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**Sent:** Monday, October 28, 2019 10:51 AM

**To:** Faculty <Faculty@aup.edu>; Quai and Combes Staff <quaiandcombesstaff@aup.edu>

**Subject:** TLC News - Inclusive classrooms and accommodations

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you have received messages about **learning accommodations** for your students this semester. The process of providing these accommodations is not without its challenges, and Academic Affairs and Student Development are working together towards what we hope will become a smoother process over time.

The TLC recently organized a workshop on the topic of **“Creating Inclusive Classrooms”**, facilitated by Lynn Verduzco-Baker. Inclusive classrooms are mostly portrayed as a challenge (which they can be). Yet, they also offer us a chance to recognize diversity and bring diversity to the fore, making the class more challenging in a positive way and more beneficial to all. Inclusive classrooms help everyone to appreciate diversity instead of being fearful of it. “Inclusive” is the key word in that creating this type of teaching/learning environment supports all students regardless of learning styles and difficulties, English language level, cultural and educational background or mental health issues, while also facilitating course and classroom management. The “inclusive classroom” is not about the process of providing accommodations; rather, it is about recognizing that each student comes to AUP with a past and a present (social, economic, cultural, educational, linguistic, health, etc.) and finding ways to “include” all students in all aspects of one’s course.

We began the discussion with the notion of “accommodation”:

- We spent some time discussing what we mean by “accommodation”. We thought about the terms we use – do students “want”, “need” or “expect” accommodations? Are accommodations the right that someone has or a service that someone requests?
- Students are often reticent to approach us about accommodation because they fear we will see them as a “problem”, which in turn, may lead to their viewing themselves as “the problem”.
- Is AUP equipped to accommodate students in the way we are being asked to?
- We need to be concerned for the well-being of our students, but we also need someone in charge of learning challenges who can guide us.

The conversation turned to what manageable steps we as faculty can take to help ensure the well-being of our students:

- How do we think about learning difficulties? Lynn replies, “If they say they need accommodation, I believe them”.
- Can the way we design our courses, the syllabus, assignments and tests positively influence our students’ learning and performance? Lynn argues that yes, rethinking our course design is a crucial step in building an inclusive classroom.
- What are some suggestions for doing this? Lynn offered several: be clear with expectations for participation from day one; explain the objective of office hours and encourage students to stop by or make an appointment with you; provide visuals when possible on handouts, the white board or powerpoints; give students sample study questions in preparation for exams; consider giving multiple options for a test or assignment.
- An AUP colleague, Sharman Levinson, recently shared an “Assignment and Diversity policy” statement from her syllabus:

All students may propose alternative assignments that are more conducive to their learning style and are evaluated by the professor to be of equivalent difficulty and correspond to the same learning objectives as the work assigned. *These alternatives and their rationale need to be presented and approved in advance.*

We will keep you posted as discussions continue, and don't hesitate to contact us with questions and comments.

**Upcoming Events** (events will take place in **Q-609** unless otherwise announced):

- Nov 4-8 - a series of **workshops and consultations with instructional designer, Nadine Aboulmagd, from the American University in Cairo** (the schedule will be published Tuesday Oct. 29; for more information, contact Rebekah at [rrast@aup.edu](mailto:rrast@aup.edu))
- Wed. Nov. 20, 12:15 **TLC lunch - *Talking about Speaking: Helping students develop presentation skills***, with Mark Ennis,
- Mon. Nov. 25, 5:30-7 **Mellon Seminar - *Student-Faculty Collaboration in the Liberal Arts: Lessons learned from the GLCA/GLAA-Library of Congress Program***, based on the research theme "Coming to America: The Early Arab-American Generations", with David Tresilian, Michael Stoepel and their students.

Until then, have an excellent mini-break!

**Your TLC**

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