or practices differ from those espoused in the teacher preparation program. When this occurs, teacher candidates tend to become disappointed and even discouraged about pursuing the profession. They also covertly express

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their disappointment by disregarding best practices and “practice” what their cooperating teacher instructs them to do, especially when the school’s accountability is determined by state-mandated tests.

This disconnect between theory and practice is likely to occur even if a classroom teacher feels confident about teaching ability, but students do not fair well academically. This conflict stems from the teacher’s efficacy beliefs or perception about self in relation to student learning and outcome. While we have noted that teacher candidates engaged in a constructivist-oriented teacher preparation program are reflective about their beliefs about student learning and have a stronger sense of their teaching efficacy (Huey-Ling et al., 1999), we cogently argue that without purposeful intent this is not likely to occur.

Likewise, conflict between teachers’ efficacy beliefs and student outcome is further exacerbated when teachers are not prepared to work with the diverse school population (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff, & Pearson, 2000). While there is much research that demonstrates minority students having minority teachers fair better academically (Meier, Wrinkle, & Polinards, 1999; Zirkel, 2002), often there are assumptions that only minority teachers can be effective in diverse classroom settings. Flores and Clark (2004) challenge the assumption by suggesting that even when there is a cultural match, same ethnic group teachers do not necessarily believe that they can teach all children regardless of external factors. Flores, Desjean-Perrotta, and Steinmetz (2004) noted that bilingual education teachers, as compared to generalist teachers, were more likely to have positive efficacious beliefs towards ethnic minority populations because both their course work and field experiences provided opportunities to engage in the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills. Moreover, other studies have also shown that when generalist teachers are prepared to work in diverse school settings, their sense of efficacy increases (Huey-Ling et al., 1999; Rushton, 2003). Sheets (2003) cautioned, however, that many teacher education programs only offer one course in “diversity” or “multicultural” education, as reported in the study conducted by Vaughan (2004). Although the students were aware of the need to know culturally responsive pedagogy, and even though only one course in cultural diversity was required, teacher candidates felt that their teacher preparation program had prepared them to work with diverse populations. However, the reality was that the candidates were not prepared to engage in culturally responsive teaching. Since issues of diversity are complex, exposure to a variety of experiences throughout the teacher preparation program will more likely result in positive attitudes towards language and cultural diversity (Vélez-Salas, Flores, & Smith, 2005).

### *Challenging Conventional Thinking*

Teacher candidates begin their professional journey with naïve beliefs about the certainty of knowledge, students’ acquisition of knowledge, as well as their role in that process (Brousseau, et al., 1988; Hollingsworth, 1989; Mahlios & Maxson, 1995; Weinstein, 1989). On the other hand, experienced teacher beliefs about practice were more complex and authentic than those of teacher candidates. Specifically, Kagan and Tippins (1991) revealed experienced teachers are more sensitive to internal struggles provoked by classroom problems, moral and ethical concerns regarding student personal needs, and the evolutionary nature of classroom problems.

One of the goals of teacher education is to promote changes in teacher epistemologies from naïve to authentic (Brownlee et al., 2001). To accomplish this goal, teacher preparation programs must provide teacher candidates opportunities to explore and critically reflect on their beliefs and engage in a variety of field experiences in diverse settings. Unfounded beliefs must be challenged via course work and experiences, and teacher candidates must be guided to manage ethical dilemmas that result from internal and external conflicts.

Changing and challenging preconceived notions can be perceived as a difficult, if not an impossible task (Flores, 2001; Gill, Ashton, & Algina, 2004). However, Brownlee et al. (2001) observed that, compared to non-reflecting teacher candidates, teacher candidates who were encouraged to engage in critical reflection about their epistemological beliefs were more likely to demonstrate a change in their beliefs. Moreover, Tatto (1998) surmised that teacher candidates are more likely to emulate the beliefs and actions of their teacher preparation programs when the program has a consistent underlying constructivist philosophical stance as compared to those that do not. Conventional teacher preparation programs were more likely to have teacher candidates who began and maintained conventional ideas about teaching, their

role as teachers, and the role of the learner. Inherent in these conclusions is that the underlying philosophy has been self-determined by the faculty involved in the teacher preparation program, as well as the academic culture in which teachers are socialized. This is a precarious supposition, since new faculty members often inherit the existing teacher preparation program when they enter academia, and concerted effort to engage in critical dialogue about the teacher program is simply overlooked. In our estimation, this undermines the academy's potential as a progressive institution.

### **A Cautionary Tale of Faculty Preparation: Teaching What We (Don't) Know**

Higher education is considered by many to be a model institution of professional integrity and social responsibility (Reybold, 2006); but in reality all institutions are characterized by complex relationships "that endow individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 8). Keith-Spiegel, Whitley, Balogh, Perkins, and Wittig (2002) point out the "potential for ethical conflict is ever-present" (p. xv) in higher education because academic "relationships are asymmetrical and complicated, individual players are ever-changing, needs exceed available resources, and policies and technologies are continuously evolving" (p. xv). Teacher education, as part of the overall institution of higher education, is subject to the same institutional frictions (Anderson, 1992; Birch, Elliott, & Trankel, 1999).

Early career faculty members are most susceptible to these frictions, partly because of their lack of status in the academy but also because of a lack of preparation and development. Thrust into a complex institutional culture, many new faculty members must develop their skills and competencies *in situ*, increasing the risk of flawed reasoning and decision-making. Inexperienced faculty members tend to rely on subjective experience and personal integrity to make critical decisions (Keith-Spiegel et al., 2002; Reybold, 2003-2004, 2006). For example, in her study of the development of research ethos in graduate school, Reybold (2003-2004) found most participants could not identify published ethical guidelines for research, but instead framed their reasoning in terms of personal morality. Likewise, in a related investigation of the social and political structuring of faculty ethics in general, participants scaffolded their professional decisions around personal experience and institutional mission (Reybold, 2006). When these decisions impact teaching and learning, this lack of faculty preparation becomes an ethical issue of professional development.

Moreover, little research has been conducted into how faculty members learn to make decisions in their roles as teachers, researchers, and service providers. Further, when the literature does address faculty reasoning, it generally essentializes both process and product, ignoring identity markers like gender, race, and ethnicity. But culture shapes *how* we know, not just *what* we know (Reybold, 2001, 2002). It stands to reason, then, that cultural characteristics impact behavior (Geertz, 1973).

In general, ethical standards for faculty assume an inclination for ethical reasoning. One obvious set of ethical guidelines for faculty practice is The American Association of University Professors *Statement on Professional Ethics*, adopted in 1987 (AAUP, 1987). The *Statement* addresses multiple facets of faculty work, including teaching, research, collegial interaction, and community engagement. As ethical ideals, they provide a framework for thinking about ethicality in higher education, but they are not codes for conduct. They are intentionally vague and subjective, allowing adaptation to various institutional contexts.

When the literature on ethical reasoning focuses specifically on faculty teaching behavior, rather than ethical ideals, standards are usually delimited to professor-student relationships, neutrality in assessment, training and preparation, content coverage, and other classroom-associated tasks (Markie, 1994). In this conventional approach, the ethics of teaching is reduced to method. In direct opposition to conventional ethicality and reasoning in higher education, Escobar, Fernandez, Guevara-Niebla, and Freire (1994) critique the utilitarian nature of the academy and argue for a critical position to ethical reasoning and behavior in higher education. Likewise, McLaren (1994) stated that the university is a moral agent that defies neutral and objective reasoning strategies. From this perspective, then, education should be transformative; thus faculty members are cultural workers who, like all humans, are accountable to the politics of education. The academy is a political site where faculty must develop a vision "that is not content with adapting

individuals to a world of oppressive social relations but is dedicated to transforming the very conditions that promote such conditions” (McLaren, p. xxxiii).

### Implementing a Critical Model of Faculty Development in Teacher Education

While most universities typically provide some form of faculty development, rarely does this instruction consider the epistemological disconnect between theory and practice. This poses two related ethical dilemmas for teacher preparation. First, faculty members are not trained to recognize and address the mismatch between their own preparation and academic reality. Second, they are not trained to recognize and address the corresponding mismatch experienced by teacher candidates. We propose a critical model of faculty development in teacher preparation that engages this disconnect and positions learning and teaching as ethical and political (see Figure 1). The model can be effectively implemented to meet the needs of higher education organizations since it is positioned within the sociocultural context of community, family, school, and students. The five essential components aim to: a) situate faculty development in professional and ethical standards, b) align faculty diversity competencies with institutional mission, c) embrace guiding principles for undergraduate education, d) contextualize faculty development, and e) challenge through reflective discourse.

### Implementing a Critical Model for Faculty Development in Teacher Education

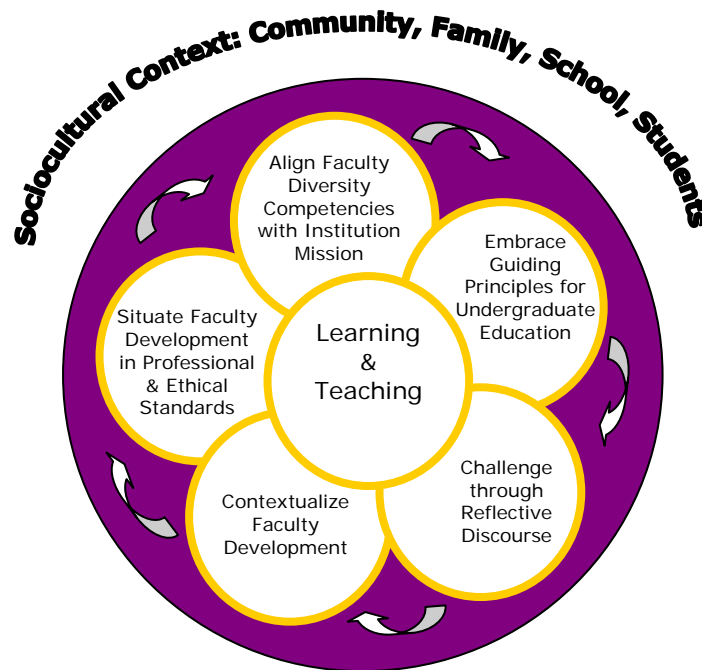


Figure 1. Implementing a critical model for faculty development in teacher education.

#### *Situate Faculty Development in Professional & Ethical Standards*

Professional identity incorporates commitment to role expectations and ethicality (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). Ozar (1993) and others claim most professionals cannot articulate their ethical standards. Research on faculty knowledge of ethical standards reports a similar lack of comprehension of standards (Gaff et al., 2000; Keith-Spiegel et al., 2002; Reybold, 2003-2004, 2006). Effective reasoning requires the skills, attitudes, and competencies for ill-structured problem solving; for teacher educators, this includes requisite comprehension of the standards for faculty ethics.

Faculty development programs must address not only standards set by the state for students to complete examinations successfully for certification purposes, but also the ethical standards of the profession (such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)). These standards situate classroom practice in the larger professional identity of teacher education; and if faculty members hope to socialize prospective teachers to be ethical practitioners, the standards should be a critical component of the syllabus as well as lectures and discussions. This is particularly important since, as we noted earlier, that early professional socialization in teacher education is known to shape professional identity and influence professional reasoning and decision making.

### *Align Faculty Diversity Competencies with Institutional Mission*

In order to train teacher candidates to work in culturally and linguistically diverse settings, faculty must know and be able to apply diversity competencies and professional standards (Rueda, 1998) and align these with the institution's mission. The goals should be to acknowledge the diversity that exists within our global society, to increase faculty understanding and awareness of diversity issues in teacher preparation, and to implement new understandings of that diversity in their teaching. Such preparation will help teacher candidates to increase their personal cultural and sociocultural knowledge as well as their teaching competence for diverse populations. Further, by aligning these competencies and standards with their institutional mission, faculty are localizing teacher education, thus connecting national standards to regional needs.

Further, if we want our teacher candidates to approach diversity from a positive stance, then how faculty model these practices is vital. Although each of the core knowledge types previously mentioned is important in teacher preparation, we must note that cultural knowledge must also be integrated *within* each to ensure that teacher candidates are being prepared to work with diverse populations. Teaching and learning should be viewed from different perspectives using what Banks (1996) described as *content integration*—"the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline." (p. 337) Unfortunately, Sheets (2003) noted that there are not enough professors who can prepare teachers to succeed in diverse settings (p. 111). For example, some faculty members have the "same" syndrome, which is "all children are the same so therefore, they all learn the same;" therefore, there is no need to talk about differences. Others may just dedicate one day to discuss diversity including the reading of a textbook chapter on multiculturalism. Still some faculty may just talk about people of color on a specific holiday or celebrations of a particular ethnic group (Cruz, 1999). Lastly, others just keep silent because they do not know what to say or do. Many researchers note that when any of these scenarios occur, university students often feel that their teacher preparation program has not been effective in preparing them for the education of diverse student populations (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Neuharth-Prichett et al., 2000; Sawyer, 2000).

Teacher education faculty members are obligated to help teacher candidates find a way to understand and embrace differences in order to assure the success of their protégés. However, to prepare teacher candidates to work with diverse populations, teacher educators must have the knowledge and willingness to make this a reality. For instance, Gallavan, Troutman, and Jones (2001) found reluctance from faculty to attend a required two-day multicultural education workshop designed to "motivate and inform them [faculty] about valuing cultural diversity ... by raising their level of cultural consciousness and provide various strategies for infusing cultural responsive and responsible pedagogy" (p. 13).

There are different ways to help faculty increase their knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity. For instance, examining the institution's diversity core values can help delineate a set of standards that must be met throughout the courses. Once the diversity standards have been identified, then a core list can be integrated throughout the teacher preparation courses. In addition, monthly faculty development sessions where experts in the field present and interact with faculty can also be of great assistance to help implement diversity standards.

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*Embrace Guiding Principles for Undergraduate Education*

In order to provide teacher educators a scholarly approach to teaching, faculty development sessions should be augmented with the Seven Principles for Undergraduate Education (Chickering & Gamson, 1999). In essence, Chickering and Gamson's principles guide teacher educators to establish contact with students, develop reciprocity and cooperation among students, encourage active learning, give prompt feedback, emphasize time on task, communicate high expectations, and respect diverse student talents and ways of learning. These principles increase understanding regarding diversity issues and best practices in order to support teacher candidates' learning. In addition, these principles mediate epistemological disconnects between theory and practice by situating learning in a constructivist environment that can be emulated by teacher candidates. The importance of university faculty modeling best practices and embracing diversity throughout the teacher preparation program cannot be underestimated (Flores, et al., 2004; Tatto, 1998; Vélez-Salas, et al., 2005). Further, as teacher educators, we are accountable to our constituents and are bound to the ethical principles of the profession.

*Contextualize Faculty Development*

Faculty development sessions should be interactive and provide opportunity for continuous professional growth. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREDL) has developed a research-based professional development model for effective teaching that promotes individual reflection and group inquiry. This model includes five phases of professional development that provide an effective structure to ensure critical analysis of teaching practices: (a) Building a Knowledge Base, (b) Observing Models and Examples, (c) Reflecting on Your Practice, (d) Changing Your Practice, and (e) Gaining and Sharing Expertise.

While the NCREDL model provides an abstract process for faculty enhancement, these efforts will be more significant when situated within a specific program or discipline. For instance, faculty must be mindful of teacher candidates' acquisition of the requisite knowledge base and application of best practice theory. Shulman (1987) identified this knowledge base as content, general pedagogical, curriculum, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of education contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values. Likewise, Saracho and Spodek (1995) indicated that good teacher preparation programs must provide students with foundational knowledge, instructional knowledge and practical knowledge. Similarly, Flores, Clark, and Villarreal (2004) further delineated the core knowledge for developing the necessary attributes to become a culturally efficacious teacher: content knowledge, socio-cultural knowledge, heuristic/experiential knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, and theoretical and historical knowledge.

An effective teacher preparation program is more than the acquisition of a knowledge base. In the most effective programs, faculty members align their epistemological beliefs with their classroom instruction. These beliefs include faculty beliefs about how learners acquire knowledge, especially how knowledge is acquired in their particular discipline (Weinstein, 2001). Often teacher educators approach teaching from a discipline-based perspective similar to how they were taught and model these practices in their classes (Kaufman, 1997). Their beliefs of how teacher candidates acquire knowledge are also associated with their beliefs about children's learning.

*Challenge through Reflective Discourse*

As teacher educators our role is to assist teacher candidates through their professional development and challenge their naïve epistemological beliefs. It is imperative that faculty members engage in critical reflection, inquiry, and dialogue with other faculty to enhance all of our effectiveness as teachers. Reflective discourse is essential to educational transformation. Freire (2001) argues that authentic "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). Without reflection and dialogue, we fail to change existing practices. This can be accomplished

through the creation of faculty learning communities in which faculty engage in critical readings and reflective discourse about issues related to the teacher preparation program.

### Summary

Student learning is a fundamental mission of higher education. Therefore, it is imperative that colleges and universities provide a plan for faculty development that encourages and supports initiative, innovation, and productivity that contribute to the goal of student learning (Pendleton, 2002). Toward this end, faculty development efforts must attend to epistemological disconnects inherent to teacher preparation and classroom practice. In addition, all faculty members must possess a fundamental understanding of ethical practice both in their own university settings and beyond to the broader community. We argue the responsibility of higher education to ethical reasoning and effective practice does not end with graduation. Rather, a critical model of faculty development situates university teaching and learning in the realities of practice. Not only does this improve student learning, critical faculty development has the potential to erase theory-to-practice disconnects—an ethical dilemma that abounds in teacher education.

However, while individual faculty members may want to encourage authentic learning through an ethical and connected pedagogy, this cannot happen without policy changes at the institutional level. Developing policies for the development and adoption of ethical standards that incorporate diversity core values at the university level is highly needed. Change cannot occur in a program where the whole organization does not invite the inclusion of diversity. In addition, examination of existing courses ensures that best practices and diversity are well represented. Effective faculty development will help promote a culture of transformative change that is needed to effectively impact students learning.

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