



Inclusive Community of Practice meeting, October 25th

“Decolonizing the Classroom and Advising Spaces”

In this session, we discussed three of the self-assessment guide questions in this article: [“Strategies for Antiracist and Decolonized Teaching”](#) by Anamika Tyman-Ghoshal and Danielle Carkin Lacorazza. Our ideas for equity-minded practices are summarized below.

To add more practices, please send to becca.ciancanelli@colorado.edu

Acknowledge our own biases and privilege

Self-Assessment Guide Questions:

- *How does my social and geographical location influence my identity, knowledge, and accumulated wisdom? What knowledge am I missing?*
- *What privileges and power do I hold? How do I exercise my power and privilege?*
- *How does my power and privilege show up in my work?*
- *How do my biases and privileges take up space and silence others?*
- *Am I nonracist or antiracist? How do I hold myself accountable?*

Equity-minded practices

- Examine power - whose voices are you bringing into the classroom? What methods are used to select readings?
- Co-creation of syllabus, grading structures, and classroom goals, making space for student agency in the classroom, including community agreements
- Modeling behavior of self-reflection, identifying how/where one occupies positions of privilege and power explicitly to the class
- Meeting students where they are at, enabling multiple forms of student participation in the classroom
- Participant suggestions for inclusive teaching practices
- Think/Pair/Share is a great strategy



Amplify minoritized voices

Self-Assessment Guide Questions:

- *How have you incorporated BIPOC work into spaces where it has previously been excluded?*
- *How are you integrating storytelling into your course? Whose stories are being told? What are you communicating when you exclude certain voices?*
- *If your institution is located in a postcolonial secular nation, how are indigenous narratives integrated into your courses?*
- *In what ways are you keeping up to date with scholarship in your field? Are these methods inclusive of minoritized voices?*
- *How are you supporting and valuing your BIPOC students without assuming assimilation?*

Equity-minded practices:

- Reviewing the syllabus, understanding who we are bringing in.
- In addition to integrating Indigenous ways of thinking, think about working against settler colonialism, supporting Indigenous sovereignty, land-back, as important aspects of decolonialism.
- Importance of revealing how knowledge structures are biased, and exclude certain groups. Wikipedia is a great example, how do we challenge reliance on peer-reviewed research in this contemporary moment of deliberate misinformation.

Developing community partnerships

Self-Assessment Guide Questions:

- *What community agencies engage in the work you teach? How can students in your discipline support diverse community agencies that support the underprivileged, underserved, and underfunded?*
- *What projects can benefit both the community partner, the individuals they serve, and the student(s)?*



- *How are you ensuring the relationship is reciprocal and you are not adding labor to the community partner?*
- *In what ways are your students learning more about the world around them?*

We had a conversation about the challenges with this topic and subsequently reached out to the Director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies (CNAIS), Andy Cowell. His response is below.

As you say, if you're just inviting organizations to your classroom, it risks being a lot more work for them. CNAIS gets all kinds of requests (at least pre-COVID) to come to local schools or other places and present -- ideally, with an indigenous student, faculty or staff member. I know the groups feel like they're reaching out and doing the right thing, but really, from CNAIS perspective, it's just a burden on us -- although we feel guilty saying no. But what are we really getting out of it other than more unpaid service, as you say?

Really, you need to go to the group, not ask them to come to you. Of course even then, community groups coming to visit CNAIS for example and asking us to do the same presentation as above, but in the cottage, is still just an unpaid burden. The question is really 'what do you (i.e. the group you're visiting) need?' or 'what can I/we do for you?' It's amazing how rare it is to have someone come and ask that -- whether it's CNAIS, or Hawaiian Civic Club here in the Denver area, etc. etc.

On top of that, even to build a relationship can be time-consuming, and one doesn't know if it will pay off. From the CNAIS perspective, I would say you should be prepared to get out of the classroom if at all possible and go to work with the groups you're contacting.

1. *Make an initial approach and express a willingness to help, in a way that doesn't require long discussions and lots of relationship building*
2. *Ideally find a way to help concretely, which will itself be the forum for more relationship building -- in the context of some activity, rather than just as extra meeting time -- you could think of this as 'immersive, practice-oriented relationship building' (using your 'communities of practice' idea). Maybe this could involve classroom work too of course, but your classroom needs have to be subsidiary to what the group actually needs. This is the classic diversity problem -- the diverse folks are asked to make the less-diverse-folks' experience better, but it's a lot less clear what the more-diverse folks are getting.*
3. *If things don't work out, well, at least something got done and not a lot of time was spent on just more and more meetings and 'get to know you' sessions.*
4. *If things do work out, then you've got the basis for a longer-term, more meaningful set of engagements.*