Common Challenges to Gender-Inclusive Teaching and Some Evidence-Based Solutions

There are several common challenges to gender-inclusive teaching. While these challenges often manifest differently across disciplinary contexts, they all arise as obstacles to disrupting the long-standing misconceptions of gender as a binary construct. In the following subsections, we discuss twelve challenges that can arise when cultivating a gender-inclusive classroom environment. We interweave the discussion of the challenges with research-based practices meant to address the issues.

Fluency with Gender Non-Binary Vocabulary

Cultivating a gender-inclusive classroom environment requires a familiarity with an array of concepts related to gender identity and expression. Consequently, efforts to promote a gender-inclusive environment require both consciousness raising and learning opportunities for students.

Sex assigned at birth versus gender identity

Individuals often conflate sex assigned at birth with gender identity. However, these

Gender identity versus gender expression

The following provide a more detailed explanation of transgender and/or non-binary individuals' anxiety about using public restrooms , thoughts about the intent of those who misgender them , and perceptions of safety on college campuses.

Even those who already have a more extensive knowledge of topics related to gender inclusivity may not entirely understand the impact of gender identity and expression on non-binary individuals. For example, they might not understand how other dimensions of individuals' social identity (i.e. socioeconomic, religious, race, etc.) converge with their gender identity, and affect how others perceive them.

Learning about non- binary identities

Students may exhibit considerable variation in their commitment to learning about non-binary gender identities. Variation in students' commitment may be rooted in lack of familiarity with non-binary individuals, ideology, culture, or religious background, and may lead to discomfort when engaging course materials that include the voices and experiences of non-binary individuals. This discomfort may be rooted in fear, shame, disgust, frustration, confusion, etc.

Clark, Rand, and Vogt (2003) observe that students may sometimes hold onto their current understanding of gender roles "like lifelines in class discussion" when confronted with information that challenges their existing views (2003, 3). According to the authors, this occurs because these critiques may threaten students' "sense of self" and, as a result, be perceived as an "attack" (Clark, Rand, Vogt 2003, 3).

Respecting the identities of non- binary individuals

Both students and instructors may exhibit varying levels of prior experience engaging with topics related to gender identity and expression. For those who lack experience, it may seem unclear how to ask others about their gender pronouns in a respectful manner or how to intervene when someone has been misgendered.

non-binary, their sexual orientation or practices, their family's reaction to their gender identity, or any other questions that are irrelevant to the classroom context unless the