

## **INCLUSIVE TEACHING RESOURCE**

### **FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE CHECKLIST**

*Create a climate that is conducive to learning for every student*

This resource is part of the **Inclusive Teaching Toolkit** which is designed to assist faculty in understanding the concepts of inclusive teaching and incorporating these ideas into your classroom. This toolkit is part of the [GWSPH DEI Initiative](#) that is being developed to respond to a societal call for social justice by changing the way GWSPH works to integrate DEI into every sphere of our work. This initiative encompasses Academics, Research, Practice, and Operations. The **Inclusive Teaching Toolkit** is one of many aspects of the Academic branch of the initiative

#### **BACKGROUND**

To include all students means we are aware of their varied identities and backgrounds and actively engage them for the class to benefit from their experiences and insights. Faculty want to avoid basing their “teaching upon their beliefs and assumptions about what students do and should know and what they can and should be able to do,” which can leave some students feeling underchallenged, overwhelmed, or disengaged.

This checklist will help you minimize negative behaviors and promote positive ones that enable equitable, accessible, and inclusive teaching. It is designed to help you reflect upon a range of inclusive teaching practices to reinforce those practices you already use and identify new ones to adopt. As you reach each recommendation, consider if you use it and would like to use it more, do not and would not use it, or have not used it and would like to try it.

#### **CHECKLIST**

##### Build instructor-student rapport.

- Reduce anonymity and get to know them through activities, office hours, online chats, etc. and let students know how you'd like them to address you.
- Treat each individual student with equal respect. Pronounce their names correctly, use the pronouns they use and support their unique abilities and experiences.
- Arrive to class (in person or online) a few minutes early, greet students and engage them in informal conversation.
- Share your interests and personal learning process with students, showing how you apply course materials and skills in your work and life.

##### Build student-student rapport.

- Provide opportunities for students to get to know and interact with each other. Use icebreaker activities at the start of the semester and encourage them to work in pairs or small groups throughout the year.

- Encourage dialogue among students about learning experiences. Facilitate a discussion of best and worst class experiences to establish a climate for learning, recording and sharing answers so all students see the diverse responses, experiences, and perspectives. Possible prompts include:
  - “In the best class I ever had, students/the instructor...”
  - “I learn best when...”
  - “I don’t learn well in classes where...”
- Use narrative reflection to incorporate experiential knowledge. Design activities that allow students to draw on their diverse backgrounds and approaches to a course concept, object, or goal. Ask students to describe their interest in the course to each other, in order to better understand the various perspectives and backgrounds in the class.

#### Treat each student as an individual.

- Invite student participation without making assumptions about their membership in various demographic groups. Allow students to self-identify as they wish, when they feel comfortable doing so. Likewise, do not expect individuals to speak for the experience of an entire group; step in if students have this expectation of their peers.
- Avoid making assumptions about students’ abilities based on stereotypes.
- Be mindful of existing stereotypes and take care not to perpetuate them (e.g., “I’m offering a special tutorial because I know some women struggle with math”). Instead, focus on behavioral and controllable actions (e.g., “I expect you to take advantage of office hours so that we can review the data calculations carefully”).

#### Convey the same level of confidence in the abilities of all your students.

- As you take care not to perpetuate stereotypes, be cautious about being over-protective of or unduly strict toward any group of or individual students.
- Be even-handed in acknowledging students’ accomplishments and areas for growth.
- Emphasize high standards with verbal assurances that you will help them succeed, and outline support they have access to that will help them meet those standards.

#### Monitor climate as the course progresses.

- Ask for feedback by setting up informal and/or formal anonymous processes to receive feedback on climate. Have students complete a classroom climate inventory mid-semester. Possible prompts include:
  - “What questions or concerns do you have about classroom climate?”
  - “Have you found any actions or words of the instructor or your peers offensive? How?”
  - “What makes class participation easy or difficult for you? What suggestions do you have?”
- When asking for feedback, make sure to review comments and report back to students at the next class session to validate their input and perspectives. When sharing feedback, refrain from attributing feedback to specific students even if you know who wrote the comment; they may not want to have their thoughts shared with the class in such a way.

## Sources

- [Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia](#) from the Center for Teaching and Learning
- [“Explore ways to create a welcoming learning environment,”](#) reference guide by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Iowa State University