

## Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online: Creating Community

Building community in your online classroom is an important component of inclusive and equitable online teaching. Students who feel welcomed and a sense of belonging in their online courses are likely to be more successful in their learning. Creating welcoming inclusive learning communities -- which value and celebrate students' diverse identities, experiences, and knowledge -- are especially significant for underrepresented or marginalized student populations in higher education.

**What is an online community?** A classroom community consists of students and instructor, collectively experiencing a course together, guided by common learning goals. In online courses, instructors play a critical role in creating and fostering community, inclusion, and equity. **Why should you create an online community?** The main reason for building inclusive, equitable, and welcoming online community in your course is to make learning fulfilling and enriching for your students, supporting their success.

In our previous newsletters, we explored [fundamentals of inclusive and equitable online teaching](#); [ways to support all learners](#); [means to make learning relevant and meaningful](#); and [designing for all learners](#). Here we share multiple ways to create and foster community in online classes, using the [CARE framework](#). You will recognize many of these examples of practices from our previous newsletter issues. That's because creating and fostering community online involves practices for inclusive, equitable, and accessible course design and teaching, including Universal Design for Learning.

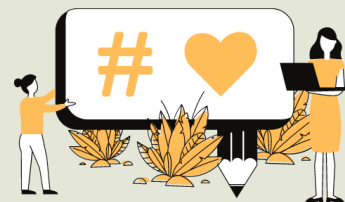
### BUILDING ONLINE COMMUNITY USING THE CARE FRAMEWORK

#### C OMMUNITY

- Create social connections between students and instructors that support community and social presence in the online classroom

#### A GENCY

- Empower students to engage, take action, and express their own learning



#### PEDAGOGIES OF CARE

- Demonstrate a conscious effort to care for our students, while simultaneously also caring for ourselves, our work ethic, and our performance in the classroom
- Consider the needs of different learners
- Result in course design to support learners
- Apply equitable and inclusive teaching methods

#### R EPRESENTATION

- Create courses that represent and affirm students' identities and experiences

#### E QUAL ACCESS

- Adopt universal design for learning and create accessible materials to remove any barriers to learning



[Use this link to view the infographic online](#)

Learn More about [How to Build Community in Online Classrooms](#)

## Five Dimensions for Creating a Caring Online Community

There is a common myth that building community in an online learning environment is difficult. However, even with small changes, you can begin to create and foster community in your online or hybrid courses. The **CARE framework** offers five dimensions or approaches for an inclusive and equitable online community: **Community, Agency, Representation, Equal Access, and “Pedagogies of Care”** which show our students that we support and care about their learning, success, and well-being. With the past pandemic year being particularly tough for our students, we must be mindful how personal challenges may impact their learning and how they perform in our classrooms. In the table below, we provide a few examples of practices for creating community in your online course, according to the five dimensions of the CARE framework. More examples are found in the [Planning Worksheet](#).

Dimension	How to Do This in Your Online Course?
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create multiple opportunities for your students to collaborate together (e.g., in discussion boards, in Blackboard groups). Use tools such as Voice Thread or Harmonize to promote student interaction and engagement in your online course.</li> </ul>
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower students to advocate for their own learning. Allow students the freedom to decide how to demonstrate their learning in the course by offering choices of different assignment formats, such written form or digital output (e.g., blog, podcast, or video).</li> </ul>
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Represent individuals of varied race, gender, religion, and ability in your presentation slides, selected readings, and course materials.</li> </ul>
Equal Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make materials accessible through multiple modalities. Provide closed captioned videos, transcripts, accessible images and PDFs.</li> </ul>
Pedagogies of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build flexibility into your course design and course policies (e.g., provide due date ranges, offer possibility to resubmit work, allow for a “life happens” free pass for a certain number of absences or late submissions without requiring explanations or imposing penalties).</li> </ul>

[Learn More Examples of Practices for Creating Online Community](#)  
[Click to Download Planning Worksheet](#)

### Contact Us!

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