



San Diego Community College District

City College · Mesa College · Miramar College · College of Continuing Education

Instructional Recommendations to Positively Affect Black Student Success

Introduction and Background

The San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) is committed to the success of our Black students. In our efforts to cultivate instructional environments which foster this objective, the SDCCD *Black Student Success Workgroup (BSSW)*, with representatives from each of the district's four colleges, developed five fundamental recommendations that we hope all faculty are willing to incorporate into their teaching practices. These recommendations are designed to **positively affect success for all students** in our classes. This work was informed, in part, by the RP Group's report entitled, [*The African American Transfer Tipping Point*](#) (2023).

We request faculty across the district come together to support the five *SDCCD Instructional Recommendations to Positively Affect Black Student Success*. We are asking each Academic Senate body to conduct a vote on "The Sense of the Senate," as to whether you support these ideas.

After each Senate accepts these recommendations as very fundamental instructional actions faculty can take to positively affect success for our Black students, the recommendations will be shared with the SDCCD Board of Trustees to request their support.

Implementation of these recommendations is voluntary. Additional recommendations are available for faculty who are interested in implementing ideas beyond these five.

If you have questions or would like additional information about the SDCCD Black Student Success Workgroup, please contact Dr. Veronica Gerace, the SDCCD BSS Faculty Coordinator, (vgerace@sdccd.edu), or Lillian Garcia, SDCCD Dean, Equity and Special Funded Programs (lgarcia002@sdccd.edu).



San Diego Community College District

City College · Mesa College · Miramar College · College of Continuing Education

Instructional Recommendations to Positively Affect Black Student Success

Developed by:

Dr. Veronica Gerace (SDCCD), Dr. Candace Katungi (Mesa), Brianna Simmons (City), Dr. Chinazom Iwuaba (Continuing Education), and Jordan Omens (Miramar).

Recommendation 1. Cultivate a supportive educational environment by learning your students' names and how to correctly pronounce them.

Explanation:

Develop practices and class activities which encourage students to get to know you as a professor and opportunities for students to get to know one another. These practices enable students to feel seen, included, and to value one another. "A person's name is part of their cultural identity. Honoring a student's name early within the academic year creates an inclusive environment in the classroom and helps students thrive." (Cooper et al., 2017; Igwe, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2014; Sue, 2010)

Recommendation 2. Regularly emphasize the value of your students' presence and their contributions to your class.

Explanation:

This can be done through daily announcements, by incorporating "Check-In" assignments into your course, or by sharing simple expressions of gratitude. Check-in assignments are assignments that allow students to reflect and to share with you how they are doing. This practice encourages students to develop self-advocacy skills. Check-in assignments can be incorporated at different points in the term. (Overall & Marsh, 1979)

Example:

A. In the very early days of the course by asking the following:

1. Do you have any questions or concerns about the course, syllabus,

or assignments that you would like to share?

B. Before an exam by asking the following questions:

1. What have you learned?
2. What would you like to review before the first exam?
3. How are you doing with the course materials (lecture, readings, assignments, etc.)?

C. After an exam by asking:

1. How did you do on the first exam?
2. What did you do to prepare for the exam?
3. Did you encounter any challenges or obstacles when preparing?
4. What grade are you aiming for in this class?
5. Do you have questions about ways to improve?

D. Expressions of gratitude can be as easy as saying things such as, "I am glad you are here," at the beginning of class.

E. Intentional acts of inclusion are invitations to students to share their knowledge, skills, and interests with the class and others. Sincere public or private acknowledgement of jobs well done may help to boost a student's confidence.

Recommendation 3. Develop your lesson plan to reflect your students' diverse identities.

Explanation:

Design your courses with the diversity of your students in mind. Ensure that students see themselves reflected positively in the subject matter, references, images, and resources. Provide students opportunities to highlight and honor their identities and experiences by connecting these with the course content through assessments, activities, and discussions. Express a deep appreciation for the depth and breadth of the student's background and culture. These practices ensure that students have opportunities to visualize their success in the course and in the profession. Students engage more positively with course content that relates to them, their backgrounds, or their culture. (Watson, 2024)

Example:

1. Develop an assignment which requires students to learn about current San Diego Black Professional(s) in your discipline. This assignment may recommend that students attend the *SDCCD San Diego Black Professionals Day* (Fall 2025) to meet with San Diego Black Professionals. This event is open to all SDCCD students.
2. Include a textbook written by a Black author and/or a required supplemental reading assignment written by a Black author.
3. Include at least one Black guest speaker as a scheduled presenter along with their CV.
4. Include positive imagery of Black professionals and other Black

- individuals on your visual aids, on Canvas, etc.
5. Share resources and references to Black organizations, events, etc.
Specific examples: The National Society of Black Engineers - San Diego Chapter; The San Diego Black Nurses Association; San Diego Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects, etc.

Recommendation 4: Share information about college and district resources that exist to support Black students and, whenever possible, incorporate them into your curriculum.

Explanation: Many SDCCD employees actively work to develop programs, initiatives, and events to support the success of Black students. Examples of these include the annual SDCCD Black Student Success Summit, the SDCCD Black Professionals Day, Black History Month Events, Black Studies Events, Umoja, Black Student Union, HBCU Caravan, the Black Student Success Canvas shell.

Examples - All faculty can support these efforts in the following ways:

1. Share announcements during class or post on Canvas about these programs and events.
2. Provide extra credit for student participation at Black Student Success events (such as during the Black Student Success Week statewide webinar series).

Recommendation 5: Demonstrate your humanity.

Explanation: Students are more eager to learn from professors who are relatable, realistic, and approachable. Regardless of whether we are an extrovert or introvert, we have a responsibility to develop positive relationships with our students. Just as in other relationships, when we meet someone new, we share about ourselves. You can convey that you are here to support all students and are approachable in very simple ways. By showing that you are human and have things in common with your students, you are demonstrating your support for your students. This type of engagement takes very little class time and demonstrates to all students that they can value and learn from one another, while also learning from you.

Examples:

1. At the beginning of the semester, share your educational journey and background.
2. Share tips and offer yourself as a resource to students who have similar interests or background.
3. Remind students that you have an open door policy during office hours or appointments to discuss any topic they wish to bring up.

Related References

Getting to Know Your Students

Cooper, K.M., Haney, B., Krieg, A., & Brownell, S.E. (2017). What's in a name? The importance of students perceiving that an instructor knows their names in a high-enrollment biology classroom. CBE Life Sciences Education, 16(1).

Igwe, N. (2016). Getting students' names right: It's personal. Faculty Focus. Retrieved from <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/getting-names-right-personal/>.

O'Brien, M.T., Leiman, T., & Duffy, J. (2014). The power of naming: The multifaceted value of learning students' names. QUT Law Review, 14(1).

Sue, D.W. (2010). Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation. Wiley. pp. xvi. [ISBN 047049140X](#).

Check-in Assignments

Overall, J.U., and Marsh, H.W., (1979). Midterm feedback from students: Its relationship to instructional improvement and students' cognitive and affective outcomes; Journal of Educational Psychology, v.71, #6, p.856-865.

Reflect Your Students' Diverse Identities

Bartlett, Jackson Christopher (2022). "Navigating Social Identity in the Classroom." Center for the Advancement of Teaching Excellence at the University of Illinois Chicago. Retrieved [4 April 2025] from <https://teaching.uic.edu/resources/teaching-guides/inclusive-equity-minded-teaching-practices/pronoun-usage/>.

Watson, S. (2024) [Culturally Appropriate Curriculum Design for Educators - Purdue University College of Education](#).

Overall Recommended Resource -

Cooper, D., Brohawn, K., & RP Group. (2023, October 28). *The African American Transfer Tipping Point*. RP Group Resources.

[https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/African American Transfer Tipping Point-\(AATTP\)-Study/AATTP ExploringTransferJourneys October2023.pdf?ver=2023-10-28-111932-313](https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/African American Transfer Tipping Point-(AATTP)-Study/AATTP ExploringTransferJourneys October2023.pdf?ver=2023-10-28-111932-313)