



Ensure Students Are Learning:

Guidelines for Fostering Student Engagement in the Classroom in Equity-Minded Ways

Suggested Citation: Georges, Jr., C. T., & Rockey, M. (2020). *Ensure students are learning: Guidelines for fostering student engagement in the classroom in equity-minded ways*. Center for Community College Student Engagement & Office of Community College Research and Leadership.

Community college educators are essential to ensuring that students learn the necessary skills and competencies that industries require in today's labor market. Community colleges enroll more than 50% of students from racially minoritized backgrounds (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019). As this figure continues to increase, it is more critical than ever for educators to espouse an equity-minded approach to foster student engagement while ensuring that students are learning in the classroom. The practices listed below assess and enrich student learning, as noted in the Guided Pathways model, and can be applied in equity-minded ways.

- Scaled, high-quality, program-relevant applied learning experiences can provide opportunities for equity-minded educators to think consciously about their pedagogical practices and tailor them to each student's learning style and ability (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2010).
- Intentional and sustained student engagement means that equity-minded educators ensure all course content is engaging and affirming for students, especially racially minoritized students.
- Evidence-based, high-impact teaching practices across modalities can be assessed by equity-minded educators to understand the varied experiences of students across racial identity groups. Curriculum components identified as high-impact practices include "service learning, community-based learning, diversity/global learning, writing-intensive coursework, common intellectual experiences, and collaborative assignments and projects" (Hatch, Crisp, & Wesley, 2016, p. 13).
- Institutional commitment to equity-minded, asset-based teaching improvement is imperative to the development of educators as faculty demographics vary greatly from student demographics in community colleges.
- Quality assessment of program learning outcomes that lead to credentials, further education, and/or gainful employment conducted by equity-minded educators who consider the racial identities of their

students and how the curriculum impacts them physically and emotionally.

The classroom is one of the most vital parts of the collegiate experience. In order to be effective in building relationships with students, educators must be equity-minded in all facets of their profession and think critically about their complicity in promoting student success. When educators are committed to student success efforts, they improve student academics, retention, and their sense of belonging.

Equity-minded educators recognize how institutionalized systems of oppression disadvantage students holding minoritized social identities. They attempt to disrupt dominant pedagogical practices that harm the achievement of students, particularly those of color. Further, equity-minded educators influence their peers to adopt similar ideologies and engage students by creating open classroom environments where participants can feel a sense of belonging and express their beliefs and cultural values without thoughts of retribution. Equity-minded educators foster spaces where students can trust faculty and peers through meaningful relationships. For an expanded discussion on this topic, see Georges Jr. and Rockey (2020).

References

- American Association of Community Colleges. (2019). *Fast facts*.
- Georges, Jr., C. T., & Rockey, M. (2020). *Equity-minded approaches for cultivating student engagement in the classroom* (Issue Brief 4). Office of Community College Research and Leadership; Center for Community College Student Engagement.
- Hatch, D. K., Crisp, G., & Wesley, K. (2016, Fall). What's in a name? The challenge and utility of defining promising and high-impact practices. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 175, 9-17.
- Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy. (2010). *Student-centered learning*.