



# Inclusion 101: Be human

With diversity on the rise in higher education, incorporating inclusion in the classroom through diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) considerations is only becoming more important. In an effort to understand best practices for promoting inclusion in the classroom, Pearson conducted a webinar with Pearson moderator, Melissa Patrick, spoke with instructors Stacy Farina from Howard University, Sam Sommers from Tufts University, and Bryan Dewsbury from Florida International University about how they are implementing these practices.

**“Don’t be afraid** to have difficult conversations in the classroom and try to prepare yourself for what those might look like.”

STACY FARINA  
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

The adage, treat others the way you want to be treated, is one that instructors can bring into their classroom. This mindset sets the tone between instructors and students, one of mutual respect and decency. It also promotes a welcoming environment, one where instructors can lead by example. One way they can lead by example is by being willing to have hard conversations, not being defensive, and encouraging dialogue. Bryan suggests starting with your mindset. Don’t just think about teaching as feeding students content, but instead, consider who you are teaching, human beings. Individuals with diverse backgrounds, needs, wants, and experiences require instructors’ openness, compassion, and empathy to be effective. Building trust with your students is paramount when creating an inclusive environment. A way to build this trust is through a light survey or reflective essay administered at the beginning of the semester. You can ask students to describe themselves, their values, their beliefs, their dreams, their pronouns, etc. This initial effort positively impacts relationships throughout the remainder of the semester. **“They are prompted to describe themselves, describe their values that shape their deepest passions. So, all the great things we do during this semester, they build on the trust we began,”** says Bryan.

Lead by example

## “This is a humanistic process.

We don’t speak of it in those terms, but it is very much that. It starts with a mindset shift.”

**BRYAN DEWSBURY**  
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**Encouraging student collaboration is key** to Stacy. She feels it builds a sense of community between the students but can potentially result in decreased cheating and increased student success. Stacy says, “I love it when students are sitting there doing their quizzes together. That makes me so happy, especially if they’re talking through the material because there’s nothing like talking through something to make you remember that material.”

There are a lot of resources available to help instructors bring inclusivity into their classroom, from books to websites to social media to campus disability services offices, but it is also important to remember that every experience and every person you come across brings a learning opportunity and an opportunity to grow.

“I am always looking for things that I can use such as examples, individuals, resources, op eds, whatever it is that I can inject into the class to help achieve inclusivity.”

**SAM SOMMERS**  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY

For those interested in promoting inclusion and wondering how to start implementing those practices, Stacy and Sam encourage patience and grace towards oneself. Because it is an ever-evolving process, Stacy

suggests starting small, making incremental changes. She recommends starting with course material accessibility. “Be intentional and be yourself. Decide what you feel comfortable with, what makes you satisfied with your courses, and build up to big changes. It takes a long time to really develop inclusive courses,” says Stacy.

“When I discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion, I’m talking about the **basic values of humanity and humanism** and respecting people for their differences, their similarities, and having that be the guiding principle around which you interact with others.”

**BRYAN DEWSBURY**  
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



The overarching theme of the webinar was humanity. Bring respect, understanding, reflection, and compassion to your classroom and your students will follow your lead.