



Fostering Equity and Inclusion during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This guidance document has been prepared by the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) Diversity Leadership Council and the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion (VCDI) to assist in fostering a supportive, positive, and inclusive climate for all during the COVID-19 crisis. It builds upon the recent professionalism and compassion statements from Chancellor Strom and President Barchi.

1. Place our [RBHS diversity, equity, and inclusion statement](#) into practice and actively denounce and discourage xenophobia (prejudicial actions against people from other countries), bigotry (intolerance for those with different opinions from oneself) and racism, treating all with respect.
2. Be an ally to our diverse community and as an "up-stander," when able to, speak up to discourage others from engaging in disrespectful comments or behavior. Be respectful and value the important roles of each interprofessional team member.
3. Refer to the virus as either "COVID-19" or "coronavirus" in both oral and written communications. Do not use terms which cast either intentional or unintentional slights or microaggressions, especially toward our Asian communities, and do not allow the use of such terms by others.
4. Health care disparities are often magnified in times of crisis that place significant demands on the health care system; be an advocate and champion for our vulnerable populations in need. For example, consider how telehealth may impact patients with limited technology resources and consider how to convey new messages and instructions at the appropriate literacy level, to those differently abled, or faced with language barriers.
5. Be mindful that in times of crisis, it is the underrepresented and marginalized who may disproportionately bear the brunt of sudden change. Be vigilant of microaggressions that may appear in different ways in the online and remote settings.
6. Be patient with one another during email and video communications. Many of our colleagues are balancing childcare, housework, and other multiple tasks along with their job responsibilities during this time. There can be a tendency to want immediate answers, and typically friendly ways of communicating can break down without this deliberate effort to maintain kindness.
7. Build an inclusive digital community. Advocate for students and meet their needs. Consider those who may have fewer resources and address unequal access to technology while using remote instruction, such as arranging access to borrowed laptops and/or wi-fi. Ask about challenges and concerns and use that information to inform your courses. Ensure accessibility for our students with disabilities when using online learning.
8. Keep the focus on what is most important and be kind and understanding regarding expectations. Relax requirements that may become impositions, such as demanding business attire for online video meetings or classes. Remember that people may be operating without resources and access to many material items and services.
9. Try to make the virtual interview process for existing faculty and staff recruitments, as consistent for all candidates, and as similar as possible to those offered prior in-person experiences (e.g., if people can ask questions during an in-person interview, allow for questions during a remote job interview).

10. Most importantly, support all our health care workers, first responders, and essential workers who are on the front line of this pandemic, “Flatten the curve” by attending to the local and federal health guidelines, and finally practice self-care! and make time for your physical and emotional needs.

Thank you,

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Resources

Tips for communicating thoughtfully and inclusively during a crisis. DA Williams 2020.

https://seureservercdn.net/198.71.233.161/6xb.115.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/NIXLA_COVID19_Communicating-in-a-Crisis-for-Businesses-One-Pager.pdf

Rutgers online teaching resources <https://ctaar.rutgers.edu/>

Inclusion, Equity, and Access While Teaching Remotely, Center for Teaching Excellence, Rice University

<https://cte.rice.edu/blogarchive/2020/3/13/inclusion-equity-and-access-while-teaching-remotely?fbclid=IwAR2C9tZm0QcqmrdrVNTTr8WSz2fbtTUNleJ8HBPJ3Q07KuaDUJ-inhShNcC2w>

[Webinar on Online Education and Website Accessibility](#), Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education

Webinar from the Online Learning Consortium: [Using Live, Online Sessions to Support Continuity of Instruction](#)

Williams, D. (2020). The COVID-19 DEI Crisis Action Strategy Guide: Recommendations to Drive Inclusive Excellence. Atlanta, GA: Center for Strategic Diversity Leadership & Social Innovation.