



OFFICE FOR INCLUSION  
AND DIVERSITY  
VIRGINIA TECH.

# Teaching Diverse Learners

Strategies for Inclusive and Anti-Racist Teaching for Medical Education

Michele C. Deramo

Associate Vice Provost for Diversity Education and Engagement

# Session Objectives

1. **Discuss** the experiences and perceptions of underrepresented minority students in higher education.
2. **Identify** faculty behaviors that contribute to a negative classroom experience for underrepresented minority students.
3. **Describe strategies** to remediate faculty behaviors that contribute to a negative classroom experience for underrepresented minority students.
4. **Recognize positive interventions** for an inclusive, anti-racist classroom environment.

# Defining Terms

## Inclusive Pedagogy

- ▶ A learner-centered instructional approach built on the principles of respect, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness so that all students learn.

## Anti-Racist Teaching

- ▶ Builds upon inclusive pedagogy by making an active commitment to counteract the persistence and impact of racism and cultivate the conditions that create constructive change.

# What is the experience of being a URM on a PWI?

**URM** = Underrepresented minority (Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaskan Natives, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)

**PWI** = Predominantly White institution

# Being a Black woman and medical student in the often-lonely world of higher education



Photograph of LaShyra Nolen, MD, in a white lab coat in front of a Harvard Medical School pylon.

## What we need from you:

- ▶ To see us.
- ▶ To see our Blackness.
- ▶ To help us fight to protect it.
- ▶ To see us beyond diversity and inclusion committees.
- ▶ To watch the news.
- ▶ To care about Black news.
- ▶ To be just as outraged by disparate Black suffering as we are.
- ▶ To cry with us.
- ▶ To care about us.

# The costs of balancing academics and racism

Battle racism and stereotype threat in the classroom

Overwork themselves to prove intellectual worth

Expend more “grit” than white peers

Experience higher levels of anxiety and trauma

Under-utilize campus mental health resources



**Which faculty behaviors contribute to a negative classroom experiences?**

**And what can we do differently?**



# Problematic Practices

Altering expectations based on stereotypes

Being “color blind”

Playing devil’s advocate

Claiming objectivity

Avoiding real-time issues

Leaving microaggressions unchallenged

Privileging Whiteness

# Altering expectations is tied to implicit bias

## What to do instead:

▶ Implement practices that reduce the influence of implicit bias.

- Improve conditions for interacting with students in and beyond the classroom.
- Use consistent, transparent methods for responding to and assessing student work.
- Get more information before drawing a conclusion about a student.

# Being “color blind” ignores students’ lived experiences

## What to do instead:

- ▶ Adopt culturally responsive practices

Take inventory of your content and the sources you use.

- Whose voices are included? Whose are left out?
- Whose perspective is given authority?
- Do sources include experts from various races, ethnicities, genders and sexualities?
- Are images and media likewise representative of the fullness of group-social diversity?

# Playing devil's advocate creates false equivalencies

## What to do instead:

▶ Identify what is non-negotiable for debate.

- Not every intellectual idea has an equally rigorous opposite.
- Focus on evidence and analyze nuance.
- Discuss how and why new evidence and research has rendered some ideas as incorrect, incomplete, or harmful.

# Claiming objectivity ignores the subject

## What to do instead:

- ▶ Identify your positionality

- ▶ Interrogate the assumption that empirically proven facts establish indisputable universal principles.
- ▶ Reflect on how the complexity of your identities and lived experiences might inform your interpretation of data.

# Avoiding real-time issues ignores impact

## What to do instead:

▶ Pause to acknowledge.

- Students come to our classrooms as their whole selves.
- When we fail to acknowledge events that deeply impact communities from which our students come, we are missing an opportunity to model support in a space where we have power.

# Leaving microaggressions unchallenged is perceived as tacit approval

## What to do instead:

▶ Promptly address issues when they arise.

- Ask clarifying questions.
- Carefully listen.
- Tell others what you observed in a factual manner.
- Inquire about impact.
- Own your own thoughts and feelings around impact.
- Next steps: Request appropriate action be taken.

# Privileging Whiteness penalizes students

## What to do instead:

▶ Embrace cultural humility.

- Thank students for raising concerns.
- Examine your practices.
- Align practices and assessment methods with content objectives.



# Positive interventions

Moving toward an anti-racist learning environment

# What is RACE?

***Race is a DOING.***

We all participate in doing race:

- ***Individual***
- ***Interactional***
- ***Institutional***
- ***Ideological***

Social  
construction

Lived  
Experience

Group-Social  
Identity

# Build racial literacy

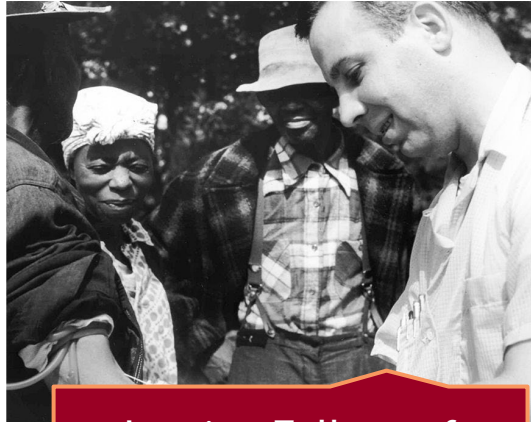
## We all have the power to undo racism:

- ▶ Recognizing shared history.
- ▶ Taking responsibility for our role in perpetuating racism.
- ▶ Learning to talk about racism.

# Learn more



1910 Flexner Report



Lasting Fallout of  
Tuskegee Experiment



Racism is Terrible for  
Everyone's Health



COVID-19 in Black and  
Poor Communities

<https://daily.jstor.org/institutionalized-racism-a-syllabus/>

# Apply the lens of intersectionality



“The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”

Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1991

# Ask yourself:

- ▶ How have my experiences shaped my perspectives and biases?
- ▶ Have I learned enough to confidently support this conversation?
- ▶ How will I handle challenging scenarios?
- ▶ Am I truly ready to do this work even when it becomes uncomfortable?

# Stop talking, start facilitating!

- ▶ Establish the "why."
- ▶ Set an example of honesty and a willingness to learn.
- ▶ Publish communications guidelines.
- ▶ Require reflective writing prior to sharing aloud in discussion.
- ▶ Foster high student-student and student-content interaction.



Want to learn more?

Questions and Next Steps



# Explore some of the resources used for this presentation

"Anti-Racist Discussion Pedagogy" guide by Drs. Selfa Chew, Akil Houston, and Alisa Cooper.

Five ways college educators can have more effective conversations about race (opinion), MarYam Hamedani, Hazel Rose Markus and Paula Moya, Inside Higher Ed, May 14, 2020.

["How Universities Embolden White Nationalists," by Marcia Chatelain in The Chronicle for Higher Education, August 2017.](#)

[Interrogating your discipline, and other ways into anti-racist teaching \(Links to an external site.\)](#). McMurtrie, B., The Chronicle of Higher Education, July 2, 2020.

*Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence, Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*, by Derald Wing Sue, 2015.

"The Cost of Balancing Academia and Racism" Adrienne Green, *The Atlantic*.

[What anti-racist teachers do differently](#), P. McKamey, *The Atlantic*, June 17, 2020.

"What I want to say when you ask, 'How are you today?'" LaShyra Nolen, *Huff Post*, June 8, 2020,

[When students resist learning about racism](#), Becky Supiano, The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 2020

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<http://profdev.tlos.vt.edu>

- ▶ Anti-Racist Teaching
- ▶ Fostering an Inclusive Classroom Environment
- ▶ Fostering a Growth Mindset
- ▶ Handling Difficult Conversations in the Classroom
- ▶ Reducing Implicit Bias in the Classroom