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Explicitly Invite Diverse Perspectives and Viewpoints

A truly inclusive environment is one where all students, staff, faculty, and leaders feel heard and welcome to share their thoughts and opinions. We must also recognize that working to ensure that everyone feels comfortable sharing their questions, knowledge, or opposing viewpoints publicly often requires that you explicitly invite diverse perspectives and viewpoints (Ginsberg, 2015). Specific strategies that you can employ to invite diverse perspectives and viewpoints include anonymous polling, allowing time for reflection, and explicitly asking for different perspectives.

Anonymous Responses

It may be easier for people to share diverse points of view if they are able to do so independently and before seeing peer responses. Anonymous polling software such as Poll Everywhere, Slido, and Mentimeter can be used to have members share their honest opinions about challenging topics. Once the poll closes, make the results visible so everyone can see that not all members believe the same thing. This can be facilitated in both online and face-to-face environments. If polling software is not available, you can provide and collect surveys and then share the results in the following class, cocurricular event, or departmental meeting.

Also consider facilitating discussion forums on challenging topics by allowing anonymous commenting. Team members may be more likely to post responses that may differ from others' viewpoints if they can do so anonymously. It might be helpful to share or remind everyone of your community agreements prior to having them submit these anonymous comments.

Allowing Time for Reflection

Reflection is a powerful tool in helping people articulate their thoughts. Building in time for participants to think more deeply or thoughtfully about a discussion post can help facilitate a more productive discussion. You may pose questions and ask students, staff, faculty, or leaders to reflect on their responses and rationale. Share with them that they have five or ten minutes (whatever amount of time is appropriate for the question asked) and then open the class or meeting to the discussion. Another possibility is to have members write down their responses and rationale and revisit those responses as you continue to engage in discussions.

Asking for Different Perspectives

It is important to note that doing something as simple as asking team members to share any perspectives, opinions, experiences, or viewpoints that differ from the dominant or most common perspectives being shared works. This can be done by posting the invitation or questions in a discussion forum or face-to-face classes and meetings. You can ask, "Does anyone have a different experience to share?" or "Who has something to add?" or "Who has a



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different viewpoint?” This serves the purpose of both inviting diverse viewpoints and showing your appreciation for diverse viewpoints.

It is also helpful to ask for diverse viewpoints that have not yet been shared by asking, “What might distractors think?” or “What would our students say?” or “Why won’t this idea work?” Asking participants to share their responses to these questions can help avoid the challenge of someone not feeling comfortable sharing viewpoints that are different from the group.

References

Ginsberg, M. B. (2015). *Excited to learn: Motivation and culturally responsive teaching*. Corwin Press.