**Potential Barriers to Accepting Diversity in the Classroom**

The likelihood of barriers to accepting diversity to surface in instructors usually derives from their homogeneous backgrounds. The barriers that prevent instructors from accepting the diversity in their classrooms include the following:

1. Prejudice Prejudice refers to an unjustified, unfavorable or negative attitude toward an

individual because of his/her membership in a certain culture or race group; it

can be race based (racism), gender based (sexism), age based (ageism) or ethnic

based (ethnocentrism).

2. Stereotype Stereotype refers to a set of beliefs or ideas about a group which is generally applied to all members of that certain group. A stereotype can be negative or unfavorable.

3. Discrimination Discrimination occurs when one bars an individual from joining an organization

because of his/her membership in a certain culture, race or other group.

4. Ethnocentrism Ethnocentrism refers to a tendency to consider one’s group or culture as

culturally superior to others.

**Strategies for Minimizing Miscommunication with Diverse Student Backgrounds**

1. Instructors must educate themselves about different races and culture groups through reading and broadening their experiences.
2. Avoid forming opinions about others based on limited interactions or observations such as one’s dress, language, or mannerisms.
3. Instructors should avoid using adjectives that highlight particular groups and suggest that an individual is the exception; the “female physician” or “black doctor”

As instructors we need to respond to the spectrum of diversity in our students through interactions that are mutually beneficial. Instructors who are culturally proficient will convey to students that they are knowledgeable about their culture group and how their culture bound values influence their perceptions of the world. The cultural imperative for instructors is to prepare students for what to expect from the multicultural, pluralistic world of employment.

Instructors should create a learning environment that caters to more than the dominant, mainstream American value system. For example, instructors must be aware that in America, individual achievement orientation is valued in contrast to group orientation and achievement in the Asian and Hispanic culture. In addition, the American culture bound value of competition is not honored among other culture groups. Cooperation and an emphasis on nurturing role relationships is valued over competition is other cultures.

Instructors must understand and accept that before their students can benefit from their interactions, they must feel appreciated and recognized as unique individuals possessing cultural variables which include a distinct language, faith, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender and age.

What Diverse Students Expect From Instructors

1. Younger and Older Students

* Respect for their life experiences at both spectrums: young and older, both groups want to be

taken seriously and to be challenged by the coursework and instructors, that older adults are

committed to lifelong learning and to be sought out as carriers of history and wisdom.

2. Females

* Desire to be acknowledged as equals to males, to be treated with respect, equal access to resources, to have their success in school and work be attributed to their ability.

3. Males

* Want to be supported, treated with respect, access to resources.

4. Individuals of Color

* To be valued as unique individuals who are members of a certain ethnic or race group, and as

capable of making contributions to the learning environment, to be supported by Caucasians,

to be treated with respect and to establish honest, open relationships with others, to not be

stereotyped or type cast.

5. Differently Abled/Challenged Individuals

* To be valued for what abilities they possess rather than their disabilities, to be challenged by their instructors and the coursework, and to be included and not isolated from the process