

# Definitions

“Inclusive classrooms are classrooms in which instructors and students work together to create and sustain an **environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged** to express her or his views and concerns.”

--Saunders & Kardia, CRLT

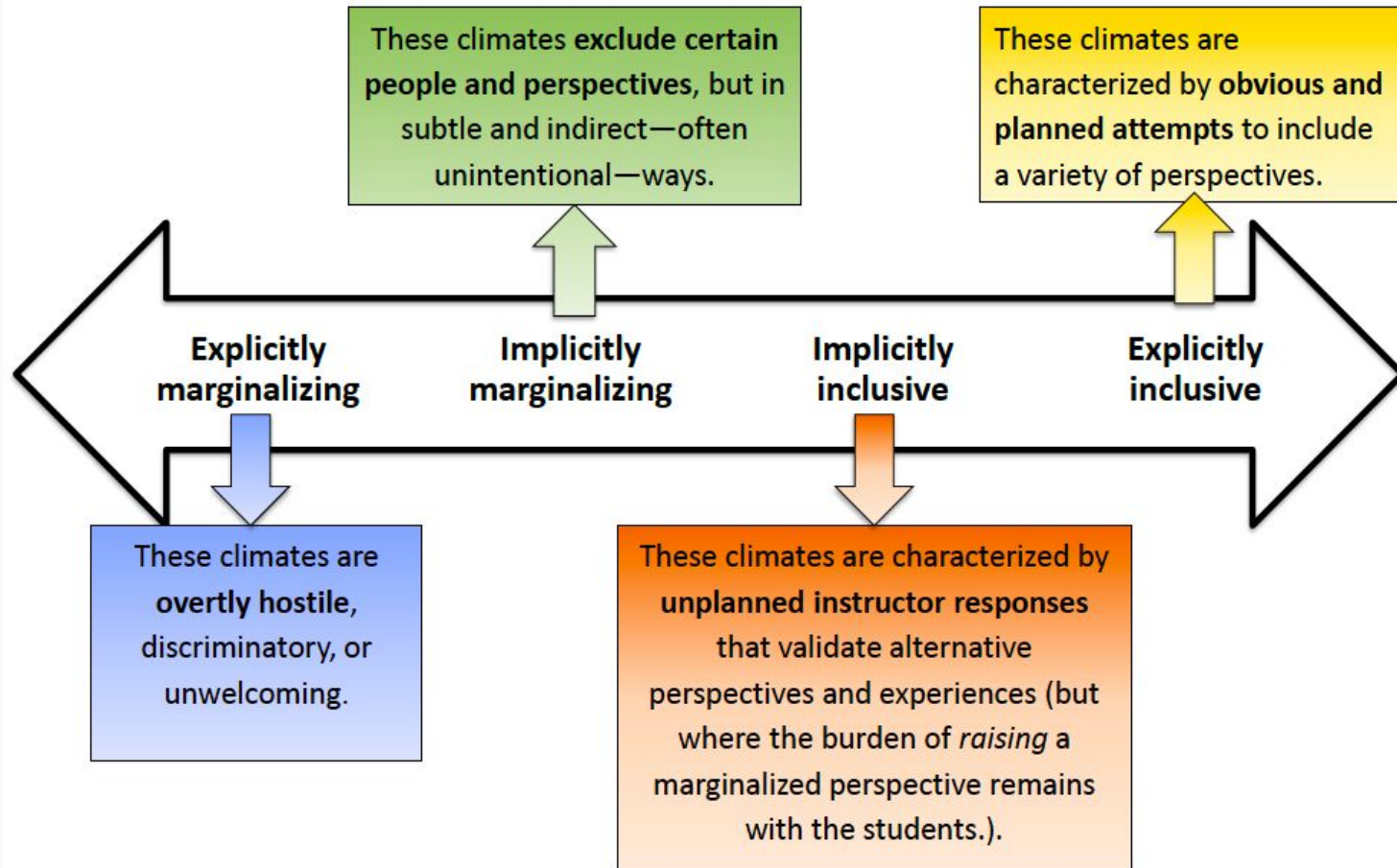
“Inclusive teaching strategies refer to any number of teaching approaches that address the needs of **students with a variety of backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities**. These strategies contribute to an overall inclusive learning environment, in which **students feel equally valued**.”

--Cornell University Center for Teaching Excellence

“Inclusive teaching means teaching in ways that **do not exclude students, accidentally or intentionally**, from opportunities to learn.”

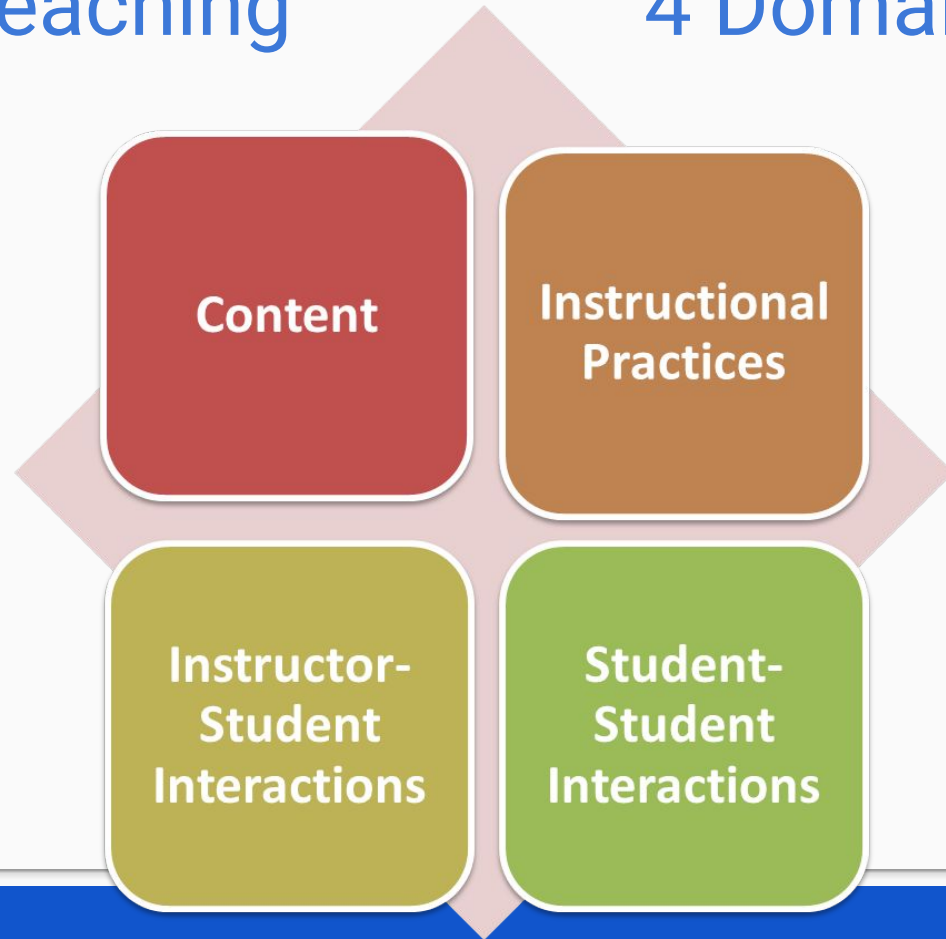
--University of Washington Center for Teaching and Learning

# Continuum of Classroom Climate



# Inclusive Teaching

# 4 Domains



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at U-M

From President Schlissel's Charge:

- **Diversity:** We commit to increasing diversity, which is expressed in myriad forms, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religious commitments, age, (dis)ability status, and political perspective
- **Equity:** We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination.
- **Inclusion:** We commit to pursuing deliberate efforts to ensure that our campus is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion.

We know that by building a critical mass of diverse groups on campus and creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can more effectively leverage the resources of diversity to advance our collective capabilities.

## Inclusive Teaching at the University of Michigan

At all levels, from individual instructors to the upper administration, the University of Michigan has stated a commitment to inclusive teaching. What does “inclusive teaching” mean at U-M? CRLT uses the following definition, which synthesizes a range of research related to teaching and learning as well as ideas collected in faculty focus groups:

**Inclusive teaching** involves **deliberately cultivating** a learning environment where all students are treated equitably, have equal access to learning, and feel welcome, valued, and supported in their learning. Such teaching **attends to student identities** and **seeks to change** the ways systemic inequities shape dynamics in teaching-learning spaces, affect individuals’ experiences of those spaces, and influence course and curriculum design.

Some key aspects of this definition to note: 1. This definition is **relevant in every discipline**, whatever your content. 2. Inclusive teaching requires **intentional practice over time**. As one participant in a CRLT faculty workshop stated, “Teaching inclusively is a mindset. You can’t think about it once and be done.” 3. Inclusive teaching does not describe any particular pedagogical approach but names a **foundational intention that shapes your approach**, whether you are lecturing, leading discussion, holding office hours, or facilitating team-based learning.

As the definition also suggests, inclusive teaching ideally stems from **instructor awareness about the ways systemic inequities (such as sexism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, and economic inequality) influence student access to and learning experiences within** specific disciplines and institutions as well as higher education more generally. In this way, the idea of inclusive teaching provides a lens through which to view your discipline, courses, students, institution, and the interactions among them.

You may or may not already have a clear understanding of how such inequities play out in your discipline. Whatever your starting point, you can increase your awareness by paying attention to -- and discussing with teaching colleagues -- matters such as the following:

- Who has primarily been included and supported in my field of study (e.g., featured as experts or top scholars, hired as faculty, recruited as graduate students, graduated in large numbers from relevant majors)? How has that inclusion been facilitated? Are people of some identity groups overrepresented or underrepresented, suggesting barriers to inclusion? Through my teaching, how might I facilitate inclusion of a broader range of identities and perspectives?
- What do the most common pedagogical approaches in my field assume about students’ educational backgrounds, frames of reference, and/or ways of learning? Who might be excluded by those assumptions, and what role can I play in including them?
- Where do I see gaps in perspective or marginalizing approaches in course materials? Where do I see marginalizing behavior in classroom interactions? How can I intervene to make changes?
- How can I learn about and guard against my own implicit biases affecting my interactions with or assessments of students?

- How can I learn about students' experiences of the learning environment in my course so I can continuously work to create an inclusive climate?

As you become increasingly aware of such dynamics and seek to respond to them through your instructional choices, it's helpful to be guided by insights from **research on learning and teaching**. You can learn more about that research foundation at [www.crlt.umich.edu/research-basis-inclusive-teaching](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/research-basis-inclusive-teaching) (where full citations are available ). Some key inclusive teaching principles stemming from that research include:

- *Students' feelings of social belonging are strongly correlated to their ability to learn. By the same token, feeling excluded, marginalized, or devalued on campus or in a class or discipline can be a significant barrier to student learning.*<sup>1</sup> (You can facilitate a sense of belonging through learning students' names, structuring meaningful peer learning opportunities, choosing examples from a broad range of cultural domains to illustrate course concepts, or having students provide examples themselves.)
- *Students are more likely to persist through challenges when instructors communicate high standards and provide clear paths to success for all students.*<sup>2</sup> (You can do this by identifying effective study strategies for exams, providing grading rubrics that outline clear criteria for success on writing assignments, or sharing stories about your own challenges and successes learning difficult material.)
- *Transparency about expectations and norms benefits all students' learning and is especially beneficial for first-generation college students and other groups who have been traditionally underserved by higher education.*<sup>3</sup> (Transparent practices include identifying learning objectives for class activities, explaining how students should communicate with you and make use of opportunities like office hours, and making clear how student work will be assessed in every dimension of the course, including participation.)
- *Student awareness of and appreciation of diversity are maximized when instructors create structured opportunities for classmates to learn about and from one another.*<sup>4</sup> (Such opportunities could include regular icebreakers at the start of class, team activities where students self-identify strengths and skills, or peer interviews about prior experience with course material.)

How might your teaching be guided by an awareness of such principles? How can you enhance inclusiveness and equity in your classroom, studio, lab, and/or office hours? These are questions you can productively reflect upon throughout your teaching career.

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<sup>1</sup> Ambrose et al (2010); Walton & Cohen (2011)

<sup>2</sup> Dweck (2006); Steele (2011); Yeager et al (2013)

<sup>3</sup> Eddy & Hogan (2014); Stephens et al (2012)

<sup>4</sup> Johnson & Johnson (2014); Gurin et al (2013)