

Six impactful teaching practices to improve the academic achievement of underrepresented minority and first generation students¹

Intervention #1: *Integrate culturally inclusive and relevant content*

- Include content-based literature from diverse populations.
- Invite students to contribute their unique cultural experiences to the classroom discussion.
- Involve students in tasks that draw on culturally-based funds of knowledge from their communities and families (Lee, 1998).
- Connect topics covered in the classroom to real-world contexts (Lee, 1998).
- Reflect on teaching practices by asking yourself the following questions:
 - What biases, prejudices, and assumptions do I bring to the classroom?
 - What more can I learn about culturally different persons? Where can I go to learn more?
 - What evidence do I have to verify that my current pedagogical practices are inclusive, empowering, and appropriate for the multicultural era in which we live, and the diverse settings in which students will someday work?
 - How do I hold myself more accountable for advancing the multicultural agenda of contemporary American higher education (Quaye & Harper, 2007)?

Intervention #2: *Decrease the potential intimidation students feel toward instructors*

- Hold office hours in a different location.
 - For example, meet students in coffee shops, libraries, the classroom, and other social spaces.
- Create more opportunities for student-faculty and student-TA interactions in and beyond the classroom (Anaya & Cole, 2001).
- Establish an open door policy for meeting with students.
- Engage students in communication and team building activities in the classroom, and have the instructor and TA(s) heavily involved in the activities.
- Conduct evening review sessions before exams, quizzes, and projects as well as before activity due dates.
- Share your desire to answer any questions and hear any comments or feedback (Gall *et al.*, 2003).

Intervention #3: *Get students involved with supplemental instruction*

- Create a peer collaborative learning space (Harding *et al.*, 2011).
- Create open study spaces where students can receive help from TAs, instructors, and other classmates (Cheng & Hsu, 2006).
- Create a “primer unit” for students to preview before the start of the semester.
 - For example, create a PowerPoint presentation of the material covered in the first few weeks of the course (Marbach-Ad *et al.*, 2006).
- Connect students with existing campus resources, like learning centers and tutoring programs.

¹ These practices are based on the literature, three years of ongoing campus discussions, and preliminary findings from Delta’s Bridging the Achievement/Equity Gap initiative. Learn more at: http://delta.wisc.edu/Achievement_Gap/achievement_gap.html

Intervention #4: *Be intentional about how student groups and project teams are formed*

- Conduct teamwork training with graduate students and undergraduate peer mentors before group projects.
- Conduct group mentoring meetings with each group during the group project (Frank *et al.*, 2003).
- Have peer mentors, TAs, and instructors meet regularly (about once a week) to discuss their experiences.
- Have groups present their work to enhance the learning community within the class (Frank *et al.*, 2003).
- Allow each study group or peer-mentoring group to determine group goals and rules.
- The agenda for each group meeting should be devised at the beginning of each meeting rather than pre-determined by a group leader. This will allow for greater group participation (Stanger-Hall *et al.*, 2010).

Intervention #5: *Work with TAs and other instructors in the class*

- Improve TA Training methods (Shannon *et al.*, 1998). For example:
 - TA training should place greater emphasis on pedagogical methods including course planning, teaching techniques, and evaluation of student learning.
 - Actively involve TAs in their training through small-group discussions, microteaching experiences, and simulation exercises.
- Set up mechanisms for supervising TAs throughout the semester. For example, observe their teaching and provide feedback during the semester, so they can make positive changes to their instructional approach.
- Mentor TAs throughout their graduate student career.
- Provide feedback to TAs about their teaching earlier in the semester, more often, and from a variety of sources (not only students).
- Include a section in your TA training on how to improve retention of first and second year students (especially in the sciences) by presenting data on institutional and national retention figures and case studies on why students leave the discipline (O'Neal *et al.*, 2007).
- Have TAs guest lecture in the course to share with students their own disciplinary research and undergraduate as well as graduate experiences (O'Neal *et al.*, 2007).
- Train TAs how to implement active learning and cooperative learning in their discussion groups and labs (Penwell *et al.*, 2004).

Intervention #6: *Use inclusive teaching practices*

- Make sure the classroom, textbooks, handouts, and all other course materials reflect an inclusive environment in both their content and images (Billings, 2008).
- Set clear norms of behavior and communication that reflect respect and understanding in the classroom, as well how to communicate differences of opinion (Billings, 2008). Discuss these norms with students at the beginning of the course, and review them as needed.
- Include activities that help students understand their own cultures and values as well as those of their peers (Billings, 2008).
- Address relevant, real-world issues in an action-oriented manner (Wlodkowski, 1995).
- Emphasize the human purpose of what is being learned and its relationship to the students' experience (Wlodkowski, 1995).
- Encourage students to make choices in content and assessment methods based on their experiences, values, needs, and strengths.