Courage to Consider Diverse Perspectives in Academia

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Learning Objectives

• Identify diverse and divisive perspectives in academia.

• Reflect upon personal experiences exploring diverse perspectives.

• Devise strategies for navigating difficult discussions in a thoughtful and compassionate manner.
Diverse & Divisive Perspectives

What are some diverse and potentially divisive perspectives in academia?

• Politics
• Race
• Sexual orientation
• Gender identity
• ???

Tangen & Danielson, 2017
Vaccaro (2010) completed a study on campus climate and found:

- Females wanted deeper discussions of diversity.

- Males (mostly white) wanted to focus on merit and felt hostile toward discussions of diversity.

- Some also resented the predominant liberal bias in higher education.
Campus Climate

- “My classes were very liberal. Anyone from a Republican/Catholic/Christian background would probably of been tarred and feathered if they spoke up!”

- “Students really do not care about race or sexual identity . . . administrative suits like the ones that came up with this shit survey do!”

- “I am transsexual and have had problems—in several courses I have students, several rows of them, laugh at me while the instructor did nothing.”

- “I think in general, the campus climate is one of polite distance. Students and staff members rarely seem to connect on real, meaningful levels.”
Empathy

What is empathy?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
Compassion

Neff (2015) defines compassion as…….

- Kindness v. Judgment
- Common humanity v. Isolation
- Mindfulness v. Over-identification

How can you apply compassion in discussions of diversity?
Our Reflections

• ACES roundtable on political diversity

• Tammy video in class
Strategies

- Create “safe” spaces
- Cultivate empathy
- Practice humility
- Ask questions to understand
- Lean into personal resistance

Tangen & Danielson, 2017
Strategies

Facilitate Intergroup Dialogue (e.g., Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009)

- Pedagogical Features: Content learning, structured interaction, facilitative interaction
- Communication Processes: Dialogic communication, critical communication
- Psychological Processes: Openness, identity engagement, positivity across difference
- Outcomes: Intergroup relationships, understanding, and collaboration
Questions/Comments
