



Online Equity Affirmation

February 2022

Foothill College's¹ mission statement reflects our institution-wide commitment to ensuring all students reach their full potential. We recognize that long-standing forms of institutionalized marginalization continue to negatively affect our students' success and retention and that these can manifest in our online course design, teaching practices, and learning support services. As individuals within our institution, each of us must take an active role in dismantling these structural inequities in our classes. To that end, we have developed the Online Equity Affirmation to support efforts to promote online learning that is socially just. We call particular attention to the roles of racism and socioeconomic disparity, as these are two of the biggest contributors to online equity gaps. We are also mindful that when race intersects with other marginalized groups around gender, sexuality, ability status, etc., that equity gaps are further exacerbated. By centering race, we do not suggest to ignore disparities for other marginalized groups. Instead, we suggest that as we attend to disparities for other groups we consistently and intentionally address students of color within those groups. We must center race in our work and discussions even as we act to mitigate other group disparities.

This affirmation is intended to be used as a foundational lens for examining online course design and pedagogy in conjunction with the CVC Rubric. The affirmation is intentionally NOT framed as a rubric for formal evaluation or ratings of competence levels. Instead, we offer it as a tool to support iterative, ongoing improvement of course design and pedagogy to maximize student learning in our courses.

Overarching framework:

Critical self-assessment in iterative fashion, collaborative and collegial
Elevate race consciousness – a foundational element
Because of racial consciousness, we use Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) as part of our iterative process
We use tenets of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to help us do that.

A Note on the Anti-Racism Strategies

Each “overarching principle” and its associated equity challenge is mapped to a list of anti-racism strategies that contribute to the reduction of race-based disparities. They are offered as a menu of options from which faculty can choose depending on their own equity data and their individual interests. We suggest picking one or two strategies to focus on first and working to implement those effectively before moving on to other strategies.

We recognize many faculty are already working to implement these anti-racist strategies (and potentially others that need to be included.) Additionally, we recognize not all strategies will be inherently familiar to all faculty. We anticipate faculty may need substantial time and support to explore and implement them in their classes, and most importantly, it will take time and collaboration within and across disciplines to explore, collaborate, implement, and refine. These strategies represent a growing body of knowledge. Many strategies will also help close gaps for other marginalized student groups.

No matter which principle, challenge, or strategy you are using, we advocate that all approaches to continual course improvement be data-informed and utilize the following strategies:

- Instructors routinely review disaggregated data to identify opportunities for improvement
- Regular analysis of success and completion rates allowing practitioners to determine opportunities for improving course and curriculum design and pedagogy
- A focus on trends rather than a focus on a single class or event, which may be idiosyncratic
- Recursive analysis to examine the effects of revisions and changes
- Use of mixed methodology to collect data about student experience and outcomes
- Use of Critical Race Theory to analyze data and surface intersectionality
- Collegial collaborations and conversations with peers

Commented [AA1]: All acronyms should be spelled out the first time they're used.

Commented [CH2R1]: coolio! Feel free to make these edits when you find them. :)

Commented [BE3]: I suggest removing these 3 words?

Commented [CH4R3]: you may! :)

Commented [AA5]: be?

Overarching principle	Equity Challenge	Anti-Racism Strategies for Designing and Promoting Equity
<p>1. Careful consideration of the Content, a.k.a. Body of Knowledge, during COR creation and (T5) reviews</p>	<p>Many of our CORs were developed before we were racially conscious and therefore unintentionally privilege a Eurocentric White male perspective. Assumptions about canon—including overarching outcomes and granular course objectives—often reflect a hegemonic view of what content should be included. Traditional disciplinary canon has viewed knowledge through a hegemonic, Eurocentric lens that elides the contribution of diverse peoplesⁱⁱ. Students have a right to see their own culture represented in the materials we teachⁱⁱⁱ, and educators have an ethical responsibility to include voices and contributions omitted from the canon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course SLOs are culturally responsive and race-conscious. • Selected Body of Knowledge (course “content”) is reviewed and revised to ensure the epistemology of the discipline – i.e., the origin(s) of the discipline’s ideas and theories – is (historically) accurate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Content is chosen to represent multiple cultural perspectives (Opposite of Western ideation) ○ Course content includes (and centers? Normalizes?) voices and contributions that have been historically omitted • Language and terminology in the COR is inclusive and does not perpetuate stereotypes. • Course content and activities invite students to use their cultural backgrounds to enhance learning, and encourages students to recognize and value diverse cultural backgrounds
<p>2. Careful consideration of the learning materials* (text, video, images, textbooks, etc.) during development of the course (more individual-instructor)</p>	<p>Many of our individual courses (faculty-specific?) were built before we were racially conscious and therefore unintentionally privilege a Eurocentric White male perspective. Students have a right to see their own culture represented in the materials we teach^{iv}, and educators have an ethical responsibility to include voices and contributions omitted from the canon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading material in the course is chosen to ensure diverse perspectives • Literature, when included, allows students to have a “mirror” as well as a “window” • Imagery represents diverse races, genders, and abilities • Content is presented in multiple ways via both multimedia (e.g. video, podcasts) and text

Commented [DS6]: How are these chosen?

Commented [AA7]: How is this to be done? How much should instructor know about the students' cultural backgrounds? How do students use their culture background to learn Physics?

Commented [HG8R7]: This may work in different subject matters. I can see this relating to art or art history.

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(*the materials selected by the instructor to convey the body of knowledge and help familiarize students with ideas in the discipline)		
3. Critical analysis of summative assessment strategies	<p>Online courses have been developed from traditional methods of teaching which often privilege specific ways of assessing student learning that are tacitly biased and may increase stereotype threat. Universal design supports examining assumptions in ways that reveal hidden biases and enable multiple modes for teaching and learning content and skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty engage in opportunities to learn about biases associated with traditional assessment techniques such as multiple-choice tests, written essays, short answer tests, etc.] • Activities and assessment are rigorous and designed to help all students grow as independent, critical thinkers • Students have options for how they provide evidence of their learning and mastery of concepts. E.g. multimedia • Student learning is evaluated based on a variety of artifacts, none of which individually contribute a substantial portion of the final grade in the course • 4Avoid high stakes assessments that measure a student's ability to engage in that particular type of assessment, and not the content or skills necessary to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. • Rubrics and descriptors for desired outcomes are included in assessment activities as well as exemplars of work that meets and does not meet instructor expectations • Assessments are designed to authentically recreate experiences students will encounter in their career or daily life

Commented [AA9]: This is not an action item like the others on this list.

Commented [BE10]: unsure what "rigorous" means... can we just say, "... assessments are designed to help..." In addition, this sentence seems weakly targeted at the goal (it is something we strive for with or without the equity affirmation). Maybe if we emphasize *all* students it is a better fit??

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<p>4. Intentional development of pedagogical practices around learning activities (Formative Assessment?)</p>	<p>Assumptions about canon often reflect a hegemonic view of what activities best promote and represent learning^{iv}. Steps should be taken to ensure activities are designed to support diverse learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course activities invite students to use their cultural backgrounds to connect to the content and enhance learning, and encourage students to recognize and value diverse cultural backgrounds • Activities are chosen to help students connect new information to prior understanding and experiences, and to apply learning to new constructs • To support learning, low- or no-stakes assessments (formative assessments) are frequent and varied, and include timely feedback designed to help students improve • Assessments are not [just] used to track participation or attendance
<p>5. The technical aspects of the course (design) are race neutral</p>	<p>Assumptions about technology—including access to specific technologies, skill level and proficiency with specific technologies, and the connection between technology tools and intellect or ability—often lock students out of learning activities or reinforce bias. Steps should be taken to ensure course material is device neutral, and, when needed, that assistance with technology is provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course content is tested on multiple devices, including mobile and tablets (Note: intended to address the reality that students access content on mobile devices out of convenience rather than poverty) • All required software is listed in the syllabus and provided at no cost to the student • All required software is available on campus computers in labs open to students • Technical support for hardware and software is provided (\$ and cultural) (Note: must question assumption that Asian students and upper middle class don't need but Brown & Black most likely to need.) • Links to support are provided in the course within the content where they will be needed • Textbooks are free or low-cost, and available to students in a variety of formats

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<p>6. Human connectedness is developed through proactive engagement</p>	<p>Student success and retention are affected when andragogic principles and/or a deficit lens is /are applied to explain low performance. Proactive engagement places the onus on practitioners and staff to meet students where they are, regardless of perceived readiness for college —to see each student as a “real” student rather than an imaginary “ideal”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor reaches out to students before the term begins to ensure all students are ready for the first week of classes • The instructor creates a welcome video that outlines how the course management system is used in that class, and explains the role the instructor will play • Week 1 includes activities that allow the instructor to assess the individual needs of students and make meaningful connections with students • Formative feedback is timely, and is designed to engage students early and support students before they fall behind • The instructor actively looks for signs of struggle or disengagement throughout the term so that proactive measures may be taken as early as possible.
<p>7. The relationship between the teacher and the learner is reconceived through a lens of mentoring, care and cultural humility</p>	<p>The traditional teacher/student relationship is built on a construct of distance and authority that can leave marginalized students feeling inferior, and inherently invokes imposter syndrome and stereotype threat^v. The traditional online instructor may not have the interpersonal communication skills for cultural humility in an online course, inbox communication, gradebook feedback or public discussion feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor intentionally works to humanize the course, including providing a video introduction that allows students to see and hear the instructor • The instructor explicitly describes their commitment to racial equity • The instructor’s interaction with each student conveys a high regard for the student, reinforcing notions that they belong, are smart, and are doing meaningful work • The instructor demonstrates care for each student as a whole person, attempting to make connections that are both academic and non-academic • Feedback [wording and mechanisms] is carefully chosen to promote learning and growth rather than wield power or judgment

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The instructor engages students who are different than them on a personal experiential level</i> • <i>The instructor cultivates curiosity and empathy about others life experiences who are different than their own.</i> • <i>The instructor shares their own cultural frame of reference.</i> • <i>The instructor can talk about racism, sexism, and classism, and believe students when they speak about their experiences.</i> • <i>Be prepared when someone brings up your ethnicity and what it means to them. Listen nondefensively.</i> • <i>Instructors learn to pronounce the names of their students.</i>
<p>8. Course design and course delivery communicate a culture of care</p>	<p>Online courses often unintentionally reinforce notions of distance and asynchronicity, which can disenfranchise and marginalize students of color and/or those who come from collectivist cultural backgrounds. Online courses should be intentionally designed to support presence, community, and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor should be visibly present throughout the course, including engaging in discussions without dominating the conversation, providing regular feedback on assignments, The instructor should be visibly present throughout the course, including engaging in discussions without dominating the conversation, providing regular feedback on assignments, and providing regular announcements • Announcements should include reminders about institutional events, especially about dates or services that impact students of color • Students should be invited to participate in the development of community norms • Instructors should monitor discussions and interactions with an eye toward preventing microaggressions • Opportunities for community-building and collaborative work are included, and carefully designed and supported

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional support for online students is robust • Institutional support for online learning is woven throughout the course • Students needing help receive a “warm hand-off” to <i>people</i> who can help, not just to services provided
9. Course design and delivery are racially conscious	Initial discussions of equity in online learning promoted concepts of online spaces as unbiased and color blind, while subtly reinforcing marginalization, stereotypes, and racism. Equitable online course design acknowledges race and recognizes, responds to, and reduces institutional racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities are created that allow students and faculty to discuss race and racism as they relate to the content, objectives, and/or learning outcomes of the course. PROVIDE EXAMPLES. • Care is taken to acknowledge and mitigate microaggressions

Commented [CH11]: we will probably need/want to provide examples for ALL of the strategies in this document. Including them right here in the document itself may make the whole thing (even more) unwieldy. Can we have a separate guide for examples? Or an appendix?

Commented [DS12]: I support the idea that faculty and other staff could benefit from good quality training for this. Faculty and staff need to know the best practices and how to use them... they need support too.

ⁱ <https://foothill.edu/president/mission.html>

ⁱⁱ Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

ⁱⁱⁱ Rendon, L. (1994) Validating Culturally Diverse Students: Toward a New Model of Learning and Student Development

^{iv} Rendon, L. (1994) Validating Culturally Diverse Students: Toward a New Model of Learning and Student Development

^v Steele, C. (2010) Whistling Vivaldi and Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us