

Student and Faculty Perspectives on the Emphasis of Inclusive and Culturally Engaging Coursework

Higher education provides opportunities for students from homogenous backgrounds to be introduced to new concepts and experiences and has the potential to create environments that engage and include students from marginalized backgrounds. It is not enough to strive for structural diversity; institutions should intentionally create formal diversity experiences, such as coursework focused on inclusive and culturally engaging activities. This large-scale, multi-institution study of undergraduate and faculty perceptions of inclusive and culturally engaging coursework gives insight into the ways faculty create supportive environments in their classrooms and what students are participating in these activities. This paper focuses on areas in which campuses are succeeding in creating more inclusive and culturally engaging classroom environments and which areas need improvement. This study was guided by the following research questions:

- From the student perspective, how much does student coursework emphasize inclusive and culturally engaging activities?
- From the faculty perspective, how much do faculty emphasize inclusive and culturally engaging activities in their courses?
- For both perspectives, how does the emphasis vary by select student and faculty characteristics?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model to better understand inclusive classroom practices (Museus, 2014). The CECE model posits that to create a more inclusive campus and support the success of a diverse student body, it is necessary for institutions to create environments which engage the cultures and identities of marginalized students. The model identifies nine indicators which measure a campus’s environment as it relates to students’ identities, cultural communities, and backgrounds. This study addresses three of the indicators through carefully developed survey questions on inclusivity and culturally engaging activities in the classroom.

Cross-Comparison of IECD Questions and CECE Indicators

Culturally Engaging Campus Environment Indicators ^a	IECD Student Scale Questions ^b	IECD Faculty Scale Questions ^b
2. Culturally Relevant Knowledge: The degree to which students have opportunities for students to learn about their own cultural communities via culturally relevant curricular and co-curricular activities.	d. Exploring your own background through projects, assignments, or programs	d. Exploring students’ backgrounds through projects, assignments, or programs
4. Cross-Cultural Engagement: Programs and practices that facilitate educationally meaningful cross-cultural interactions that focus on solving real social and political problems.	a. Developing the skills necessary to work effectively with people from various backgrounds e. Learning about other cultures	a. Developing the skills necessary to work effectively with people from various backgrounds e. Learning about other cultures
5. Cultural Validation: Campus cultures that validate the cultural backgrounds, knowledge, and identities of diverse students.	c. Sharing your own perspectives and experiences g. Respecting the expression of diverse ideas	c. Students sharing their perspectives and experiences g. Respecting the expression of diverse ideas

^aCECE Indicators are derived from Museus, S. D. (2014). The culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) model: A new theory of success among racially diverse college student populations. In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.) Higher education: Handbook of theory and research (29th ed.) (189-227). Springer Netherlands

^bIECD Scale Questions are derived from the *Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity* Topical Modules of the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

DATA

The data for this study are from the 2017 administration of both the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). In 2017, 132 institutions chose to use the Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity (IECD) module for NSSE, and 30 institutions chose to use the IECD module for FSSE, yielding 55,289 student responses and 24,418 faculty responses. IECD measures the environments, experiences, and engagement of students and faculty around cultural diversity. The focus of this study is the first set of items in the IECD module. These items ask students how much their coursework has emphasized various aspects of cultural diversity and asks faculty how much their courses emphasize those same aspects.

RESULTS

From the student perspective, how much does student coursework emphasize inclusive and culturally engaging activities?

The items with the highest average score for students were Sharing your own perspectives and experiences (M: 2.78, SD: .903) and Respecting the expression of diverse ideas (M: 2.76, SD: .953). There wasn't a large difference between these means and the means of the lowest scoring items: Exploring your own background through projects, assignments, or programs (M: 2.45, SD: 1.004) and Discussing issues of equity or privilege (M: 2.49, SD: 1.024). This suggests that all the activities examined here can be thought of as being emphasized in students' coursework at least Some but not Quite a bit.

From the faculty perspective, how much do faculty emphasize inclusive and culturally engaging activities in their courses?

The items with the highest average score for faculty mirrored that of students: Respecting the expression of diverse ideas (M: 2.87, SD: 1.12) and Students sharing their perspectives and experiences (M: 2.79, SD: 1.08). Faculty had similar lowest scoring items with only slightly larger differences in mean score: Exploring students' backgrounds through projects, assignments, or programs (M: 2.22; SD: 1.15) and Discussing issues of equity or privilege (M: 2.31; SD: 1.17). As with student scores, results suggest that faculty emphasize inclusive and culturally engaging activities at least Some but not Quite a bit.

For both perspectives, how does the emphasis vary by select student and faculty characteristics?

Differences in coursework emphasis for both students and faculty were found for major/academic discipline, course format, gender identity, racial/ethnic identification, and sexual orientation. Similar trends for faculty and students were found across disciplines with the same groups of disciplines reporting more inclusive and culturally engaging activities for both students and faculty. Student and faculty in Education and Social Services were engaged in more IECD activities, but students and faculty in Engineering, Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science were engaged in fewer. Students majoring in social services had the largest positive difference ($B = .330, p < .001$) comparing to faculty in Education ($B = .850, p < .001$). In contrast, students majoring in engineering report the lowest participation ($B = -.505, p < .001$) and faculty in the physical sciences, mathematics, & computer science report the lowest level of IECD activities in their classroom ($B = -.71, p < .01$). Women students and faculty both report engaging in more inclusive and culturally engaging activities than men. For racial/ethnic identity, the largest differences, compared to White students, can be found for Black or African American students ($B = .274, p < .001$) and Asian students ($B = .262, p < .001$). For faculty, the largest difference compared to White faculty were for Indigenous faculty ($B = .42, p < .05$) and Asian faculty ($B = .42, p < .05$). Students who took their courses online participated in more IECD-related activities ($B = .108, p < .001$) while faculty who taught online reported lower levels of these activities, although their results were not statistically significant.