THE EDIT 10
BEST PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE TEACHING IN MEDIA PRODUCTION

Equity
Diversity &
Inclusion in
Teaching
Media

This document was created by media faculty for media faculty based on research conducted on U.S. higher education media production classrooms. We call our faculty-led initiative EDIT Media (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Teaching Media) and the EDIT 10 was developed collaboratively with faculty, students, and alumni of production programs. EDIT Media's impetus in developing this document began in department meetings, at conferences, and in student conversations about recurring problems in production classes: frustration with gender, racial, economic, and other imbalances in the classroom; students' desire to see a wider array of mediamakers, actors, and characters in examples presented in class; and shared concerns across campuses and at festivals over stereotypical characters, gratuitous violence, and clichéd narratives in student work.

EDIT Media's methodology in developing these practices included researching scholarship on media production practices, media literacy, and inclusive pedagogy; in-person focus groups with faculty and students across the country representing a variety of institutions and experiences; and anonymous national surveys of faculty and students in media production programs.

Change is needed if faculty are to fairly and equitably engage all of the students in our classrooms. Of 149 media faculty surveyed about inclusive teaching practices in media production higher education programs, 90.5% stated that more was needed from programs to ensure that all students feel equally valued and fully participate.* (More specifically, 24% said some improvement is needed, 42% said there was "lots of room to improve," 22.1% said "quite a lot" of improvement is still needed, and 1.3% stated that programs were very poor at inclusion.)

Students concur. In our survey of 152 students, 26% answered "yes" when asked whether they had ever felt excluded from or uncomfortable with a project or discussion in their production classes because of their identity.** Of those "yes" responses, the most often-cited causes for a feeling of marginalization were that "Film/TV examples shown or discussed in class rarely portrayed people like me" (17%), "Other students in the class said insensitive things about my identity" (16%), or "I felt intimidated because of my skill level with equipment or software" (13%).

In this research, we repeatedly heard stories of both faculty and students replicating the same kinds of biases in front of and behind the camera that are plaguing the American media industries. As instructors, we are in a position not only to support our students in producing richer and more diverse creative work, but to launch them into careers as leaders creating more inclusive workplaces. Graduates entering these fields can make transformative change. To get there, students on this career path need the best education possible – an education based on best practices.

With that in mind, the EDIT 10 builds upon research and feedback shared about faculty and student experiences in the classroom. These Best Practices allow each faculty member to teach to their expertise, to have autonomy in the classroom, and to foster students' creativity. They are not intended to provide solutions, but rather to provide a framework for teaching media in a way that addresses the needs of a diverse and ever-evolving student body. The practices are holistic and interdependent—one practice does not exist as an answer in and of itself, but is in conversation with all other practices. This is a living document that will change and grow. We hope the EDIT 10 will encourage rich conversations between faculty, administrators, staff, and students about how best our programs can succeed.

Visit the EDIT Media website for further explanation of the EDIT 10 and for teaching resources, data, and articles to help guide faculty on how to implement each of these Best Practices in the classroom.

1. SCREEN WIDELY

Screen examples in class from a diverse array of mediamakers, with casts, characters, and aesthetics that include a range of representation. Give attention to diversity in terms of gender, race, age, LGBTQ status, ability, class, geography, and/or religious affiliation in your choices for your everyday demonstration of techniques and concepts. Expand the canon beyond the obvious auteurs.

2. CULTIVATE YOUR CREW

Encourage collaboration and cooperation over auteurism and competition. Build a strong community within your classrooms by modeling professional and cooperative behavior in the classroom. Establish explicit expectations of mutual respect and equitable collaboration both in the classroom and on location. Openly discuss inclusion as a policy on your syllabus and a practice in your class. Think carefully about forming teams for class projects, including rotating students through roles throughout the semester. Assign teams rather than let students choose their collaborators. Ensure that shyer and less confident students have opportunities for leadership and technical roles and that more dominant and confident students learn how to listen, support, and assist their quieter peers.

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3. BLEND THEORY & PRACTICE

Part of the process of learning how to produce a media work involves developing self-awareness of each creative choice – why it's important to the final product, what meaning it conveys, how an audience might receive it (and a consideration of who that audience is). Asking students to place their choices in a theoretical and historical context inspires deeper reflection on how their works fit into the larger world of media. Blending these approaches can also help to bridge the divide that students often see between their production and critical studies courses.

4. CONCEPT BEFORE CRAFT

Keep a balance between developing storytelling skills and focusing on technical training. Without balanced attention to creative expression, trite or harmful content can go unaddressed in favor of development of technical ability. Creating a strong connection between craft and content opens up a space for the class to discuss representation and how technical execution shapes that representation.

5. CHARACTER MATTERS

All stories, and many other forms of expression, are about characters' identities: their personalities, emotional states, flaws, and backstories, but also their age, place of origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, class, etc. Because developing characters is integral to the process of most mediamaking, questions of representation are critical to developing rich, authentic characters. Suggest students break away from stale and harmful stereotypes and instead draw from personal stories before attempting to craft characters different from themselves. If students tell stories of characters who are less familiar to them, provide resources and techniques for crafting characters' language, experiences, and identity to build depth, responsibility, and thoughtfulness into the story development process.

6. ALL HANDS ON DECK

Active, cooperative, and experiential learning enables students to get hands-on experience with a skill or concept in a low-stakes setting that emphasizes problem-solving and communication skills. Provide regular opportunities for all students to gain practical experience in an environment where they can ask questions, solve problems collaboratively and independently, and succeed in applying what they've learned. Enable students who might otherwise simply observe to participate in learning as fully as more confident students. Prepare assignments with attention to accommodating the physical, economic, or scheduling challenges facing working and low-income students, students who have family commitments, or students with disabilities. Consider the diversity of access to resources among students as you evaluate their work.

7. FLY SOLO

Provide opportunities for solo and self-sufficient work in addition to group projects. Independent work not only provides all students the space to develop their skills, but creates accountability for students' learning, so that each student becomes responsible for their own growth and contributions. family commitments, or students with disabilities. Consider the diversity of access to resources among students as you evaluate their work.

8. CREATIVITY THROUGH CONSTRAINTS

Evidence shows that placing constraints on student projects has strong pedagogical value in promoting creativity and critical problem-solving, especially for introductory students. Creating boundaries on student work discourages problematic content while students are still developing theoretical and conceptual skills. Constraints need not be a list of banned items; instead, they can be a way of directing student work to encourage deeper engagement with specific skills. Such constraints can include limiting the length of projects, allowing only specific equipment to be used, focusing on conceptual approaches like a theme, or emphasizing stylistic approaches like the use of color. In introductory classes, pedagogical research shows that less is more.

9. KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

No individual instructor can accommodate the needs of all students. Instead, reach out to campus, community, and industry resources to connect your students to support systems, funding, and learning opportunities—inclusion or disability offices, student organizations or clubs, and internship coordinators, etc. Staff at these offices can also provide support in offering advice on best teaching practices for specific student populations and in locating additional resources. Invite guest speakers to fill in gaps in your own knowledge or experience, to contribute to critiques, or to model the diversity of people who can take on particular production roles.

10. PUT ON YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK FIRST

Take time to explore your own thoughts, experiences, and points of view on topics outlined in these practices. While implementing the EDIT 10 can feel organic, you may find yourself engaged in difficult conversations about how best to create and collaborate across difference and and how to address problems in representation. Carve out time for your own individual introspection and preparation. Research the issues that impact specific marginalized communities, especially those most represented on your campus. Acknowledge your own role as an authority figure with your students to explicitly promote an understanding of, and challenge to, the power dynamics that can play a role in shared learning in the classroom. Be prepared to advocate for students of marginalized identities who might otherwise be left to defend themselves on their own, and be willing to listen, make mistakes, and grow.

LEAD AUTHORS

Jennifer Proctor, M.F.A.
University of Michigan-Dearborn

Miranda Banks, Ph.D.
Loyola Marymount University

* Proctor, Jennifer. "Inclusive Teaching in Media Production - Instructor Survey." Survey. Qualtrics (Provo, UT), 2017. (Publication forthcoming)

** Proctor, Jennifer. "Inclusive Teaching in Media Production - Student Survey" Survey. Qualtrics (Provo, UT), 2017. (Publication forthcoming)