

IV. BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Building an Interculturally Competent Faculty

By Darla K. Deardorff¹

GIVEN THE INTEGRAL involvement of faculty in shaping the student experience, interculturally competent professors and instructors are in an excellent position to help students develop their own competence in this realm and facilitate students' global preparedness.

Interculturally competent faculty are those who:

- Understand the complexity of intercultural competence (ICC);
- Design their courses to go beyond knowledge transmission and address intercultural learning as an outcome;
- Can successfully teach students from a wide variety of backgrounds; and
- Are well prepared to provide feedback to students in their intercultural journeys.

Examples of events and activities faculty may participate in to build intercultural competence include: university-initiated conferences, workshops, and symposia; national and international conferences at which ICC is addressed; special ICC-focused faculty professional development opportunities. Building intercultural competence requires some important considerations for developing the content of such activities:

- Faculty must see the relevance of intercultural competence, whether through leading students abroad or teaching students from diverse backgrounds in an "intercultural classroom." Without relevance, it is difficult for there to be traction.
- Because faculty tend to be research-oriented, many find it helpful to learn that there have been over five decades of scholarly work on the concept of intercultural competence. Key definitions and frameworks (such as the first research-based ICC framework developed by Deardorff, 2006, 2009) can provide a foundation on which a working definition of ICC can be developed within a specific institutional context.
- Emphasizing the developmental, lifelong process of intercultural competence provides faculty with a different paradigm beyond a results-oriented skills approach. A more process-oriented approach promotes the incorporation of learning

Some Indicators of Intercultural Competence: Questions for Faculty Discussion¹

ICC Attitudes:

- How truly open am I to those from different cultural, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds?
- Do I make quick assumptions about a student? Do I prejudge students or situations, or do I withhold judgment while I explore all facets of the situation?

ICC Knowledge:

- Can I describe my own cultural conditioning? For example, what cultural values impact how I behave and communicate with others?
- How would I describe some of my students' worldviews? How might these differ from the ways in which I see the world?

ICC Skills:

- Do I engage in active observation in my classroom, paying attention to subtle nuances and dynamics among my students, and in my interactions with my students?
- Do I engage in active reflection on my teaching practice and on my interactions with those from different cultural backgrounds? Do I seek to understand why something occurred and what lessons can be learned from the situation?

ICC Internal Outcomes:

- Am I able to adapt my behavior and communication style to accommodate students from different culturally conditioned communication styles?
- Am I able to be flexible in responding to students' learning needs, seeking to understand those needs from their cultural perspectives?

ICC External Outcomes:

- How culturally appropriate have I been in my interactions with my students? How would my students answer this question?
- Was I able to meet my goals in an appropriate and effective manner?

Reference

1. Excerpted from Deardorff, D.K. (2011). *Exploring a framework for interculturally competent teaching in diverse classrooms*. In *Internationalisation of European Higher Education Handbook*. Berlin, Germany: Raabe Academic Publishers.

activities such as critical reflection and analysis into coursework.

- Faculty should reflect on the intercultural aspects of their teaching practice.
- It is important to meet faculty where they are in terms of their backgrounds, learning styles, and expectations. Identifying existing ICC allies and advocates, and engaging faculty through informal conversations or meetings to ascertain needs, challenges, and interest in intercultural competence can be effective first steps in building a campus-wide ICC community.

Through strategies and opportunities such as the ones discussed here, faculty become more effective in ensuring that students are well prepared to live in a global society. ■

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Reference

1. Faculty with an interest in intercultural competence are invited to join a new global network on ICC research (contact author for details: d.deardorff@duke.edu).