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Supporting Diverse First-Generation Introductory Anthropology Students: Lessons from a Regional Midwestern University

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Abstract

First-generation college students (students whose parents did not complete a bachelor's degree) are a growing population within U.S. colleges. These students often belong to historically underrepresented populations including racial and ethnic minority groups and those with lower socioeconomic status. This paper discusses a project to redesign introductory anthropology courses to be more "first-generation friendly." Changes discussed include creating a welcoming classroom climate, providing clear expectations and feedback, integrating Universal Design for Learning, rethinking course content, and creating plans for critical self-reflection. We conclude by discussing the impact of our changes and plans for future work.

Keywords: First-generation Students; Pedagogy; Introductory Courses

Introduction

"As a first-generation student, I didn't know where to go or who to talk to when I had a problem. I thought I had to figure everything out on my own and it was really isolating – like it was me against everyone else."

The first-generation student quoted above (also one of this paper's authors) is not alone. Recent estimates suggest around one-third of all college students in the United States are first-generation or "first-gen" (Skomsvold 2015). While multiple definitions exist (Toutkoushian et al. 2021), first-generation college students are federally defined as "an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree" (United States Higher Education Act 1965, Amended 1998). Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, like many universities, is enrolling a growing number of first-generation students; this growth has prompted faculty and administrators to consider how to best support the unique challenges and insights that first-generation students bring to the classroom.

This work is also personal to us; each of the paper's authors were first-generation college students. Our own lived university experience mirrors that of many of our students, including feelings of confusion, isolation, and a lack of sense of belonging. For example,

when Miller was an undergraduate student, he would often look around himself and say, "I must be the only person who doesn't already know this stuff." Klales never went to office hours and struggled to understand the financial bureaucracy of paying for higher education. Maxwell fretted that their work was never good enough. Like the authors, many first-generation students fail to utilize student support systems, either due to discomfort or lack of awareness. As first-generation students turned faculty, we wondered: how might we address the challenges we faced as first-generation students, and how can we make our courses more welcoming to diverse students and specifically to first-generation students like us?

Amidst the backdrop of the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic and the Black Lives Matter social justice movement in the United States, the authors participated in a "First-generation Course Redesign," a two-month long summer workshop sponsored by our university's Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant and the Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning (CTEL). The workshop provided faculty with tools to redesign their courses to make them more accessible to first-generation students. Over the course of the workshop, we leveraged our anthropological training and personal classroom insights to improve our pedagogic praxis in introductory anthropology courses.

In this article, we share the results of our redesign efforts and our reflections over six subsequent semesters. We begin by contextualizing first-generation students more broadly before describing our university and anthropology program. Next, we share the course redesign framework we utilized and discuss the results of our efforts to redesign our courses. This includes how we reimagined our three introductory anthropology courses (biological, cultural, and linguistic) and highlights helpful strategies based on student feedback. We conclude by discussing some of our "best practice takeaways" and why we believe this work is broadly applicable to the creation of more equitable and accessible courses for all students.

Contextualizing First-Generation College Students

First-generation students seeking bachelor's degrees at four-year universities in the United States represent a growing student demographic. The number of first-generation students increased from 16.7 percent in 2007 (Saenz et al. 2007) to 56 percent in 2015-2016 (CFGSS n.d.). First-generation status is also often correlated with other identities. For example, first-generation students are more likely to identify as female (60 percent vs. 52 percent of non-first-generation students), have dependents (30 percent vs. 16 percent of non-first-generation students), attend school less than full time (60 percent vs. 52 percent of non-first-generation students), identify more often as an ethnic or racial minority (54 percent, including 18 percent identifying as Black or African American, 25 percent identifying as Hispanic or Latinx, 6 percent identifying as Asian, and 1.5 percent identifying as Native American, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian), and have fewer financial resources ($41k median parental income vs. $90k) (CFGSS n.d.). Scholars such as Deil-Amen (2011),

Herbet (2018), and Toutkoushian et al. (2021) discuss how these intersecting, minoritized identities can complicate a student's path to success and persistence to college completion. These complications range from a lack of role models to not understanding how to apply for financial aid. Thus, Nguyen and Nguyen (2018, 169) advocate for using an *intersectional* lens to understand the experience of first-generation students, a lens which views first-generation students not as one isolated identity, but multiple (often historically marginalized) identities. These intersecting identities each have complicated and historically informed relationships with institutions and power structures. Ergo, the programs that universities create to assist first-generation students must utilize strategies that are also intersectional in approach and scope, including those that support low-income students and students of color.

While the number of first-generation students is increasing, institutions are not always well-prepared to include and support these students for a successful college experience. Only about 20 percent of first-generation students attain a bachelor's degree within six years of entering their postsecondary education and more than half receive no degree at all (CFGSS n.d.). First-generation students experience a variety of significant barriers during their collegiate years, including facing questions of belonging (Johnson et al. 2011; Stephens et al. 2012); increased academic troubles (Pascarella et al. 2004); and underutilizing advising, academic support services, career services, and health services (CFGSS n.d.). However, some universities recognize the importance of dedicated support for first-generation students. In June 2017, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, created the Center for First-generation Student Success, which researches and publicizes evidence-based practices to serve first-generation students. Currently, 277 campuses have earned the Center's "First-gen Forward" recognition for their commitment to first-generation college students, including our own.

Much of the scholarly literature regarding first-generation college students draws heavily on Bourdieu's (1973) notion of social capital (see Davis 2010; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995; and Zwerling and London 1992). Here, social capital refers to the utilization of social relationships and support networks for navigating the college experience (Davis 2010). Thus, if students do not have college educated individuals in their social networks, they will be unable to learn from their experiences. Ward et al. (2012, 6-8) concludes that this *lack* of social capital is the "key construct" to understanding how to best support first-generation students. In other words, this is a *deficit*-based approach, which emphasizes what first-generation students lack rather than helping students to identify what they bring into the classroom as assets (Yosso 2005). This approach suggests students must be provided (or gain access on their own to) those aspects of social capital to succeed. Colleges utilizing this approach, our own included, might focus on orientation programs that match low-social capital first-generation students with more connected/experienced peer mentors who serve as role models, or they may provide additional training resources to help first-generation students acclimatize to university life.

While we certainly agree that students arrive in our classrooms needing additional knowledge and insight, this *deficit*-based approach can de-emphasize the effects of structural factors on a student's sense of belonging and success while over-emphasizing the collection of relationships and other traits as a path to success (Clegg 2011; Kingston 2001; Yosso 2005). Brazilian educator and scholar Paulo Freire (1970) and critical educator bell hooks (1994) are two examples of scholars who critique this model of education, which they term "banking," that seeks to fill empty students with knowledge. For example, connecting a first-generation student with a role model will not necessarily help the student overcome the structural racism present in higher education or deal with professors who are unsympathetic to students who work full time while also attending college. Instead, scholars like those above call for a model of education that engages students in bringing their whole selves into the classroom and challenging structural factors that inhibit success. For example, critical race theorist Tara Yosso (2005, 70) argues against the deficit and "banking" approach and instead offers the concept of *community cultural wealth.* Community cultural wealth is defined as the "under-utilized assets Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom." Yosso (2005) identifies multiple forms of capital that students of color bring to the classroom: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant. In our own work, we extend this notion to not just include students of color, but to include all historically minoritized students, including low-income, LGBTQ+, and undocumented students.

We chose the community cultural wealth framework to guide our first-generation course redesign for several reasons. First, it recognizes that students bring assets with them into our classrooms and helps us identify ways in which we as faculty can best address areas where first-generation students (and others with intersecting identities) need assistance to succeed. Second, it provides a way for us to engage with students directly while also recognizing that institutions have historical and often asymmetrical power relationships with historically marginalized populations such as Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income communities. As you will see in the next section, our university's students have many intersecting cultural and social identities, highlighting the importance of a model of inclusion drawn from community knowledge. It is from this community cultural wealth model that we began thinking about our own anthropology classrooms, our students' inherent capital, and the ways we could make our classrooms more accessible and welcoming to first-generation students.

Contextualizing our University and Anthropology Program

Washburn University is one of only three municipal universities in the United States, meaning partial funding comes from the local city of Topeka, Shawnee County, and the state of Kansas; however, the university retains its own Board of Regents separate from the Kansas State University System's Board of Regents. That local focus extends to our student body of about 6,400 students, of which 91.7 percent are from the state of Kansas and 49.3 percent are from the same or neighboring county as the university. The university has open

admissions and accepts any student with a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) Certificate. Several factors make Washburn a desirable choice for many students who may find it harder to succeed at a larger university, including: a low student to faculty ratio (17:1); low cost per undergraduate credit hour ($315.25); resident tuition offered for students from neighboring states; national recognition for low student debt upon graduation; distribution of over $53 million in aid every year; and specific initiatives aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System 2022).

The student demographics and intersecting student identities of our own institution mirror those described by the Center for First-Generation Student Success (n.d.) above. In the fall of 2021, 52 percent of our students were white, 23 percent were non-white, and 25 percent were unknown or unreported. Sixty three percent were female, and 37 percent male. Within Washburn's advising app *Navigate*, students can self-disclose first-generation status if they wish; however, it is difficult to know an exact number because Washburn does not specifically collect this data. In 2022, our university's Title III Grant Director estimates that approximately 50 percent of our students are first-generation. Like first-gen status, it is also difficult to measure student socio-economic status (SES) and the relationship of SES to college preparation and completion. In any given year, about 80 percent of Washburn's first-year students receive financial aid; 60 percent of students receive grant aid; and 16.5 percent of incoming first-year students come from households earning under $30K/year (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System 2022).

Washburn has given considerable attention, albeit through a deficit-based approach, to first-generation students, given their increasing number on campus. We have a first-generation office with a full-time coordinator, a student club, dedicated website with information/resources, a living-learning community, and a bilingual first-generation newsletter. We received a U.S. Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant in 2018 (the grant which funded the workshop discussed in this article) which, amongst other things, funds several "Success Coaches" who work with students to help them succeed. For this work, NASPA identified Washburn as a "Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education First-Gen Forward Institution" in 2019-2020 for our demonstrated commitment to advancing first-generation student success.

The anthropology program at Washburn is in a combined department with sociology. We offer two anthropology degrees with approximately 40 majors: a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology (Forensics Concentration). Both degree programs require introductory courses in each of the four anthropological subfields and anthropological methods/theory courses. Students then typically take upper-division courses in their preferred subfield(s) of anthropology. There are five full-time anthropology faculty who teach a variety of courses across the four anthropological subfields. All of these faculty are white; four are cisgender women and one is a cisgender man. Each of the anthropology faculty members, including the three authors, routinely participate in

Washburn University's CTEL programs and have earned multiple annual CTEL Certificates of Teaching and Learning and/or CTEL Certificates of Inclusive Teaching and Learning.

CTEL First-Generation Course Redesign Workshop and Framework

The First-Generation Course Redesign Workshop brought together faculty from across the university. Each week focused on various aspects of pedagogy for first-generation students. In addition to readings, mini-lectures, and Zoom-based discussions, we reflected on ways in which we might incorporate that week's themes into our courses. Workshop creators and facilitators Melanie N. Burdick and Valerie M. Mendoza created an "Inclusive Course Design Planning Guide" (Burdick, Mendoza, and CTEL 2020) and worksheet (see Table 1), which served as a framework for redesigning our courses.

The framework consisted of five design categories: creating a welcoming class climate; providing clear expectations and feedback; integrating Universal Design for Learning (UDL); rethinking course content; and creating plans for critical self-reflection. In addition, Burdick, Mendoza, and CTEL's (2020) framework asked participants to identify three levels of potential course changes including *easy steps* (changes that could be made right away with little effort), *larger changes* (changes that required more effort to implement), and *massive goals* (changes that might take several semesters to fully implement).

Table 1. Inclusive Course Design Planning Guide Worksheet
(Burdick, Mendoza, and CTEL 2020)

Category of Redesign	Easy Steps	Larger Changes	Massive Goals
Creating a Welcoming Class Climate			
Providing Clear Expectations and Feedback			
Integrating Universal Design for Learning			
Rethinking Course Content			
Plans for Critical Self-Reflection			

While Burdick, Mendoza, and CTEL's (2020) framework did not explicitly incorporate Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory, it, too, recognized that first-generation students often also identify as students of color, lower income students, disabled students, and LGBTQ+ students; the framework thus also embraced intersectionality.

The authors took a team-based approach and decided to focus on three[1] of our four introductory anthropology courses: Cultural Anthropology, Linguistic Anthropology, and Biological Anthropology. We focused on the introductory level for several reasons. First, these three courses are frequently taught, averaging 12 sections a year by the authors alone, and have large enrollments (~30 students per section). Second, they are "gateway" general education courses promoted to incoming students from all majors and are required by several majors outside of anthropology. Finally, because these courses are all 100-level introductory courses, they typically enroll many first-generation and first-year students. Research shows that the courses first-year students take have a major impact on retention between years 1 and 2 in terms of first-generation student success (Soria and Stebleton 2012).

To begin the redesign process, we each reflected on our courses and independently completed the CTEL worksheet provided in Table 1. Then, we met to develop a prioritization plan by identifying areas of overlap for each of the three levels and all five design categories. Next, we planned for implementation and reflection, which is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Creating a Welcoming Class Climate

We define a "welcoming class climate" as one in which students feel comfortable bringing their whole selves into the classroom. In their online course, "Inclusive Teaching: Supporting All Students in the College Classroom," Jungels and Patel (n.d.) articulate a framework for examining course climate via four quadrants: ways that a course is implicitly marginalizing, explicitly marginalizing, implicitly centralizing, and explicitly centralizing. Additionally, many educators (c.f. Ladson-Billings 1995, 2006; Paris 2012) advocate for culturally relevant or culturally sustaining pedagogy to welcome and nurture a diverse array of students into the classroom by focusing on their cultural assets. To that end, we looked for ways we could make our courses more accessible for all students, and specifically first-generation students, and invite them to bring their cultural assets into the classroom through a community cultural wealth approach.

Easy Steps

Easy changes to create a welcoming class environment focused on modifying our communication, both directly and indirectly, including tone, frequency, and explicitness. A first step here was explicitly disclosing our own first-generation student status to our students either in the syllabi, during instructor introductions, and/or on our faculty websites. The tone of course syllabi was modified to be more welcoming by switching to first person plural verb tense (e.g., "We will learn…" instead of "You will learn…"). Next, we each created a captioned welcome video that explained some of the common tasks students

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[1] Laura Murphy, Archaeology faculty member, also participated in the workshop to redesign her Introduction to Archaeology course; however, she chose not to participate in co-authoring this article.

struggle with and the expectations for the course. We reframed the traditional office hours as *student hours* and clarified the purpose of this time in our syllabi and in the orientation videos. We also provided multiple point-of-contact options including phone calls, Zoom calls with or without video, in-person meetings, and online via our learning management system (LMS) chat so that students could choose a comfortable format that worked with their own schedules. In addition, we provided some examples of how students might use student hours and why students should take advantage of meeting with us outside of class. Finally, recognizing that many of our students were low-income, we added a basic needs statement (discussed in greater detail below) and links to campus resources (such as our laptop checkout program and the two food pantries on campus) to the syllabus and orientation videos; this statement was modeled after the statement created by Sara Goldrick-Rab (2017).

About a month before our courses began, we utilized Intelligent Agents (IA), a communication feature of our campus's LMS, which, once set up, automatically emails a welcome message to all students enrolled in our courses. The email expressed our excitement for the upcoming semester and provided the syllabus and additional information, such as places to access affordable textbooks (for courses which did not utilize zero-cost course materials). The LMS continued to send these IA emails to all students who enrolled in the course up until the day before classes began. Klales found the automated IA messages to be particularly helpful and expanded their use to provide students automated messages when a variety of criteria were met. For example, when a student received a low score on an exam or quiz, they received an automated email providing tutoring options, encouragement to attend student drop-in hours, and/or information on study strategies for different learning styles and/or disciplines. Weekly deadline reminders and student kudos were also sent via the LMS IA.

Larger Changes

In terms of larger changes, we were interested in the "interactive syllabus" as proposed by Guy McHendry (2017) and Angela Jenks (2019), but we needed a bit more time to develop our own version before we implemented it. An interactive syllabus "takes students through all of the material on a traditional syllabus but also asks students questions about their goals, concerns, and questions about the class empowering professors to engage students from day one" (McHendry 2017). In our interactive syllabus, students work through a series of questions requiring them to provide their own narrative responses instead of strictly multiple-choice options. We presented this to students as a low stakes syllabus "quiz" with points awarded simply for completion. We wanted to create a space in each of our classes for students to discuss their barriers, learning styles, goals, and strategies to be successful in the class. We responded to each student individually after they submitted their "syllabus quiz" to follow up on their questions or concerns, to welcome each student personally, and to help calm students' anxiety. As these courses began to return to in-person formats, we made class time available to have these

discussions together to increase the sense of community. Further, submitting a low-stakes "quiz" helped incentivize students to complete the interactive syllabus and allowed them to immediately begin a dialogue with the course instructors.

Finally, we worked with students early in the course to set classroom agreements (sometimes called ground rules) for our class discussions and to help students get to know each other as individuals. Part of this work involved creating opportunities for students to bring their whole selves and lives into the classroom. For example, in one early assignment common to both the Cultural Anthropology and Linguistic Anthropology courses, students created cultural (or linguistic) autobiographies that shared their cultural (or linguistic) lives with their classmates. We welcomed students to bring their own lived experiences into the classroom to help them see themselves as cultural beings who had valuable experiences, following the community wealth model proposed by Yosso (2005). Students could complete the assignment in writing via a blog post shared with their classmates or were invited to create a video *vlog* in lieu of a more traditional essay. Maxwell encouraged her students in Cultural Anthropology to adorn their posts with photographs and quotes that helped communicate their culture with other students and to comment on each other's autobiographies. In this way, students were engaged with each other and encouraged to bring aspects of themselves (if they felt comfortable) into the classroom. This small, low-stakes assignment helped build community and interaction, but on another level, it laid the groundwork for future, more difficult conversations about gender, sexuality, class, and race. The goal was to show students that it was not only acceptable to bring their lived experiences into the classroom, but also encouraged. As one student from Maxwell's class commented, "the [online] class discussions were by far my favorite part of this class, because it helps relate the course material to my life and makes it easier to understand." This is, in a way, a response to hooks's call for faculty to practice "engaged pedagogy" (1994, 13–22) by inviting students to see themselves as whole bodies and whole learners in the classroom.

Massive Goals

Our ongoing discussions and efforts particularly focus on ways to create a more welcoming climate for students of color and other historically marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ students. To that end, the authors participated in a semester-long project in the fall of 2020 about how to incorporate Black Lives Matter into our curriculum. They also attended a series of three workshops in the fall of 2021 on Antiracism in the Classroom, led by scholar Amaarah DeCuir (Inclusive Pedagogy Fellow at the American University Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning) and hosted at Washburn. The third author (Klales) participated in multiple workshops on similar themes hosted by the Center for Archaeology, Society of Forensic Anthropologists, and the American Anthropological Association. From the project and workshops, we each developed an anti-racist/anti-bias statement that discusses what it means to be in an anti-racist/anti-bias classroom. These statements now appear in our syllabi. For example, Miller's statement reads:

Respect for cultural and human biological diversity are core concepts in Anthropology. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed, and that the diversity that students bring to this class is viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities; each of our voices have something to contribute to class discussion. I am committed to creating and maintaining an anti-racist, inclusive classroom and community that welcomes diversity in all its forms, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, disability status, class, age, and religious belief. Please respect those contributions and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. If you witness or experience racism, discrimination, micro-aggressions, or other offensive behavior, please let me know so that I can address it.

We discuss these statements with our students at the beginning of the semester and what it means to be a student in an anti-racist classroom. We also end this discussion by inviting students to engage with us on this work and note that we will revisit this throughout the remainder of the semester. We are in the process of creating a department-wide statement.

Providing Clear Expectations and Feedback

Giving students assignments and then offering feedback about their work is a regular part of higher education. However, students read assignment instructions and receive our feedback in multiple ways. For example, Hattie and Timperley (2007) discuss differences in how instructors and students conceptualize feedback and the ways in which feedback can support or hinder student learning, while Bonnel et al. (2008) maintain that faculty need to help students understand what to do with the feedback they receive. In our courses, we reflected on ways in which we worded assignment instructions, gave formative feedback to our students (feedback given to students incrementally across the learning process, such as after a low-stakes assignment or reflection), and summative feedback (feedback given to students after a major assignment).

Easy Steps

We began by focusing on the "hidden" rules of higher education that may be unknown to many first-generation students. We leveraged our LMS's announcement feature by creating weekly announcements that contained a sentence of encouragement, a sentence or two of framing regarding the week's content, and a list of what needed to be accomplished that week in the order we recommended. We ended by reminding students

that they could reach out to us over email/phone or during student hours if they wanted to talk or had questions. These weekly announcements also contained embedded links to the week's readings and assignments making it easy for the student to find that week's materials from the front page of the course. This carried over into the structure of the course's LMS page with each week having its own "module" and each module containing a list of everything that was assigned or due that week, which also corresponded to the course schedule on the syllabus. Numerous students have since commented in person and in our student evaluations that they love the "to do" lists and find them a useful tool for keeping track of course requirements.

In addition, we each took several other steps to encourage our students. Miller created weekly *nudges* during the first half of their courses called "Wednesday Tips" to help acclimate students to both the course and the university. These contained tips for things we often find students are unaware of or struggle with in our intro courses such as: how to access basic needs on campus and CARES Act grants (available during the COVID-19 pandemic), a tip about rubrics and how they are used in the course, how to set up LMS notifications and assignment reminders on the student's phone or email, how to access course tutoring, how to access our feedback on their assignments, etc. These tips were set to appear when a student would first need the information. For example, the post about how to read a rubric appears on the Wednesday after the first low-stakes assignment is graded. Maxwell and Klales created a "Start Here" module for their courses, which contained similar information presented in Miller's weekly nudges, such as: a document of university resources, tips on how to write a discussion post, how to set up LMS notifications, how to access feedback on assignments, and a link to the academic calendar for the university. Within this module, the instructors also included the orientation video, syllabus, and syllabus schedule, in which rubrics and assignments were explained in addition to their location on the LMS platform. Similarly, they would send out reminders of where to find information when the students would need it. One student commented, "I found the course to be inclusive and easy to navigate." Klales and Maxwell also used nudges in their courses by leveraging the LMS IA feature discussed above, which emails students with weekly assignment deadline reminders or, if the student failed to submit an assignment on time, with information on making up the work. Finally, Maxwell redesigned assignment instructions to take a 3-question approach: Why am I asking you to do this? What do I want you to do? How will you be evaluated? In this way, students had a clear understanding of the student learning outcomes and the objectives of the assignment. Many students often question the point of an assignment, and this structure provides an answer. While we did not explicitly use this framing, the Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Ed (TILT Higher Ed) framework created by Winkelmes (n.d.) provides a similar way of demystifying assignments for students.

We also spent considerable time reflecting on how we provided students with feedback on their assignment drafts and submissions, opting for a constructive or "sandwich" approach. There are many models of this or similar approaches, but all rely on offering

students a positive comment about their work before offering suggestions for how to improve the submission, followed by another positive comment. Prochazka et al. (2020) found this to be an effective tool for feedback. We used the sandwich feedback approach where possible and incorporated more positive feedback into student comments to balance critically constructive feedback.

Large Changes

We blurred the line between larger changes and massive goals for providing clear expectations and feedback by taking an approach that was incremental and which lasted several semesters. First, we incorporated better scaffolding, particularly as it pertained to student writing and research. Scaffolding involved thinking about the skills a student needed to complete a course assignment and identifying at which specific point in the course (or before the course) the student gained those skills. Miller and Maxwell revised the required writing assignments in Cultural Anthropology (completed by all students in the course, regardless of instructor) to better help students move through the writing stages. Students began with identifying a thesis statement and finding ethnographic evidence to support that statement in a three-paragraph essay, which helped them build up to writing a five-paragraph essay. Miller did the same for Linguistic Anthropology, followed by Klales and Maxwell in Biological Anthropology, which dedicated more class time to the individual research and writing components. In Biological Anthropology, Klales created low-stake in-class assignments to scaffold components of their larger general education writing assignment. This included information on navigating our library's website to find sources, differentiating between academic versus primary sources, practicing proper citation formatting, identifying the key components of a strong thesis statement, and annotating sources. The lower-stake scaffolded assignments resulted in a higher completion rate and overall higher scores on the Biological Anthropology general education writing assignment. Second, we updated grading rubrics to ensure we evaluated the writing skills we prioritized. We then very purposefully communicated to students the importance of the skill scaffolding.

Massive Goals

We continue to refine our efforts to improve student writing and meet regularly (about once a semester) to review what is working and what we could improve. A key aspect of this reflection is also listening to our students and asking specifically how we can best support them. During a recent "check-in" meeting for Cultural Anthropology, we decided to create sample essays for students to view and critique as a model for what we were looking for. The idea for this came directly from students asking for examples in class. At a similar "check-in" meeting for Biological Anthropology, we discussed implementing new mini-assignments (discussed above) that focused on how to search and find scholarly works, since we found through student feedback that this was a consistent barrier.

Integrating Universal Design for Learning

According to CAST (n.d.), UDL is "a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and challenging for all." The UDL framework is large, with many considerations grouped into three broad areas: *engagement* (the "why" of learning), which emphasizes student interest, choice, and self-regulation; *representation* (the "what" of learning) that works to clarify language and allows learners to customize how they receive information; and *action and expression* (the "how" of learning), which is focused on tools and assistive technologies and on allowing students to express their learning in multiple ways.

Easy Steps

To ensure that information was accessible to all students, we presented course information in multiple formats. This included modification of our syllabi and course assignments to be readable by text-to-speech software, having optical character recognition versions of these materials, and providing text (written) and video (visual/auditory) versions. Another option included use of a textbook that was available in multiple formats (digital, printed) and at low-cost or free price points (e.g., rent, printed, open access). We also worked to clarify and simplify academic jargon and other language used in the course (e.g., reframing office hours as discussed in the previous section or explaining what a rubric is and how to use it). Lastly, we optimized comprehension by scaffolding assignments with a series of lower-stake checkpoint assignments with feedback; relating assignments back to the course and program learning goals; and highlighting important concepts and applications of previous learning to new contexts. For example, our syllabi indicated which assignments were designed to achieve each course/program learning outcome and then also included these learning outcomes on each individual assignment.

Larger Changes

Next, we went through our other teaching materials and, over the course of an academic year, updated them to be more visually consistent. Materials were modified in terms of font, color, contrast, and text size to adhere to best practice guidelines. Moreover, we ensured all photos had descriptions or captions and were diverse in content (see below). In our online and "flipped"[2] in-person classes, we scripted, recorded, and edited our lectures to ensure they were concise and accessible to diverse learners. We also created different ways of engaging with students about the course including via email, Zoom meetups and office hours, IAs, notes and nudges embedded in our recorded lectures, written announcements on the LMS, etc. Many of these engagements contained the same

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[2] A "flipped" course is one in which students view recorded lectures or other preparatory materials before coming to class; this frees class time to be devoted to active learning, problem solving, group work, etc. See Mazur (2009) for a more detailed discussion of this approach.

information but helped meet students where they were and cater to their learning styles. Finally, all three of us already utilized "active learning" techniques in our courses (Brame 2016). Nevertheless, we reviewed our weekly lesson plans and identified opportunities for incorporating new or modifying existing activities to help students master course content outside of lectures. In addition to helping students learn, these active learning techniques encouraged students to draw upon their own lives and experiences while practicing critical thinking. This is another way we incorporated Yosso's (2005) cultural wealth model by helping students to see themselves as cultural, linguistic, and biological beings.

Massive Goals

In terms of massive goals, we reworked several assignments (discussed in more detail below) to allow learners to demonstrate their content knowledge outside of the traditional term paper or multiple-choice test. Beyond these goals, we hope to learn more about UDL and think more about how we can incorporate it into our courses going forward.

Rethinking Course Content

This category focused on increasing the diversity of persons featured in the course by reconsidering who was centralized in our conversations. This is connected to category one, Creating a Welcoming Classroom Climate, and Jungels and Patel's (n.d.) Classroom Climate Quadrants. For this work, we evaluated our underlying assumptions about anthropology curricula and the disciplinary and cultural frameworks of our courses. We then identified areas of our courses where content could be diversified.

Easy Changes

For this category, we took an inventory of the people and voices present in our courses. Each author highlighted which cultures and geographic areas were present in course readings and films or discussed to a significant extent in lectures. The results demonstrated which geographic areas were overrepresented or underrepresented in the course and allowed the authors to search for additional materials that were more representative cross-culturally. Our students noticed, and provided feedback stating, "the course was diverse, and it made me appreciate the diversity around the world."

We also took inventory of the images included in our lectures and worked to increase diversity, with a particular focus on including more depictions of BIPOC. For example, we tried to include images of people of multiple racial and ethnic identities, of different ages, from different class backgrounds, of different ability levels, etc. However, we were also keenly aware to avoid overrepresentation or the use of images that exotified BIPOC as "the other." One of the strategies we employed here was to ensure that we also included images of white individuals coupled with topics that might be seen as more exotic or deviant. For example, white faces appear on slides about divorce, poverty, and sickle cell anemia, which students may read as more "negative portrayals."

We faced several challenges in diversifying images from finding suitable images to securing copyright permission. We relied heavily on sites like http://images.google.com, which can be set to only return images under Creative Commons Licenses, and http://www.pexels.com, which contains images which do not need to be attributed to the photographer. However, both options remain challenging in that they often lack demographic and descriptive captions about who is in the photo and what is happening. Our search strategy often began with using diverse key terms. For example, if we needed an image to use on a slide about "language acquisition" we might use a key term like school, but also a geographic region or country name such as "Uganda" or "Belize" to increase the number of cross-cultural representations. Another quality resource we relied on is https://www.anthroillustrated.com, which has a growing number of illustrations of diverse anthropologists.

Klales also evaluated the language utilized within the Biological Anthropology course materials to take inventory of and change any biased language. For example, this involved identifying LGBTQ+ biases in gender catch-alls (e.g., changing guys to team/people), gender biased terminology (e.g., changing mankind to humankind), as well as age biases (e.g., changing elderly to senior citizen), or racial/ethnic biases (e.g., changing undocumented or illegal to immigrant). In outside resources, such as videos or articles that could not be modified, written or verbal comments were added to explain the problematic nature of such terminology. Klales also evaluated word connotations and shifted any negative connotations to neutral or positive connotations, thereby shifting the tone of the course content.

Larger Changes

We identified many long-term goals that are more challenging to integrate. For example, textbooks and other readings are an important aspect of most introductory anthropology courses. Many introductory anthropology textbooks are expensive, which limits many students' access to this important learning tool. Moreover, at the beginning of this process, almost all the available textbooks for these three courses were written by white and/or male/men authors. Maxwell has since adopted *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (Brown et al. 2020)*, an entirely open access textbook produced by the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges for her Cultural Anthropology course. This text (an edited volume) includes numerous authors of color. Miller also adopted a new Cultural Anthropology textbook (De Gonzales 2019) at a lower price point than his previous textbook and already used two books written by authors of color in Linguistic Anthropology (Mendoza-Denton 2014 and Stanlaw et al. 2018). Klales and Maxwell have since adopted the *Laboratory Manual and Workbook for Biological Anthropology* (Soluri and Agarwal 2019), which is currently the only discipline-specific textbook that is written exclusively by women/female authors and an author of color. This textbook was developed as a result of several years of research and data collection on the manual contents to test the most effective pedagogical methods for teaching biological

anthropology (Soluri 2010). For those books that were newly adopted, we spent a great deal of time considering price. Each of the new texts is at least as affordable (if not more) than the former texts. Of course, *Perspectives* is zero cost. Miller also puts copies of each of his textbooks on reserve in the library for students to access. In addition to these specific course texts, we have begun a larger conversation in our department about the kinds of voices included in the anthropology curriculum more broadly, and we hope that this will result in more structural change.

Massive Goals

A final long-term area of change we hope to implement is providing students with alternate ways of demonstrating their learning. For example, this may take the form of allowing students options for a final project or even allowing more "creative" options in lieu of more traditional essays. In Cultural Anthropology, Miller and Maxwell created a cultural autobiography assignment that allowed students to upload photographs, quotes, and even vlogs about how they see themselves as cultural beings. Another recently popularized approach is "UnEssays" in which a student is free to demonstrate their learning through a variety of means that are not (necessarily) an essay (Mader 2020; Nelson 2019). While none of the authors currently use UnEssays in these three courses, we have since implemented them in a few upper-division courses quite successfully. We continue to discuss and imagine what such assignments might look like in our introductory courses.

Plans for Critical Self-Reflection

Our final category of change included our plans for our own critical self-reflection. These included reflection on our teaching as well as reflection on our own positionality (race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) and how that impacted our own experience of the classroom. While anthropologists often engage in a great deal of reflexivity in their own work, we grappled with Wheatley's (2002) call for educators to be "willing to be disturbed" in our teaching.

Easy Steps

First, we began journaling about our experiences in the classroom. Klales has kept such a journal since she first began teaching over a decade ago and shared her journaling process with the other authors. We also received examples from Melanie Burdick, director of CTEL, in the workshop. From here, Miller and Maxwell also began journaling about their classroom experiences. Journaling provided an additional layer of reflection and helped us become more aware of our day-to-day classroom praxis. For example, we challenged ourselves to be more mindful about how we communicated with students in and out of the classroom in terms of tone, word choice, and framing; we also became more mindful of other classroom dynamics like who we called on, if there were students or parts of the classroom (or Zoom screen) that we tended to unconsciously favor or focus on more than

others, or how we structured discussion. Journaling also allowed us to reflect on what was or was not working for discussions and class assignments and how we could improve individual topics.

Larger Changes

Larger goals centered on soliciting feedback and evaluation from students and peers and integrating this feedback into course modifications. For example, Miller and Klales created optional and anonymous mid-semester surveys in their courses to gauge student engagement, perceptions of course content and pacing, and to check-in with students. A similar semester-end survey from Klales and Maxwell solicited feedback on the assignments, course content, and perceived achievement of student learning outcomes. Washburn also disseminates end-of-semester student perception surveys to collect quantitative and qualitative data following grade submissions. Each author also was evaluated by their peers either from within our department or by utilizing a program offered through our CTEL office. The authors reflected on each level of feedback and integrated substantive changes to their courses based on this. We have since re-evaluated and updated our teaching philosophies to incorporate things we learned through this process.

Massive Goals

We committed to increase our own learning about diverse pedagogy. Over the past two years, all three authors engaged in explicit reflective work around inclusive pedagogy and anti-racist pedagogy. Each of us attained our university's Certificate of Inclusive Teaching and Learning for attending at least nine diversity and inclusion training events. As mentioned previously, the authors also participated in a three-month program at our university around incorporating Black Lives Matter into our courses and attended a three-day workshop on anti-racism in the classroom, which included such topics as the basics of anti-racist pedagogy, communicating with students the importance of using critical race theory in courses, and humanizing classrooms. While we do not have the space in this article to fully expand on the results of this work, we find that the skills we learned, and ideas generated from these trainings and workshops continue to have a deep impact on our pedagogy. For example, our own anti-racist/anti-bias syllabus statement was a direct result of participation in this workshop.

Moreover, we think of this paper as a form of reflection on what we have accomplished and where we plan to go moving forward. This act of scholarship is engaging with you, the reader, in a participatory reflection where we hope to encourage you to begin your own reflective journey concerning your teaching. More broadly, we are convinced that transforming our pedagogy to be more inclusive and explicitly anti-racist is a continual process of learning and reflection. We have committed ourselves to working more broadly to decentralize white voices in our teaching.

Impact

As with any change in pedagogy, it can be difficult to assess the direct impact on learners. We implemented many different changes across many distinct aspects of our courses over the past two years. Beyond this, we do not have access to institutional demographic data about the students in our courses, so it is challenging to parse who is a first-generation student. Instead, our goal became to better support not just first-generation students, but all students through our redesign. An impact assessment is further complicated by the ongoing global pandemic when our lives as teachers and our students' lives remain profoundly impacted and our instruction shifted first online and now back again to in-person. We do not believe it is yet possible to tease out whether these changes alone have impacted students' grades in the courses or their persistence in the courses given that the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic have not yet left the classroom. For example, we are unsure if students drop our courses because of something that occurs in the course, something that impacts the student's life such as illness or financial barriers, or something else. However, we plan to evaluate the impact of these changes on grade distribution by comparing final grades to previous semesters, and on persistence in terms of the number of students who drop the course, once we believe there is some sense of "normalcy" returning to the classroom, however far in the future that might be.

Nevertheless, there are other ways in which we can measure impact. For example, students' perceptions of our courses are collected via an official university survey at the end of each semester. We treated these surveys as a source of data to learn more about the experiences of our students. To that end, we read the qualitative comments students provided and grouped them by themes related to the redesign: class climate, expectations and feedback, UDL, and content. Some of the quantitative questions on the student perception survey were also grouped into these categories. For example, one Likert scale question asked, "I received feedback on my course work/assignments that helped me learn;" we grouped these responses with feedback in our analysis. In addition, we used various other tools to solicit reflection data formally and informally from our students; this information is summarized below and in Table 2. [3]

Miller created a brief survey that accompanied the interactive syllabus in his Cultural Anthropology and Linguistic Anthropology courses. Over 230 students have used his interactive syllabi over the past two years and completed the post-syllabus survey. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents agreed that the interactive syllabus was easy to use while 80 percent agreed with a statement that they felt more prepared for the course after completing the interactive syllabus. Half the respondents stated that they told Miller things on the interactive syllabus they have never told a professor before, and 72 percent said they would prefer that all professors use the interactive syllabus. Respondents also gave qualitative feedback. Their comments included responses like: "I appreciate it not being a

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[3] Use of student quotations and feedback in this article was approved by the Washburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB#22-29).

traditional syllabus quiz," "I appreciate you caring enough to ask the questions you did," and "I felt more confident in the course's rules and regulations by completing syllabus quiz."

Maxwell conducted an anonymous end-of-class survey reflecting on the changes made and received 55 responses out of 144 students. Ninety-three percent agreed that the interactive syllabus, orientation video, and three-question assignment instructions helped them understand course requirements and be successful in the course. Ninety-five percent understood and utilized the assignment rubrics and syllabus. This is certainly an area for further research.

Klales also offered an anonymous end-of-class survey which asked students if they thought they achieved each course student learning outcome based on the assignments designed to evaluate that outcome. Students were also able to provide qualitative feedback. One hundred percent of respondents agreed that they had achieved the course learning outcomes and the qualitative responses revealed that many achieved these learning outcomes because of the course redesign. For example, responses included: "everything was clear and understandable," "it was easy to access the information I needed . . . as a visual learner," and "at the end of the class I was able to talk about the topics and I could understand what was being talked about in class."

Table 2. Summary of Additional Student Reflection Surveys

Assessment Tool	Author	Response Rate
Interactive Syllabus Survey	Miller	232/236 students (99%)
End of Course Survey (unofficial)	Maxwell	55/144 students (38%)
End of Course Survey (unofficial)	Klales	57/93 students (61%)

Taken collectively, our analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data from these surveys remains inconclusive. Many students responded positively – particularly to how we organized the courses; a typical response was, "This online course was clearly organized, and documentaries were very interesting to watch." Other students responded positively to the increased explicit focus on anti-bias content. One sample Cultural Anthropology student respondent said, "I enjoyed this class and I feel like I learned how to unlearn stereotypes that I had." Finally, students seemed to respond positively to our various nudges and ways of being in contact with them. One Linguistic Anthropology student wrote, "I really appreciate the way Dr. Miller has his classes set up. This is my second class of his and again I feel as though I have learned the information I needed to succeed in the class. Probably the most responsive Professor I have had during my time at Washburn." Comments like these suggest that the increase in nudges, passive communication, and encouraging students to reach out are making a difference. However, other students pushed back against some of our changes, saying things such as: "[I] felt that the class had

more to do with race than linguistics" and "I liked the course material all right, but I wasn't crazy about how it was structured." As we continue to teach these courses, we will incorporate student feedback and continue to look for ways to further refine our courses.

Conclusion

As we have demonstrated in this article, anthropology faculty can explore multiple avenues to make their courses more accessible to diverse first-generation students. This includes creating more welcoming class climates, providing clearer expectations and feedback that relies on marrying affirmations with constructive criticism, integrating UDL principles, rethinking course content to be more inclusive of diverse peoples, and relying on critical self-reflection and an exploration of their own positionality as educators. The approaches we implemented eschew the traditional "banking" model of education, which sees students as empty or deficient, and instead works to uncover the sometimes-hidden structures and embedded knowledge needed to succeed. Using Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework provided an important theoretical lens with which to see our students as intersectionally situated beings with embodied forms of cultural and social capital that we could incorporate into our classrooms. This helped foster a deeper sense of belonging in our courses. Moreover, we invite our students into our classrooms as full people who are knowledgeable about their own lives and to use their lived experience as an asset and not a deficit.

We see many opportunities for future fruitful research in this area – not just for these three courses or for anthropology in general, but for ways in which faculty across the academy can work to make higher education more accessible for all students regardless of background. We are curious about ways in which students from nontraditional backgrounds find their way to anthropology, ways in which faculty make decisions about whose voices and faces to include in their canons, and how anthropology students make sense of themselves when invited into these, perhaps, uncommon classrooms. As we noted at the beginning of the impact section, we find that the COVID-19 pandemic makes a strict analysis of learning outcomes difficult. This is an area we hope to explore in greater depth now that the pandemic begins to recede, and students' lives are more routine. A robust comparison of learning outcomes and course persistence between pre-redesign and redesigned sections will hopefully soon be possible.

Certainly, it is too soon to tell the full impact of these changes. However, we are convinced they are the correct path for our students, ourselves as faculty, and our anthropology program more broadly. We have already begun to change not just our pedagogy but our majors, program student learning outcomes, course sequencing, required courses, assessment strategies, and much more. This work is neither simple nor singular but will live and evolve over time as we and our students both grapple with what anthropology means today.

Acknowledgements

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