ASM M(icro)OOC
Inclusive pedagogy in Higher Education
Frequently asked questions

1) Do you feel that concept mapping is a good tool (for either diagnostic or assessment) in a diverse learning environment?
   It can be depending on how it is used. Certainly the literature indicates that concept mapping can elucidate misconceptions students have about certain topics. It however can address diversity with respect to learning approaches. Some students may have an easier time laying concepts out in the logical format that concept mapping suggests. For me, the key is having a curriculum that addresses a variety of learning styles. Such a curriculum might include a concept mapping type activity.

2) Do teachers need special training to handle the differences between their students and to choose the best strategies to sustain an inclusive classroom?
   I wouldn’t classify it as ‘special’ training in the sense that instructors would need some sort of official certification. I WOULD say however that teachers would need to be aware of a. their own possible biases and understandings of social belonging b. what the literature says on the above and c. a safe space where they can discuss these things with colleagues. In this safe space (teaching and learning centers are usually good for this because of the supportive atmosphere), teachers can discuss strategies for inclusive pedagogy specific to the population of their school.

3) Some of my students have placed a mental block (bias) on microbiology. Could you recommend a solution?
   It sounds to me like some of your students may have developed a ‘fixed mindset’ specific to your course. There are a number of reasons why this particular mindset might develop. Some of these reasons MIGHT relate to sense of belonging, perception of identity within field (and consequentially within classroom), or poor study strategies which might serve to reinforce the above. It also might be worth taking a critical look at the pedagogy to ensure that the methods used maximize learning for most or all students. Each of the above will have a different solution, and so I would suggest the first step be an exploration of the nature of the ‘mental block’. This information can be gleaned from surveys you can give your students, or interviews (for lower enrollment classes). Depending on what the data tells you, you can devise a specific intervention. For mindset issues consider the mindset reflective writing piece we discussed. I’d be happy to share the specific instructions if needed.

4) If the instructor is an underrepresented minority, what can he or she do to involve himself or herself in a non-diverse (say, all white) class?
   Interesting question. I suppose I would need to know what you specifically mean by ‘involve’. If you looking for ways to ensure that your students ‘connect’ with you in
a profound way I would suggest a few different things. Depending on your location/where you teach, your position might present a unique opportunity to educate your students about where you are from, and how your experience provide interesting dimensions to their learning. I’ll stop there only because I would like more clarity on what ‘involve’ means.

5) References

a. The diagnostic test you recommended: the name and the website or book
   Implicit Association Test, http://implicit.harvard.edu, BlindSpot is the book written on the topic
b. All papers you cited during the presentation
c. (If you want) Recommended books
   Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People – Banaji and Greenwald
   Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do about it – Steele
   The Righteous Mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion – Haidt
   Paying for the party: How college maintains inequality – Hamilton and Armstrong
   Why are all the black kids sitting at the cafeteria: And other conversations on race - Tatum