What to be aware of when working with diverse student populations:

1. Learning environment
   a. Research indicates the following as common problems:
      - calling on some students more than others,
      - drawing out some students more than others,
      - making eye contact,
      - reinforcing student contributions,
      - patience with students searching for an answer or thinking out loud, asking the only student of color to explain a problem that features people of color (e.g., asking a minority student to speak on behalf of all people from that group),
      - offering seemingly helpful comments that sound like you think some students aren’t as competent as others
   b. Stereotype threat has measurable effects on students’ grades and wraps around most diversity categories: race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and social class. Are there stereotypes about particular populations related to your field that could be triggered by something you’re doing in an effort actually to help? (See these examples at the bottom of the page – especially the one on grades). Can you think of other examples? How can you address the problem?
   c. Much research indicates that students need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Just don’t choose all of your examples in ways that stereotype a population. If you’re infusing a course gradually, you can prep your students so that they are aware of the stereotypes that might interfere with their learning (in fact, you should do this anyway if the example includes a diverse population). You can also wait until you have more than one example about that same group.

2. Feedback/grading –
   a. Research on this arena notes these problematic patterns:
      - feedback on student work can be patronizing or overly harsh,
      - attributing good student performance to things students view as intrinsic (e.g. intelligence – even though they are wrong) or to luck rather than to effort
   b. One of the principle diversity issues to consider in course design lies in deciding what to grade and why, initial decisions you need to make before you reach the How question.
      - does part of your course grade include class participation? Do you define what you mean by that, and do you explain to students why it’s important; e.g. do you define the outcome this grade item measures? You will have students with a wide range of classroom-cultural expectations about interaction with peers vs professor, let alone expectations embedded in ethnicity or class.
      - universal design means offering students more than one way to “get” the content, so reading AND audio would be one example that benefits all students although most especially students with disabilities. You can provide students with the option to express what they know in formats other than a lab report (benefits many students with learning disabilities as well as non-native English speakers) IF you align those options with specific learning outcomes.

Solutions: the key to fixing a problem lies in noticing it exists – catching yourself doing something like this. Pay attention to how students might hear you (regardless of what YOU think you’re saying). Can also ask someone to observe you (especially someone from a non-dominant group).
Presentations or websites might actually be more appropriate if your outcomes consider audience.

Helping minority students to form supportive networks among other students in their classes:

1. **Collaborative Learning Techniques** — this is a “best practice” for students of color in particular, but it works well for all students. When I use long-term groups, I always provide a “divorce” clause. UW-L has a number of copies of this book floating around besides just Murphy’s copy, including at least one in CATL.

2. Treisman’s research provides a well-developed example of collaborative learning. His initial study showed that his African American students in particular had learned that they aren’t supposed to study with other students, whereas his Asian American students had learned to study together with high purpose. Stereotype threat might mean that students of color hesitate to come talk to the professor, and collaborative study helps students know when to come. Many Asian American students come from more communal cultures in which collaboration is aimed at making sure everyone understands. [Here’s the article about the program Treisman created from this study.](http://catl.typepad.com/files/5_Ways_Diversity_Infusion.pdf) This strategy works when you find the right kinds of problems for students to tackle, and when you teach students how to collaborate effectively.

How to make diversity normative in courses that focus on “things” rather than "people".

1. Problem-solving outcomes work well with curriculum infusion; some critical thinking outcomes will work too. Students will achieve a problem-solving outcome better if you give them several examples to work through. If you don’t, even a small switch in the context will throw them – the problem will look completely different to them. Try helping students understand how a principle or method or process actually works by setting it in several different settings. Students really need to see the concept you’re teaching them in very different contexts BEFORE they get it in a new context on a test.

2. How does diversity affect your discipline? What are researchers from under-represented communities studying?

3. Consider including a diversity-specific outcome: much of science research is conducted in teams, and diverse teams help prevent errors borne of cultural assumptions. But students must be trained to learn to work across differences. How best to do that?


How can we prepare students to work with an international body of researchers or to work with diverse populations as medical professionals?

1. How do you know when your students are able to collaborate well? Start there, and see if you can define what that would look like. Then you can figure out how to get them there.

2. Eventually, they probably need actually to DO it. Technology might offer you an avenue if your class’s demographics don’t.