Creating a Welcoming Classroom Environment

Thoughtful rapport and considerate communication with students is a critical foundation to create a welcoming classroom environment/community. Below are a few brief considerations to help you establish a welcoming learning environment in your course.

**Introduce Yourself with a welcome video:** Before the start of the semester, create a 3-5 minute welcome video and post it on your course site. Keep it informal. Address what you hope students will get out of the course; why the topic is important for you and to their future professional careers; disclose other interesting information about you (family, pets, where you have lived, hobbies).

**Get to Know Students Names:** One of the most important foundations for creating a welcoming learning environment is learning about your students. Consider creating a “getting to know you” questionnaire; have students create and display name cards. Create active learning opportunities where students can get to know each other as well. Plan a note-review; think, pair, share exercise; or offer a discussion prompt.

**Create and maintain a communication plan for students:** In your course syllabus, draft clear guidelines for how students can communicate with you. Create an incentive for students to visit during office hours; and develop clear channels of communication via email, text, phone, or other online media.

**Incorporate care and substantive feedback and authentic assessment:** Fink (2013) recommends giving high-quality feedback to help sustain student motivation and self-esteem. Consider offering self-assessment opportunities for students. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue through active learning exercises devoted to formative feedback. Create rubrics to illustrate a pathway for student learning.

**Establish and maintain a welcoming environment:** Consider drafting your course syllabus in a warm and inviting tone to encourage student participation (Harnish, 2011). Use the same language in assignments and course correspondence.

**Practice active listening and open-ended questions:** Utilize active listening techniques while meeting in class as well as practiced open-ended questioning to encourage participation and to help students feel heard.

**Resources**

