

The background features a dark blue gradient with intricate technical graphics. On the left, there are several circular gauges or dials with numerical scales ranging from 40 to 260. On the right, there are circular arrows and dashed lines, suggesting a process or cycle. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, typical of a corporate or academic presentation.

# I WANT TO CONNECT TO AS MANY STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE: WHAT SHOULD I KEEP IN MIND?

ALLEN SUTTON, ED.D

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OFFICE OF OUTREACH AND EDUCATION



## FORMER FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA

- “When I first arrived at school...I didn’t know anyone on campus except my brother. I didn’t know how to pick the right classes or find the right buildings. I didn’t even bring the right size sheets for my dorm room bed. I didn’t realize those beds were so long. So, I was a little overwhelmed and a little isolated.”
- “My experiences at Princeton made me far more aware of my 'blackness' than ever before...I sometimes felt like a visitor on campus; as if I really didn't belong.”



# SONIA SOTOMAYOR SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

- [At Princeton, I felt like] a visitor landing in an alien land... Race matters, because of the slights, the snickers, the silent judgments that reinforce that most crippling of thoughts: 'I do not belong here.'



# #GOALS

More important than *anything else you do* as an instructor or faculty member is the relationship you build with your students.



# WHY RELATIONSHIP- BUILDING WITH YOUR STUDENTS IS CRITICAL



When students transition to college life it can be a vulnerable time for them as they must adjust.

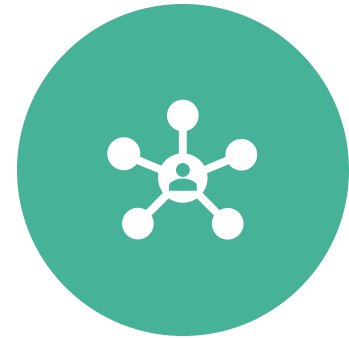


What are identity threats?

# HOW TO COMBAT IDENTITY THREATS?



WHAT IS ***IDENTITY SAFETY***?



HOW DO YOU CULTIVATE  
***IDENTITY SAFETY*** WITH  
YOUR STUDENTS?

# BELONGING, THRIVING, AND MATTERING



(Strayhorn, 2012) defines sense of belonging as “students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g. campus community) or others on campus (e.g. faculty, peers)” (p. 3).

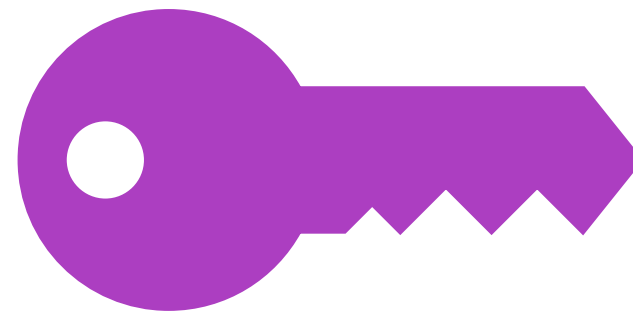


(Shriner, 2010) describe thriving as students who are academically successful, experience a sense of community, and possesses a level of well-being that contributes to their persistence to graduation (p. 4)



(Schlossberg, 1989) describes mattering as students feeling that they are noticed and cared about.

**7 KEYS TO CONNECTING  
WITH STUDENTS AND  
CREATING IDENTITY SAFETY  
IN YOUR CLASSROOMS**





# DROP THE NOSTALGIA.



One big barrier to connecting with students is the constant desire for the “nostalgia of the past”. Some faculty and Instructors often constantly compare their current students (the spoiled and entitled ones) with the (better) ones we *used* to teach.



This point of view often leads to bitterness, a dismissive attitude, and lack of empathy that your students can sense very easily.

# OPEN UP & BE VULNERABLE

- Often times, faculty and instructors are set on teaching and nothing else. After all, this is what you get paid to do! However, when you share parts of your own personal story with students, they get more comfortable sharing their own, and this is how connections are made.

# FIND COMMON GROUND



Students live in a very different world than the one we lived in at their age. Learn current cultural lingo, music, movies, and T.V. shows.



This doesn't mean that you have to stop watching NCIS, Law & Order, and CSPAN to partake in Family Guy, Black-ish, and The Daily Show with Trevor Noah.



No, you don't have to trade in your Aerosmith, Whitney Houston, and Beethoven for Cardi B, Ed Sheeren, and Ariana Grande.



It just means you should explore culturally relevant things once or twice a week and weave them into your conversation...

BE PERSISTENT  
WITH YOUR  
PRYING...BUT BE  
PATIENT, TOO.

- With students who are slower to warm or open up in class, you must put aside your egos and just keep trying to breakthrough to them. Your persistence may be the difference between a college drop out and a WSU grad.

# RUN TOWARD TROUBLE

- Lest you think that connecting with students is just about smiles and funny stories, I encourage you to run toward trouble. Your students will inevitably encounter difficult times, blowups, setbacks, failures, hurt, and disappointments. Be aware of your student's demeanor and leap into action if you sense something is wrong. Even if you are directing them to someone else for help...make the initial connection.

# KNOW AND ASK



Many times, students will share, or you may overhear, that they are doing something big in their life. It may be that they are going skiing that weekend or going to karaoke with friends that night.



If you are invited to an athletic or co-curricular event/program, try to go. And then discuss the program/event with them before or after class

# CARE



Care and Care Deeply.



Your interactions and attempts to connect may come at a time when they are struggling and your observations, as well as your actions, could be what turns their life and situation around.



# A COUPLE OF STUDENT CONNECTION TECHNIQUES



# FIRST FIVE MINUTES STRATEGY

- This is where faculty/instructors use the first few (five) minutes of class to engage with your students in casual conversation or even set aside topics.

# ATTENDING OUT OF CLASS EXPERIENCES

- Make an effort to attend the out-of-class experiences that your students participate in such as programs, fundraisers, etc. It's important to take an interest in the things your students love. This helps them see you as more than a voice in front of the room.

The background features a dark blue gradient with intricate white and light blue circular patterns. These include concentric circles, dashed lines, and radial scales with numbers ranging from 40 to 260. Some circles have arrows indicating a clockwise direction. The overall aesthetic is technical and modern.

# ACHIEVING AN EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH STUDENT CONNECTIONS

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM MORE EQUITABLE

# WHAT IS EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM?



The definition of educational equity continues to evolve and expand.



Many experts emphasize that equity focuses on meeting the needs of a culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse student population.

# GETTING TO AN EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- An equitable learning environment is illustrated by, “patterns of interaction among individuals [that is] free from threat, humiliation, danger and disregard ... [and] exists within a supportive, quality environment characterized by genuine acceptance, valuing, respect, safety and security.”



THINK D.E.E.P.

# WAYS TO INCORPORATE EQUITABLE PRACTICES IN YOUR CLASS

The background is a dark blue gradient with faint, light blue technical graphics. On the right side, there are several circular gauges or dials with numerical scales (e.g., 100, 120, 140, 160, 180, 200, 210) and arrows. There are also some dashed lines and smaller circular elements scattered across the background.

# DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE USE IN THE CLASSROOM

## WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

- Faculty/instructors must establish clear communication expectations they expect to observe from students; while simultaneously modeling those same standards. Promote and practice making your class a “judgement-free zone” that avoids statements and actions that appear to judge or could offend others. Ensure that students know that they should refer to others by name, not by labels or physical characteristics. This will help them avoid statements such as “that person,” and “those people,”.
- Encourage them to use “I” statements



ENCOURAGING OPEN AND HONEST  
DIALOGUE ALLOWS STUDENTS TO  
EXPERIENCE BOTH SIMILARITIES AND  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ONE  
ANOTHER.

# WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE?

- This means that faculty/instructors plan opportunities for students to share their viewpoints and experiences using “think-pair-share” moments sharing in pairs, small groups, or large groups. When students have the chance to think independently, then run their ideas and views by a small group of peers first, they may be more likely to dialogue. This is also a good way to help students feel like they have a voice in the classroom.





EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO  
SHARE WITHOUT RIDICULE

# SO WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

- This means that faculty/instructors are acknowledging that there will be differences in the classroom and that individuals are unique in varying ways. Intervene immediately when students violate respectful communication expectations.

The background features a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white stars and technical graphics. On the right side, there are several circular gauges or dials with numerical scales (e.g., 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210) and arrows. On the left, there are faint circular outlines and arrows. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and data-oriented.

PROCESSING INFORMATION  
SHARED BY RECONNECTING IT TO  
COURSE CONTENT

## AND WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE?

- This means that faculty/instructors are actively ensuring that student discussions, viewpoints, and ideas are both valued and summarized in the context of a learning outcome or course objective. Acknowledge the value of student contributions, even when there is disagreement.

# SO WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

- These aspirations, activities, and goals are not complicated and take minimal time and planning to implement. Yet, they have great potential to help faculty/instructors deepen their knowledge about students, build important relationships with them, and develop equitable practices that are meaningful and supportive of students.

# WORKS CITED

- Cox, Janelle. "Teaching Strategies to Promote Student Equity and Engagement." ThoughtCo, Feb. 11, 2020, [thoughtco.com/promoting-student-equity-and-engagement-4074141](https://www.thoughtco.com/promoting-student-equity-and-engagement-4074141).
- Holmes IV, O., Whitman, M. V., Campbell, K. S., & Johnson, D. E. (2016). Exploring the social identity threat response. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 35(3), 205–220. <http://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-08-2015-0068>
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1989). Marginality and mattering: Key issues in building community. *New directions for student services*, 1989(48), 5-15.
- Schreiner, Laurie. (2013) Thriving in College, *New Directions for Student Services*, 2013, 143, (41-52).
- Steele, C. M. (2002). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*. New York: Norton.
- Strayhorn, T. (2012). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sybing, R. (2019). Making Connections: Student-Teacher Rapport in Higher Education Classrooms. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 19(5). <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v19i5.26578>
- *Teaching for inclusion* (1998). Chapel Hill, NC: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.