Inclusive Classroom Strategies

1. **Examine your assumptions.** It is common for people to make assumptions, often subconsciously, that others share the same background, perspectives, or experiences. We might be unaware that the examples we use are less meaningful to students from other backgrounds. Expectations that students share similar cultural backgrounds, economic privilege, come from traditional families, have parents who attended college, or are heterosexual or cisgender can make students outside the majority feel marginalized. It is important to develop an awareness of these assumptions and to replace them with inclusive language and behavior.

2. **Avoid stereotypes.** Every culture fosters stereotypes and we sometimes promote them unconsciously. In the classroom, particularly detrimental are the stereotypes that assign certain skills or weaknesses, abilities, or potential based on students’ membership in a particular classification. For example, one might expect Asian students to be strong in science and math or minority students to need extra help. According to cultural stereotypes, sometimes individual characteristics are associated with ability level, for example a woman who dresses very femininely might be assumed to have less technical competence than male peers. Men who exhibit traits/behaviors that do not conform to cultural expectations for masculinity have reported being treated as being less technically competent.

3. **Model inclusive language.** For example, avoid using masculine pronouns or terms like “guys” to refer to both men and women. Show respect for differences in gender identity by asking students their lived name and pronouns and remembering to use them.

4. **Model inclusive behavior.** Implicit biases often result in unequal treatment of students in class through verbal and nonverbal cues (Schnellmann & Gibbons, 1984). Take an Implicit Biases Test online at [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html). Reflect on the results with an open mind. Most of us have biases of which we are unaware.

5. **Create equal opportunities for all students to participate in class discussions and answer questions.** Beware of low ability signals such as asking women less challenging questions (Schnellmann & Gibbons, 1984).

6. **Use diverse examples.** In STEM this might include a variety of applications that would be meaningful to different gender identities, sexual orientations, or cultural backgrounds, or that address different societal needs. An instructor might seek opportunities to highlight contributions of LGBTQ engineers or scientists or others from minority or underrepresented groups, giving appropriate acknowledgement to the individual’s identity.
Lived Name/Pronoun Classroom Strategies

1. Remove birth/given names from your class records, roster, and attendance sheet. On the first day, call the last name, and ask students to introduce themselves INSTEAD of calling roll using the names in the university’s student information system. Start with yourself – e.g. “I am Professor Burke and I use she and her pronouns.” Many universities still include birth/given names in the student information system. Using this name could accidentally “out” a student who uses a different name.

2. As a getting-to-know-you activity, pass around 3x5 cards and ask students to provide a photo, write down their names and pronouns, and tell you 1 or 2 things that are important to them (e.g., a hobby). Collecting the cards during the next class meeting.

3. Use a syllabus statement (see example above). 4. When in doubt, ask! Generally, it is best to use pronouns that are consistent with the way an individual present themselves. If you are not sure, it is OK to ask politely and with discretion.

For more information on pronouns and inclusive classroom strategies, please consult the Safe Zone Ally Training Level 1 Participant Booklet.