

# TOPkit DIGEST

This month's TOPkit Digest is brought to you by **Tina Calandrino**, M.Ed., Associate Instructional Designer, Division of Digital Learning, University of Central Florida ([Tina.Calandrino@ucf.edu](mailto:Tina.Calandrino@ucf.edu)). She discusses the topic of **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Online Courses**.

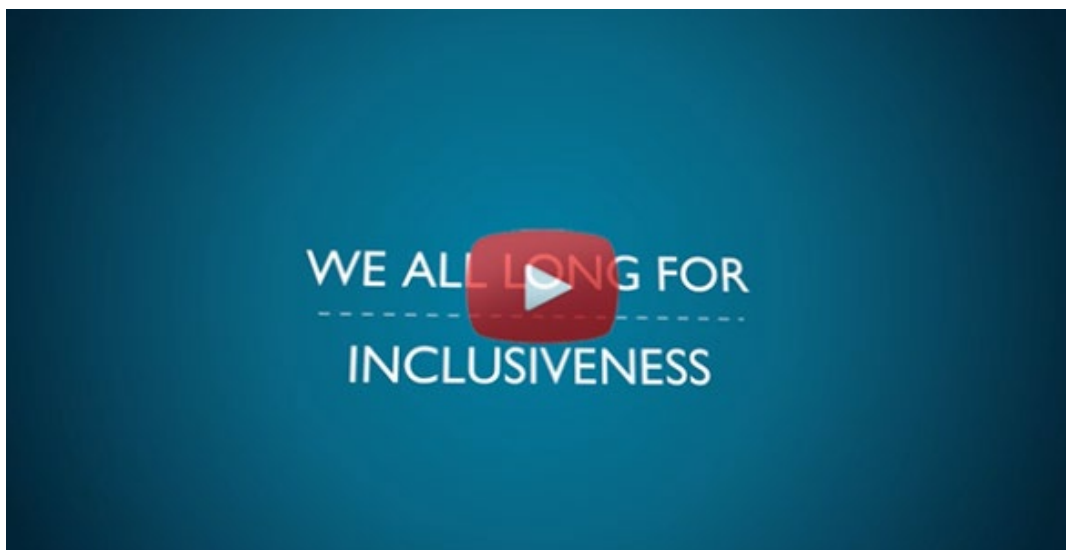
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## Video Tip

### Diversity Matters in Education

The Effects of Diversity Last a Lifetime



Diversity matters in education. A group of students tell their diversity experiences in education and why it matters to them. Why do you think diversity matters to the educational experience?

[Watch Video](#)

**Grace - Student**

[Diversity Matters](#)

[Video](#)

“

I've learned more from the people I've met from various backgrounds and cultures...more so than just the regular stuff that comes out of your textbooks.

A banner for a live virtual event. On the left is the TOPkit logo, which features the word "TOP" in teal with a palm tree inside the 'O', and "kit" in orange below it. Underneath the logo is the text "Teaching Online Preparation Toolkit". To the right, a black arrow points to the text "LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT". Below this, it says "JOIN US TUESDAY - THURSDAY MARCH 7-9 2023". At the bottom right, it says "Hosted by UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA" with the UCF logo.

**Register to Attend the TOPkit Workshop 2023**

The [TOPkit Workshop 2023](#) to be held in a live, virtual format with three half days of informative sessions about planning, developing, or evaluating faculty development programs as well as networking and fun. Join us as we **build on the past of online teaching and learning to empower our future**. [Call for proposals](#) is open until **November 11**. Volunteer [proposal reviewers](#) may sign up to help by **November 4**.

**REGISTER NOW**

## Top Tips

# Building Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into Online Courses

Creating a positive, student-centered environment where all students feel like they belong.

The promotion/growth/movement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in education has been a journey to foster a community of respect and understanding. As educators, designers, and leaders all begin to adopt an equity mindset, it is up to everyone to make sure that online courses are equitable for all. Effective online courses should be deliberate and purposeful using [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL) concepts along with evolving DEI strategy (Subocz et al., 2022) that focuses on all students culture, life experiences, and abilities. Redirecting systemic ideas on a variety of topics from cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to gender inclusion is a start to making the online environment a safe space for learners.

Approaching inclusive practices as recognition of collective ownership of everyone from the institutional level to instructors to instructional designers to students will help to build a greater DEI consciousness in a classroom that will help students become their best and most authentic selves.

Here are the Top Five practices to help build a more diverse, inclusive and equitable online classroom:

- Universal Design for Learning Principles (UDL)
- Word Choices/Linguistics
- Assumptions
- Resources to technology
- Celebrating Diversity

**Tip #1: Apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles.** UDL is the basic framework for inclusion of all kinds. By presenting information that optimizes teaching and learning in an online environment, UDL guidelines encompass DEI outcomes, too. For example, the use of closed captions is available not just for students with hearing impairments, yet for second language acquisition and

cognitively delayed learning. Always remember that UDL is set up to design by reminding instructors and designers to *Access>Build>Internalize>Goals*. Utilizing [UDL techniques](#) while building an online course will keep the instructor and designers mindful of the wide-array DEI that should always be properly addressed to make certain all students have equal access and understanding within the virtual classroom.

**Tip #2: Be Aware of Word Choices/Linguistics.** It is helpful to remember that DEI is an umbrella term that encompasses [many considerations](#). In an online classroom, it is even more important to remember that we must be aware that language can reinforce inclusive practices and remove bias. Many students come from different countries or of different generation and will not understand colloquial phrases. One of the hardest concepts for educators to grasp is the use of plural language for pronouns even though it has been common usage for many years. Who left *their* book here? shows the replacement of a plural for a singular pronoun, such as he/her/ze/zer/them/zem.

**Tip #3: Avoid Assumptions.** Often, an online course will instruct the learner to Ask all the boys in the class or Look at this picture within the lesson. Take a moment to imagine what it means if you are a learner that is [non-binary](#), or sight limited. This immediately will set a student apart from the others in the online space. Even putting a scenario as two parents/two children/summer vacation at Disney World excludes students when assuming that experiences are similar to the one you may have had growing up. Wanting students to be successful means making sure they are connected to the learning experience.

**Tip #4: Access to Resources and Technology.** According to [Wiley University Services](#) (2022), students are accessing their courses via mobile devices such as phones and tablets over traditional computers for everything from checking grades, reading materials, and completing assignments (up to half of the students for the last point). Additionally, many students must take online courses due to life situations such as deployment, illness, or natural disasters, so it is important to discover how and when a student will access a course. Making sure that students have fair access by chunking material, using pages in the LMS over PDFs, and using friendly tools to create a sense of community will ensure that the students can access the technology and the course.

**Tip #5: Celebrate Diversity.** While it is difficult to look at students in the online classroom, this helps to remove bias and celebrate all the wonderful nuances that make up a dynamic community of learners. It is easier to develop a curriculum or curricula that exposes students to a spectrum of experiences that encourages each student to include their viewpoints. Invite non-traditional experts, or persons from traditionally marginalized communities, to be guest speakers or curriculum contributors so that students see a reflection of themselves in the content. A female NASA physicist could conduct a Q&A for a GEP course so that learners see early on that others think, look, and come from a similar background. Make sure to ask for open, respectful discussion that does not put the student in the role of an expert. The success of experts who are as diverse as our student population holds everyone involved to stronger learning outcomes.

Small changes in a course will have large impacts. Be open to suggestions from feedback that includes students and subject matter experts. With each modification, an online course will reduce diversity and equity gaps and results in [supportive, inclusive education for all](#).

## From the Community

# Successful Strategies for Advancing DEI in Online Education

Community Resources Offer Resources and Guidance for DEI

The TOPkit community content contributions and other resources offer guidance for furthering understanding and facilitating diversity, equity, and inclusion in the online learning environment that will foster a sense of belonging for all students.

- [Americans with Disability Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [An Equitable Transition to Online Learning: Flexibility, Low Bandwidth, Cell Phones, and More](#)
- [How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive - Advice Guide](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#)

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## Ask ADDIE

### E-Readiness

The Key to Online Teaching Success

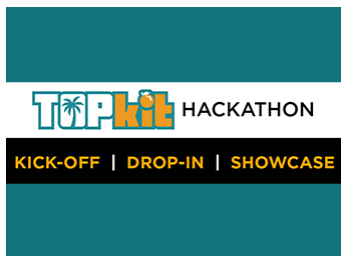
**Dear ADDIE:** My organization is facing a new challenge. We require online faculty to complete a faculty development program for online teaching that most consider phenomenal. However, it seems that some participants are still not fully prepared or ready for teaching effectively in the online environment based on personal reflections or student evaluations. Do you know of any instruments or strategies that can be used to effectively gauge readiness for online teaching?



[Read ADDIE's response →](#)

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## Upcoming Events



## TOPkit Hackathon

**Register now** for the Fall 2022 TOPkit Hackathon.

[Learn more →](#)

## OLC Accelerate

**Register now** for the OLC Accelerate 2022 conference and help shape the future of online, digital, and blended learning.

[Learn more →](#)

## Innovation Summit

**Register now** for the 2023 Florida Online Innovation Summit.

[Learn more →](#)

## Top Community Topics



- [TOPkit Workshop 2023](#)
- [TOPkit Hackathon Fall 2022](#)
- [Planning - Faculty Development Decision Guide](#)
- [Evaluating - Checklists & Rubrics](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Developing - Best Practices for Using Video in Online Learning](#)
- [Evaluating - Data on Your Campus](#)

## Works Referenced or Cited

[SEE REFERENCES](#)

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