

June 2022



Image: Peralta Community College

DEI in Curriculum: Model Principles and Practices



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DEI in Curriculum: Model Principles and Practices

Background and Groundwork

The California Community College Curriculum Committee (5C) in 2020 created a set of recommended priorities that focuses on championing equity-minded curriculum and practices for credit and noncredit instruction. The committee created a workgroup in fall of 2021, charged with developing guidance for the field and recommendations on how to support the implementation of culturally relevant and responsive curriculum at local levels. This workgroup, called DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) in Curriculum, created the chart below with promising practices for both discipline/teaching faculty and for curriculum committees and local academic senates.

The traditional educational practices listed below, and juxtaposed with the equity principles and culturally responsive practices provided, include traditional western/Eurocentric ideologies and practices upon which North American educational systems and institutions were built. This DEI framework recognizes and acknowledges the historic omission and hindrance of students of color from education by law throughout U.S. history. Even after many forms of overt racial discrimination were outlawed, the legacy of that history is still present in seemingly race-neutral, “universal” values and practices. This framework acknowledges and challenges the structures, policies, and practices inherent in systems of higher education that maintain inequality and hinder the education and progress of marginalized students. A focus on equity principles and culturally responsive policy and practices directly counters institutionalized racism, inviting CCC educators to actively engage in dismantling that harmful legacy. This framework was created to help you actualize that work.

DEI IN CURRICULUM: MODEL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Who Is the Audience for These Recommendations?

Discipline/instructional faculty, curriculum committees, and local academic senates have the shared responsibility to ensure that curriculum review committee members and discipline experts work together to provide DEI frameworks and principles in curriculum review and approval processes for credit and noncredit. Administrators and classified professionals who support the curriculum process at local levels also contribute to supporting equity-minded practices.

How Do I Use This Chart?

The chart below provides promising practices that can be used by faculty, deans, curriculum chairs and committees, Chief Instructional Officers (CIO)/Vice Presidents of Instruction, and local academic senates to begin conversations on how to redesign practices from working within a traditional Eurocentric model to working within an equity-minded framework. Although there may be challenging conversations in beginning transformative work, addressing the fear and leaning into the dissonance has the opportunity to become a cacophony of discord that can create rhapsody and beautiful new sounds and thoughts. In other words, the emotion and push back may be uncomfortable, but it may also yield new ideas and ways to support our diverse student population in more innovative and representative ways, which is the charge of the California Community Colleges.

The first column provides some of the traditional ways of thinking of the curriculum elements and is juxtaposed by the second column that shows equity-minded principles.

The third column provides promising practices that faculty can begin implementing at the classroom level. The fourth column shows ways in which local curriculum committees and academic senates may support equity work in reviewing credit and noncredit curriculum, course outlines of record, and curriculum documents and processes in the classroom and beyond in culturally responsive ways.

The chart is not exhaustive and is not intended to be a mandate, but rather a model and tool of transformative principles to frame curriculum development and classroom practices at local levels. The document concludes with a brief glossary of terms and a list of culturally responsive theorists and scholars referenced in the development of this tool

Traditional Educational Practice Supporting research may be found at the end of this document.	Equity Principle Supporting research may be found at the end of this document.	Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices All faculty have the opportunity to engage in conversations about equity-minded practices within the context of their disciplinary expertise and curricular practices and such practices may include but are not limited to the following:	Culturally Responsive Practices for Curriculum Committees and Local Senates Curriculum committees and senates have the opportunity to engage in equity-minded review processes of curriculum that may include but are not limited to the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One dominant culture represented in textbooks and course materials. • High cost of course textbooks and materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent multiple cultures in textbooks and course materials. • Use low-cost and zero-cost textbooks/materials. • Use open educational resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select textbooks and course materials that include multiple perspectives and diverse representation from varied racial, ethnic, sex, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion, age, and abilities perspectives. • Explore and select open educational resources and low-cost textbooks and materials for a reduction of costs when feasible. • Ensure textbooks and materials are accessible. • Enhance textbook selections with additional supplemental materials that ensure the above equity frameworks and principles in decision-making are prioritized and addressed. • For additional resources for effective inclusion, diversity, equity, antiracism textbook and resource audits—see ASCCC OERI Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review textbook and course material selections for inclusion of multiple perspectives and diverse representation from varied racial, ethnic, sex, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion, age, and abilities perspectives; and provide feedback and guidance. • Encourage and incentivize reduction of textbook and material costs (via reviews of units, textbook costs, and other materials). • Ensure textbooks and materials are accessible. • Model, encourage and incentivize inclusion of additional supplemental materials that ensure the above equity frameworks and principles in decision-making are prioritized and addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-facing documents and descriptions focused on deficit-minded language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use asset-minded and decolonized language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift language from impersonal verbiage and descriptions to warm, culturally responsive content. • Reword language from a colonized mindset to an equity mindset (e.g., colonized vs colonial; enslaved instead of slaves). • Collaborate with student services faculty and classified professionals to prioritize student needs in a more hands-on, holistic approach that addresses the whole student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine equity-minded language continuity in documents that are front-facing to ensure culturally responsive practices such as in course descriptions, catalogues, course outlines of record, websites, and policies. • Review documents for language and descriptions that may be impersonal and shift descriptions to be warm and culturally responsive. • Recommend and model rewording language from a colonized mindset to equity mindset.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional culture of deference to discipline faculty as the only experts on curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrogate systemic and institutional barriers. • Dismantle institutional deference to hierarchies that perpetuate barriers. • Move as a faculty collective toward antiracist critical consciousness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete training and professional development on cultural curriculum audits. • Embrace DEI discussions, value cross-functional input, and solicit interdisciplinary feedback. • Take care not to “weaponize” academic freedom and academic integrity as tools to impede equity in an academic discipline or inflict curricular trauma on our students, especially historically marginalized students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assert the voice of and embrace the power and authority granted in educational code and title 5 to make curriculum decisions, as is the responsibility of curriculum committees. • Intentionally include culturally responsive experts on curriculum committees and for review of course outlines of record (CORs). • Agendize and normalize DEI discussions and intentionally alter practices that perpetuate barriers. • Create a curriculum committee handbook that requires a diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracist lens for the COR. • Make time for critical conversations, empowering faculty to hold each other accountable for embedding cultural humility in faculty self-reflection and cultural competency into lessons and activities. • For more information on embedding DEI into the COR—see Rostrum article “Moving the Needle: Equity, Cultural Responsiveness, and Anti-Racism in the Course Outline of Record”.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course syllabus is approached from a compliance and/or teacher-centered perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe practices and policies to serve as a co-learner and engage in a partnership. • Actively care for the whole human being in syllabi/classroom policies. • Democratize the student/teacher relationship and empower students' agency over their own learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use warm handoffs and intentional basic needs office/resource contact names, websites, phone numbers. • Understand and be sensitive to students' lived experiences. • Use flexible due dates and make room for students' needs. • Coach and “water up” - meaning to create learning environments where students become active agents in their own learning (see Hammond’s definition in the Glossary of Terms below). • Communicate in the syllabus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intention to create a classroom where students are cared for and valued as learners, • desire for and ability of all students to succeed at a high level and outline how faculty work with students for their success, • belief that all students are expected to succeed, • actively promote awareness and critical examination dominant norms and broader social inequalities , • the value of students’ racial/ethnic backgrounds as sources of learning and knowledge, and, • actively promote awareness and critical examination of students’ assumptions, beliefs, and privilege. (Source: Equity-Minded Inquiry Series Syllabus Review.) • For additional resources and models of effective culturally responsive practices—see Center for Urban Education’s Equity-minded Inquiry Series Syllabus. • For resources on creating social belonging and supporting the whole student — see the College Transition Collaborative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate with collective bargaining units to include culturally responsive practices in performance evaluations and/or peer reviews. • Provide professional development to support culturally responsive practices.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom experiences, assignments, and assessments are built from an individualist perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift to a collectivism perspective to engage authentic lived experiences and relate to students' cultural norms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on diverse backgrounds to engage as a familia, tribe, or village through collaborative classroom activities. Be a warm demander and co-learner with students. Intentionally create collaborative engagement opportunities (e.g., group work, peer-to-peer work, pair shares, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage assignments, practices, and assessments that are formative in addition to summative. Review for a variety of methods of evaluations, assignments, and assessments. Encourage and provide professional development for the creation of authentic assessments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumption that only certain disciplines can address antiracism, diversity, and equity. Not recognizing ethnic studies as a well-established discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weave DEI and culturally responsive practice into every course. Intentionally design ethnic studies courses with discipline experts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use culturally responsive practices and a social justice lens in all disciplines. Create ethnic studies courses that rely on ethnic studies discipline experts to maintain the integrity of the ethnic studies disciplines. Honor and respect the ethnic studies disciplines by focusing on African American/Africana/Black Studies, American Indian/Native American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Chicano/a/Latino/Mexican American Studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all classes and curriculum engage in equity work and culturally responsive content and practices. Maintain the fidelity of ethnic studies as a well-established discipline.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siloed programs and service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Guided Pathways frameworks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rethink mapping and milestones within a student-centered focus. Utilize the resources available to do the work: Student Equity and Achievement (SEA), Flex, division/deans, & Guided Pathways funds; and Academic Senate for CA Community Colleges (ASCCC) local senate visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicitly include DEI practices in program review, curriculum committee, senate, and shared governance meetings to discuss DEI in curriculum and program needs. Involve students in the Guided Pathways decision-making process.

Glossary

Collectivism — an individual’s sense of connection to and responsibility for members of their group/community (Hofstede, 1984; Triandis, 1995).

Critical race theory — a way of seeing, attending to, accounting for, tracing and analyzing the ways that race is produced; the ways that racial inequality is facilitated, and the ways that our history has created these inequalities that now can be almost effortlessly reproduced unless we attend to the existence of these inequalities (Crenshaw, 2021 as cited in Fortin).

Culturally responsive teaching — an educator’s ability to 1) recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making, 2) respond positively and constructively with teaching actions, 3) use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing, and 4) to create a safe space for learning (Hammond, 2015).

Equity-minded — a schema that provides an alternative framework for understanding the causes of equity gaps in outcomes and the action needed to close them. Rather than attribute inequities in outcomes to student deficits, being equity-minded involves interpreting inequitable outcomes as a signal that practices are not working as intended. Inequities are eliminated through changes in institutional practices, policies, culture, and routines. Equity-mindedness encompasses being (1) race-conscious, (2) institutionally-focused, (3) evidence-based, (4) systemically-aware, and (5) action-oriented (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary of Terms).

Euro-centric — privileging European or Westernized values and ways of knowing as the norm or “default” while marginalizing alternative perspectives, histories, and knowledge.

Individualism — the valuing of the individual over the value of groups or society as a whole (Griffiths, 2015).

Student-centered — refers to a wide variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students.

Warm demander — a teacher who communicates personal warmth toward students while at the same time demands they work toward high standards. The teacher provides concrete guidance and support for meeting the standards, particularly corrective feedback, opportunities for information processing, and culturally relevant meaning making (Hammond, 2015).

Warm handoffs — directly connecting students to campus resources and services; a transfer of care between two members of a care team; teachers providing direct contact names and information to connect students with service representatives such as in syllabi and course materials or directly introducing students to student service representatives with an intentional introduction.

Watering up — instructional practices with the science of learning that we can apprentice students to be active agents in their own learning, instead of watering them down with compliance-oriented deficit views. This process requires students to build and braid together multiple neural, relational, and experiential processes to produce their own unique learning acceleration process (Hammond, 2021).

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