

Creating an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Classroom

Prepared by the Staff and Students of the UW-Oshkosh LGBTQ Resource Center

Why should faculty and staff be SAFE trained?

Many students have given feedback stating that they only feel comfortable approaching staff or faculty if a SAFE triangle is prominently displayed on their office or department door. Other students have stated that they have felt discouraged walking through the hallways and seeing a lack of professors who are displaying SAFE triangles.¹

How do you address a student with concerns about campus or classroom equity?

The best way to address a student expressing concerns is first to listen. The student has experienced something that has created an uncomfortable environment, and the student has chosen to confide in you about the issue. Hear the entire explanation of what happened, and then proceed from there. Do not try to convince the student that the issue may not be as bad as it seems – the student came to you because it was a bad situation, and that is all you need to know.¹

How do you improve classroom climate to create an inclusive environment?

- **Set Ground Rules for Discussion and Classroom Etiquette:**

Have some basic ground rules for students to follow, such as what kinds of language can be used, assumptions to be avoided, etc., and also allow students to set some of their own ground rules for the classroom. This allows for students to help dictate the type of environment that will allow for the most productive learning possible.¹
- **Be attuned to student-to-student interactions:**

Students' peers are often the most detrimental to learning, based on homophobic language, sexist attitudes, or other problematic behaviors. Sometimes these behaviors can go as far as blatant discrimination and harassment, while other times there are micro-aggressions that show themselves. If you, as the instructor, do not step in and say that the behaviors are unacceptable, the behavior becomes a part of your campus climate. Being a bystander can be just as hurtful, if not worse, than being the person performing the discriminatory actions.¹
- **Be attuned to language use in your classroom:**
 - Develop inclusive rather than “us/them” terminology. Develop a pedagogical style that avoids using language that implies heterosexist classroom norms. For example, the use of “we” in the following well-intentioned sentence may nonetheless support assumptions of LGBTQ classroom minority status: “Even though it is outside our experience, we need to try and understand the life challenges of persons who are LGBTQ.” An alternative might be “All students benefit from understanding the life challenges of persons who are LGBTQ.”²
 - Use precise terms like Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ) rather than homosexual or gay as an umbrella term.³
 - Avoid heteronormative language that assumes the heterosexuality and cisgender identities of your students.
 - Avoid stereotypical language in discussing LGBTQ+ people and experiences.
 - Use the language a person designates for themselves.¹

- Use Gender-Neutral Language:

| Gendered Language | Gender-Neutral Alternative |
|---|---|
| “Ladies and Gentlemen” or “Boys and Girls” | “Students” |
| Assuming he/him/his or she/her/hers for pronouns | When taking roll call, ask preferred pronouns |
| Calling off first names on the first day of class for roll call | Calling off last names and asking for first name, to ensure use of preferred name |
| Examples using heterosexual couples | Finding examples that avoid heteronormativity |
| “Husband/Wife” or “Boyfriend/Girlfriend” | “Partner” or “Spouse” |
| Gender roles: men as technology specialists, women as human resource managers | There is never a reason to assume a specific gender identity belongs in a specific job position |
| “Guys” | “Everyone” |
| Assuming all students are in straight relationships | Not everyone is in a straight relationship, much less a relationship at all. Find examples that don’t single out students |
| Using “he” or “she” for a hypothetical person | Use “they” |
| “Both Genders” or “Both Sexes” | “All Genders” or “All Sexes” |

Chart created by Ian Unger

- Use a student’s preferred gender pronouns. This list is not inclusive so always ask a student what their pronouns are. Remember that the singular “they” is grammatically correct. (<http://rebloggy.com/post/help-lgbtq-trans-pronouns-informative/64836332646>)



- **Manage inclusive content in classroom discussions and lectures:**

- If an example references male/female/man/woman, it’s probably either a stereotype or heteronormative, unless it is a statistic or about biology.¹
- Don’t make assumptions that students are in heterosexual relationships, even for “funny” examples (e.g. “Boys, would you do this for your girlfriend?”) and challenge such assumptions if students raise them.¹

- Remember that not everyone identifies as a man or a woman; there are also genderqueer identities that need to be recognized¹
 - Remember that sexuality is not just the heterosexual/homosexual binary: some other sexualities include bisexuality, pansexuality, and asexuality.
 - Use multiple and diverse examples. Multiple examples increase the likelihood of students relating to at least one of them. Take care to include examples that speak to multiple genders and that work across cultures.⁴
- **Create a classroom climate in which the perspectives of LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ students are valued.**²
 - **Be careful never to “out” an LGBTQ+ student, meaning that if a student is not open in their sexual orientation or gender identity and they share that with you, be careful not to share that information with others. Sometimes being out can be more dangerous than being closeted.**³
 - **Respect the clothing choices students make, supporting them as they figure out how they want to perform their gender.**³
 - **Don’t ask people to speak for an entire group.**³
 - **Recognize that you’re not an expert. You will make mistakes and occasionally be insensitive.**³
 - **Humble yourself and apologize where necessary; learn from your mistakes, and always try to broaden your understanding of LGBTQ issues so you can best support all of your students.**³

How do you handle a situation where a student’s name in the roster, D2L, and/or email do not match their preferred name?

If a student informs you that they go by a different name, it is not only respectful but also for their safety that you get their name and pronouns correct. Many students need to hide the fact that they are transgender, commonly called “stealth,” in order to avoid harassment and discrimination. If the student’s name is different between D2L, the roster and/or email, or you notice that students are calling them a different name and you have not heard anything from them, it is alright to privately ask them what name they would like to be referred to by.¹

Why should you include LGBTQ topics in your curriculum?

The business climate nationally is moving toward acceptance and diversity, and being a leading business school in the nation, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh should strive to stay ahead of these trends. Additionally, 10.26% of respondents to the spring 2014 survey of COBA students identified as a sexual orientation other than heterosexual or straight, which puts the College of Business quite high in population for sexual orientation diversity. Also, 1.33% of students openly identified as transgender in the survey.¹

How do you include LGBTQ topics in your curriculum?

- Weave LGBTQ content and materials throughout the course curriculum. Providing students with a course outline that includes LGBTQ+ content is one means of explicitly challenging student heterosexist assumptions. Whenever possible, disperse LGBTQ readings and discussion throughout the course to avoid creating the impression that LGBTQ course content can only be tangential to the goals and activities of your discipline.²
- Look for examples of articles for your department in Ian Unger’s Guide.¹

- Increase visibility of LGBTQ role models and allies. When LGBTQ topics are less salient to the specific course content, faculty can select readings by or bring in speakers who are openly LGBTQ+ experts in the course content area.²

How do you handle “hot moments” in classroom discussion?

Tips from “Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom” by Lee Warren

<http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/hotmoments.html>

- Manage yourself:
 - Hold steady.
 - Breathe deeply.
 - Don't personalize remarks and get caught up in a personal reaction.
 - Know yourself and your own biases so you can devise strategies in advance.
- Find the teaching opportunity in the moment:
 - Clarify how you are thinking about the moment:
 - Listen for "the song beneath the words"
 - Ask yourself what is the sub-text? What is the student really saying? Why is this coming up at all? Why at this time?
 - Double-check your impressions with the student so we can use this information to further the conversation.
 - Help the entire class to think about the moment
 - Put it on the table as a topic for general discussion
 - Require that all students seek to understand each other's perspectives by listening carefully, asking respectful questions, and then restating that position.
 - Get the students to do the work
 - Ask students to step back and reflect on what they might learn from this moment.
 - Ask students how their reactions mirror the subject at hand and what they might learn from their own behavior.
 - Don't avoid the issue even if it has nothing to do with the content you are teaching.
 - Have a fallback position: if you need more time to develop an effective way to address this issue, tell students that it is important and that you will come back to it at the next class and then do so.
- If a student breaks down as a result of the original outburst, acknowledge it and ask them if they would like to remain in the classroom or leave for a while. At the end of class, find the student and ask if you can be of any assistance. In extreme cases, urge them to see a counselor.

¹ Ian Unger, LGBTQ + Diversity in the College of Business Administration: A Guide to an Inclusive Campus and Corporate Climate, (UW Oshkosh: 2014) 1-14.

² Fordam University Faculty, “Creating LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum and Classroom Climate,” ed. by Adam Fried, Center for Ethics Education, (Fordam University: 2014).
http://www.fordham.edu/academics/office_of_research/research_centers_in/center_for_ethics_ed/resources_and_links/special_topics_and_p/lgbtq_inclusive_curr_93211.asp

³ “The Twelve Keys to Building an Inclusive Classroom Community: Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning Students,” (Arizona State University). https://sls.asu.edu/sites/default/files/Inclusive%20Classroom_Community.pdf
Adapted from global ascension productions, 2012.

⁴ “Create an Inclusive Learning Environment,” Elberly Center, (Carnegie Mellon).
<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/learningenvironment.html>