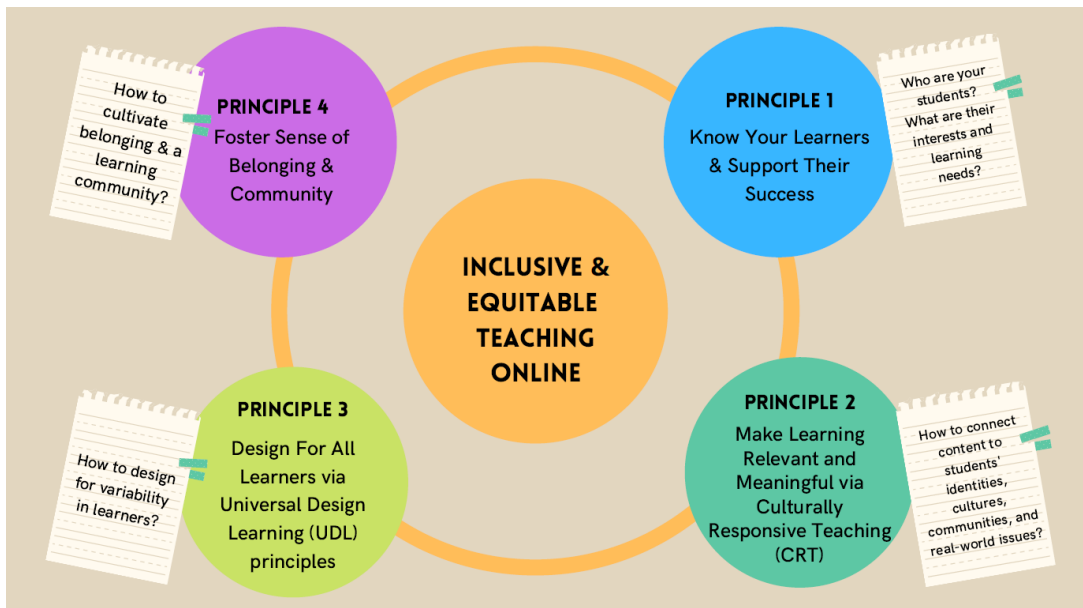# Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online: Getting Started

Inclusive and equitable teaching creates a classroom in which all students feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued. It includes being intentional about course design and responsive to students' unique backgrounds to foster learning. In online learning environments, it is especially important for you to consider inclusive and equitable resources when selecting course content, learning activities, and assessments.

In this issue of the Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter we will describe the importance of inclusive & equitable teaching for students, and provide tips on how you can get started with designing and creating an inclusive and equitable online learning environment.

Please also see Stearns Center website for additional tips and resources for **Creating Inclusive Classrooms.**

Why is Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Important for Online Learning?

Students learn better when they have a sense of belonging and feel connected to their instructor, their peers, and to course content & activities. Due to the perceived distance between students and their instructors, it's particularly important to create & foster an environment of belonging, community, and connection in your online course. In our Online Teaching Newsletter series this summer, we will consider strategies to address four principles for inclusive & equitable online teaching (as shown in image below):

How to Get Started with Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online?

Creating an inclusive classroom is an ongoing process you can start right now; today! To get started, here are two quick steps to begin creating an inclusive & equitable online learning environment that meets the needs of Mason's diverse students.

Explore your own biases and assumptions. Just like our students, our backgrounds and experiences influence how we perceive the world around us. The first step in creating a more inclusive environment is to reflect on your experiences and how these have shaped the types of decisions you make. Students have abilities, beliefs, and backgrounds that all shape their learning and determine how they respond & connect to course material. Start with getting to know more about each student's individual interests as well as any challenges each may face for online learning.

- **TIP 1:** Have each student complete a brief **"What I Want You to Know about Me?"** survey about their interests, needs, strengths, prior knowledge, relevant experiences, and skills. The completed surveys will be shared with you as the instructor.

- **TIP 2:** At the start of the course, have your students share information about themselves in a class-wide Icebreaker or other introductory discussion forum in order to build community.

Build and foster quality relationships with your online students – starting with their names! One easy way to start build relationships is to reflect on how you use student names. Do you use some students' names, but not others? Some names may be unfamiliar or harder or pronounce, yet it is essential to make an effort to call students by their names, and to use their preferred pronouns. When in doubt, just ask!

- **TIP:** For your reference, create a spreadsheet with information including student names, what they preferred to be called, and their preferred pronouns. Include phonetic pronunciation of names to refer to in synchronous online sessions or virtual meetings.

Learn More Tips for Getting Started (click on link to downloadable Planning Worksheet)

Additional Resources

Darby, F. (2020, July 23) **6 quick ways to be more inclusive in a virtual classroom.** *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <Site license access provided by GMU; **how to access Chronicle**>

Tan, L. (2021, February 17) **Building a virtual equity-driven learning community.** *Faculty Focus*, Magna Publications.

Contact Us!

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