Identity in the Classroom: A Graduate Learning Community with Broad Campus Benefits
Jennifer Randall Crosby
Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning, Stanford University

Why a Learning Community?
- Learning Communities can have strong positive impacts on participants' teaching effectiveness, views of teaching as an intellectual pursuit, interest in the teaching process, and interdisciplinary connections (Cox, 2001).
- For graduate students, learning communities can provide a respite from individual and disciplinary isolation, as well as an effective mechanism for professional development (Huntzinger, McPherron, & Rajagopal, 2011).
- Given our office's interest in supporting longer-term, interdisciplinary community for graduate students and demonstrated student interest in teaching practices focused on equity and diversity, we launched the Identity in the Classroom Learning Community in fall of 2015.

Curriculum
- Format:
  - Ten students in pilot program
  - Admission by application
  - Eight 90-minute group meetings
  - Topics determined by participant interest
  - Designated student facilitator at each meeting
  - Shared reading for each conversation
  - Relevant campus guests
  - Diversity and First Generation Office
  - Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
  - Focus on concrete products and resources to inform the larger teaching community at Stanford and beyond
  - Participants received $500 stipend

Disciplines Represented, 2015-16:
- Civil & Environmental Engineering
- Geological Sciences
- Graduate School of Education
- Sociology
- History
- Linguistics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology

Topics Discussed:
- Stereotype Threat
- Growth Mindset
- Trauma and Trigger Warnings
- Difficult Classroom Conversations
- Ground Rules and First Day Practices
- Microaggressions and Implicit Bias
- Classroom Climate
- Supporting First Generation and Low Income Students

Assessment and Broader Benefits

Assessment Questions:
- How knowledgeable do you feel about issues related to student identity and learning?
- How prepared do you feel to address issues related to student identity in your teaching?
- How comfortable do you feel addressing issues related to student identity in your teaching?
- How confident do you feel about your ability to have classroom discussions related to student identity?
- How confident do you feel in your ability to create an inclusive classroom atmosphere in your discipline?
- *$p < .05; ^{p < .10}$ (repeated measures t-test)
- 80% response rate
- 100% of respondents would recommend participation in the learning community to their peers.

Discussions formed the basis for a series of new web resources available to all instructors:

Iteration and Next Steps

Participant Comments:
- "I really enjoyed the level of reflection, introspection and space to grapple with difficult ideas. I thought the group was thoughtful and really invested in the topics and I looked forward to the sessions."
- "I walked away from the group comfortable with the fact that I'm going to be uncomfortable . . . and that it's not about getting it 'right' but about being intentional about the climate I want in my classroom. . . . Finally, it was wonderful to be with people from different disciplines to hear about their unique issues and also to see the commonality among our issues and questions."
- "Hearing from members of disparate departments, fields, and backgrounds exposed me to new teaching issues and approaches that I had not considered before."
- "I learned a lot, even about things I didn't think mattered that much [the group] helps you think: how you are structuring your class, how are you making this accessible. Has been so very, very valuable."

Next Steps:
- Currently running two new cohorts with a total of 28 participants (69 applications)
- Additional campus experts added to address:
  - Allyship and Advocacy
  - Physical Disability and Mental Health
  - Difficult Dialogues Role Plays
  - Focus on concrete activities and classroom practices as outcomes

Disciplines Represented, 2016-17:
- Aeronautics & Astronautics
- Applied Physics
- Art History
- Classics
- Comparative Literature
- Energy Resources
- History
- Linguistics
- Math
- Mechanical Engineering
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science
- School of Medicine
- Theater and Performance Studies

Considerations around Evolution:
- Would a faculty version have traction?
- How would a course compare to this format?