Culturally Affirming and Meaningful Assignments Checklist

Initial Considerations

1. Have you reflected on how your positionality, beliefs, values, and experiences may influence what types of assignments you require and how campus professionals and colleagues can help you design or redesign assignments that are culturally affirming and meaningful?
2. Did you consider alternatives to traditional summative assignments that allow students to demonstrate learning in creative and personally relevant ways? Did you identify formative assignments that will help students know if they are on track for success?
3. Did you learn about your students before the start of the semester and use this information to determine assignments?
4. Did you reflect on what assumptions you may be making about students' prior knowledge and what assignment support may benefit students?

Assessment Design

1. Will the assignment (and assignment choices, if give) enable students to demonstrate that they achieved the learning outcomes of the course and program?
2. Does the assignment allow students to demonstrate their learning in diverse ways?
3. Does the assignment build on and value students' prior knowledge and experiences?
4. Will the assignment help students develop a multicultural orientation or perspective?
5. Does the assignment provide an opportunity for students to engage with and learn from others?
6. Does the assignment require students to make connections between what they are learning and their personal and professional lives?
7. Do the skills learned via the assignment have immediate and future real-world value?
8. Do you allow students to choose the topic and/or sources for assignments? If so, what guidance do you provide to help students decide on a topic?
9. Do you allow students to make process choices such as working independently or in a group or determining due dates?
10. Is the assignment at the "just-right" level of challenge? How do you know?

Transparent Communication of Assignment

1. Have you communicated how the assignment links to course learning outcomes and career skills?
2. Is the purpose of the assignment communicated?
3. Is a sequential list of the steps or tasks students need to take to complete the assignment successfully provided?
4. Did you use easy-to-understand, jargon-free language to communicate assignment expectations?
5. Did you share examples or models that illustrate various ways students can complete the assignment?
6. Did you communicate grading criteria and scheme, how assignment feedback would be provided, and if opportunities such as revise and resubmit options or reflective assignment components to use feedback immediately are available?
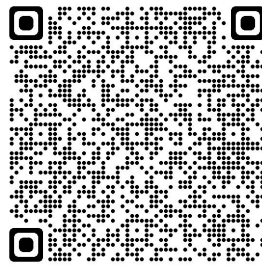
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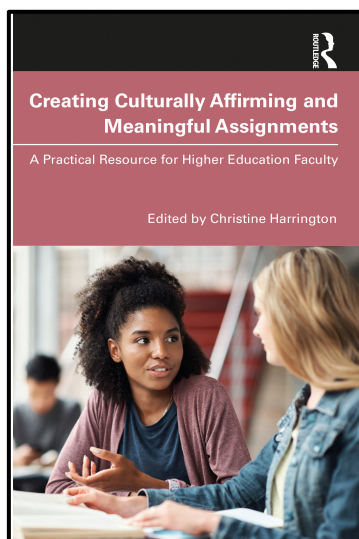
Creating Culturally Affirming and Meaningful Assignments
A Practical Resource for Higher Education Faculty

Christine Harrington

This book offers principles, strategies, and examples to aid in the development of inclusive college coursework in which all students feel seen and valued.

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