

Introduction:

Promoting inclusion is an important role of higher education institutions. Creating an inclusive environment helps to promote acceptance of other cultures and sense of belonging among students.

Facilitator Notes:

This is a good activity for a group of instructors/facilitators. It can also be used with students (e.g., future instructors) to help them imagine how they can create inclusivity in their future classrooms.

This activity can be adapted to your group of participants. Be sure to never place the spotlight on any individual student.

Be aware of who is in the space as you facilitate this activity and the emotional labor that might be disproportionately required by participants. For example, if there is only one facilitator/student from any one of the themes listed in Activity Instruction #3 in the room, this could cause feelings of isolation, contradicting the goal of an inclusive classroom. In this case, you might reconsider facilitating this activity.

Groups may need to be prepared to support any participant whose abilities limit participation.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the challenges faced by students from various backgrounds in an academic setting.
2. Develop strategies to promote inclusion.

Time:

30 minutes.

Group Size:

Small group.

Materials:

Post-it notes (two different colors); Markers; Large whiteboard or chalkboard at the front of the room; Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Acceptance
- Minimization

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

Openness

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Other Skills:

Mentorship & Leadership; Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

Activity Instructions:

1. Divide the whiteboard/chalkboard into six sections according to the themes listed in Activity Instruction #3 (below). Write these themes on each section on the board for participants' reference.
2. Hand out at least twelve post-it notes of each color (two colors total) and one marker to each participant.
3. Instruct participants to imagine they are the instructor of a freshman-level engineering classroom, where some of their students have voiced concern that they do not feel included in the classroom because of the below reasons/themes. Ask participants to imagine they do not share the same challenges that may come with the below themes.
 - Theme 1: "I am the only Black female in an engineering classroom."
 - Theme 2: "I am a Latino student, and I am used to being in a school where everyone speaks Spanish."
 - Theme 3: "I am an Asian international student and I want to make friends with domestic students, but I'm not sure where to start."
 - Theme 4: "I just came out as trans, and I don't know anybody here."
 - Theme 5: "I am an undergraduate male, and I am 35 years old."
 - Theme 6: "I am autistic, and I miss my high school friends."

Ask participants to reflect and discuss the challenges that could be faced by students within these themes and write these challenges on the first color of post-it notes, making sure to include only one challenge per post-it note. Be prepared to pass out more sticky notes if students come up with more than one challenge per theme. Then, instruct participants to come up to the front of the class and stick their "challenge" post-it notes on the board according to theme (10 minutes).

Option: If you're working with a group of more than ten, consider dividing participants into smaller groups. You can also consider dividing participants into groups of two or

three (instead of everyone being asked to place their sticky notes on the board) to help ensure people of all abilities can participate.

4. After participants have placed the challenges on the board, ask them to now identify solutions to mitigate these challenges, writing the corresponding solutions on the second color of post-it notes. Instruct participants to come up to the front of the class and stick their solutions on the board next to the corresponding challenges (10 minutes).
5. After the board is filled, ask participants to answer the following debriefing questions in a group discussion (10 minutes):
 - How did you feel when you were reflecting on the challenges under each theme?
 - Have you ever encountered a similar situation where you felt isolated? How did you approach the situation? How did the situation evolve and how do you feel looking back on it?
 - What other themes can you think of that could present challenges for students in the classroom?
 - What steps can instructors take to promote and create an inclusive classroom environment? What steps can students take to promote and create an inclusive classroom environment? What questions will you ask yourself to challenge yourself to consider different perspectives as you work to create an inclusive classroom?
 - What challenges or barriers do you anticipate as you work toward creating an inclusive classroom environment? How will you work to overcome these barriers?

Related Tools:

- [How Easy Is My Daily Life? \(Lego Privilege Activity\)](#)
- [Identity Beads](#)
- [Line Exercise, The](#)
- [Privilege for Sale](#)
- [Privilege Walk](#)
- [Up-Down-Up](#)