Design for Diverse Learners: Preparing the Self

How can we design learning opportunities/systems that work well for people different than ourselves?

We asked this question to each of the Community Engagement Fellows cohorts in Fall 2017, Below is the advice they shared related to preparing to lead activities for diverse learners.

Preparing the Self. *We will design better learning systems if we continually gain new skills and perspectives.*

- When you're teaching, are you looking at your students as sausages or oysters? Are they empty cases to fill, like sausages, or oysters—a little rough around the edges, but if you pry them open a little and put in some irritant, something beautiful may grow.

- Don't allow fear to paralyze you into not interacting with people different than you.

- Practice having courageous conversations.

- Become a better listener.

- Don't make assumptions.

- Don't disparage any group of people.

- Be realistic about the limits of inclusivity in a classroom setting.

- Building meaningful relationships. If you have inside jokes, you're getting there.

- Get to know people by name; talk with the people you're engaging individually.

- Assume positive intent; give people the benefit of the doubt.

- Use the "Yes, and…" approach; this generates validity and sense of shared ownership.

- Acknowledge that there's research about how people learn; learn what we already know.

- Have awareness of the power systems/structures around us, and which we work within.

- Take a critical perspective on our learning structures; don't take any aspect for granted.

- Notice that there is often tension between what is good for the institution (money, prestige, stability, etc.) and what's good for the students (learning, flexibility, etc.).