

Diversity statement

As a former nontraditional student returning to higher education, I am deeply invested in providing opportunities for a more inclusive, diverse student body, both in terms of benefiting minoritized students and in order to enrich student learning. As an undergraduate myself, I noticed how increasing my employment hours at the multiple jobs I was working negatively impacted my opportunities for learning. Upon reflection, aided by reading literature on the effects of food insecurity and stereotype threat, I suspect that these issues influenced my performance as well. I have also experienced firsthand how challenging it can be to study away from familiar surroundings, having lived overseas in India, Nepal, and China. I always remind myself that my students might be dealing with similar stresses stemming from issues outside my classroom, and how difficult college life can be for someone unfamiliar with that environment.

Research suggests that increasing transparency is part of the answer for how to improve disparities in student outcomes, particularly for BIPOC and first-generation students (Winkelman, et. al., 2016). So teaching my courses I am always careful to explain my lesson plan to students and highlight course and assignment goals. Similarly, I have found that giving students a chance to practice learning outcomes in class with the peers facilitates achieving equitable outcomes and produces better work. Properly managed peer-to-peer learning has proven to be successful in improving student outcomes, but in order for peer-to-peer learning to take place, students need to feel that their contributions will be respected. Marginalized students need to feel that there will be accountability, while students used to exercising privilege need to know that they can make mistakes, so during the first weeks of any course I teach we generate a set of community discussion guidelines so that each student is clear on our expectations of how to contribute to classroom discussions. Generating student classroom agreements on what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior during classroom discussion gives students tools to engage in the challenging work of learning about the past histories and present realities of the experiences of marginalized communities, both those they may belong to and ones they do not.

Research in the field of Teaching and Learning also suggests that bringing additional viewpoints into a classroom reduces achievement gaps and challenges and improves student learning for all the students involved. As a researcher myself, I have focused my work on the meaning and signification of racial and gender nonconforming bodies, and so I have seen how performing more diverse theatre can impact our interpretations and generate new knowledge about ourselves and our world. Therefore I always cast my productions conscious of gender, sexuality, race, and ability. In my 2019 production of *As You Like It*, I recruited and worked with a transmasculine actor as Rosalind, and together we devised extratextual additions to the original scene in which Rosalind dons their “disguise” in order for them to be able to make visible the struggle transgender and genderqueer students undergo in making choices about what to wear in public. These performance choices then also impact how I teach theatre, incorporating the voices and experiences of the actors in my classroom.

As an advocate for social justice, I understand that my actions must also reach outside the classroom, so I look for opportunities to engage in allyship. Most recently I helped write and revise the language my unit uses in position descriptions to be more inclusive. To work towards employing a more diverse staff, I advocated for and then worked as part of a team to include language in all of our job descriptions that requires a foundational understanding of DEIJ concepts, then also advocated for language that requires all of our new hires to demonstrate their commitment to inclusion during the recruitment and interview process.

In my interactions with those within the systems that contain and replicate hierarchies and histories of oppression, I take an intersectional feminist perspective to speak truth to power and “call in” those who perhaps are not aware of how their speech or actions replicate systems and modes of marginalization. Always open to correction myself, I listen to and believe underrepresented voices and seek to uplift and amplify voices that have been previously ignored or disempowered, creating in the end a more equitable and just environment for us all.