

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

1 Engage in learning opportunities on topics related to teaching and student engagement.

Duke has a wide variety of resources, programs, and educational opportunities for faculty to expand their knowledge in the areas of teaching and learning. Consider taking advantage of these initiatives. Visit the websites for the Office of the Duke Learning Innovation and the Office for Faculty Advancement for additional information.

2 Include diverse perspectives throughout your course materials.

When possible, try to include readings and cover material written by a variety of scholars from different backgrounds, including women and underrepresented scholars. This will enrich the learning experiences of your students, introduce academic role models, and expand the scope of your course. Also, consider inviting a wide variety of speakers to introduce intellectual diversity into classroom discussions.

3 Set ground rules for teamwork among students.

Group work and projects give students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of subject matter, and it also helps them to learn how to collaborate with their peers who may have different perspectives or come from different backgrounds. Be intentional about how groups are put together and establish ground rules to guide their work. Prioritize individual accountability to the group, and emphasize the need to be respectful and make constructive contributions.

4 Connect with your students through personalized interactions.

Get to know your students and address them by their names and pronouns, particularly in small classes where this is more feasible. Students appreciate professors taking the time to learn their names and pronouns and make personal connections. This level of personalization could be particularly important for international students and students from underrepresented backgrounds.

5 Establish clear ground rules and clearly communicate the value of all perspectives.

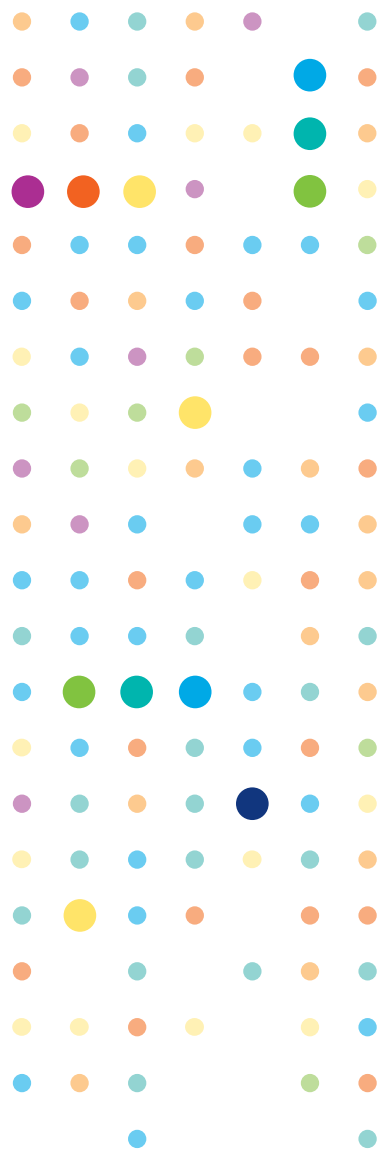
Part of establishing an appropriate tone at the start of the semester should be creating operational norms for the classroom, including specifics on mutual respect and civility during discourse. Impress on students that it is possible to have rigorous and robust discussions that are also civil and respectful. Make these norms explicit at the beginning of the semester, and consider including a statement in your syllabi to reflect the expected classroom behaviors. Clear ground rules will also provide you with a foundation for reference if future challenges arise.

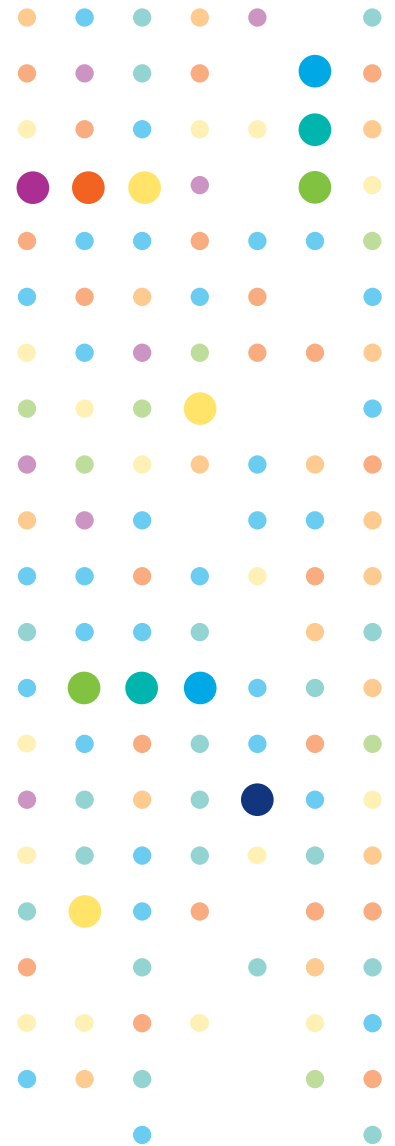
6 Avoid treating underrepresented students as representatives for particular groups.

Students have different life experiences that shape their views of the world. Remember to treat each student as an individual, and do not ask anyone to serve as a generic voice to represent an entire identity group. Respect the privacy of your students by not calling them out based on their backgrounds, identities or life experiences.

7 Create a learning and mentoring environment that generates opportunities for all students to succeed.

Consider ways that you can engage each member of your class to help all students feel that they have the opportunity to excel in your course. Familiarize yourself with resources related to academic support. Be sure to communicate clear expectations and create continual learning opportunities. Remind students of the purpose of office hours, and regularly post reminders about the time/location of those hours. Ensure that your feedback is clear and timely to provide students with the opportunity to adjust their work styles.





8 Do not miss learning opportunities that arise in difficult moments.

It can be difficult to facilitate discussions during spontaneous, tense exchanges, or even during planned dialogues on contentious topics. However, your management of these situations will likely influence the climate of your classroom and guide your students' responses to the situation. Your leadership may also influence how students from different backgrounds, identities and life experiences feel about engaging in future classroom discussions.

9 Assess your own biases, and be mindful of how they may unintentionally affect your students.

Research shows that we all have different forms of bias that may shape our regular behaviors and decisions, and this holds true in classroom environments. Take the time to evaluate your viewpoints and examine your own unconscious biases. Many resources exist to help you to develop strategies and tools to reduce bias in your teaching and mentoring.

10 Foster meaningful connections.

Students who develop close connections with faculty often perform better than those who don't. Relationships between students and faculty can open up opportunities for mentoring and promote a sense of belonging for students. Find opportunities to build such connections with your students, and use the programs and resources available at Duke to learn about the many opportunities for faculty and students to connect.

11 Consider the socioeconomic inclusivity and accessibility of your course.

Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and some may have personal financial limitations that make purchasing course materials challenging. Consider using cost-effective, high quality, and rigorous alternatives in your course. If any students require academic accommodations, be sure that you are clear on what is required and partner with Duke Disability Management System to understand how to best provide the support that your students need.

12 Support the wellbeing of your students.

Become familiar with the resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of your students. Encourage students to engage with the Duke Student Wellness Center, and if you have concerns about a student reach out to the relevant academic dean, Dean of Students office, Director of Undergraduate Studies, or Director of Graduate Studies.

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