



REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR CULTIVATING SENSE OF BELONGING

Student perceptions of their belonging are critical to their learning and persistence. These questions are to spark thinking and discussion about what you do in the contexts in which you work with students: program-level curriculum design, program climate, instructional settings, mentoring and advising, and co-curricular activities. We recommend selecting a section heading of this document that sounds interesting and beginning to reflect on what you currently do, and where you might expand in your work as an educator.

Relationships/Networks & Discussions about Belonging

- How might you communicate care? What role might emails, check-ins, using student names, or other communication tools play?
- How might you use your networks of peers, faculty, and staff to support students? How might you support students' networks?
- How might you establish positive relationships with and among students? How do students organize study groups?
- How might you normalize the challenges of connecting with peers or making friends and encourage more connections and interactions among peers in your learning environment?
- How might you normalize the need for resources, e.g., tutoring or counseling? Can you anticipate obstacles students might face in accessing resources?
- What opportunities are there for students to interact with faculty outside of classes?

For Example: You might have a regular practice of asking students to find connections between course material and their personal/professional interests and experiences. You might consider 'First Day of Class' introductory questionnaires. You might also encourage students to learn each other's names or implement think/pair/share activities that encourage students to discuss the course material.

Tacit Knowledge (Hidden Curriculum)

- How might you find out about your students' understanding of your expectations? For example, when should students ask for help? Who should they ask?
- What assumptions might you bring to learning environments? For example, what should office hours be like?
- Where might you see opportunities for communicating expectations more clearly?

For example: You might consider providing students with examples of questions/problems they could bring to office hours and explaining the purpose of office hours.



Feedback and Assessment

- What purpose(s) can assessment serve?
- How are grades determined? What do grades mean/*not* mean? What reasonable inferences might students make about their grades?
- Might there be ways you can use assessment to draw students into the material?
- If assessment is meant to demonstrate learning (or to check on progress), is there more than one way that students can demonstrate their learning?
- What role might meta-cognitive practices play, e.g., discussions about study strategies or reflections on progress?
- What are your procedures for feedback? Rubrics? Directing students to resources?

For Example: If allowing for resubmission of assignments seems unwieldy, consider a ‘get out of jail free card’ that allows students to turn in an assignment late, no questions asked or to drop the lowest grade for a group of assignments such as quizzes. You might also consider offering students an opportunity to complete assignments in different formats or choose to complete one of two assigned readings/problem sets, etc.

Awareness of Own Implicit Biases

- What are your assumptions about students and student learning?
- What energizes you about student requests for help? What de-energizes you?
- How might you observe/notice your own behavior, e.g., students you call on or make eye contact with?

For example: You might consider taking a moment at the beginning and end of the semester to reflect on what went well and what changes you would like to make. You might also consider setting specific goals related to connecting with students each semester.