

Multicultural Curriculum Sub-Committee Report

May 22, 2010

Short term goals:

1. Edit and propose respect clause as resource for faculty to include in syllabi.

Accomplished to date: Considered several ideas (including the College of Law's Diversity Statement), and developed a respect clause for consideration by the Steering Committee (See attached draft and rationale)

2. Work with Jean Henscheid in Core Discovery to provide training for core discovery instructors this summer. Suggestions on topics include: white privilege, safe zone, etc. The committee needs further discussion about other topics for training and who might provide them. Perhaps a short proposal to Jean Henscheid to consider as she plans for the summer core training.

Accomplished to date:

2.1 Investigated coverage of diversity in the core discovery courses.

- Diversity training for core discovery instructors has significant areas for improvement
- Coverage is inconsistent across courses

2.2 Further discussions were placed on hold when the General Education Task Force began their review of the university's general education requirements.

Long term goals:

1. Establish incentive grants to encourage faculty to integrate multiculturalism into curriculum. Require faculty engage in two trainings before receiving grant. Need to work more on what these trainings might entail, how to offer them in a sustainable way and how often. Also need to discuss reasonable amount of grants that would elicit and encourage faculty to pursue these grants.
2. Consider asking the president to require deans, chairs, and faculty to engage in and report success in specific diversity curricular efforts. Currently deans are evaluated on their diversity initiative though it's unclear how this is assessed. The group discussed specific measures including: number of faculty in a college who have attended particular trainings on multiculturalism, inclusive pedagogy, etc., number of faculty who include respect clause on syllabi, etc.
3. Assess what each College is doing relative to multicultural curriculum. This might include specific questions on courses with specific significant diversity content, number of faculty who have attended training and what kind. This information would help identify Colleges that need more support in expanding their multicultural curricular efforts.
4. Work with Cori on including more multicultural activities/curriculum/etc in orientation package.

5. Engage with teaching and advising committee to include “attention to multicultural curriculum” as part of the teaching/Hoffman excellence awards as a way to reward and motivate individual faculty.
6. Supplement DIGG grants for co-curricular activities to widen pool of applicants who receive such grants and to ensure we are working collaboratively with academics and other activities on campus.

Proposed Respect Clause

In any environment in which people interact in meaningful ways to gain knowledge, it is essential that each member feel as free and safe as possible in their participation. To this end, it will be course policy and expected that everyone will be treated with mutual respect. We certainly do not have to agree, but everyone deserves to feel they are heard. We learn by engaging in constructive evidence-based dialogue. Therefore we shall establish in this course a general understanding that members of this class (including students, instructors, professors, and teaching assistants) will be respected and respectful to one another in discussion, in action, in teaching, and in learning.

Rationale for Inclusion of Respect Clause:

College is intended to prepare students to become contributing and educated members of society. As members of society and especially the workplace, they will be expected (and rewarded) for being respectful of others.

Students and faculty thrive and education is at its best when there is a culture of respect in the classroom. Students and faculty both suffer when the content of course is lost due to lack of respect among class participants and between students and instructors/professors. While faculty members have a great deal of power in the classroom, it only takes one student who intentionally or unintentionally disrespects another student or the faculty member, for the classroom to become a place of hostility instead of a place of learning. Ideally students should see the classroom as a place in which they are encouraged to engage with the material and a place free of intimidation from others. Faculty are encouraged to include a Respect Clause which is contextualized to their course materials in their syllabus as a mechanism to create a respectful learning environment.

Even in courses where issues of diversity have not traditionally been addressed, a Respect Clause will encourage students to ask questions of the instructor and of each other in the comfort of knowing that the Respect Clause is in place. Such a clause communicates to the student that the instructor will take an active role in mediating classroom interactions to ensure respectful and constructive dialogue. To truly encourage diversity in the student body, it is essential that faculty recognize that students from diverse backgrounds are present in the classroom which may lead to different life experiences and perspectives. The use of the Respect Clause assists in creating an inclusive learning environment as students from various backgrounds collectively learn course material.

Even if the Respect Clause is not discussed at length, the appearance of such a clause should serve to raise awareness of the ways in which academic conversation can be conducted with respect for all persons. This is especially important for those who may be new to academic settings and unsure of how course interactions among students and with professors are expected to take place.

What does this mean? The spirit behind such a clause is to encourage expression and engagement from all students and faculty in the classroom. At this level of education, exposure to a diverse set of ideas is part of the educational experience and should be encouraged with appropriate facilitation by faculty to ensure these are shared in respectful ways.

Respect Clause Examples

Example 1:

College of Law Diversity Statement

The University of Idaho College of Law recognizes and supports the value of diversity within the law school community and the legal profession. The law school learning environment is an inclusive, measured, and respectful forum for the discussion of legal principles, concepts, and practical skills. As a preparatory ground for the future practitioners of the legal profession, we adhere to the standards of legal professionalism within our classrooms, our offices, our hallways, our student organizations, our gathering places, and our activities. The calling to law is an important one with significant impacts on society and as a law school we take that significance to the core of our purpose. Diversity in race, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, life experience, sexual orientation, philosophy, citizenship, and opinion are welcome components of the University of Idaho College of Law and require legal professionalism from all sectors of our community to provide an appropriately respectful learning environment.

Example 2:

CODE OF CONDUCT AND RESPECT

Sociology explores topics that are often controversial to new students in the discipline. Sociology develops the skill of critical reasoning, because it makes its students (including me) observe our dearest habits, beliefs, and values as objects *outside ourselves*. It forces us to face the fact that not all things we believe to be true as individuals are necessarily true, especially without qualification. This can feel threatening at first, but, if you open yourself to scholarly curiosity, you will find this experience rewarding. I guarantee this course will help you learn about yourself as much as it will help you develop a sociological imagination. In light of the potential for conflict in the classroom, I ask that we follow a code of conduct. The code of conduct includes the simple idea that “you do unto others what you would like done unto yourself”. How this translates into our own conduct in class comprises the following:

1. Listen attentively to individuals who present ideas in class.
2. Do not hold conversations with peers in the background of class presentations/discussions.
3. Put away all materials that are not related to the course during class sessions (newspapers, magazines, cell phones - turn the ringer off, portable video games, CD players, and so on).
4. Laptops are not to be used during class, unless it is something necessary for those with physical or learning disabilities (in such a case, formal evidence must be provided).
5. In addition, when you pose your own position before the class, please recognize that others' ideas may vastly differ from your own. Be sure you don't make fun of, or degrade, others who hold different perspectives.

Failing to abide by any of the terms in this code of conduct may result in expulsion from class sessions.