Leveraging a Global Student Body to Maximize Learning
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Participants in this workshop brainstormed strategies that instructors can use to encourage students in group work to work collaboratively, listening to and learning from each other. Participants in both sessions emphasized that these strategies not only enable "domestic" students to learn new ways of seeing and knowing from international students, but they also should cultivate more effective participation by <u>all</u> students. We were seeking to foster behaviors by student group participants such as listening closely when others are speaking, asking follow-up questions to encourage other speakers, summarizing what has been said in a group so far in order to provide everyone a shared footing for the next step in a conversation, offering a quieter group member the floor, or paraphrasing what another person has said to confirm understanding. The suggestions that follow aim to position all the students in a group project, seminar, or class as participants and learners.

1. **Teach students new ways of communicating with each other. Each of these strategies involves offering explicit instruction on the goals of participation and the structures for participation, creating a positive frame for collaboration and thus greater learning.**

- Engage a group in formulating how it will manage a task, roles distribution, and communication, and sign off on this plan before the group proceeds to implementing it.
- Teach students explicitly what turn-taking strategies to use in group work and discussion. Tell students explicitly that cooperation and collaboration are expected.
- Instruct students to begin with a period of silent reflection to explore and verbalize their thoughts. Encourage "wait time" before jumping in to speak.
- Teach and use a process called "council," in which students sit in a circle with an intention to listen deeply to what is being said. An object is passed around the circle, allocating the option to take a turn, but the focus is on learning how to listen, rather than on becoming the speaker. The goal is to explore the shared thinking of the group. Students can be trained to meditate and become aware of their own thoughts, and to clear their minds in order to hear the thoughts of others.
- Teach and use a process called "round-robin," in which students take turns speaking, the group attentively listening to everyone's thoughts.
- Teach and use "Cold-calling" (large lecture context): a motivation for this method can be to allocate turns to everyone in class. Students can learn how to be prepared to contribute orally when given a turn. Instructors can be prepared to give hints to guide reticent participants, and to engage other students in helping out a student who is stuck. One instructor noted that within a given class session, those students who successfully get through a cold-call turn tend to keep volunteering to contribute thereafter.
- When calling on students, provide a summary of discussion and/or points that will support the student's ability to respond effectively.
- Teach and use a double-mic system (lecture or large seminar context): One instructor distributes two wireless microphones in a large lecture classroom, and trains students in how to ask and respond to productive discussion questions, thus allocating turns and enabling students to get to know each other even in a large lecture.
- Teach and use a brainstorming process where all ideas are affirmed in the initial stage. Teach techniques for effective participation in open discussion.
- Coach and use student facilitators: The instructor coaches students on how to lead class discussion, both posing discussion questions and taking "public" notes on a smart board, projected laptop, overhead projector, etc.

2. **Give groups a great deal of structure in terms of learning objectives and participation roles.**

   Preparation for Group work and Group formation:
   - Consider group size—in a larger group, there may be more opportunities for role differentiation, which could promote different kinds of productive participation, but it may become easier for some participants to become eclipsed.
   - Engage in activities in and out of class that foster meaningful, comfortable relationships among students. Make opportunities for students to get acquainted and to learn about others' backgrounds and experiences, to see what they have to offer each other.
   - Become aware of negative stereotypes or assumptions that students may have about the reliability of some peers as potential collaborators. Address these issues and attempt to construct groups that can work together with goodwill.
   - Try to balance group composition so no one is isolated by race, gender, language, or cultural background in a group dominated by members of the majority (e.g., group students such that international students have an ally member in a group).

   Nature of the Assignment
   - Tune content to student expertise—position ordinarily marginalized students as experts. This may often mean opening the context of a prompt to a broader frame so as to tap into a more diverse range of expertise.
   - Carefully consider the wording of prompts, discussion questions, etc. to see what perspectives might be accidentally eclipsed by the wording or tacit assumptions of a question. In other words, imagine what experience or perspectives different students may be able to bring to a learning interaction. Invite students to consider the flip side of a given question, or to apply it to a different context.
   - Ensure that overwhelmed students (which may mean all students) are equipped with the necessary resources to engage in collaborative tasks.
   - Provide a variety of means for a group to present the outcome of its collaboration, some options more verbal than others (e.g., skits).
   - Consider making students responsible for presenting the work of another student.

   Collaborative Processes
   - Make time for groups to discuss their assumptions and goals for working together and to tie these to an operational plan for how they will do their work.
   - Make time for groups to work during class or section, where instructor can keep an eye on how participation is distributed, and coach/intervene as needed.
   - Require/encourage the use of written agendas circulated in advance and meeting notes to enable all participants to prepare for meetings effectively and to say up with progress and decision making.
   - Require interim reports on group meetings and offer feedback and guidance in response.
   - Enable students to prepare short-term or long-term in advance, for example with short in-class writing prompts or announcements in advance on how to prepare for participation. In other words, give students advance notice of what to expect in order to prepare.
   - Establish a partner or advocate system for students who may have difficulty listening and note-taking simultaneously or who may benefit from being given a turn at talk rather than having to compete for one.
   - Give every student the opportunity to function as leader of discussion and coach them for this role.
   - Encourage asking questions, clarification, and confirmation as essentials for maximizing learning.

   Assessment
   - In grading, measure not only group outcomes, but also group process. Possibly get a report from students on who contributed what and on what students learned from others in their group.
   - Have students grade each other on their listening skills, their participation, and their peer-facilitation behaviors.
   - Establish a mid-process feedback system in which students can advocate for their own needs and also say what they think others in the class need or could do to maximize learning with and from all members of the classroom community.