
*MY EXPERIENCES & HOW I CONTRIBUTE TO A CULTURE OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.*

I value equity, diversity, and inclusion because every person has a right to equal treatment; we are strengthened by diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. Building an equitable, diverse, and inclusive department is collaborative and requires those in positions of privilege to be allies to those who are marginalized. My childhood experiences speak to who I am as an individual and, thus, the lens through which I educate. I travelled extensively as a child, and by the age of eight I saw more examples of diversity, inequity and exclusion than most will in their lifetime. I witnessed the multitude of child beggars worldwide, India's leper colonies, the poorness/violence in Haiti and the unmarked memorials to people shot trying to escape their countries. My father was a defector from communist Czechoslovakia, and we helped his friends later escape. My mother was a missionary/minister in South Korea and Japan, a social justice advocate and the first Canadian advertiser/activist for Amnesty International. I witnessed her work on the successful extraction of a jailed defector athlete (and met his family). In addition to this, I was aware of the discrimination against the ordination of women in her day. I witnessed the hardships and supported my gay, indigenous brother growing up in a homophobic society and in my non-indigenous family. Due to my own personal circumstances, I have been a minority and a marginalized individual in my work environment and classroom. I am also familiar with the barriers of being a minority living in a foreign country. These experiences (and many more...) are an important part of my life that shape how I view the world, learn and especially teach in a multi-cultural educational environment. My international students have told me that the clothes I wear and world experiences that I relate (some from their own countries) make them feel at home during my lectures!

In later years, I served on the Advisory Committee for the Office of Equity, Diversity and Gender at the University of Ottawa. I volunteered for the Congo Yetu Initiative for women and children's rights when it was founded in Ottawa to provide support to women and children victims of sexual violence in the DR Congo (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/congo-yetu-initiative-88029632/>). I contribute to Amnesty International's campaigns. I have helped English as a Second Language (ESL) scientific authors publish through my work as a freelance proofreader of ESL scientific manuscripts (2011–2020)(<https://www.proof-reading-service.com/en/>). I also support the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation, which is dedicated to the conservation of the orphaned and endangered Bornean orangutan and its habitat through the involvement of local people.

*HOW I CONTRIBUTE TO A CULTURE OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION WITHIN MY
CLASSROOM.*

Learners have a variety of needs, abilities and ways of learning. Diversity refers to individuals with specific characteristics such as “communication skills, culture, marital status, ability to attend, learning abilities, intelligence, interests (cognitive abilities), values, culture, social skills, family support, learning styles, age, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical abilities, sensory abilities, race, gender.” (Burgstahler and Corey, 2008, p.4). Fostering inclusion and awareness of diversity in education and taking a supportive approach in our teaching benefits all students. Accessibility relates to the removal of barriers that may be environmental, behavioural, personal to allow students to reach their full potential. I continuously revise my lectures/labs/tutorials to foster an inclusive environment, lower barriers and expand my students' learning experiences. I design & revise courses with my role as an educator based on inspiration, critical thinking and engagement rather than as a conduit of information [Barkley, E. (2010)]. Training our

undergraduate biology students to be aware and sensitive to diversity will prepare them to thrive in a diverse Canadian/global workspace and in a multicultural society. My best practices include the following:

1) I provide non-discriminatory course expectations. I develop courses with inclusion in mind by determining specific course and lecture objectives & providing clear rubrics (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008). This allows students to prepare for any necessary accommodation. I can then focus on a variety of skills, attitudes, knowledge & level of proficiency I want students to obtain by the end of the course. Content in my courses is consistently scaffolded, integrated and reinforced at all levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

2) I vary assessment methods. Grading schemes, performance criteria and feedback methods are specified clearly in each syllabus. I offer choices for students to demonstrate their understanding of course content, such as short answer, MCQ, matching, diagram recognition, data analysis and graphs. I allow flexibility in visual, oral and written communication and provide a selection choice of exam question topics to be mindful of the diversity of learning styles, strengths and interests.

3) I avoid visual/auditory discrimination by removing red-green on my visuals (where possible) to include students with colour-vision deficiency. While creating content, I use the OpenDyslexicAlta font designed against common symptoms of dyslexia and include closed-captioned videos and short audio instructions online. I use large-font headers and lists for easy navigation by screen readers and run the LMS accessibility checker on my webpages. I also include accessibility content in the form of text alternatives for images in PowerPoint lectures as provided by McGraw-Hill. I routinely use Powerpoint's subtitles function for voice-text capturing during lectures.

4) I vary my method of instruction & provide active learning to include as many styles as possible by providing lecture learning activities/case studies / videos / jeopardy /think-pair-share/ HHMI interactives/data analysis for a more engaging and active lesson (Barkley, 2010). I integrate case studies so students relate the concepts taught in class to real-world experiences in my undergraduate courses. I use disorders of sex determination and multifactorial genetic control of skin colour to promote awareness of diversity within my lessons. I provide a variety of supplemental information and practice sheets to foster the variety in learning styles and paces and that are designed with ease of reading & understanding and in OpenDyslexicAlta font. I also use self-paced online homework to reinforce lecture content in a relaxed and accessible atmosphere, including weakly dynamic study and self-quizzing modules that use adaptive learning to help students learn the basics. I have developed active-learning, group exercises using Google jamboards to increase visual literacy and promote an inclusive community through student collaboration.

5) I evaluate goals, learning needs & teaching methods through surveys to assess student learning styles & gather feedback on teaching strategies with a focus on accessible learning.

6) I provide a highly supportive, caring & approachable atmosphere within & after contact hours to encourage students to seek help of any kind. This includes a zero-indifference approach to insensitive comments. I support students using a course management system to provide access to online course content, being available by email, and by referral to accessibility services (& checking on them while writing exams).

7) I participate in workshops/webinars focussing on inclusive teaching practices. It is my responsibility to provide practices that contribute to safe, inclusive discussion of genetics and social issues. I attended the Undergraduate Genetics Education Virtual Workshop, which raised awareness that genetic ancestry testing influences consumers' ethnic and racial identities and can reinforce race privilege among those who already experience it. I now provide students with information to promote deep thinking about what ancestral DNA means to different groups. I included a TedED video 'What your DNA can't tell you' in my courses. One student commented in the associated online discussion forum: "Also, the databases that they use don't include many Indigenous groups. So while those DNA tests might be fun, I don't think companies should be allowed to advertise them as being accurate and they definitely should not be used to try to prove or disprove someone's ethnicity or race."

In summary, I am committed and able to contribute to your institution's vision of inclusion and equity by scholarship, teaching, service, mentoring and advising.