

Invite Diverse Perspectives and Viewpoints

According to the Center for American Progress, “Research shows that the overall academic and social effects of increased racial diversity on campus are likely to be positive, ranging from higher levels of academic achievement to the improvement of near- and long-term intergroup relations” (Kerby, 2012, reason 7).

The number of students engaging in online education has rapidly increased in the last two decades in most colleges and universities across the United States (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Larger numbers of students bring more diversity to the online learning environment with different cultural, educational, and social experiences that can enrich learning in all content areas.

Encouraging students to share their diverse viewpoints enriches discussions, encourages creative problem-solving, and helps students develop critical thinking skills. Students also learn to listen respectfully and respond to various viewpoints, a key career-ready skill.

Use the ideas below to encourage students to share their diverse perspectives and viewpoints.

Create a Supportive Learning Environment

- Acknowledge that there will be differences between peers and these differences can be powerful learning opportunities.
- Establish a “judgment-free” zone that allows for the open exchange of ideas.
- Encourage students to share their viewpoints and experiences.
- Intervene as soon as possible when students violate respectful communication expectations.

Provide Opportunities for Students to Share Their Viewpoints and Experiences in Discussion Forums

- Create prompts that invite students to share their experiences, viewpoints, and opinions.
- Use LMS functions to require students to post before they can read other students’ contributions.
- Encourage students to respond to someone with a different point of view.
- Engage in the discussion forum or assign a student to engage as a “devil’s advocate” to encourage deeper dialogue.
- In synchronous discussions, ask directly for opposing viewpoints.

References

- Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2017, May). *Digital compass learning: Distance education enrollment report 2017*. Babson Survey Research Group, eLiterate, and WCET.
<https://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/digitallearningcompassenrollment2017.pdf>
- Kerby, S. (2012, October 10). *10 reasons why we need diversity on college campuses*. Center for American Progress.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2012/10/09/41004/10-reasons-why-we-need-diversity-on-college-campuses/>