

# Online Equity Affirmation

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The mission of Foothill College[[1]](#endnote-2)[[2]](#endnote-3)[[3]](#endnote-4) reflects our institution-wide commitment to ensuring all students reach their full potential. We recognize that long-standing forms of institutionalized marginalization continue to negatively affect our students’ success and retention and that these can manifest in our online course design, teaching practices, and learning support services. As individuals within our institution, each of us must take an active role in dismantling these structural inequities in our classes. To that end, we have developed the Online Equity Affirmation to support efforts to promote online learning that is socially just. We call particular attention to the roles of racism and socioeconomic disparity, as these are two of the biggest contributors to online equity gaps. These forms of marginalization often intersect, but not always, and as we seek to address them, it is essential that we avoid conflating the two.

This affirmation is intended to be used as a foundational lens for examining online course design in conjunction with the CVC-OEI Online Course Design Rubric.

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| Action | Equity Challenge | Anti-Racism Strategies for Designing and Promoting Equity |
| Instructors routinely review disaggregated data to identify opportunities for improvement | Success and completion data demonstrate that students of color are disproportionately impacted in online courses. | * Regular analysis of success and completion rates allowing practitioners to determine opportunities for improving course and curriculum design * A focus on trends rather than a focus on a single class or event, which may be idiosyncratic * Recursive analysis to examine the effects of revisions and changes * Use of mixed methodology to collect data about student experience and outcomes * Use of Critical Race Theory to analyze data |
| Summative and Formative assessment is designed using tenets of Universal Design for Learning, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and Informed by Critical Race Theory | Online courses have been developed from traditional methods of teaching which often privilege specific ways of testing student learning that are tacitly biased. Universal design supports examining assumptions in ways that reveal hidden biases and enable multiple modes for teaching and learning content and skills. | * Rigorous review of assessment approaches to reveal traditional biases about how students are assessed * Assessments and grading schemes are intentionally (re)designed through an equity lens * Summative assessments are designed in ways that allow students choices in how they submit their work, including multimedia * Formative assessment, as outlined in the CVC-OEI Rubric, is frequent and varied, and designed to support learning and teaching, not just track participation or attendance * Feedback on formative assessments is intentionally crafted to promote learning and growth * Activities and assessment are rigorous and designed to help students grow as independent learners. |
| Content and Activities are designed using tenets of Universal Design for Learning and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy | Assumptions about canon—including overarching outcomes and granular course objectives—often reflect a hegemonic view of what content should be included and what activities best represent learning[[4]](#endnote-5). Steps should be taken to ensure content and activities are designed to support diverse learners. | * Revision of Course Outlines, including outcomes, objectives, and methods of assessment to reflect equity tenets (Institutional practitioners-level) * Content is presented in multiple ways via both multimedia (e.g. video, podcasts) and text * Content is chosen to represent multiple perspectives (cultural. Opposite of Western ideation) * Activities are chosen to help students connect new information to prior understanding and experiences, and to apply learning to new constructs |
| The technical aspects of the course are designed using tenets of Universal Design for Learning and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy  \*being especially mindful to avoid conflating class/ socioeconomic roles with race | Assumptions about technology—including access to specific technologies, skill level and proficiency with specific technologies, and the connection between technology tools and intellect or ability—often lock students out of learning activities or reinforce bias. Steps should be taken to ensure course material is device neutral, and, when needed, that assistance with technology is provided. | * Course content is tested on multiple devices, including mobile and tablets (Note: intended to address the reality that students access content on mobile devices out of convenience rather than poverty) * All required software is listed in the syllabus and provided at no cost to the student * All required software is available on campus computers in labs open to students * Technical support for hardware and software is provided ($ and **cultural**) (Note: must question assumption that Asian students and upper middle class don’t need but Brown & Black most likely to need.) * Links to support are provided in the course within the content where they will be needed * Textbooks are free or low-cost, and available to students in a variety of formats |
| Cultural Responsiveness[[5]](#endnote-6) | Traditional disciplinary canon has viewed knowledge through a hegemonic, Eurocentric lens that elides the contribution of diverse peoples[[6]](#endnote-7). Students have a right to see their own culture represented in the materials we teach[[7]](#endnote-8), and educators have an ethical responsibility to include voices and contributions omitted from the canon. | * Reading material in the course is chosen to ensure diverse perspectives * Literature, when included, allows students to have a “mirror” as well as a “window” * Course content includes voices and contributions that have been historically omitted * Imagery represents diverse races, genders, and abilities * Course content and activities invite students to use their cultural backgrounds to enhance learning, and encourages students to recognize and value diverse cultural backgrounds |
| Proactive Engagement | Student success and retention are affected when andragogic principles and/or a deficit lens is applied to explain low performance. Proactive engagement places the onus on practitioners and staff to meet students where they are, regardless of perceived readiness for college —to see each student as a “real” student rather than an imaginary “ideal” | * The instructor reaches out to students before the term begins to ensure all students are ready for the first week of classes * The instructor creates a welcome video outlines how the course management system is used in that class, and the role the instructor will play * Week 1 includes activities that allow the instructor to assess the individual needs of students and make meaningful connections * Formative feedback is timely, and is designed to engage students early and support students before they fall behind * the instructor actively looks for signs of struggle or disengagement throughout the term so that proactive measures may be taken as early as possible. |
| The relationship between the teacher and the learner is reconceived through a lens of mentoring and care | The traditional teacher/student relationship is built on a construct of distance and authority that can leave marginalized students feeling inferior, and inherently invokes imposter syndrome and stereotype threat[[8]](#endnote-9). | * The instructor intentionally works to humanize the course, including providing a video introduction that allows students to see and hear the instructor * The instructor explicitly describes their commitment to racial equity * The instructor’s interaction with each student conveys a high regard for the student, reinforcing notions that they belong, are smart, and are doing meaningful work * The instructor demonstrates care for each student as a whole person, attempting to make connections that are both academic and non-academic * Feedback [wording and mechanisms] is carefully chosen to promote learning and growth rather than wield power or judgment |
| Course design and course delivery communicate a culture of care | Online courses often unintentionally reinforce notions of distance and asynchronicity, which can disenfranchise and marginalize students of color and/or those who come from collectivist cultural backgrounds. Online courses should be intentionally designed to support presence, community, and communication. | * The instructor should be visibly present throughout the course, including engaging in discussions without dominating the conversation, providing regular feedback on assignments, and providing regular announcements * Announcements should include reminders about institutional events, especially about dates or services that impact students of color * Students should be invited to participate in the development of community norms * Instructors should monitor discussions and interactions with an eye toward preventing microaggressions * Opportunities for community-building and collaborative work are included, and carefully designed and supported * Institutional support for online students is robust * Institutional support for online learning is woven throughout the course * Students needing help receive a “warm hand-off” to *people* who can help, not just to services provided |
| Course design and delivery are racially conscious | Initial discussions of equity in online learning promoted concepts of online spaces as unbiased and color blind, while subtly reinforcing marginalization, stereotypes, and racism. Equitable online course design acknowledges races and recognizes, responds to, and reduces institutional racism. | * Spaces are created that allow students an opportunity to discuss race and racism as appropriate to the content of the course * Care is taken to acknowledge and mitigate microaggressions |

1. <https://foothill.edu/accreditation/pdf/educational-master-plan-2016-2022.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. <https://foothill.edu/president/mission.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. <http://go.boarddocs.com/ca/fhda/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=9TV3FF06A6C9> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Hammond, Z. Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. Rendon, L. (1994) Validating Culturally Diverse Students: Toward a New Model of Learning and Student Development [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. Steele, C. (2010) Whistling Vivaldi and Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us [↑](#endnote-ref-9)