

Using Case Studies to Discuss Issues of Diversity and Inclusion

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Using Case Studies – The Process

- Get in groups of 3 or 4 and introduce yourselves.
- Read the situation on the next page on your own. This is based on a true story.
- Have a look at the reflection questions and discuss them in small groups.
- Share with the whole group.

Some Ground Rules

- We all have different viewpoints, we may not all agree, but we need to respect each other.
- Also be respectful of students and others in the case study, whatever their circumstances.
- We are here to think together about these issues, and learn. We might say things we do not mean, or regret saying. We might say things we do not realize might be hurtful. But we will all do our best to learn from this.
- Can you think of anything else?

(turn over)

The Situation

The setting. A weekly course meeting for the teaching staff of a calculus course. There is one faculty member who is the instructor, and three graduate students who are teaching assistants.

Towards the end of the meeting, people are discussing their week and the faculty member explains how a particular student in the course is really struggling, is having a lot of emotional issues and personal problems right now, and how that student has come to the faculty's office hours crying. The student would need a lot of extra help. The faculty member then asks Sofia, in front of the other teaching assistants, if she could help the struggling student. After all, the faculty member says, Sofia is "a nice person".

~ Inspired by a true story.

Questions for reflection

1. List a few feelings and emotions that Sofia might be having, and explain why.
2. What might others in the teaching team be feeling or thinking? You may also list the feelings you are having right now in this training.
3. Did you make assumptions about the gender of the people in the teaching team? Does it matter if those genders were different from what you assumed?
4. What would you do, if anything? Does it depend on what your role would be in the team?
5. Is there a difference in your answers if the faculty member is tenured or not? If they are a post-doc? If the some of the teaching assistants are post-docs?
6. Think of other factors that might make someone feel undervalued, different, isolated, self-conscious, ostracized, uncomfortable, etc.
7. Have you noticed similar things in your department, that you would like to share here?