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JEAN KELLER AND KYHL LYNDGAARD

A Brief Taxonomy of Inclusive Pedagogies:
What Faculty Can Do Differently to Teach More Inclusively

Abstract

At the All-Campus Forum in August 2016, President Mary Dana Hinton called for us to create an "ecosystem of inclusion" at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB/SJU). Faculty members' work with students is central to creating such an ecosystem, but what do we mean by "inclusion?" In this essay, we provide an overview of our evolving understanding of "inclusive pedagogy," as informed by our work administering and participating in multiple faculty development workshops funded by twin grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.[1] "Faculty Formation to Support Liberal Learning for All" was awarded to CSB under principal investigator President Mary Dana Hinton. It is administered by Jean Keller and includes a cohort of humanities faculty members. "Faculty Development to Engage Increasingly Diverse Students" was awarded to SJU under principal investigator President Michael Hemesath. It is administered by Kyhl Lyndgaard and includes a cohort of First-Year Seminar faculty members. Both grants run throughout the 2015-2017 academic years.

Keywords

Teaching, diversity, inclusion, asset-based teaching, cultural competency

"… like any set of ideas or tactics, inclusive teaching is no cure-all. But expecting that type of magic solution is a fool's errand. What inclusive teaching does, though, is remarkably important and offers us hope for difficult times. It is a pedagogical mindset that challenges us to be critically reflective practitioners. It asks us to see ourselves and the work we do from the perspective of others. In this sense, it helps us connect this essential trait of historical scholarship—the ability to discern and

comprehend various perspectives—with our own teaching to make us better practitioners of both history and pedagogy. Most importantly for our current context, though, is that inclusive pedagogy asks us to make a commitment to an entire approach. As the saying goes, 'it's not a moment, it's a movement.' Inclusive teaching is a teaching and learning worldview that encompasses everything from course design to daily practice, from content selection to student assessments."
Kevin Gannon, "Inclusive Teaching in Exclusionary Times" (http://www.teachingushistory.co/2016/11/inclusive-teaching-in-exclusionary-times.html)[2]

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University were awarded twin grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in summer 2015. The grants target professional development for Humanities and First-Year Seminar faculty, respectively. The goal of this development is to improve the faculty's skill in teaching and advising American students of color. Mellon cohort members have had the opportunity to attend a variety of workshops on inclusive teaching/advising led by different experts in the field (Spring and Fall 2016) and have experimented with implementing specific changes to make their courses more inclusive for all their students (Fall 2016). These changes are being documented on a Canvas page and will serve as a resource for faculty at CSB/SJU going forward. Furthermore, as part of the grant, a team led by Dr. Rodolfo Rincones (University of Texas, El Paso) has studied our campus climate using surveys and focus groups of students and faculty. The independent findings from Dr. Rincones about our specific context inform our thinking as well.

In this article, we provide an overview of our evolving understanding of "inclusivity" in light of these faculty development opportunities.[3] "Inclusivity" means different things to different people, and a given classroom environment may be inclusive in some of the ways described below, but not in others. By providing a taxonomy of different ways courses can be inclusive, we encourage departments to think more deeply about curriculum design, learning goals, and assessment; for individual faculty, we encourage you to think about

your own course planning and your in-class pedagogical practices.

In addition to this theoretical overview of "inclusive pedagogy," a set of related articles appear in *Headwaters* by Mellon cohort members. Each author discusses in more detail specific examples of inclusive pedagogical practices they have implemented as a result of what they learned from their participation in the Mellon grants. Ultimately, the goal of these articles, like that of the Mellon grants, is that faculty at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University will further improve our ability to meet the needs of all students.

Drawing on the understanding of inclusivity utilized by David Concepción in our May 2016 two-day workshop, two guiding principles inform our understanding of inclusivity in this essay. First, to be truly inclusive, courses must "sing" to students from a wide variety of backgrounds, identities, and learning styles ("sing" both with regards to the content covered and the classroom pedagogies utilized). Second, in an inclusive course, all students must have access to the skills necessary to succeed in it, such that grades and evaluations reflect the work and effort students put into a particular class, rather than their level of academic preparedness from high school.

With these general points in mind, we will review five different types of inclusivity: 1) curricular diversity, 2) inclusivity as explicit attention to good teaching methods, 3) inclusivity as cultural competency, 4) inclusivity as a funds of knowledge or asset-based pedagogical approach, and 5) inclusivity as facilitating difficult conversations.

1) Curricular Diversity

Rationale: Students have a legitimate desire to see themselves in their course materials—and notice when they do not. And students of color at CSB/SJU notice. At the April 4, 2016 student panel that Jean Keller moderated, "What CSB/SJU Students of Color Want Their Faculty to Know," all six students on the panel agreed that they want the faculty to diversify the body of authors on the syllabus. CSB student Jerly Alcala

requested that faculty "shake up the curriculum," while SJU student Daniel Yang followed Alcala's comment to note that such changes would "reinforce that people of color are educated, too, and we can achieve and be successful."

When Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum was on campus for the McCarthy Lecture Series in Fall 2016, we also arranged a reading group based on her well-known book on the formation of racial identity, *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race.*[4] At her public lecture, she gave a memorable and instructive example about the centrality and unavoidable place curricular diversity has in inclusionary practices. Tatum asked the audience: if she took a picture of them after her lecture, what would be the first thing attendees would do when she shared the picture with them? Participants readily volunteered that they would look for their own face in the seats. And, if they could not find their own faces, yet had been at the lecture, they would feel excluded and wonder what was happening. When students do not see people from their own racial, ethnic, or cultural background reflected in the curriculum—but know that they are part of the story—they are excluded.

We know that this is the experience for some of our students, based on the focus groups that Dr. Rincones led. For example, an American student of color said, "They [CSB/SJU community as a whole] are glad there is diversity but there is nothing inside of it. We have to assimilate to the white culture more than they want to learn about our culture" (Rincones et al., "Results from the Student Focus Groups" 5). On the other hand, white students are more likely to feel that issues of diversity and inclusivity are being addressed. One white student at the focus group said, "I think including different perspectives is something they [faculty] are trying to think about" (Rincones et al., "Results from the Student Focus Groups" 5).

When done well, curricular diversity is transformative. It is not the equivalent of "add women and stir." Rather, adding new voices moves course topics into new categories and new modes of inquiry. The kinds of questions and concerns explored in the classroom become different

because different voices are included. Charles Wright provides a robust description of the transformative potential of curricular inclusion in his *Headwaters* article "Ethics in the Field: Notes on Making Environmental Ethics More Inclusive."

Ironically, David Concepción claims curricular diversity is the easiest kind of inclusion to carry out. This statement is ironic because his field (and that of author Jean Keller), philosophy, has been publicly struggling for decades with whether and how to diversify its white, western, male orientation.

Although we started our taxonomy of inclusive pedagogies with curricular diversity, this topic was not the emphasis of the Mellon grants. To address this topic comprehensively and well would require the engagement of departments, not just individual faculty members. Increased curricular diversity on a structural level would require rethinking core curriculum course requirements as well as reformulating the content of departmental courses and, quite possibly, departmental requirements. Such a project could form the basis for a future grant. That said, some faculty in the Mellon cohorts did revise courses they taught such that their courses included more diverse voices.

2) Inclusivity as Explicit Attention to Good Teaching Methods for Greater Enagement

Rationale: Faculty must explicitly teach students the skills needed both inside and outside the classroom to succeed in college. If we assume that students have already mastered basic skills, students who were privileged enough to attend academically rigorous high schools are rewarded while we leave behind students who did not have that privilege.[5] Students with learning disabilities or who are first generation college students are also more likely to be left behind.

Engaging students starts even before the first day of class through the wording of the syllabus and major assignments. Rather than utilizing

cautionary language focusing on what not to do and technical language that presupposes advanced education, we should work to include positive, accessibly written statements of what to do and why it matters. Such statements can outline the skills necessary to succeed. Evaluative criteria should be based on the amount that students learn in class, rather than the skills and knowledge they acquired prior to taking a particular class.

Inclusive classrooms are intentionally designed such that all students will be engaged by and invested in classroom learning as this increases the likelihood students will put the effort into their classes necessary to learn (see Ambrose et al. 69, 83-85). David Concepción suggests that faculty are more likely to accomplish this goal if they attend to the gerunds that guide course design. Create learning opportunities that require students to do more than the "reading, reflecting, writing, discussing, and analyzing" that is typical of college classrooms. For example, in Charles Wright's environmental ethics course, students' experiential learning required that students do some combination of building, bushwhacking, weeding, quieting, creating, digging, and reevaluating.

On a related subject, when students are given multiple ways to demonstrate what they know, they are better able to capitalize on their strengths. Utilize various kinds of assignments, not just the typical essay and tests, to assess student learning. Some possibilities here include the use of oral presentations, debates, having students create a film to demonstrate course learning, writing a letter to the mayor, drawing a concept map, etc.

Including "how to" instructions throughout a semester is also valuable to ensure all students clearly understand your expectations. For example, spending time in a course to practice thesis statements may seem simplistic at times, yet students will develop much stronger essays when given a chance for structured practice and feedback very early in the composition process.

During class discussion, utilize techniques that respectfully but fully include and engage all student voices through intentional pedagogical practices. This point may be particularly important for the CSB/SJU

context because American students of color have reported that despite rising structural diversity, their classroom experiences include instances of being shut out of group work and being asked to stand in for entire ethnic groups. Dr. Rodolfo Rincones and his team argue in their CSB/SJU student survey findings that "[while] making the most of classroom diversity is aligned with the instructor intentions and preparation and using course materials on topics of diversity alone may not be enough. One area for faculty growth may be in learning to facilitate discussions and group activities that encourage diverse students to interact with one another" ("Student Survey Results" 15). Examples of such techniques are outlined in the articles in *Headwaters* on Circles of Understanding processes by Jessica Harkins, Julie Lynch, and Brandyn Woodard, as well as in Sophia Geng's essay. Regardless of the technique chosen, it is critical to ensure that no one or two students are singled out as representatives of an entire culture.

Finally, time outside of class is also critical. Structure outside of class time to reinforce what happens in the few hours of class each week. *In Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, L. Dee Fink outlines a "castle top" course structure to show students what they need to do beyond the classroom. Matt Harkins's essay in *Headwaters* explores the efficacy of requiring study groups.

3) Inclusivity as Cultural Competency[6]

Rationale: Our teaching and advising practices are informed by our own cultural background, whether we are aware of it or not. If we fail to engage in cultural introspection, that is, to reflect on our own culture and how it informs our teaching, as well as the cultures of our students and how they affect their approach to learning, we will fail to develop and implement pedagogies and assessments that reach all our students. Instead, we will teach in such a way that assignments make sense, are more comfortable, and hence are easier for those students whose cultural background matches our own. Moreover, by "teaching across cultural strengths" vs. engaging in "ethnocentric monoculturalism" we better equip all our students with the skills to engage a multicultural and rapidly changing world (Sue 2004 as

quoted in Chávez and Longerbeam, *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths*, pg. 77).

In their book, *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths*, Alicia Fedelina Chávez and Susan Diana Longerbeam observe that:

> Through accessing strengths in cultures of origin, whether consciously or unconsciously, learners may favor or even assume individual or collective ways of learning; may forefront the mind, body, spirit, or heart as avenues for taking in and processing knowledge; may think and communicate in linear or circular patterns; and may process from applied to conceptual or conceptual to applied pedagogies. Similarly, faculty bring culturally influenced design, pedagogy, evaluations, assumptions, interactions, and facilitation of learning into teaching practice. (5)

In a reading group on *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths*, the six Mellon faculty present (five white; one Latina) all agreed that we have been socialized by our graduate programs and our disciplines into prioritizing individuated versus more integrated modes of teaching and assessment (see Chávez and Longerbeam 8). Thus, our default teaching mode emphasizes the importance of theory, analysis, and verbal presentation in our teaching and the role of individual essays, homework assignments, and tests to assess student knowledge. While reading group members have, over time, integrated a wider variety of pedagogies into our teaching as a way to reach students with different learning styles, Chávez and Longerbeam emphasize that such efforts must become more intentional and systematic. Only then will we allow all our students the comfort of being taught in a learning mode which matches their cultural expectations and the intellectual challenge of being taught in modes that push them out of their comfort zones.

In our reading group we discussed concept maps, having students draw a picture of the main ideas in a chapter, group presentations, group tests, starting with an application and then drawing out the theoretical implications as examples of integrated learning we have used and could use more systematically. *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths* contains many more excellent examples of developing teaching practices that draw on the

strengths of both individuated and integrated learners. They also offer a variety of ways that faculty can interrogate their own cultural background, such as journaling, regular discussion with colleagues as well as students, cultural research, and, particularly, through narrative and writing a teaching autobiography (see Chávez and Longerbeam, *Going Inward*, 217-222).

A primary way in which Mellon faculty to date have integrated an understanding of culture into their teaching has been by evaluating students based on class engagement versus on class participation. While grading class participation is common at CSB/SJU, workshop facilitator David Concepción pointed out that participation rewards students from cultures that encourage one to speak up and share individual opinions—and puts students from cultures where this is not the cultural norm (such as more collectivist cultures) at a disadvantage. Moreover, participation does not necessarily reward the quality of work done, as it often grades students based on the sheer number of verbal contributions they make to class. It also puts students with social anxiety at a disadvantage. Class engagement tries to look more holistically at a range of ways that students can demonstrate that they are actively engaging in course materials; speaking in class is merely one of a number of ways students can demonstrate engagement. See Kelly Berg's article in this journal for one example of how a Mellon faculty member chose to grade students based on engagement versus participation.

4) Inclusivity as a funds of knowledge or asset-based pedagogical approach

Rationale: We must view our increasingly diverse student body as an asset, not as a group more likely to have academic deficit. This orientation was clear from the beginning of the grant, when the Intercultural Directions Council emphasized the importance of such an approach and ensured that this was one of the explicit, defined goals of the grant. Faculty should emphasize and include in our pedagogy the specific assets that a diverse set of students bring.

Working with a diverse student body is sometimes articulated more as a problem to be solved rather than as a source of increasing strength for CSB/SJU. If we ignore the focus and hard work that allowed our students to get where they are despite varying levels of opportunities and preparation, we are doing a disservice to all our students. This unconstructive approach closes us and the rest of the class off from the varied kind of learning that is possible when all students are welcomed to the table and their many strengths and abilities are seen, acknowledged, and integrated into the classroom. We know from Gurin et al. that improved educational outcomes are accomplished by all students when there are high levels of structural/demographic diversity alongside inclusive pedagogy.

Faculty have the responsibility to reflect the changes in the student body in their pedagogy. For example, when faculty require interaction across differences in their classrooms, they build "an environment where diverse students work together, collaborate, and ultimately grow in understanding others across differences" (Rincones et al., "Results from the Faculty Focus Group" 2).

During his visit last August to CSB/SJU, A.T. Miller provided a couple of examples of icebreakers that allow students to share parts of their personal story and thereby interact across their differences. Start class by inviting students to introduce themselves with their first, middle, and last names and then to share a story about one of their three names. This provides students the opportunity to share something about their family or their culture. Another icebreaker is to have students share something about themselves that is typical of a Bennie (or a Johnnie) or that is unusual about them as a Bennie (or a Johnnie). This is a good way for students to realize that, different as they may seem to be on the surface, they share some things in common, while bringing to light hidden differences among students who may otherwise be assumed to be similar to oneself. Amy Lee et al. outline several assignments that created increased opportunities for interactional diversity in "Engaging Diversity in First-Year College Classrooms." For example, students in first-year courses completed a "biographical-object" assignment near

the beginning of the semester, writing and speaking about "an object that reflected an aspect of their identity, experience, or values" (205). As measured by reflective journals completed by the students in the study, this assignment was "consistently and explicitly identified . . . as facilitating diversity-related outcomes . . . extending several weeks or even months later" (205). While fulfilling course goals related to communication and writing skills, the faculty were also creating the conditions for intercultural interactions between students in their structurally diverse classrooms based on strength and appreciation for others.

Finally, by being attuned to a strengths-based approach, one may recognize and be able to validate student contributions that may have otherwise flown under the radar. Jean experienced that when a first-generation student of color approached her at the end of class one day with a sketch of the first two chapters of the ethics textbook. He had drawn a picture of the ethical concepts from those chapters and how they related to each other, asking: can one understand these ideas this way? After some tweaking, it became a class handout and the review session for the first exam became one in which student groups made their own picture depicting a chapter from the book and had to present and explain these images to the class. In this case, the student taught the instructor another approach to course material and strengthened the learning of the entire class through his integrated approach to learning.

5) **Inclusivity as Facilitating Difficult Conversations** (esp. about race and other "isms"):

Rationale: As our campuses get more diverse, the ability to facilitate discussions on sensitive topics becomes increasingly pressing. We need to be able to foster dialogue with students who come from different social groups, with divergent life experiences, and different experiences and understandings of (for example) privilege and oppression.

Mellon cohort faculty have repeatedly requested guidance and advice on this particular form of inclusive pedagogy. Few of us received training on facilitating difficult conversations, particularly with regard to forms of oppression, as part of our professional education. Moreover, the broader cultural context does a poor job of providing models of engaged citizens thoughtfully working together to unpack the history, meanings, and ongoing implications of topics such as the history of institutionalized racism in the United States. This context makes our teaching of such topics that much harder. Used to being the "expert," faculty (especially white faculty) may find it easier to avoid such conversations altogether than to welcome them into the classroom. This reluctance or caution may be due to fear of losing control of the discussion, when students' individual and often fraught histories of racism and white privilege are brought into the classroom setting. Another cause may be a fear of being "unmasked"—when instructors' inevitable biases and/or lack of knowledge are made evident.

Since multiple articles in this edition of *Headwaters* address specific discussion techniques that can be utilized when addressing difficult topics in the classroom, we'll address general background concerns for such discussions here. First, set the context for having these conversations at the beginning of the semester. For example, establish and create student buy-in on ground rules for class discussion. Having students develop these ground rules together is a great way to create buy-in; refer back to these often, for example, by having students assess how well the class is living up to them; modify when new circumstances warrant. Two articles for facilitating class discussion on discussion prior to creating ground rules are Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens, "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces" or Kathryn Norlock's "Receptivity as a Virtue of (Practitioners of) Argumentation" (especially useful for ethics or philosophy classes).

Blane Harding, who facilitated a Mellon-sponsored workshop on inclusive advising at CSB/SJU, argued that learning begins when we extend ourselves beyond our comfort zone. Establishing this expectation early, and reiterating it throughout the semester, is a terrific way to

communicate to students from the dominant group that they will be expected to take risks and to move beyond their comfort zone. Students from non-dominant groups, on the other hand, are habitually out of their comfort zone and are continually taking risks in our classes. Thus, pushing students from dominant groups to act likewise not only is useful for setting expectations when it comes to difficult conversations, but also may help level the playing field among students from different social groups. Harding also suggested that faculty take risks, too, and do things like volunteer to advise student groups that they may have seemingly little connection to. For example, consider advising the fishing club even if you have never caught a fish in your life.

When students and faculty venture into new and unfamiliar discussions on such fraught issues as race and racism, they are more likely than not to make occasional mistakes. Thus it becomes incumbent on the professor to create a classroom atmosphere in which mistakes are seen as expected, as acceptable, and as learning opportunities for all. Verbally acknowledging the limits of one's own perspective and understanding, and inviting feedback when one gets something wrong, models humility and openness to learning for our students, and sets an important tone for students.

Accept that microaggressions will and most likely do take place in your classroom. Your task as instructor is to gain awareness of their occurrence and learn how to address them. Educate yourself on what constitutes a microaggression (see, for example, the 2014 Kelly Burns article); take steps to minimize the possibility of them occurring (see Burns, as well as Kramer and Cook article in *Headwaters* on small groups and microaggressions). Be prepared with strategies for addressing them when they do occur. Two strategies suggested by Mellon faculty development workshops include encouraging students to say "ouch" when a student heard a stereotypical or otherwise offensive comment. This allows the recipient of the "ouch" to then reframe the comment, explain the comment, or ask further questions if they did not understand why it was offensive. Another strategy was simply to take a deep breath, count to 5, then ask a follow up question that would allow the speaker

to think twice/reformulate their initial comments.

Robin DiAngelo importantly reminds us that white silence in the face of discussions of racism is, for historical reasons, often received by people of color as white incomprehension or hostility. With this in mind, when faculty have seen through student work that white students have experienced a shift in their understanding of racism and/or white privilege, it is important for faculty to create opportunities for these students to share with the class. Otherwise, students of color may wonder if they, and the concerns raised by course materials, have been understood and received by white students, thereby contributing to a chilly classroom climate.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the work of inclusive pedagogy is to help students succeed. Woodard, Mallory, and DeLuca note that "at colleges where faculty believe students have what it takes to learn and consider it their job to make sure students learn, students are more likely to learn and to stay in college" (qtd. in Chávez & Longerbeam, *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths* 4).

Our taxonomy of inclusive pedagogies may be incomplete and still evolving, but it represents what we have learned thus far from the various workshops made possible by the Mellon grants and the work of the dozens of CSB/SJU faculty who have been active and earnest participants. From our first meeting in May 2016, we have been impressed with both the humility of the Mellon cohort faculty, expressed in their ready acknowledgement that they do not have all the answers with regard to teaching inclusively and still have lots to learn, and their collective expertise. That combination of humility and expertise, we think, is exactly the right combination for working on faculty development.

Mellon Cohort Faculty have repeatedly asked a critical question: What will happen to this work after the grant ends? While further resources will need to be dedicated to inclusive pedagogy for all faculty at CSB/SJU, from all divisions, we believe that this cohort—as seen in the various articles in this issue of *Headwaters*, from the course revisions on the Mellon Canvas pages, and from other venues the work is being shared formally and informally—forms a great nucleus on which to build.

Notes

1. We would be remiss if we did not express our deep gratitude to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for this generous funding. President Mary Dana Hinton and President Michael Hemesath demonstrated great foresight in applying for these grants, and we thank them for the chance to administer these grants. This work has been a transformative professional opportunity for both authors of this article. Finally, our faculty cohort members—nearly sixty people—are amazing colleagues who have eagerly participated in faculty development and have made a demonstrable difference for our students.

2. Thanks to Jonathan Nash for sharing this apt quote with us and for consistently, over the course of the grant, sending relevant resources our way.

3. The perspectives reviewed in this essay are deeply indebted to the ideas and insights of David Concepción (Ball State University) and A. T. Miller (Cornell University), as well as to Janet Rowles (Conflict Resolution Center, St. Cloud) and Blane Harding (University of Nevada, Reno). We wish to thank these presenters for so generously sharing their expertise with us in their respective workshops and for their willingness for us to further share their ideas with wider audiences.

4. Thanks to Jen Kramer (Communication) and Amanda Jantzer (Psychology) for co-facilitating sessions of this reading group prior to Dr. Tatum's visit.

5. One way to think about this is that faculty need to make explicit the hidden curriculum that's necessary for students to navigate in order to succeed in college. See, for example: Buffy Smith, *Mentoring At-Risk Students through the Hidden Curriculum of Higher Education.* Note that Smith spoke at the Inclusion Visioning Day led by Academic Affairs on December 13, 2016.

6. Note: this was the explicit focus of a Mellon sponsored workshop facilitated by Alicia Fedelina Chávez and Susan Diana Longerbeam, authors of *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths,* in April 2017.

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