

# Centering Equity and Equity-Mindedness in Culturally-Relevant Teaching and Learning



# About CCEAL



The **Community College Equity Assessment Laboratory (CCEAL)** is a national research and practice lab that partners with community colleges to support their capacity in advancing outcomes for students who have been historically underserved in education, particularly students of color.

CCEAL houses the **Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3)** and the **Black Minds Project (BMP)**, and the **National Consortium on College Men of Color (NCCMC)**.

CCEAL was developed to advance three objectives:

- **Research** - to conduct and disseminate empirical research on the experiences of historically underserved students in community colleges;
- **Training** - to provide training that improves practices and research relevant to students of color in community colleges; and
- **Assessment** - to use assessment and evaluation to facilitate capacity-building within community colleges.

# Institutional Assessment Package

## “student survey”



### Community College Success Measure (CCSM)

- for identifying factors influencing the success of underserved students

**105 colleges**  
**10 states, 84,549 students**

## “staff survey”

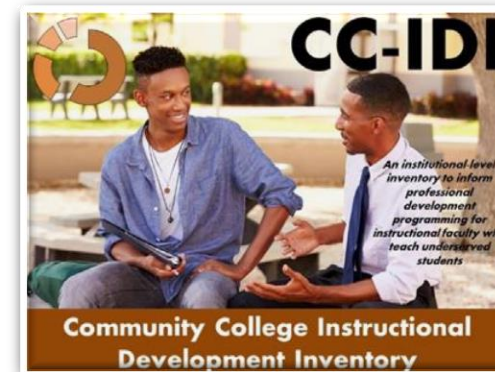


### Community College Staff Development Inventory (CC-SDI)

- to inform professional development programming for staff

**170 colleges**  
**40 states, 7,429 instructional faculty**

## “faculty survey”



### Community College Instructional Development Inventory (CC-IDI)

- to inform professional development programming for instructional faculty

**70 colleges**  
**15 states, 3,122 staff**

# Qualitative Assessment



## **Student focus groups**

Examining students' perceptions of factors influencing success in community college

10 colleges  
CA, 252 students, 50 focus groups

## **Faculty interviews**

Examining perceptions of factors that are effective in educating students of color in community colleges

10 colleges  
CA, 102 faculty

## **Consensus focus groups**

Collective sensemaking approach for identifying root challenges facing students in community colleges from an equity-based perspective

32 colleges  
CA & MN, 240 faculty/staff  
52 consensus groups

## **Narratives of success**

Narratives from educators with a documented record of success in teaching and supporting underserved students of color

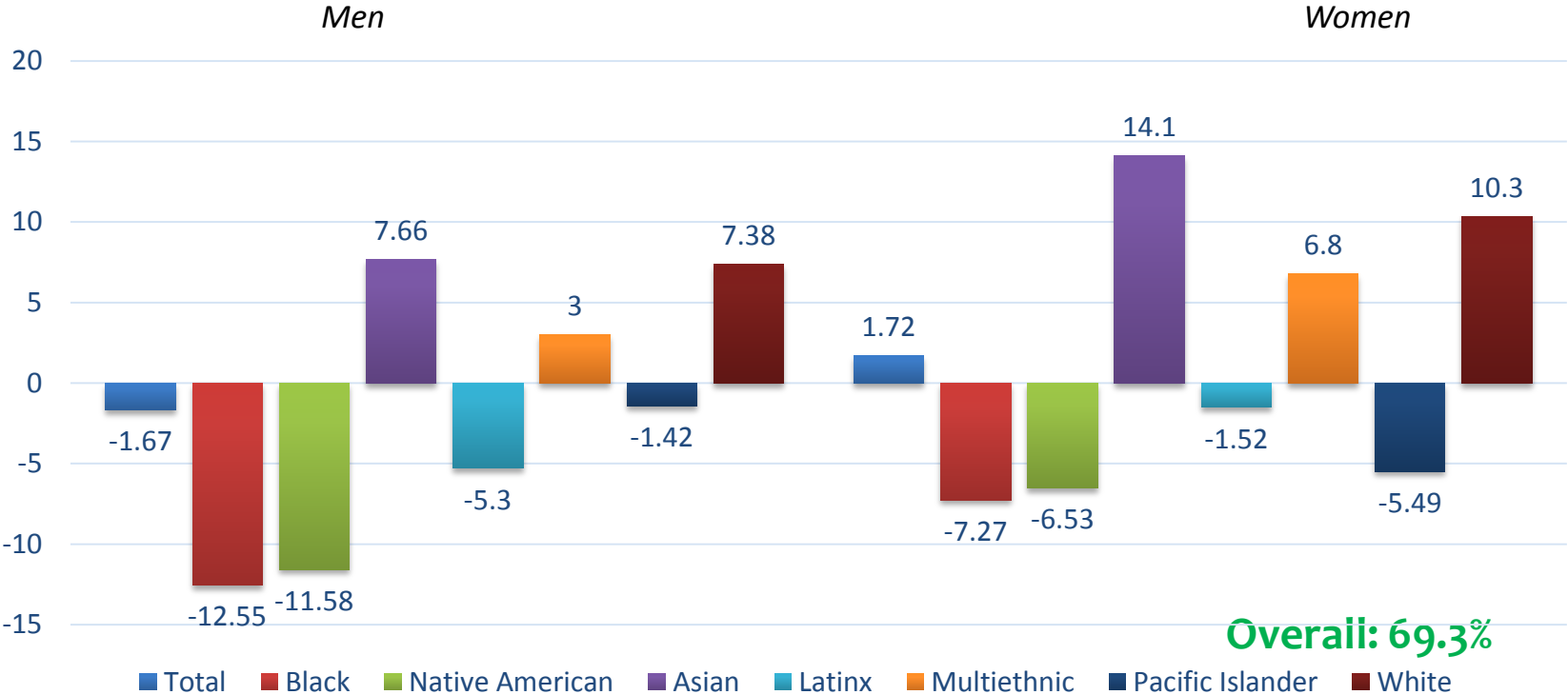
14 colleges  
12 states, 88 educators

# Toward an Understanding of Equity

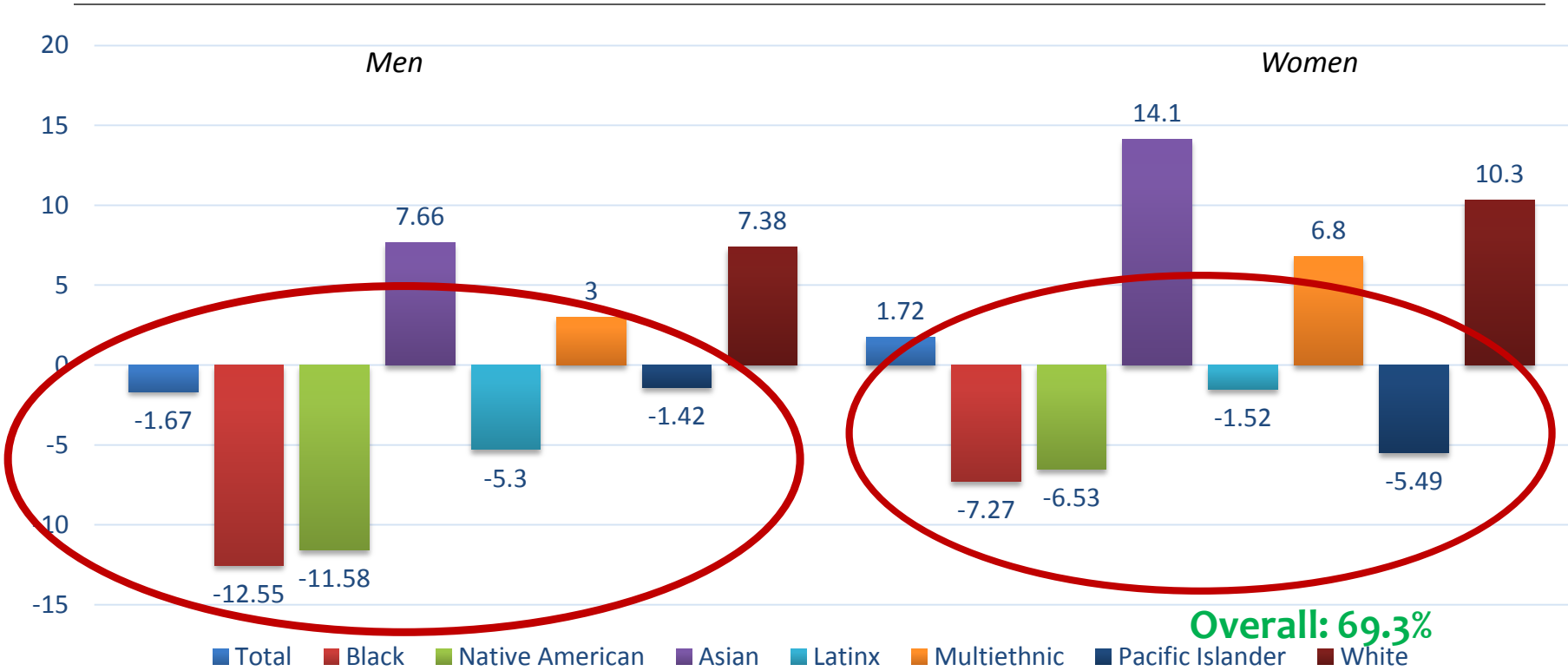
**Equity** refers to a heightened focus on groups experiencing disproportionate impact in order to remediate disparities in their experiences and outcomes.

- Students of color ( e.g., Black, Latino, Native American, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander)
- Foster youth
- Students with disabilities
- Low-income students
- Veterans
- Food and housing insecurity

# El Camino College, Fall 2017 Course Success Rates



# El Camino College, Fall 2017 Course Success Rates




# Equity-Mindedness

According to Bensimon (2007) Equity-mindedness entails:

- recognizing the ways in which **systemic inequities** disadvantage minoritized people in a range of social institutions or contexts (education, employment, healthcare, the criminal justice system, etc.)
- (re)framing outcome disparities as an indication of **institutional underperformance** rather than students' underperformance;
- **not attributing outcome disparities** exclusively to students or perceived deficits in students' identities, life circumstances, or capabilities;
- **critically reflecting upon one's role** and responsibilities (as a faculty member, student affairs staff, administrator, counselor, institutional researchers etc.).





***“What the heck is wrong with these students? Why aren’t they doing what it takes for them to be successful here?”***

*“What are we doing  
(or not doing) as a  
district, college, or  
unit that results in  
our students not  
doing as well as  
they should?”*



# TAXONOMY OF EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

	Don't know what to do (DK)	Know what to do (K)
Willing to employ practices (W)	DK W	K W
Unwilling to employ practices (UW)	DK U	K U

# TAXONOMY OF EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

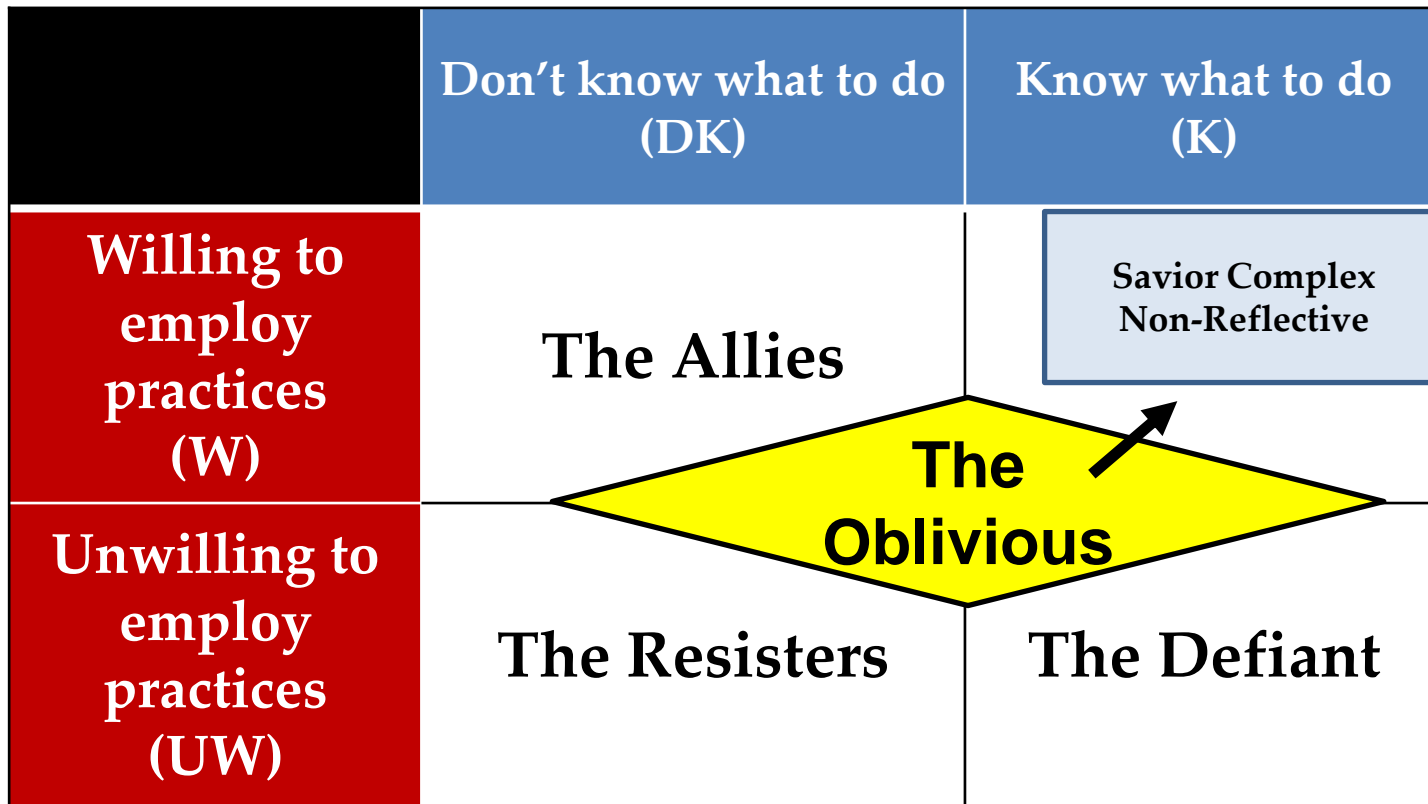
	Don't know what to do (DK)	Know what to do (K)
Willing to employ practices (W)	<b>The Allies</b>	<b>The Choir</b>
Unwilling to employ practices (UW)	<b>The Resisters</b>	<b>The Defiant</b>

# TAXONOMY OF EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

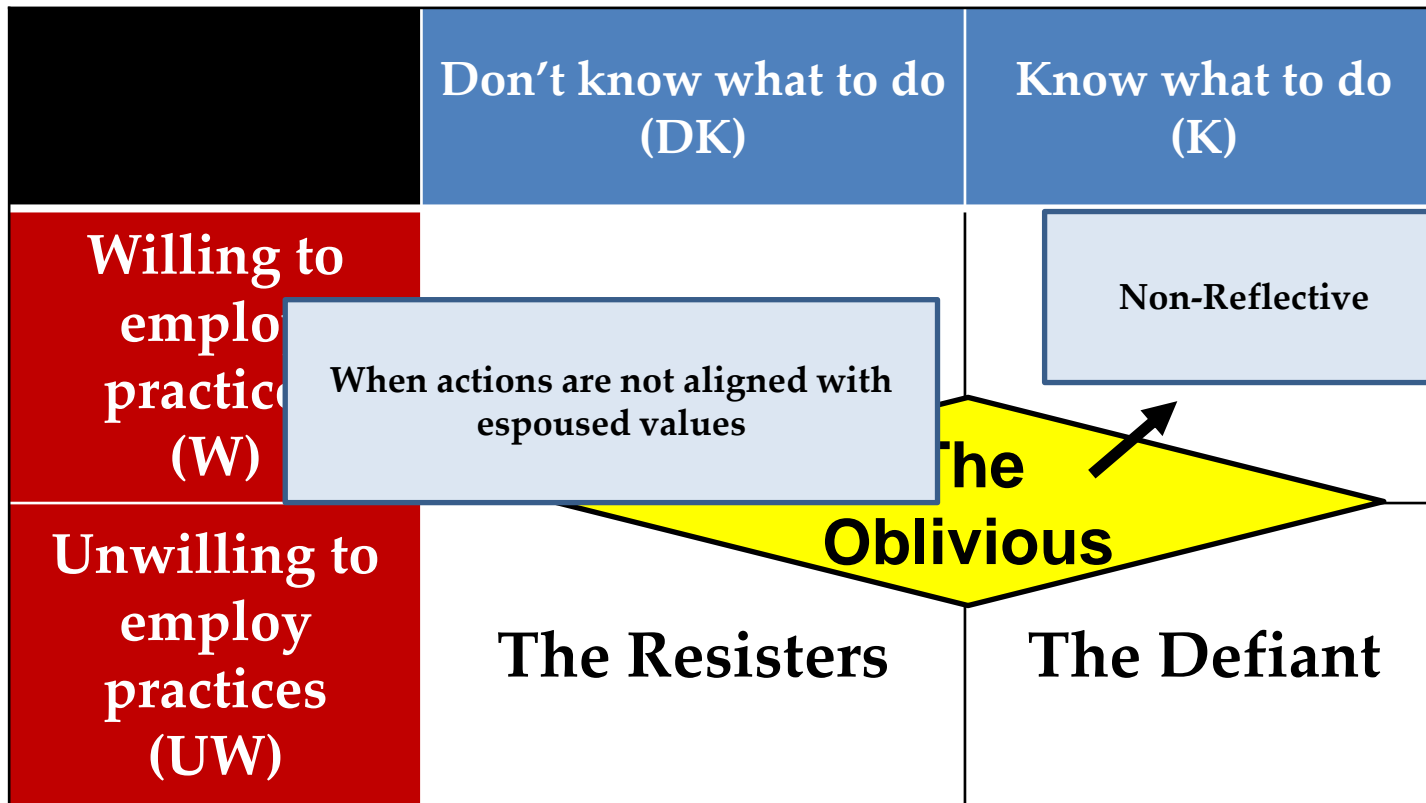
	Don't know what to do (DK)	Know what to do (K)
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**The Oblivious**

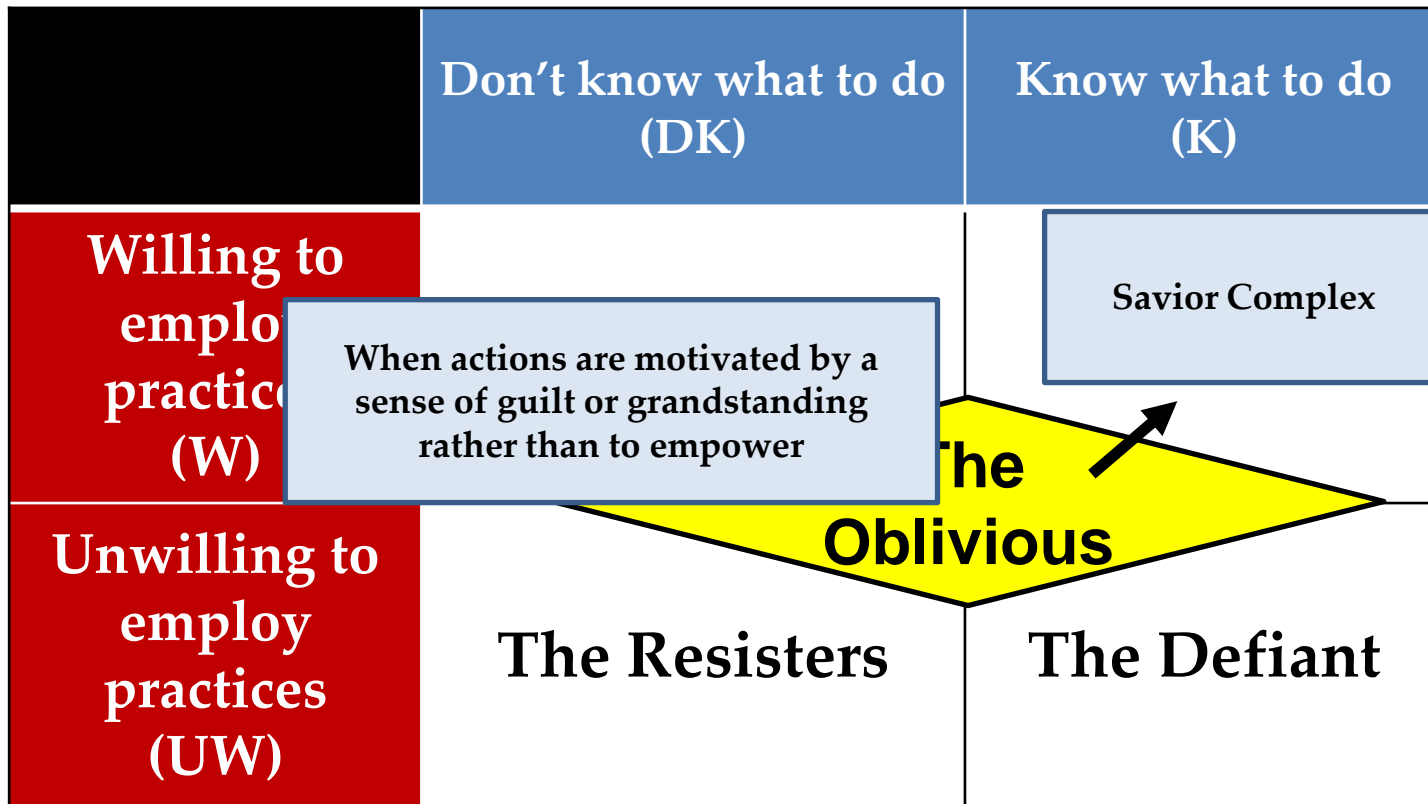
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# What is Cultural Relevancy?

- Educators' ability to connect course content to students' lived experiences and cultural contexts (Ladson-Billing, 1995)
- Centering diverse students in every aspect of the teaching and learning experience
- Acknowledging and leveraging cultural strengths and assets to facilitate learning for all students
- "Mirroring" diverse students in course content, perspectives, and materials

# The Benefits of Cultural Relevancy

- Addresses students' unique cultural experiences
- Value-added to students' growth, learning and success
  - Self-efficacy
  - Intrinsic interest
  - Sense of belonging
  - Perceptions of degree utility
  - Healthy concepts of gender and masculinity
- Contributes to the learning of all students

# Misguided Attempts at Cultural Relevancy

- Using dehumanizing and stereotypical examples to explain course concepts (e.g., sports, slavery, poverty)
- Not being attentive to within-group diversity – “What position do you play?”
- Making claims of equivalency – “I grew up poor so I know what it’s like to be Latino”
- Over-simplifying culturally relevant practices (changing “John” to “Juan”)
- Assuming STEM fields are culturally irrelevant – “There’s nothing cultural about math.”

# Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning Practices

- Foregrounding Students' Lived Experiences
- Using Diverse Course Materials and Examples
- Facilitating Critical Reflection and Dialogue
- Teaching with Humility
- Using Feedback to Validate
- Giving Students Ownership of the Course

# Foregrounding Students' Lived Experiences

“I think that, you know, I think that as an instructor maybe I encourage a narrative assignment at first and then we move to an argument assignment and then a final research essay, **but I know that it is important that students feel connected to the material that they are able to see relevancy between their lives, the text we are using, and what is happening in the community.** So I try to create a space for all of that to be part of the class.”

# Using Diverse Course Materials and Examples

“I’m always thinking about how I can make math relevant to the students in terms of their culture. I go to the library and do a little research and **find people who have made significant contributions in math or science.** For example, I found a book about a chemist born in Mexico who taught at Harvard, MIT and Yale. I read the beginning of his bio to the class to awaken students on how they can have an influence in their environment.”

# Using Diverse Course Materials and Examples

“What I have been trying to do is make some personal connection. **I have been trying to use examples that are more interesting to people in this group, just people this age, people in this group, and you know modify the things that I talk about, the way that I talk about them as well.**”

# Facilitating Critical Reflection and Dialogue

“So it is not always about their own lives but in some way they are able to bring in [current events] that mean something to them that they think are important and then **I ask them to intentionally tap into why this event matters. What is important about it? Or what can be done? Or what kind of argument can you construct around it?**”



# Teaching with Humility

“I have dyslexia and they all know that I have this. I tell them from the beginning. I tell them, if I spell something wrong it is because of this, so feel free to correct me. When I misspell things on the board I will let them correct me and tell me how to write the word correctly. **This helps to make the connection that someone up there, a faculty member, might also be facing a similar situation as me.**”

# Teaching with Humility

“I tell them about the imposter syndrome and how many students of color think that they don’t belong in higher education. **I explain how I felt like that as an undergraduate and graduate student, that someday someone will figure out that I am a fake.** When they come into class I tell them about my experience. I tell them that everyone has the same questions that they have and I think that encourages them to open up more.”

# Using Feedback to Validate

“I focus on what the student is doing right, looking at what they are doing wrong does not help. Focusing on what students are doing wrong is something that its easy for English teachers to do, but that’s a gate keeper mentality that prevents students from learning and developing their skills. **They feel devalued and discouraged. So I try to focus on what the student is doing right and what they are capable of doing.** What are the next steps that you can take to improve? So, its growth mindset compared to a deficit mindset.”

# Giving Students Ownership of the Course

“The other thing that I do is **give them wider latitude in choosing topics like for a research paper.** They might study hip hop and how it has changed over the last 40 years, how lyrics have changed and so forth. So **if they have different interests, they can still bring it in and it can be sociologically relevant,** they can analyze it sociologically, they can apply theory to it, they could use research methods. So it seems to be kind of helpful to have them talk about in their papers things that are important to them.”



# Online Certificate Programs



Racial Microaggressions  
J. Luke Wood



Supporting Men of Color in  
the Community College  
Frank Harris III, J. Luke Wood



Teaching Men of Color in  
the Community College  
Frank Harris III, J. Luke Wood



Unconscious Bias  
J. Luke Wood