

## **DRAFT**

### **BMCC Cultural Responsive-Sustaining Engagement Statement**

The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Engagement (CRSE) framework is intended to help BMCC faculty and staff create a welcoming learning environment that:

- a. affirms and values cultural diversity (i.e., race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, social class, nationality, culture, and language)
- b. identifies and leverages students' experiences and background as assets and resources, and not as "deficiencies to overcome" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87)

Deficit-based perspectives see certain groups of students as lacking in some way, defective, and not as academic as other groups, and that the role of the school is to fix the student. Deficit-based teaching seeks to teach to students' weaknesses instead of teaching to their strengths. It views students as needing to be fixed or remediated, and often attributes their school failures to perceived deficits that lie within the student, their family, community or background. On the other hand, culturally responsive-sustaining perspectives take an asset-based perspective that starts from the question of what is right and working. Rather than approaching marginalized populations from the point of what is missing, an asset model of education approaches students as having unique strengths, passions, and interests that need to be tapped and incorporated into the beliefs, practices and discourse of the classroom and the educational institution.

No single teaching approach will engage every student at once, but building a strategy to consistently deliver culturally-responsive lessons will help to engage our students by positioning diversity as a strength. Each suggested strategy, listed below, illustrates how CRSE might look in practice across a range of contexts in which students interact with faculty, staff, and other students. Contexts include the advisement, testing, as well as the pedagogy. These strategies represent an opportunity for BMCC faculty and staff to continue to work together to create the conditions that can lead to more fruitful learning and increased student success. We recognize that much of this work is already happening across the college in classrooms, departments and offices, and we are aware that BMCC faculty and staff have amassed tremendous insight into leveraging students' differences in order to facilitate richer learning experiences. We present this document in an effort to provide concrete and feasible suggestions that can be adopted by the BMCC community to foster positive academic outcomes.

## **Strategies**

### **1. Learn About and Engage Your Students**

At the start of the year or semester, demonstrate desire to get to know your students so they feel valued.

- Learn your students' preferred names (and nicknames). Try to learn how to pronounce them correctly
- Distribute questionnaires to gather information about students' backgrounds and varying interest and fields of expertise
- Hold open discussions, allowing students to talk about positive experiences from past classes
- Provide opportunities for students to share family histories and cultural heritage to help all members of the classroom understand what it means to belong in different groups.
- Welcome each student by name when they enter the classroom, if possible, taking care to correctly pronounce everyone's name
- Before class or after class, or when students are working in groups, take the opportunity to talk to individual students. Ask about: hobbies, their favorite lessons and activities and the kinds of learning activities that help them remember lessons and concepts
- Encourage students to share a personal perspectives, when a question allows for it
- Call on students who do not always raise their hands

## **2. Pay attention to language**

- Choose kind words over put-down language. Model appropriate ways of speaking to one another, even in tense situations or when there are disagreements.
- Model interactive dialogue. In addition to lectures, discuss your lesson with them and let students know why they are learning a particular topic and why it is important
- Provide students opportunities to share what they think and show that you value their opinions.
- Practice empathy during interactions. Take into account students' experiences and imagine what they are experiencing as a student at BMCC.
- Recognize that some students are English language learners and many come from homes in which another language other than English is spoken. Value multilingualism.
- In classes in which you are making up word problems or giving examples, create culturally-relevant word problems that include student names to make subject matter relatable and/or link to student interests

- Give students agency in the classroom:
  - Have students create their own word problems where they write from their cultural perspective
  - When appropriate, ask students to submit ideas for their own projects from concept to completion.
  - Create assessment criteria in conjunction with students and involve them in the creation of rubrics or other assessment material.

### **3. Draw on students' experiences**

- Draw upon students' past learning and life experiences, as well as their cultural background to introduce or make meaning of new concepts
- Identify gaps where the current curriculum does not address multiple perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds.
- Advocate for and highlight resources developed by marginalized voices that offer diverse perspectives and have been traditionally left off the curriculum.
- Use media and texts that positively depict a range of cultures
- Connect instructional content with the daily lives of students by using culturally-specific examples (e.g., music, movies, art) that tap into their existing interests and knowledge.
- In any subject, keep student attention by integrating vocabulary and ideas that are familiar to them. For example, if you students are sports fans, use a soccer example to demonstrate an idea or concept.
- Invite guest speakers who can represent students' diverse cultural identities and backgrounds.

### **How do we get this information to faculty and staff?**

Do we want to provide a checklist that could be available online that would help professors self-evaluate their own implementation of culturally responsive-sustainment engagement?

Do we want to recommend a wac-like course (and if so, what would this look like)

Do we want a CRSE "rep" in each department who can work with faculty on this?

Do we want to include videos of professors speaking about their practices available online in the BMCC webpage?

Do we want to have do workshops in a CETLS-like fashion?

**Evaluation?**

Do we want to include how we are going to evaluate these strategies?

How would we know if professors are using these guidelines and what types of success (or not) they are having? How can we measure this?

## References

- Aronson, B, & Laughter, J. (2016, March). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(1), 163-206.
- Banks, J.A. (2003). Levels of integration of multicultural content, A brief summary. Retrieved from <http://resources.css.edu/diversityservices/docs/levelsofintegrationofmulticulturalcontent.pdf>.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). Culturally relevant teaching: The key to making multicultural education work. In C.A. Grant (Ed.), *Research and multicultural education* (pp. 106-121). London: Falmer Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.