

The *Syllabus Challenge*: A faculty development intervention for inclusive teaching

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Abstract

Due to lack of research to track inclusive teaching behavior changes, the extent of faculty application of inclusive teaching practices remains unknown. Therefore, direct evaluation of faculty behavior change is needed to understand the process of incorporating inclusive practices into their teaching such as through the syllabus or course design. This study investigated the impact of a faculty development workshop and *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit using a pre-post survey of faculty attitudes toward inclusive teaching, self-efficacy, intentions to incorporate inclusive teaching, and actual inclusive changes via pre-post syllabi comparisons. Based on pre/post workshop surveys, faculty positive attitudes, inclusive teaching self-efficacy, and inclusive teaching behavioral intentions increased following the intervention. Comparisons of course syllabi revealed that faculty made between 1 and 9 inclusive syllabus changes across sections of the syllabi. Findings highlight the benefits of a brief workshop and the *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit for faculty to increase inclusive attitudes and syllabus practices and support future work to understand the relationship between intentions to engage in and behaviors associated with inclusive teaching practices.

Keywords: inclusive teaching, faculty development intervention, syllabus, syllabus challenge, inclusive pedagogy, syllabus tool, inclusive teaching workshop, teacher multicultural attitudes

The importance of inclusive teaching practices has received much needed attention in recent years (e.g., Addy et al., 2021; Kite et al., 2021; Mena et al., 2023; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021). However, many faculty were trained long before these recommendations, and thus there is a need for faculty development programs that expose faculty to these ideas. This study explored the impact of a faculty development workshop and toolkit, called the *Syllabus Challenge* (Case, 2017), intended to increase inclusive syllabus practices. We conducted an evaluation of the *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit by surveying faculty attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions before and after the workshop and by documenting changes faculty made to syllabi by using the toolkit after the workshop.

Literature review

Inclusive pedagogy in the broadest sense reaches back at least to the 1960s-1970s if not earlier (e.g., Baker & Snodgrass, 1979; Strobel, 1977). More recently, and due to the influences of exceptionally rich expertise within interdisciplinary, critical spaces such as women's and gender studies, racial and ethnic studies, LGBTQ+ studies, and disability studies (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987; Crenshaw, 1989; Lorde, 1984; Scott et al., 1977), inclusive pedagogy now touches every discipline, though not equivalently. Over the past 15 years, increased faculty interest in finding ways to support the academic success of students from underrepresented and marginalized groups resulted in faculty sharing more resources publicly and publishing more journal articles and books addressing "inclusive teaching" (Addy et al., 2021; Kite et al., 2021; Mena et al., 2023; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021). More specifically, empirical scholarship illuminated the effectiveness of inclusive

strategies to promote student engagement, sense of belonging, and academic success (Howansky et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2023). In line with this long history, wide disciplinary reach, and growing body of data-based evidence, faculty report their increased support for inclusive teaching and intentions to engage in these practices (Addy et al., 2021; Aragon et al., 2017; Dallas et al., 2016). Yet application in teaching may not follow from these positive faculty attitudes toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (Smolen et al., 2006). Due to lack of research tracking observable teaching behavior changes, the extent of faculty application of inclusive teaching practices remains unknown. Direct evaluation of faculty behavior changes to incorporate inclusive practices into their teaching such as through the syllabus or course design would help fill this gap in the research literature.

Fueled by the impending enrollment cliff and strategic diversity goals, widespread institutional moves targeting underrepresented students, especially groups with low retention rates, resulted in a noticeable expansion of faculty development offerings to promote inclusive teaching practices (e.g., Bryson et al., 2020). Descriptive summaries of faculty development programs shared ideas for implementation across institutions, often assessing faculty experiences or satisfaction with these programs (Attas et al., 2023; Erby et al., 2021; Suarez-Grant & Haras, 2022). Many studies focused on the effectiveness of inclusive teaching interventions rely on faculty self-report of changes or intentions to change (Addy et al., 2021; Aragon et al., 2017). One year after a workshop on inclusive teaching practices, Glowacki-Dudka et al. (2012) collected self-report data revealing that 9 of 21 faculty actually had made changes to their teaching. Several intervention studies documented faculty members' increased knowledge of or support for inclusive teaching practices (Harrison-Bernard et al., 2020; Villarreal et al., 2022). Given that researcher assessment of teaching products presents both access and time challenges, far fewer studies go beyond self-report data to directly compare teaching materials before and after an intervention. As a rare example of direct evaluation of faculty behavior change, Wheeler and Bach (2020) found that participation in

a faculty learning community led to higher rates of learning-focused language in syllabi and greater use of active learning approaches. In the realm of inclusive teaching, very little is known about the effectiveness of faculty development interventions due to the lack of evidence measuring actual behavior change. In attempts to encourage change, faculty developers have focused on the syllabus as the core communication document between faculty and students.

Expanding inclusive teaching via the syllabus

To increase faculty application of inclusive teaching practices, scholars and faculty development professionals often focused on the syllabus as a key mechanism for implementation. The syllabus sets the stage for students to understand the professor, course expectations, and the overall tone and culture for the course (Richmond et al., 2019; Stephens et al., 2012; Sulik & Keys, 2014). The centrality of the syllabus to the learning experience and to building a foundation of understanding between students and professor make this document a prime space for introducing inclusive teaching practices. Previous research demonstrated that creating syllabi with the learner in mind not only improved students' perceptions of the instructor, but also increased learning and motivation (Richmond et al., 2019). Studies of syllabus tone in particular revealed that students who read a warm-tone syllabus (i.e., friendly, humorous, compassionate, enthusiastic) perceived the instructor as more approachable (Gurung & Galardi, 2021; Harnish & Bridges, 2011).

To get faculty started with inclusive teaching, reading a vast literature and becoming theoretical experts are not required. Although much scholarship on syllabi development remains reflective, practical tools that support motivated faculty can advance inclusive teaching (McArthur, 2010; Taylor et al., 2019). In other words, resources that equip faculty with practical tips and ideas for immediate implementation in the core syllabus document will move faculty members from reflection to action. Fuentes et al. (2021) suggested key areas of syllabi that can

be harnessed to promote student motivation and feelings of inclusion. They offered recommendations for instructor reflexivity, infusion of diversity rather than tokenism, addressing colonialism and power structures, including a diversity statement, and more (Fuentes et al., 2021). Bryson et al. (2020) offered a more structured tool. They organized 26 inclusive excellence teaching strategies that focus on the syllabus, class management, assessment, accessibility, and more. In their *Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool*, Taylor et al. (2019) provided 19 reflective questions in an organized table connecting each to theory and citations. The tool introduced by Taylor et al. (2019) focuses on growth mindset, representation, assignment transparency, low-stakes assignments, connecting content to social justice, communal and warm language, reducing jargon, and more. These models and practical tools aid faculty by increasing knowledge and reducing the time required to implement suggestions. Another widely utilized tool, the *Syllabus Challenge for Inclusive Teaching* (also known as the *Syllabus Challenge*; Case, 2017), serves as a checklist of inclusive teaching strategies ranging from easy syllabus implementation to time-intensive course redesign, with significant attention to equity, social justice, and anti-racism pedagogies.

The Syllabus Challenge

In 2017, the first author (Kim Case) developed the *Syllabus Challenge for Inclusive Teaching* toolkit (Case, 2017), which became the foundation for delivering faculty workshops at several colleges and universities. Since then, she made additions, updates, and adjustments to the toolkit, often based on external feedback and suggestions, as an iterative process for continuous strengthening of practical strategies. Built on theoretical foundations often absent from inclusive teaching, the *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit incorporates practices informed by liberatory, decolonial, critical race, queer, critical disability, privilege studies, and intersectional pedagogies (e.g., Case, 2017; Friere, 1970, hooks, 1994; Nocella, 2008; Tatum, 1994). By offering a mix of inclusive strategies alongside social justice and anti-racist teaching practices, this

toolkit provides faculty who are new to inclusive teaching with small changes they can implement with ease. At the same time, the *Syllabus Challenge* provides more advanced and already inclusive teachers and faculty with critical pedagogy expertise with potential new ideas for fundamental course design changes. For example, a beginner could choose to rename “office hours” to “student hours” and draw attention to the purpose of those open hours, encouraging students to visit the professor for questions and advising. Someone with more experience may decide to convert a class project to be more public facing by connecting with a community organization for real-world application to social issues. The *Syllabus Challenge* presents users with 87 reflective questions and practical teaching suggestions across nine categories: general review; professor information, course description, learning objectives, texts and authors, topics and themes, schedule, evaluation of learning, and policies. Given both general education and disciplinary emphases on diversity, equity, and inclusion within the undergraduate curriculum, our study aimed to expose faculty in a large research university to practical teaching strategies offered by the *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit.

Present Study

The present mixed-method study (Morgan, 2018) investigated the impact of a faculty development workshop using the *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit on subsequent inclusive syllabus changes. Reflecting on Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick’s (2006) evaluation model, this study expands previous work, which has only addressed level 1 or learner reactions to the program, to address higher levels of evaluation, specifically teachers’ syllabus production. To directly address common faculty barriers of lack of knowledge and time, the workshop occurred during a regularly scheduled department meeting and provided practical inclusive teaching applications for immediate use within the syllabus and course design. Rather than relying only on faculty members’ attitudes or stated intentions to apply inclusive teaching practices,

we compared course syllabi from a prior semester to the semester that began a few weeks after the workshop. Specifically, we assessed pre- and post-workshop faculty attitudes toward multicultural teaching, self-efficacy related to inclusive teaching, and intentions to incorporate inclusive teaching practices. We also directly evaluated the impact of the workshop and toolkit on change, specifically if faculty altered components and incorporated inclusive teaching strategies within their course syllabi. Although direct observation of classroom teaching behaviors remains difficult to scale and impossible to conduct retrospectively, syllabi are an accessible artifact amenable to analysis that can provide significant evidence of changes in faculty behaviors and attitudes. We hypothesized that the workshop and toolkit would: (a) increase positive attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions toward inclusive teaching, and (b) result in behavior to incorporate more inclusive changes into course syllabi.

Methods

Participants and procedure

The following procedures and mixed-methods received approval from the institutional internal review board prior to contact with potential participants. Faculty participants were full-time faculty members (30–35 in attendance) employed by the psychology department of a large southeastern university. About four weeks before the study, faculty were notified via email that the next regularly scheduled department meeting in January 2022 would be devoted to a workshop on inclusive syllabus design. Approximately one week prior to the meeting, the study team emailed the informed consent document to all department faculty. The beginning of the pre-workshop survey included a copy of the informed consent form which was used to document electronic informed consent and subsequent eligibility to participate in the survey and/or syllabus reviews. Consent to complete

the survey was not a requirement to attend and participate in the workshop.

Once informed consent was obtained, eligible participants completed a pre-workshop survey (Appendix A) to assess their willingness to share course syllabi and their attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions towards inclusive teaching practices and diversity in the classroom. At the scheduled faculty meeting, the first author facilitated the *Syllabus Challenge* workshop that was designed to highlight best practices for writing inclusive syllabi. The workshop lasted approximately two hours and was offered virtually through the Zoom telecommunications application for all department faculty, regardless of study participation status. After the conclusion of the workshop, the study team emailed participating faculty one time with a follow-up survey containing identical measures of attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions. This web-based survey was administered through REDCap software. A total of 12 faculty completed all measures both before and after the *Syllabus Challenge* workshop.

The Syllabus Challenge workshop

Along with the original 2017 toolkit creation, the first author also created a faculty development workshop that she delivered both in-person and virtually for numerous institutions (research-intensive, small liberal arts, Master's comprehensive, private, public, and community colleges) across the U.S. and internationally. During the workshop, faculty use the *Syllabus Challenge* toolkit to analyze their own syllabi and discuss ideas for how to make changes with the peers. The workshop content provides many examples of syllabi sections before and after implementing inclusive teaching practices from the toolkit's 80+ suggestions. This approach provides faculty with concrete understanding of how to make inclusive changes to syllabus sections such as course descriptions, learning goals, instructor information, language and terminology, readings and other course materials, assignments, and

policies. For example, after implementing inclusive syllabus changes, learning goals for a health psychology course referenced “how health psychology applies to people from your own community” and “who has access to affordable healthy food?” Diversity statement examples changed from a list of social identity groups to explicit acknowledgment that “Historically, much of psychological science was built on a small subset of privileged voices.” With before and after examples to inspire their own application of inclusive syllabus practices, faculty engaged in three small group discussions to further plan their own inclusive changes.

Measures

The top of the 35-item survey provided brief definitions of inclusive teaching practices and diversity for clarity as these terms were referenced within survey items (see Table 1). Three measures were assessed pre- and post-workshop among participants. For item examples provided below and in Appendix A, we indicated any adapted text with italics. To minimize chances of identifying individuals, we did not request participant demographics in this study.

Teacher Diversity Attitudes Survey. Attitudes regarding diversity and inclusive teaching practices were assessed using 17 items adapted from the Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS; Ponterotto et al., 1998) using a 5-point rating scale (strongly disagree = 1; strongly agree = 5) keeping with the original rating scale. Example item: “I find teaching a diverse student group rewarding.” Three of the original 20 items were removed from our study due to item content specific to K-12 settings. Ponterotto’s (1998) original TMAS scale validation study found a coefficient alpha of .79 to .91 across three samples and a 3-week interval test-retest reliability of .80. In our sample, $\alpha = .89$ for the pre-survey and .94 for the post-survey. Convergent validity tests confirmed the expected TMAS positive correlations with scales measuring multicultural identity, racial bias, and gender bias (see Ponterotto et al., 1998).

Inclusive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale. For self-efficacy around inclusive teaching practices, eight items were adapted from the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Chen et al., 2001) and used the same 5-point rating scale as the attitude measure for consistency. Example item: “I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*” Thorough testing of the 8-item GSE by Chen et al., (2001) revealed a reliability alphas between .85 and .88 and test-retest reliability between .62 and .66 (approximately 3 weeks apart). In our sample, $\alpha = .90$ pre-survey and .86 post-survey. See Chen et al. (2001) for additional information on content, discriminant, and predictive validity.

Inclusive Teaching Behavioral Intentions Scale. Behavioral intentions to engage in inclusive teaching practices were assessed with 10 items using behavioral intention phrasing of “I intend to...” described in Armitage et al. (1999). Participants indicated their intentions on a 7-point rating scale (definitely will not = 1; definitely will = 7) which followed the method used by Armitage et al. (1999). Example item: “I intend to make changes to the *course description* of my syllabus.” Internal consistency of the scale was .91 for the pre-survey and .86 for the post-survey.

Collecting syllabi

Based on consent form permission from faculty, we accessed syllabi from the department’s syllabus repository: a) one syllabus for the course taught by the faculty member prior to the workshop, and b) the syllabus for the same course taught in the semester immediately following the workshop. To protect participant confidentiality and reduce potential bias, one member of the research team replaced faculty names on surveys and syllabi with an identifying code number and redacted any other identifying information prior to analysis. Each pair of syllabi was compared using track-change features in Microsoft Word to aid in the identification of changes made following the workshop.

Syllabus codebook

The study team developed a coding scheme and associated codebook (detailed below) using an iterative and thoughtful process following pilot coding of several syllabi not included in the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). We followed best practices in developing this codebook (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024) with a focus on capturing aspects of a key dimension: inclusive teaching practices (Dewsbury, 2017). Given that the foundation of our deductive analysis is theoretically grounded in the broader inclusive syllabus literature, we engaged in directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

To prepare for coding of inclusive syllabus practices, each comparison syllabus with changes marked was first color-coded to clearly identify five syllabus sections. We marked syllabus sections to represent major sections found in most syllabi (Nilson, 2010): *orientation information* (course name, instructor name, teaching philosophy, contact info, and/or tips for success, etc.); *course description* (course description and/or learning objectives); *course materials* (course texts, videos, any assigned materials, schedule, reading lists, and/or technology requirements); *course assignments* (assignments, exams, grading breakdown, and/or grading policy); and *course policies* (includes reference to late assignment policy and/or diversity statement). This step allowed us to determine if certain sections of the syllabi were more often locations for inclusive changes. Then each syllabus section (e.g., course description) was then evaluated for the presence of a change in inclusive syllabus practices (yes, no). If yes, coders also identified one or more categories of inclusive syllabus changes among the six available categories. Inclusive syllabus practices change categories included: *professor humanity*, *language/visuals*, *engagement*, *critical pedagogy*, *policies/resources*, and *equity practices* (see Table 1 for detail and supporting citations).

Table 1. Definitions and categories of inclusive syllabus changes made to syllabi

Term	Definition provided to faculty participants and coders	Supporting citations
Inclusive teaching practices	Inclusive teaching practices encompass evidence-based approaches that support underrepresented and traditionally marginalized students in higher education. In particular, inclusive teaching practices increase microaffirmations and a sense of belonging while decreasing microaggressions and equity gaps in student achievement.	Addy et al., 2021; Dewsbury, 2017; Kite et al., 2021; Mena et al., 2023; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021
Diversity	Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender, but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.	APA, 2021; Fuentes et al., 2021
Inclusive Syllabus Change Categories	Examples of inclusive syllabus change	Supporting citations
Professor humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased professor personal touch (humanity/social identity/photo) Included teaching approach or philosophy 	Harnish & Bridges, 2011; Malowski; 2020; Nusbaum et al., 2021; Sulik & Keys, 2014
Language/visuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible language for students (reduce academic jargon, increase interdependent language such as “community;” informal/conversational language; reduced U.S.-centric phrasings) Added updated inclusive terminology (Latinx or Latine, BIPOC, gender nonbinary, use of “they” as a singular pronoun, person-first such as “student with a disability”) Added visual format 	Fuentes et al., 2021; Harnish & Bridges, 2011; Nusbaum et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2012; Wheeler & Bach, 2020
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased flexibility or student choice/agency (e.g., students can choose which project, more than one path to completion) Encouraging student engagement (“student hours,” explained why they want to see students and why students should talk to professor) 	Harnish & Bridges, 2011; Herrmann, 2023; Richmond et al., 2019

(Contd.)

Inclusive Syllabus Change Categories	Examples of inclusive syllabus change	Supporting citations
Critical pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to critical pedagogies (social justice, anti-racism, feminist, intersectional, systemic oppression, privilege, power) • Invited critical analysis (question the discipline and systems of power) 	Case, 2017; Friere, 1970, Fuentes et al., 2021; hooks, 1994; Nocella, 2008; Tatum, 1994
Policies/resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified/added inclusive policies or resources to increase the equitable application of policy (welcoming accessibility statement, pronouns, community ground rules, anti-racism statement, inclusion statement, super clear & encouraging late/extension/attendance policies, mention student multicultural center or pride alliance on campus) 	Fuentes et al., 2021; Gurung & Galardi, 2021; Harnish & Bridges, 2011
Equity practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased representation of marginalized topics, voices, scholars (beyond western, educated, industrial, rich, democracy-based) • Added culturally relevant or responsive approach (connect to students' lives and backgrounds, assignments they can tie to own identity) • Incorporated equity-based practice (e.g., open education resources, texts, transparent assignments; used strength-based framing or removed deficit-based language) 	Fuentes et al., 2021; Gurung & Galardi, 2021; Howansky et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2012

Subsequently, each syllabus was coded independently by two study team members to identify syllabus sections which was followed by coding for the presence of an inclusive syllabus change and associated inclusive syllabus category. Discrepancies were reviewed by each pair of reviewers, and if needed, a third reviewer to reach consensus. All discrepancies were resolved and none of inclusive syllabus changes were excluded from the study.

Results

We first compared faculty self-ratings on measures of self-efficacy, attitudes, and behavioral intentions towards inclusive teaching practices. The means, standard deviations, and statistical tests are presented in Table 2. The variables met the assumptions required for these analyses (Guo &

Table 2. Pre to post differences in self-efficacy, attitudes, and behavioral intentions towards inclusive teaching practices

	pre M (SD)	post M (SD)	d	t	df	p
Self- Efficacy	3.91 (0.59)	4.14 (0.51)	0.30	-2.78	11	.009
Attitudes	4.45 (0.44)	4.62 (0.40)	0.29	-1.95	11	.038
Behavioral Intentions	5.24 (0.99)	6.03 (0.89)	0.84	-3.23	11	.004

Yuan, 2017). We conducted one-tailed dependent samples *t*-tests as we were only interested in improvements in faculty's measures. Faculty demonstrated a statistically significant increase in all three domains. The size of the effect was small for change in attitudes and self-efficacy. However, the effect size was large for change in behavioral intentions.

At both pre and post assessment, self-efficacy was moderately, but non-significantly, correlated with attitudes (pre $r(13) = .44$, $p = .10$; post $r(14) = .34$, $p = .19$). In contrast, attitudes were significantly associated with behavioral intentions at both time points (pre $r(13) = .59$, $p < .05$; post $r(14) = .67$, $p < .01$). Self-efficacy was not directly related to behavioral intentions (pre $r(13) = .11$, $p = .70$; post $r(14) = .004$, $p = .99$).

We next examined faculty participants' syllabi before and after the workshop. Eight faculty provided pre- and post-workshop syllabi for nine unique courses. All syllabi demonstrated at least one change in inclusive syllabus practices. See Table 3 for the types of inclusive syllabus changes by each syllabus section. Examples of changes are shared below to elaborate on each category.

For the nine pre/post syllabi collected, the number of sections in which a change occurred ranged from 1 to 5 out of 5 total syllabus sections: orientation information; course description; course materials; course assignments; and course policies. Various sections of a syllabus are not necessarily equally weighted in terms of impact on inclusion, but incorporating inclusive practices within more sections sends increased inclusive signals to students. For each syllabus, we calculated the total number of inclusive practice categories, or types of changes, across all sections of the syllabus. As a reminder of Table 1, we used six categories of inclusive syllabus practices change: professor humanity, language/visuals, engagement, critical pedagogy, policies/resources, and equity practices. The

Table 3. Inclusive syllabus changes by syllabus sections (n = 9 syllabi)

	Orienting material n = 6 syllabi	Course description n = 6 syllabi	Course materials n = 5 syllabi	Grading policies n = 5 syllabi	Course policies n = 5 syllabi	Total changes by category
Professor as human	3 (50%)	–	–	1 (20%)	–	4
Language or visuals	–	2 (33%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	7
Student Agency/ engagement	–	–	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	6
Critical pedagogy	2 (33%)	5 (83%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	–	10
Policies and/or resources	1 (17%)	–	–	–	4 (80%)	5
Representation and/or equity	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	3 (60%)	–	1 (20%)	6
Total changes by syllabus section	7	8	8	6	9	

Note: **Bold** indicates the most prevalent change syllabus section where each category of change was observed.

total number of inclusive category changes across five syllabus sections within a syllabus ranged from 1 to 9 (with a possible range of 0–30).

We next correlated faculty's self-assessment of their self-efficacy, attitudes, and behavioral intentions with the total number of inclusive categories across syllabus sections using a mixed methods approach (Morgan, 2018). Interestingly, the number of changes was significantly related only to the faculty's attitudes towards inclusive teaching at pre-assessment ($r(7) = .75, p < .05$). Two other relationships emerged as possible associations given the size of the correlation, albeit not statistically significant due to the small sample size: attitudes at post-assessment ($r(7) = .50, p = .18$) and behavioral intentions at post-assessment ($r(7) = .59, p = .10$). The degree of change between pre- and post-assessment for each measure was not related to the number of types of changes in the syllabi.

Syllabus change examples

All examples provided below represent post-workshop changes made to syllabi. The "professor humanity" code included post-workshop changes that shared personal details as a means of increasing inclusion

and approachability. Two professors added pictures of the professor and teaching assistants. One added a detailed description of her social identities and discussed how her interests are reflected in the content of the course. Professors also took time to develop and add information about their teaching philosophies which gave students insight into how they view the learning process and how they aim to support student success. Professors shared that they believe “learning can be empowering, inclusive, equitable, and fun,” that they strive for an “anti-racist classroom,” and welcome student feedback about the course. Another professor added a section with the heading “Learning joyfully” to explain how the course content applies to lifelong skills such as how to analyze new information and consistently re-evaluate what we think we know.

Regarding “language/visuals” usage, many professors reduced the complexity or jargon in their syllabus language or used more inclusive terminology such as replacing the word “local” with “community.” One professor converted the heading of “preferred name/pronoun statement” to “name/pronoun statement” for a more gender-affirming tone. Although the pre-workshop syllabus included a standard diversity statement expressing a welcome to all backgrounds based on immigration status, race, gender, disability, and more, the professor removed the phrase “regardless of” per advice from the workshop. Welcoming students regardless of their identities can sound like we are tolerating those identities rather than celebrating them as a way to learn from each other’s diverse perspectives. Another professor moved the traditional text-based syllabus to a fully visual syllabus in slide format. The visual syllabus used images, icons, links and QR codes, and callout boxes to highlight important points. For example, a QR code linked to all course deadlines, a pie graph provided a visual of the grading scheme, a callout box reminded students how to find their discussion groups, and links to university policies removed bulky text from the syllabus that students may perceive as punitive in tone.

Six syllabi showed evidence of efforts to increase student “engagement.” One professor stated, “We are online and asynchronous this semester...but that doesn’t mean you won’t ever get a chance to

interact with me. In fact, I WANT you to interact with me throughout the semester!" The professor then described several ways the students could reach the instructor. Three professors moved away from "office hours" to either "student hours" or "stats chat" as the new name for office hours. One professor encouraged students to use these hours for questions about course materials as well as questions about "about psychology in general" and their "interests and goals." Within a description of a Flipgrid assignment, a professor welcomed students to "introduce yourself to me" and provided flexibility in the assignment design. In the grading section of the syllabus, a professor explicitly encouraged students to ask questions as they planned a project and vowed to "always make time for you to discuss your ideas" prior to the deadline.

Incorporating "critical pedagogy" was one of the most common changes faculty incorporated into their syllabi. Several professors added course objectives such as "identifying biased and deficit-based approaches to research," making "equitable decisions in research design," understanding and addressing "intersectional contexts," and practicing "cultural humility." One professor added a critical question to the course objectives focusing on what social groups research tends to include and exclude. Another professor added an Indigenous land acknowledgement within the course description and spelled out a new course objective highlighting over-reliance on knowledge from western, white men. This objective also explicitly named incorporation of knowledge from "Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color, Latinx, gender fluid," and other individuals as a way to strengthen the discipline. Course descriptions included additions referencing "injustice," the impact of "power" on access to resources and opportunities, and how limited access may "disenfranchise and damage people." Added course materials included readings that address "social justice," human rights," intersectional "matrices of domination," "white racial identity," and challenging racism. A strong example of a syllabus change was a midterm paper asking students to conduct a professional reflection on intersectionality for better understanding of within group diversity and a "more comprehensive story that encompasses

intersecting identities and impact the overall experience of individuals in our communities.”

One common “policy/resources” change was to move the course’s policy on diversity and inclusion to a more prominent and visible place earlier in the syllabus. Added ground rules for class discussion mentioned “engaging in cultural humility” and practicing respect around “diversity and intersectionality.” A professor added a link to the university system that allows students to state their used name and used pronouns (which translates to course rosters) despite the legal names students may no longer use that remain in the university database. Another professor added a statement with the heading “An Important Note on Belonging and Inclusion” on the value of human diversity. The statement thanked students for “enriching our world, sharing your lived and vital experience, and for adding to the diversity that makes our intellectual community vibrant and undeniably creative.” Another post-workshop change came in the form of removing or reducing long policies that students may view as punitive. For example, several professors removed academic dishonesty policies and instead offered students links to the official university policy. For one syllabus, this meant removal of one full page on plagiarism and student conduct. One professor removed a half page of instructions on how to write a proper email and to the professor or teaching assistant. That change also meant removing a sentence indicating the professor and TA had the right to ignore emails asking questions already answered in the syllabus. They also updated their late work policy with clear language communicating all extension requests will be granted. Another professor removed legal language regarding disability accommodations and simplified the policy.

Some faculty also applied “equity practices” by increasing visibility through representation in course materials or engaging culturally-relevant assignments. Many examples of this code reflected faculty adding readings, assignments, and resources that expand representation of scholars from traditionally marginalized communities. Post-workshop syllabi added resources such as a federal government organization addressing disability, readings about diverse populations

across the world, articles from international journals, and readings on emotional labor, health equity, sexual minorities, race, ethnicity, supporting trans and gender diverse populations. Additional representation within readings focused on research articles with study participant diversity: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders. As noted above, visual representations added after the workshop highlighted people with disabilities and a variety of individuals with varying skin tones across races and ethnicities.

Discussion

The *Syllabus Challenge* tool and interactive workshop and toolkit resulted in several faculty making changes to their syllabi by incorporating more inclusive syllabus practices. We found a significant increase from before to after the workshop, and their use of the toolkit, in terms of positive attitudes toward inclusive teaching, self-efficacy regarding inclusive teaching, and behavioral intentions to incorporate more inclusive teaching practices. Every faculty member whose syllabi were examined both before and after the workshop made inclusive syllabus changes to the syllabus. Within each post-workshop syllabus, the number of syllabus sections with changes ranged from one section to all five sections suggesting variance by instructor or course. Changes to critical pedagogy were most common across syllabus sections, but attention to other forms of inclusive syllabus practices were observed at similar frequencies. The number of inclusive syllabus changes correlated only with faculty attitudes toward inclusive teaching prior to the workshop, although the degree of the correlations suggests attitudes and behavioral intentions were related at post-assessment. The fact that the study detected statistically significant effects despite such a small sample speaks to the magnitude of those effects.

Limitations and future directions

This study investigated the syllabi developed by a small sample of faculty who (a) participated in a *Syllabus Challenge* workshop and

(b) agreed to provide us with both their original and updated syllabi. As such, faculty who volunteered to participate in our study were, at the very least, self-selected for participation and willing to share their course materials. Hence, this group may not be representative of the larger department faculty. Faculty who declined to share their syllabi may be less interested in inclusive teaching or less likely to implement changes. Unfortunately, this limits our understanding of the broader impact of the *Syllabus Challenge* workshop and toolkit on faculty behavior. In addition, without direct observations of teaching behaviors (e.g., in the classroom or within grading approaches), the present study cannot predict changes related to inclusive pedagogical practices. The small sample of syllabi for just nine courses also reduced power, and therefore, limited the ability to achieve potential significance on some measures. For example, the increased behavioral intentions after the workshop may be related to inclusive syllabus change, but the small sample prevented that relationship from reaching significance. Future research incorporating interviews or focus groups with faculty workshop participants, including those making no change, may contribute to learning about the psychological processes most likely to drive inclusive teaching behavior change (Erby et al., 2021). Studies with direct observation of potential changes in inclusive teaching behaviors in terms of classroom interactions, grading and assessment approaches to reduce bias, etc. will reduce reliance on self-report about intentions to change. It will also be important for future studies to examine the relationship of implementing inclusive changes to syllabi with student perceptions and learning (Gurung & Galardi, 2021; Howansky et al., 2021; Stephens et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2023).

Recommendations for faculty development

For those considering faculty development to support inclusive syllabus practices, we encourage the use of the *Syllabus Challenge* as a checklist for quick application (Bryson et al., 2020; Fuentes et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2019). For our context, the *Syllabus Challenge*

toolkit provided various levels of changes that could work well for faculty new to inclusive teaching and those well-versed in these strategies. Interestingly, we found faculty increases in positive attitudes toward inclusive teaching even though the workshop intervention did not include content on why these practices are important or how they benefit student learning. By starting from the assumption that faculty care about inclusion (Erby et al., 2021), faculty development programs can maximize time spent on practical tips and immediately applicable strategies for inclusive teaching (Taylor et al., 2019). One possible way to further increase inclusive syllabus practices may be including workshops into previously scheduled meetings to avoid trying to bring faculty together at a separate time because they possess very little time for development (Villarreal et al., 2022). For example, within our study, using an official department meeting for this focus on inclusive syllabus practices may have signaled that these teaching approaches were highly valued by department leadership. By creating space for this work during official department time, faculty could benefit from engaging in a community of practice that contributes to the broader collaborative synergy as described by Mena et al. (2023). For us, the small group discussions woven into this study's workshop provided space for colleagues to apply the ideas to their own syllabi. To advance a departmental culture shift toward collaborative synergy that can sustain well beyond a single workshop intervention, we also suggest organizing follow-up discussions where faculty can share syllabi and get feedback on inclusive syllabus changes they plan to make.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The data reported in this manuscript are available on request by contacting the corresponding author.

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Appendix A. Survey items with adaptations in italics

Teacher Multicultural Attitudes Survey (Ponerotto et al., 1998)

Note: Adapted 17 items using original rating scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. For items referencing cultural diversity or background, the word “cultural” or “multiculturalism” was dropped for inclusion of a broad range of diversity.

- I find teaching a diverse student group rewarding.
- Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a diverse student group.
- Sometimes I think that there is too much emphasis placed on *inclusive teaching practices* training for teachers. (reverse scored)
- Teachers have the responsibility to be aware of their students’ backgrounds.
- It is not the teacher’s responsibility to encourage pride in one’s diversity. (reverse scored)
- As classrooms become more diverse, the teacher’s job becomes increasingly rewarding.
- I believe that the teacher’s role needs to be redefined to address the needs of diverse students.
- As classrooms become more diverse, the teacher’s job becomes increasingly challenging. (reverse scored)
- I can learn a great deal from *diverse students*.
- *Inclusive teaching practices* training for teachers is not necessary. (reverse scored)
- To be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of student differences present in the classroom.
- *Inclusive teaching practices* training can help me to work more effectively with a diverse student population.
- Today’s curriculum gives undue importance to diversity. (reverse scored)
- I am aware of the diversity of students in my classroom.
- Regardless of the makeup of my class, it is important for students to be aware of diversity.

- Being aware of diversity is not relevant for the subject I teach. (reverse scored)
- Teaching students about diversity will only create conflict in the classroom. (reverse scored)

Inclusive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (adapted from Chen et al., 2001)

Note: Adapted 8 items with rating scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

- I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*
- When facing difficult tasks *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices*, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
- In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*
- I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*
- I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*
- I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*
- Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices.*
- Even when things are tough *related to the use of inclusive teaching practices*, I can perform quite well.

Inclusive Syllabus Behavioral Intentions

Note: Created 10 items with response options: 1 = definitely will not; 7 = definitely will. Phrasing to capture behavioral intentions from Armitage et al. (1999) was used as the "I intend to..." stem for items.

- I intend to make changes to the course description of my syllabus.
- I intend to make changes to the learning goals/course objectives of my syllabus.

- I intend to make changes to the instructor information/contact related-information of my syllabus.
- I intend to make changes to the course materials-texts/readings of my syllabus.
- I intend to make changes to the course materials-videos/digital media of my syllabus.
- I intend to make changes to the student assessments (e.g., papers, projects, quizzes, exams) of my syllabus.
- I intend to make changes to the course policies of my syllabus.
- I intend to include material in my syllabus to address inclusivity.
- I intend to provide additional materials within my syllabus to help increase students' feelings of inclusivity.
- I intend to make changes to my syllabus to reflect content to improve students' feelings of community and belonging.