

Resource Guide

Inclusive Online Teaching

Teaching online presents a unique challenge for instructors committed to inclusive teaching (DeVita, Lanier, Parker, Boersman, & Hicks, 2016). How do you create an inclusive learning environment when students are “geographically separated from one another, only connected by the electronic impulses of a computer network?” (Boyd, 2016, p. 167). Education scholar Andrea Dominique (2016) suggests online learning is a favorable medium for inclusive teaching if a few elements are considered during the course design process: student demographics, learning formats, and accommodations. Below are brief descriptions of each element as well as references to additional resources for designing inclusive online learning environments.

- *Student Demographics*

Online courses often attract an intergenerational and geographically diverse student enrollment, which also intersect with differences in gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and so forth. It is important to be mindful of how these student demographics matter differently in an online learning environment (e.g., Boyd, 2016; Dominique, 2016). Consider how student demographics may impact online discussion forums, collaborative assignments, or student engagement with course content and materials. When and how will you respond to diverse student experiences and needs throughout the course? When and how will you manage conflict that occurs online between students?
- *Online Learning Formats*

There are two types of online learning formats: “Asynchronous learning is based on environments in which students participate in course activities within a given span of time, as compared to synchronous learning, which requires that students participate in course activities simultaneously in real time” (Dominique, 2016, p. 373). Consider the advantages and disadvantages of each format when designing an online course (e.g., Boyd, 2016; Coombs, 2010). Which online learning format will best support the goals of the course? How will students experience each format differently? Which format will create an inclusive learning environment for all students?
- *Accommodations*

Online learning provides an accessible opportunity for many students to participate more fully in higher education. For example, multilingual students may feel more confident participating in online discussions than in traditional face-to-face discussions. At the same time, online learning may create barriers to inclusion for some students. For example, a student with a hearing impairment may be unable to watch a video lecture because there are no captions. It is important to design online learning environments that are accessible and inclusive of students with disabilities (e.g.,

Coombs, 2010; Dominique, 2016). Consider the challenges of online learning for these students. How will you ensure their full inclusion? When and how will you communicate with students about their accommodation needs?

Resources

Boyd, D. (2016). What would Paulo Freire think of Blackboard™: Critical pedagogy in an age of online learning. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 7, 165-186.

Coombs, N. (2010). *Making online teaching accessible: Inclusive course design for students with disabilities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

DeVita, J. M., Lanier, C., Parker, M., Boersman, J., & Hicks, R. (2016). Moving applied learning online: Creating engaged and inclusive spaces. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 1, 145-161.

Dominique, A. D. (2016). Online and blended pedagogy in social justice education. In M. Adams & L. A. Bell (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed.) (pp. 369-396). New York, NY: Routledge.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at ctl@slu.edu.