

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Students in Higher Education

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Who Are We Serving?



Students

- Students!
 - Who are these students today?
 - Diverse in their ethnicities, races, genders and cultures
 - Diverse in their levels of academic ability
 - Diverse in their needs for academic and physical accommodations, accessible buildings, mental health and medical services
 - Diverse in their ages, occupations, and living arrangements
 - Diverse in their preparation for
 - Academics
 - Collegiate life

Why Are We Serving?



Pressures From All Sides

- Legal Mandates
 - Admissions
 - Access
- Political Pressures
 - Academic Accountability
 - Workforce Relationships
 - Fiscal Responsibility
- Parental Involvement and Expectations

What Are We Serving?



“The Bottom Line”

- Enrollment and Retention
 - Filling our classes
 - Meeting Expectations and Mandates
 - Retaining enrolled students
 - Keeping the Institution Financially Secure

Challenges Are Clear



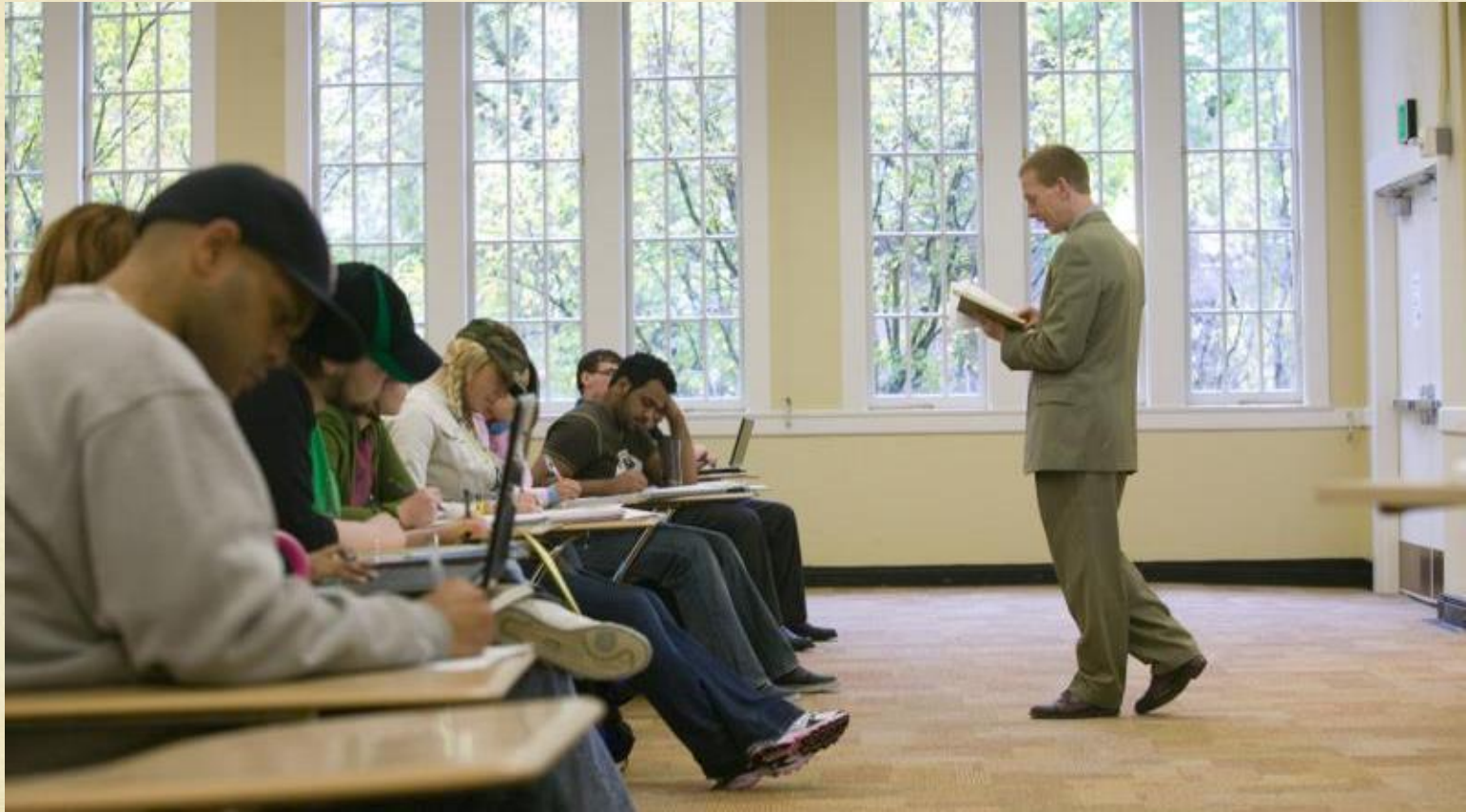
Faculty On The Front Line



Who Are We Serving? How?



Faculty Choices



Our Diverse Students

- We have a variety of students in our classrooms
 - Professionals who have “come back” to higher education
 - Fully employed while in school, often in stressful jobs
 - Workers in transition, needing additional credentials
 - Parents of young children, Caretakers of older parents
 - Adults experiencing new marriages, divorces, and illnesses and deaths of loved ones
 - Students who have not been students for many years and who are not confident in their abilities
 - Commuters who live or work up to 3 hours from campus

Our Diverse Students

- Students Working Through Various Challenges
 - Physical
 - Needs for access to buildings, reading materials
 - Intellectual
 - Needs for assistance with writing, mathematics
 - Needs for additional time, instruction
 - Social
 - Needs for safety and sense of community with classmates
 - Identifying with diverse sexual orientations, religious beliefs, political affiliations

Traditional Expectations

- Curriculum
 - Most courses are designed to cover particular material and students are expected to complete their assignments and examinations “on time” which generally means “at the same time.” The syllabus is a form of contract.
 - Students are expected to have the pre-requisite skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the course or to obtain them on their own when they run into difficulty.
 - Courses are scheduled within the norms of the university’s or department’s timetable, taking into consideration the faculty’s needs and available spaces.

University Pressures

- Fiscal Accountability
 - Place as many students as possible into each course section; reduce course sections to create fewer sections with more students in each.
 - Once enrolled, students are expected to be retained through graduation, though all the services they need to be successful are not always available.
- Legal Responsibilities
 - Provide appropriate access and accommodations.
- Political Pressures
 - Graduates should be fully prepared for the workplace.

Faculty Can Feel Drained



Can We Meet All the Needs?

- How do we manage to
 - Provide a rigorous, relevant curriculum
 - Engage every learner in our courses
 - Support the sustainability and growth of the institution



Examples

- Scheduling courses on Saturdays and evenings, at times that make sense for students
- Offering courses/ or professional development trainings where students work
- Using Skype or other services to bring students into class who cannot attend physically
- Creating online forums and communities to extend learning opportunities
- Ensuring that all materials can be accessed by all students
- Reducing costs for textbooks and other materials when possible such as the use of ebooks.

Examples of Rigorous and Relevant Coursework

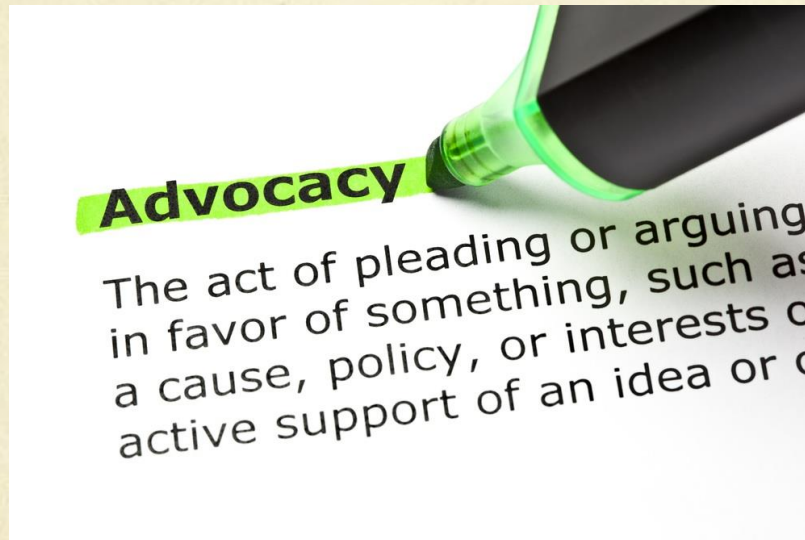
- Transformative Research Course: identifying the unheard voices
- Program Evaluation Course: taking on the challenges of poverty and homelessness; examining restorative justice policies at the university
- Independent Research: understanding the needs of students in developmental mathematics and the connection to their future careers
- Higher Education Curriculum and Instruction: what does it mean to be a culturally competent instructor?

Social Justice

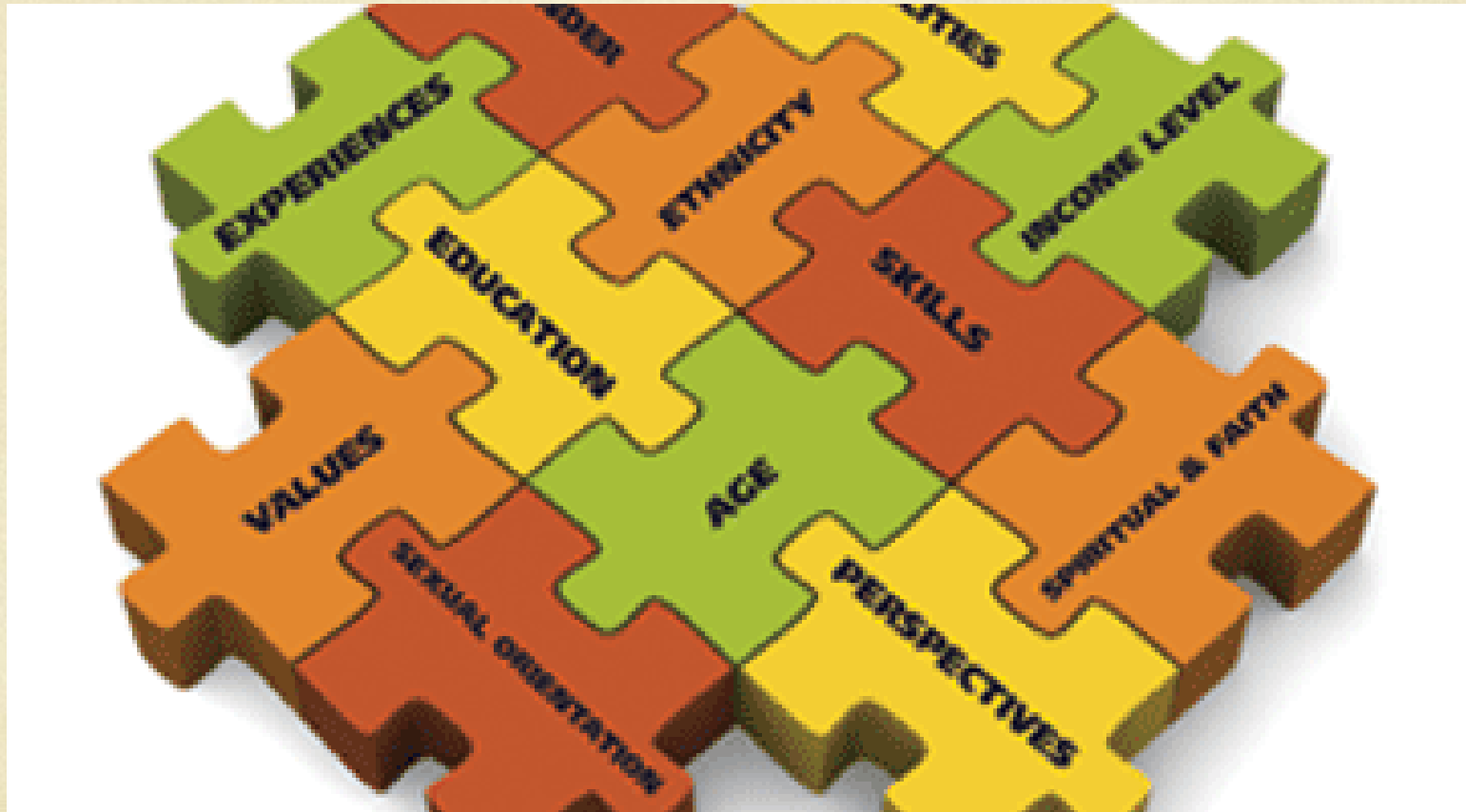
- The education of all students is a matter of social justice. We have the ability, as faculty, to design our courses to be
 - Fully inclusive
 - Completely accessible
 - Rigorous and Relevant
- As faculty in education, we believe we must model the advocacy, inclusivity, accessibility, rigorousness and relevance of excellent course design and teaching so that our students in turn create those expectations where they teach and lead.

Advocate

- When university policies create burdens for students, we must advocate for changes and give a voice to students who can speak to their needs.



Include



Provide Access



Explain

- Be explicit about the design of the course
 - Share the philosophy behind the course design
 - Invite participation in the development of the course
 - Ask for reflection about the success of the course in terms of its inclusivity and accessibility
 - Challenge students to carry these ideas forward in their own course and school designs
- Promote the benefits of these courses to the administration and share student work with the public whenever possible.

Final Thoughts

- By finding new paths in policy to meet student needs,
- finding funds to bring training to students working in the field,
- teaching courses that promote social justice and personal transformation,

faculty in higher education have an opportunity to address issues related to cultural competence and social justice.

It will be by this example that they will lead others to do the same.

Thank You!

- Please feel free to contact us with any questions:
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- We also welcome you to visit us in Plymouth, New Hampshire!

