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*Pedagogy of  
Inclusion:  
Integrated  
Multicultural  
Instructional  
Design*

*This article presents integrated multicultural instructional design (IMID), a new pedagogical model that is responsive to the growing student diversity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and throughout the world. This work builds on previous research articles in the Journal of College Reading and Learning related to assessing our commitment to multiculturalism. Course evaluation results from a pilot implementation project involving 5 faculty members are also discussed, and the PIRIMID course evaluation template is provided.*

**R**ecent research in the U.S. has documented that participating in a diverse learning environment can enhance the educational experience for *all* postsecondary students and can be related to the development of leadership, critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication skills (Antonio, 2001; Barron, Pieper, Lee, Nantharath, Higbee, & Schultz, 2007; Blimling, 2001; Chang, 1999; Gurin Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Maruyama, Nirebim, Gudeman, & Marin, 2000; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Pascarella, Palmer, Moye, & Pierson, 2001; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000; Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, & Parent, 2001). For purposes of this article, “student diversity” will be defined as the existence of students’ diverse social identities—complex configurations that can include race, ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, age,

gender, sexual orientation, disability, social class, language, citizenship, and so on—any of which can be more or less salient at any given moment depending on context. “Multiculturalism” will be used to refer to how we as learning assistance and developmental education professionals consider multiple cultural perspectives in responding to these diverse social identities (Miksch, Bruch, Higbee, Jehangir, & Lundell, 2003). If our institutions provide access without also providing the supports needed to facilitate student success, we fail in our mission to prepare future citizens for life in an increasingly diverse global society. Although many educators would agree that integrating multiculturalism in postsecondary teaching and learning is an important goal, there is a dearth of resources for professional development for faculty and student services staff related to specific strategies for achieving this goal. The purpose of this article is to describe integrated multicultural instructional design (IMID; Higbee & Goff, 2009), a model for multicultural postsecondary education that focuses on teaching but also addresses other supports for learning.

### **Building on Previous Research**

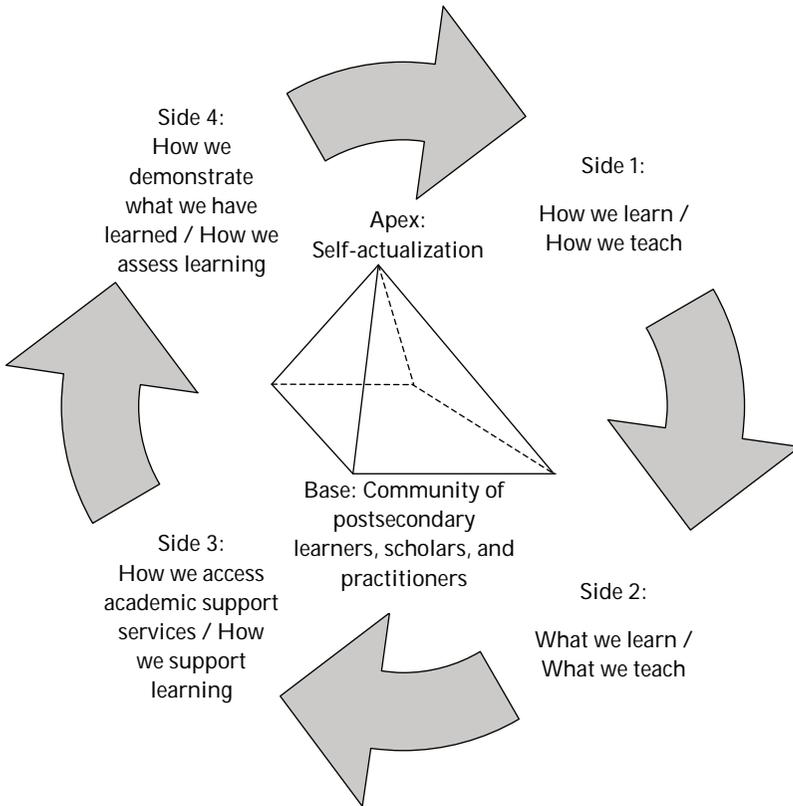
In 2001, with encouragement from James Banks, lead author of *Diversity Within Unity: Essential Principles for Teaching and Learning in a Multicultural Society* (Banks et al., 2001), the Multicultural Concerns Committee (MCC) within the General College (GC) at the University of Minnesota began exploring how to assess its commitment to multiculturalism. We started with a brief open-ended survey of the GC faculty (Bruch & Higbee, 2002) as well as an analysis of the contents of the prominent journals in developmental education and learning assistance for the previous 10-year period. What we learned was that although the GC faculty considered multicultural awareness vital to teaching and learning, very little attention was paid in the developmental education literature to students' diverse social identities and how culture and other facets of identity might be related to learning. The notable exceptions were articles related to English as a second language and to learning disabilities as factors in the development of reading and writing skills. Meanwhile, postsecondary student demographics changed significantly during this period (Crissman Ishler, 2005; Higbee, 2009; KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). With the support of GC Dean David Taylor, leaders and scholars in the field of learning assistance were invited to the Twin Cities for a “Future Directions” meeting in November 2002 to discuss ways of infusing multiculturalism in developmental education theory, research, and pedagogy (Higbee & Pettman, 2003; Lundell, 2003). One outgrowth of this meeting was the publication

of two monographs by GC's Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL): *Multiculturalism in Developmental Education* (Higbee, Lundell, & Duranczyk, 2003) and *Diversity and the Postsecondary Experience* (Higbee, Lundell, & Duranczyk, 2007). Meanwhile, the MCC developed its scenarios project (Jehangir, Yamasaki, Ghere, Hugg, Williams, & Higbee, 2002) as a professional development resource.

The MCC began adapting Banks et al.'s *Diversity Within Unity*, a checklist for assessing the integration of multicultural perspectives in elementary through secondary educational settings developed by the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington, for use in postsecondary settings; the MCC then piloted its new questionnaire for GC faculty, staff, and administrators in February 2002 (Bruch, Jehangir, Lundell, Higbee, & Miksch, 2005; Higbee, Miksch, Jehangir, Lundell, Bruch, & Jiang, 2004). Although means exceeded 4 on a 5-point Likert-type scale for many of the items, notable exceptions included items regarding (a) professional development opportunities related to diversity and multiculturalism, with means ranging from 3.58 to 3.82; (b) using diverse teaching methods and addressing cultural heritage, with means ranging from 3.50 to 3.90; and (c) assessment, with means ranging from 2.82 to 3.86 (Higbee et al., 2004). The questionnaire was further revised with feedback from respondents after which separate parallel survey forms were developed for (a) faculty and instructional staff, (b) student development professionals, (c) administrators, and (d) students, and published by CRDEUL in 2003 as the *Multicultural Awareness Project for Institutional Transformation* (MAP IT; Miksch, Higbee, et al., 2003).

The next step was to assess student perceptions using the MAP IT tool (Bruch, Higbee, & Siaka, 2007; Higbee, Bruch, & Siaka, 2008; Higbee & Siaka, 2005; Higbee, Siaka, & Bruch, 2007a, 2007b). Again the results were generally positive, with most item means between 2.80 and 3.20 on a 4-point, Likert-type scale, but faculty and staff members were concerned that more needed to be done to ensure that they "walked the talk" (Bruch, Higbee, Jehangir, & Siaka, 2004). One last iteration of the faculty and staff MAP IT questionnaires was administered as GC was closing in spring 2006 (Ghere, Kampsen, Duranczyk, & Christensen, 2007). Throughout this process of assessing our commitment to diversity and multiculturalism, we reflected critically on the results and explored specific strategies to ensure that all students felt welcome and supported. As GC was replaced by the Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning (PsTL), the development and evaluation of IMID as a model for inclusive pedagogy seemed like the next logical step (Higbee, 2008; Higbee & Barajas, 2007; Higbee, Duranczyk, & Ghere, 2008).

**Figure 1. Visual Representation of PIRIMID Course Evaluation Form Template Spring 2009**



### **Integrated Multicultural Instructional Design**

The primary goal of IMID (Higbee & Goff, 2009) is to promote the integration of multicultural content and diverse teaching and learning strategies in postsecondary curricula, programs, courses, and academic support services. Our vision of IMID resembles a pyramid. Its foundation is a collaborative community of postsecondary administrators, faculty, student development and academic support professionals, and students who express their commitment to diversity and multiculturalism throughout the educational process. From the perspectives of first the learner and then the educator, the four sides of the IMID pyramid depict (a) *how we learn / how we teach*, (b) *what we learn / what we teach*, (c) *how we access academic support services / how we support learning*, and (d) *how we demonstrate what we have learned / how we assess learning*.

Just as the great pyramids of Egypt are actually made of blocks, each building on the previous one, for the IMID pyramid, each layer provides the scaffolding to support the next level of learning. As illustrated in Figure 1, the four sides of the IMID pyramid come together at an apex that, like Maslow's (1954, 1968) hierarchy of needs, represents self-actualization for all members of the educational community.

Building on the MAP IT guiding principles, we have created guidelines for each of the four sides of the pyramid.

**Guiding principles related to instructional strategies—how we teach—include:**

- Promote understanding of how knowledge and personal experiences are shaped by the contexts (e.g., cultural, social, political, economic, historical) in which we live and work.
- Work collaboratively to construct knowledge.
- Understand that learning is a complex process that involves many layers of reflection.
- Identify what skills must be developed in order to achieve mastery without excluding students on the basis of nonessential skills.
- Integrate skill development (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, written and oral communication) with the acquisition of content knowledge.
- Establish and communicate clear expectations in terms of (a) learning objectives, (b) engagement in the teaching and learning process, and (c) evaluation measures for teaching and learning.
- Use teaching methods that consider diverse learning styles, abilities, ways of knowing, and previous experience and background knowledge.

**Guidelines for content—what we teach—include:**

- Determine what content knowledge is essential for each course and for the program or curriculum as a whole.
- Establish course objectives that reflect essential course components and do not exclude students on the basis of gaps in prior knowledge.
- Meet or exceed professional standards for excellence in content knowledge within an environment of inclusion.
- Integrate multicultural perspectives within course content.
- Relate content to historical trends, current events, and future directions.
- Consider global perspectives.

The third side of the pyramid—academic support—focuses on developing natural supports for learning that enhance access, overcome previous inequities, and provide a scaffold for the learning process. Sanford (1966, 1968) proposed that to maximize student development we must achieve an appropriate balance between challenge and support. In addition to supports provided by faculty within the classroom, academic support

services such as learning centers and tutoring and mentoring programs can assist in creating this balance.

Guiding principles for assessment, the fourth side of the pyramid, include creating multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge, ensuring the absence of bias in the assessment of student learning, and using formative as well as summative assessment measures. In developmental education programs it is important that these guidelines apply to placement and exit testing practices as well as to opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skill development in individual courses.

Clearly the four dimensions of IMID are not discrete or mutually exclusive. For example, how we assess learning is part of how we teach. However, we developed the model to present learning support and assessment as key factors in the teaching and learning process because too often they are overlooked in these conversations.

### **Implementation**

The University of Minnesota's Office for Equity and Diversity provided a \$3,000 grant for the "Promoting Inclusion and Retention through Integrated Multicultural Instructional Design" (PIRIMID) project to develop the IMID model and pilot implementation during the 2008-2009 academic year (Duranczyk & Higbee, 2009; Higbee & Goff, 2009; Higbee, Goff, & Schultz, 2009). The following paragraphs present just a few examples that illustrate how we implemented the guiding principles of each of the four aspects of IMID.

#### **Instructional Strategies—How We Teach**

The course syllabus can be a helpful tool in welcoming students. Including policies such as those related to disability accommodations and absences for religious observances communicates that difference is valued. We also consider it imperative to model appropriate use of language in the classroom; on the first day of class we discuss how and why words can hurt and our expectations for respectful communication (Clinton & Higbee, 2010).

In order to ensure that all students feel welcome and supported, it is important to learn students' names, even in larger class sections. One method is making an individual "getting to know you" appointment an assignment for the class. Other ideas include using name tags or table tents (i.e., note cards bearing students' names folded lengthwise and propped on the table or desk in front of the student) and class photos to assist in memorizing names. Mechanisms like "student information sheets" and in-class introductions (Goff & Higbee, 2008, pp. 6, 16) and

weekly question cards (Schultz & Higbee, 2007, 2009) also aid in learning more about each student as an individual. E-mail and other electronic forms of communication like text messaging are also useful tools, and many students prefer them to attending office hours or calling because they are not only more convenient but also less threatening. Each faculty member must choose the best channels for communication depending upon accessibility, comfort with technology, and costs for both the faculty member and the students. When using electronic forms of correspondence, the faculty member needs to respond in a timely fashion without being expected to be online 24 hours per day.

The University of Minnesota has adopted seven "Student Learning Outcomes" (SLOs; University of Minnesota, 2007), as follow:

- Can identify, define, and solve problems
- Can locate and critically evaluate information
- Have mastered a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry
- Understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies
- Can communicate effectively
- Understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines
- Have acquired skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning

Faculty are required to identify one or more of these SLOs to be addressed in each course. In addition to including the content learning objectives for the course, we have also communicated expectations by stating specific course activities geared toward facilitating student progress on the SLOs in the syllabus. Other strategies for communicating clear expectations include: (a) involving all students in brainstorming guidelines for creating a respectful learning environment; (b) providing a handout with a summary of all assignments, deadlines, and point values on which students track their own progress (Goff & Higbee, 2008, p. 10); (c) creating separate grading rubric handouts for each major assignment, with a corresponding grading sheet that is returned with the assignment and delineates the points earned for each criterion of the rubric; and (d) utilizing online grade books. Faculty provide handouts in multiple formats (e.g., paper copies, posted to course Web site) in addition to being discussed in class.

We have used a wide array of mechanisms to illustrate how knowledge and personal experiences are shaped by contexts, including emphasizing the sharing of life experiences of both faculty members and students as appropriate to the course content. Meanwhile, students actively engage in working collaboratively to construct knowledge. One idea is to project a photo on the screen and ask students to write down what

they see. After they share their thoughts first in small groups and then with the class as a whole, they are able to discuss how and why their perceptions can be so different. An assignment used in spring 2009 was to write a letter to the author of one of the readings; students were surprised to see the extent to which some agreed and others heartily disagreed with the author's point of view and why. Another sample assignment required students to interview a practitioner of their choice. Students shared their findings with their peers individually in 3-minute intervals while sitting in concentric circles. Students valued the option to choose their own interviewee, the diversity of interview results, and the ability to discuss their interviews one-on-one rather than making a formal presentation. This assignment served as scaffolding for making the connection between theoretical learning and pragmatic knowledge. We also use application-level activities and assessments for engaging students as well as contextualizing learning.

Our own preferred learning styles are not dissimilar from those of our students, so we, as teachers, also benefit when using methods that consider diverse learning styles, abilities, ways of knowing, and previous experience and background knowledge. We use film clips, case studies, individual and small group presentations, interactive Web sites, in-class activities, field trips, guest speakers, multimedia presentations, role plays, and other tools to balance lecture- and text-based learning. To ensure engagement with the text, we ask students to create their own questions as they read, and those questions then form the basis for class discussion.

### **Course Content—*What We Teach***

Critics may assume that it is easy to determine essential course components, establish objectives, and embed multiculturalism in the courses we teach—psychology, first-year experience courses, writing-intensive freshman seminars, marketing, human resource development, and management—but not so easy in “the hard sciences” and other areas where rigorous national and international standards must be met. Staats (2005) provided a rich example of how multicultural content enhanced student learning in a developmental education mathematics course in which a significant amount of math content also had to be mastered in order to ensure students' success in subsequent course work.

In order to relate course content to historical trends, current events, and future directions and consider global perspectives, we strive to be very deliberate in how we tie course material to mass media accounts of current events and to students' own “real world” experiences. Faculty encourage students to bring in artifacts of popular culture related to

course content, and time is provided for discussion of these artifacts. For example, in a freshman seminar focusing on diversity, when the YouTube version of Susan Boyle's (2009) performance on *Britain's Got Talent* became an overnight sensation, students used the video as a starting point for a conversation about stereotypes. This video led to a discussion about ageism and how age and experience are revered in some cultures as a source of wisdom, while respect for one's elders does not necessarily have the same importance in all cultures. We are fortunate in that we often have U.S. immigrant and international students in our classes. Although we would never expect them to represent the perspectives of an entire population, we know that we all benefit when they share their points of view or question our sometimes Western-centric ways of looking at what is happening in the world.

### **Instructional Supports and Academic Services—*How We Support Learning***

Although we use Web-based supports in our courses, it is important to recognize that some students do not own a computer or share one family computer, cannot afford Internet access at home, and may also be limited in the amount of time they have to use computer labs on campus because of work, family, and other responsibilities (Duquaine-Watson, 2008). Thus, we try to make all materials available in multiple formats, including paper copies, and provide students with information about campus resources both in the syllabus and on course websites. In class, we use experiential activities and discussion—often guided by the questions that the students themselves have developed—to reinforce material covered in the reading. We also prepare our own study guides that reflect what we consider most important in the reading and hold in-class review sessions for quizzes and tests. For writing-intensive courses, we provide significant feedback on the mechanics as well as the content of student writing, but also refer students to the centrally-located Writing Center on campus for more in-depth support as needed.

### **Evaluating Student Growth—*How We Assess Learning***

Creating multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge can enrich teaching as well as learning experiences. In addition to basing course grades on a broad array of assignments and spreading out deadlines across the semester, with no single test or assignment accounting for more than 15% of the final grade (i.e., no “high stakes” tests or papers), we have introduced creative writing assignments, given students a choice between outlining longer papers or creating mind maps or other visual representations instead, and provided formative

feedback with several opportunities for revision. We have also developed presentation assignments that enable students to build their presentation skills and get more comfortable with oral performance a little at a time, and have assigned projects that foster creativity while also reflecting students' different abilities and ways of knowing. Final projects for spring semester included CDs and live performances of original poetry and music compositions, videos, collages, scrapbooks, original works of art, short stories, games, journals and other self-reflections, and graphic novels. As part of the handouts describing all assignments, including the final projects, faculty provided grading rubrics that considered multiple modes of presentation and noted that although creativity, organization, and presentation were facets of the rubric, content and relevance to the course were the categories bearing the largest point totals. In spite of the wide range of projects, it can be surprisingly easy to determine the quality of the content and the level of effort required of the student. Peers became involved in the grading process, and were highly critical of those projects with shallow content or that seemed to be thrown together at the last minute.

To eliminate bias against students who are slow readers or non-native speakers of English or have test anxiety, we have used a number of strategies to eliminate time as a factor in test performance. For example, we give the full class period and have reduced the number of items on tests and the expected length for answers to essay questions. Students found specific instructor-initiated discussion on test-taking strategies for different types of examinations (e.g., true-or-false) to be very helpful. We asked students to apply personal experience to course material in short-answer and essay questions. We have used formative midterm evaluations to guide changes to assessment formats to take into consideration students' backgrounds, opinions, and perceptions; based on student feedback we have made adjustments in the types of test items we use and attempted to reduce other barriers to learning and to demonstrating knowledge. Although we want test items to distinguish between students who have read the text and studied carefully and those who have only skimmed the material, our intent is not to trick students. We create all of our own exams rather than using items generated by textbook publishers or other sources. Thus, when we indicate that we consider information important, students can anticipate that it will be covered on a forthcoming test or quiz.

Many of the strategies we have discussed in the previous paragraphs might simply be considered good teaching. However, as we have worked to implement IMID we have found that we are even more intentional and reflective in our work, and that we also find ourselves thinking more deeply about the role that culture can play in teaching and learning (Hackman, 2008).

## Evaluation of the Pilot Implementation Project

Five PsTL faculty members submitted PIRIMID implementation plans for their courses during spring semester and also had their students evaluate their courses using the PIRIMID course evaluation template (see Figure 2). Faculty could individualize the template by adding examples of how they implemented IMID in their courses.

**Figure 2. PIRIMID Course Evaluation Form Template Spring 2009**

**COURSE EVALUATION FORM TEMPLATE**  
**Promoting Inclusion and Retention through**  
**Integrated Multicultural Instructional Design (PIRIMID)**  
 [Insert course name and number here]

This course was designed using the principles of Integrated Multicultural Instructional Design (IMID), a model for developing inclusive curricula. On a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 = “not at all” and 10 = “outstanding,” please evaluate the extent to which this course accomplished each of the following goals:

**Teaching Methods**  
 [Insert faculty member’s name here] uses a variety of teaching methods (e.g., \_\_\_\_\_) that reflect a commitment to engaging a diverse student population.

<u>Not at all</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	<u>Outstanding</u>
										10

Comments regarding teaching methods:

**Course Content**  
 [Insert faculty member’s name here] integrates multicultural perspectives (e.g., \_\_\_\_\_) within the course content.

<u>Not at all</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	<u>Outstanding</u>
										10

Comments regarding course content:

**Evaluation of Student Learning**  
 [Insert faculty member’s name here] uses assessment and grading procedures that provide equitable opportunities for success for all students in the course, including multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge (e.g., \_\_\_\_\_).

<u>Not at all</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	<u>Outstanding</u>
										10

Comments regarding evaluation of learning:

**Commitment to Diversity and Multiculturalism**  
 [Insert faculty member’s name here] articulates a commitment to diversity and multiculturalism and demonstrates that commitment through her/his teaching methods, course content, and procedures for evaluating student learning.

<u>Not at all</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	<u>Outstanding</u>
										10

Comments related to faculty member’s commitment to diversity and multiculturalism:

The overall results of the PIRIMID course evaluations were overwhelmingly positive; aggregate results are provided in Table 1. For individual instructors, the mean for “uses a variety of teaching methods ... that reflect a commitment to engaging a diverse student population” ranged from 8.13 to 9.61, with individual instructor modes and medians both ranging from 8 to 10 on a 10-point Likert-type scale. For the item that asked about “integrat[ing] multicultural perspectives ... within the course content” the instructors’ individual means ranged from 8.33 to 9.89, while both modes and medians ranged from 9 to 10 across all instructors. When students were asked whether the instructor “uses assessment and grading procedures that provide equitable opportunities for success for all students in the course, including multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge” the instructor means ranged from 8.73 to 9.77, with medians and modes at either 9 or 10. Finally, mean student responses when asked whether an individual instructor “articulates a commitment to diversity and multiculturalism and demonstrates that commitment through her/his teaching methods, course content, and procedures for evaluating student learning” ranged from 8.67 to 9.85, with modes at either 9 or 10.

**Table 1**  
*PIRIMID Course Evaluation Results Spring 2009*

PIRIMID Project Responses for Faculty Submitting Implementation Plans	Teaching Methods	Course Content	Student Learning	Diversity
Mean	9.14	9.12	9.36	9.27
Mode	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Median	9.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Standard Deviation	1.07	1.27	0.90	1.20
Range (Minimum)	5.00	5.00	7.00	3.00
Range (Maximum)	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Number of Responses	116	116	113	113

As demonstrated in Figure 2, students also had the opportunity to provide open-ended comments. Many of the comments indicated that students believed that faculty cared about them as individuals and structured their courses to facilitate student success.

## Discussion

Prior to the spring semester, participating faculty were required to provide specific details related to operationalizing the guiding principles of each of the four sides of the IMID model: *how we teach, what we teach, how we support learning, and how we assess learning*. The evaluation results for the five instructors who were willing to develop implementation plans and then have students evaluate their commitment to multiculturalism as expressed through their teaching indicate that when faculty take the time to reflect very intentionally on strategies to ensure that all students are included and supported, students appreciate their efforts.

It should be noted that several of these classes were small, with fewer than 20 students, enabling faculty to know students as individuals in a way that might not be possible in larger classes. Furthermore, the faculty members who would open themselves up to this level of scrutiny may not be typical of faculty at the institution as a whole. Finally, these faculty members work within a College of Education and Human Development in a department titled "Postsecondary Teaching and Learning"; it is their job to explore and assess best practices. Thus, it cannot be assumed that these evaluation results can be generalized to other situations. Despite the small sample size and other limitations, however, the findings confirm our belief that integrated multicultural instructional design is a viable model for inclusive pedagogy. Implementing IMID encourages faculty to be more intentional and reflective and to consider the multiple intersecting aspects of students' social identities as they develop course content, instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and academic supports. Qualitative evaluation results supported that students want to know that faculty are invested in their success. We challenge other faculty at other institutions to create their own implementation plans and evaluate their results.

## Next Steps

This article reviews previous work done within an academic unit that has actively sought to assess whether it has fulfilled the commitment to diversity and multiculturalism that is articulated as a core value in its mission statement. We then present a new model to operationalize that commitment throughout the teaching and learning process and provide

evaluation results from a pilot project. For us, the next logical step in this research is to collaborate with other faculty members throughout the U.S. and other nations to develop this model further and discuss specific strategies for different academic settings and disciplines. As indicated in our previous research, both faculty and students believe that faculty members need further training in creating learning opportunities that consider students' diverse social identities. Those professional development activities should include theoretical perspectives, but ultimately need to be pragmatic, providing specific examples for implementing IMID.

Both educators and students benefit from the true integration of multiculturalism in the educational process. Consideration of diverse perspectives is essential as we educate students for life in a future where national boundaries will be blurred by global imperatives.

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