

From: [Center for Faculty Innovation](#)
To: TEACHING-TOOLBOX@listserv.jmu.edu
Subject: Teaching Toolbox: Madison Matters – Inclusive Learning Environments
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Teaching Toolbox: Madison Matters – Inclusive Learning Environments
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[The Madison Matters project](#) was a campus climate survey conducted at JMU in spring of 2015 with the purpose identifying how well students from different cultural backgrounds feel connected, included, and comfortable on campus. Over 1,400 JMU students completed it, and findings have been presented at D.E.E.P. Impact, the JMU Diversity Conference, the JMU Diversity Teach-In, and our special [Madison Matters Day](#) events in April and, just this week, in November 2016.

Many of the results suggest students believe faculty could use more training and experience in facilitating discussions of diversity issues, and in creating a more inclusive environment. Below are some tips based on our most prominent findings:

Use more inclusive and diverse language, teaching materials and examples, and course activities!

Many types of minority students, compared to majority group members, reported that faculty members were not as aware or as comfortable addressing issues of diversity in the classroom. According to Madison Matters survey results, female students had lower opinions of JMU faculty members than did male students, both Black and Hispanic/Latinx students had lower opinions in contrast to White students, and students with a minority sexual orientation also saw their professors in a worse light, in comparison to how heterosexual students responded. These trends suggest that different minority groups feel that faculty aren't doing enough to incorporate more diverse and inclusive language, examples, authors, and materials in the classroom.

Fortunately, there are many ways to use more inclusive language and teaching techniques:

- Having students create introduction cards or questionnaires at the beginning of the semester that ask where they are from, what their preferred pronouns are, how to pronounce their names, etc.
- Establishing ground rules for handling controversial topics and giving students the option to review and make additions to those rules
- Using phrases such as “hey folks” or “hey everyone” instead of “hey guys”
- Mixing students sitting in different classroom areas when assigning group work since students might self-segregate based on shared characteristics (e.g., gender, race, nationality)
- Incorporating role-playing activities and allowing students to play roles regardless of the role's race, gender, etc.
- Referring to people's romantic interests as “partners” and not assuming everyone is heterosexual
- Using diverse images, questions, names, references, authors, and more!

Feel free to email us for a consultation or for questions about our survey!

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