

Incorporating Social Justice & Equity in High-Impact Practices

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“If we understand the core purposes of higher education as transcending unidimensional academic knowledge and transferable skills to encompass students’ full development as individuals, then at each level of academe we must actively attend to students’ intellectual and personal development, to their overall well-being, to their crafting an integrative foundation for lifelong learning and action, and to their capacity for living committed and purposeful lives in community” (Swaner 2012, p. 86).

Introduction

California State University Fullerton (CSUF) is one of the largest in the California State University system¹ and is also among the most diverse. The Office of Institutional Research notes that CSUF’s student population is 50.2% Latinx, 22% Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 17% white; it is designated both a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution.² Of our nearly 39,000 students in fall 2022, two-thirds received financial aid, nearly one-third were first-generation college students,³ one-quarter attended only part-time,⁴ and 45% of new students were upper-division transfers⁵, predominantly from California’s community college system. At the same time, CSUF is consistently ranked by organizations including *Washington Monthly*, CollegeNET, and *Money*, as among the best universities in the country to facilitate social mobility while ensuring affordable tuition for students.⁶

It is against this backdrop—and largely in response to it—that we have sought to incorporate equity and social justice teaching strategies into a variety of the Political Science department’s high-

¹ The CSU reports that CSUF, at 38,948 enrollment, is second in size only to CSU Northridge, at 40,131.

<https://www.calstate.edu/attend/campuses/campus-match/Pages/campus-match.aspx?location=&setting=&enrollment=20001&sports=°rees=&>

² https://www.fullerton.edu/data/institutionalresearch/facts/Fall2022_CSUF_Facts_Accessible_101321.pdf

³ https://www.fullerton.edu/data/institutionalresearch/facts/Fall2022_CSUF_Facts_Accessible_101321.pdf

⁴ <https://www.fullerton.edu/data/institutionalresearch/student/enrollments/headcountsftesbycollegeandstudentlevel.php>

⁵ <https://www.fullerton.edu/data/institutionalresearch/student/newstudents/appsadmitenrolls.php>

⁶ [https://washingtonmonthly.com/2021college-guide/best-bang-for-the-buck-rankings-west/;](https://washingtonmonthly.com/2021college-guide/best-bang-for-the-buck-rankings-west/)

<https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/news/Pages/Social-Mobility-Index-2021.aspx;>

[https://www.socialmobilityindex.org/;](https://www.socialmobilityindex.org/) [https://money.com/best-colleges/rankings/best-colleges-west/;](https://money.com/best-colleges/rankings/best-colleges-west/)

<http://edreformnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Social-Mobility-Elevators-Issue-Brief.pdf>

impact programs in which we are involved. According to the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) high-impact practices include: collaborative assignments, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, diversity and global learning, internships, and service learning.⁷ Research indicates that engaging students in these sorts of “purposeful activities” has positive affects on cognitive growth (Pascarella & Blaich 2013), grades, retention, engagement, and learning (Bonet & Walters 2016; Swaner 2012). Importantly, several studies note that these effects are greatest for underserved students, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), first generation, lower-income, and transfer students (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea 2008; Kuh, O’Donnell, & Schneider 2017; Finley & McNair 2013). In addition to engagement in high-impact practices, transfer students in particular have been found to benefit from building relationships with faculty, thorough introduction to campus resources, involvement in campus clubs, and the opportunity to interact with and create community with their peers (Townsend & Wilson 2006; Ellis 2013; Dinh & Zhang 2021; Thomas et al. 2021).

In their ten-year retrospective on the use and outcomes of high-impact practices in the U.S., Kuh, O’Donnell, & Schneider (2017) explain that these practices are successful because they are hands-on, collaborative, and experiential; they involve high levels of student engagement that leads to deeper substantive learning. Importantly, they also note research that indicates participation in high-impact practices is inequitable, with fewer such opportunities offered to BIPOC, first generation, and transfer students. While these students are already the vast majority at CSUF, colleges and universities across the country will continue to see their numbers grow. The National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) estimates that the numbers of BIPOC students will increase at all institutions over the next five years, suggesting a 14% increase in Latinx students, an 8% increase in Black students, a 2% increase in Asian/Pacific Islanders, and a 1% increase in students of two or more races by 2028.

Unsurprisingly, research finds that faculty play an important role in their students’ educational outcomes. For example, scholars have noted the importance of *faculty intentionality* in executing successful high-impact practices (Brownell & Swaner 2009; Finley & McNair 2013; Kuh and Kinzie 2018). Others have found that quality faculty interactions, in which students feel that faculty are interested in their growth and success, are key to increased academic motivation (Trolan, Jach, Hanson, & Pascarella 2016). In particular, Anaya & Cole (2001) found increases in Latinx student achievement when they feel supported by their faculty. As we have reflected on the challenges faced by many of our

⁷ <https://www.aacu.org/trending-topics/high-impact>

students, we have increasingly sought to implement pedagogical practices that increase their social capital by honoring and reflecting their experiences, and empowering them at the university and beyond.

In this paper, we provide examples for political scientists to engage in social justice teaching to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students who, like ours, may not see themselves or their experiences reflected in the traditional political science classroom. We define social justice teaching as recognizing hegemonic institutions in the US that dominate culture, politics, and government and that negatively affect people and communities whose identities lay outside the dominant culture. Social justice teaching begins with recognition of injustices and inequities that exist in a community and the polity at large. For us this means introducing students to circumstances they may already experience or to experiences different from their own. Even students that experience injustice or inequity may only recognize their personal struggle rather than the systemic struggle. We also understand social justice teaching to involve strategies that create community in the classroom, foster dialogue and better understanding, and encourage knowledge sharing among community members.

Our examples focus primarily on AACU high-impact practices including: Collaborative Assignments required in programs like Moot Court; Learning Communities, in particular an Equity & Social Justice Cohort for transfer-students; Diversity Learning, including both strategies for including social justice and equity topics, and discussion of a series of case studies focused on state and local government successes and failures in the area of advancing justice and equity; Global Learning is also addressed through examples of embedding global justice issues including refugee response, in traditional Study Abroad programs through Service Learning.

Unfortunately, most undergraduates only know a civics lacking civility, and a political system mired in disinformation and conflict. This is particularly troubling at a time when our students come from more diverse social, economic, racial, and religious backgrounds than ever before. Our hope is to offer suggestions and spark dialogue about ways in which political science can regain its relevance for students and equip them with the knowledge and agency to push for more just and equitable social and political institutions.

Collaborative Assignments

Successful implementation of collaborative assignments provides benefits for students in the classroom as well as outside of it, including personal and professional development. AACU notes that assignments in which students work together help to facilitate listening skills and engagement, particularly among those with different viewpoints and experiences (AAC&U 2023). Collaborative assignments involving simulations of real-world experiences help students identify problems and move

towards solutions. Organizing students to work collectively provides students opportunities to see questions, problems, and solutions from different perspectives. Accordingly, research demonstrates these opportunities promote both self-understanding and better understanding of others (Kuh, O'Donnell, & Schneider 2017).

One such example is Moot Court, which offers undergraduate students the opportunity to participate in mock Supreme Court proceedings. Moot Court is distinguished from mock trial in that simulations are appellate proceedings and not fact-finding trials. Students do not present evidence or question witnesses, but rather present arguments of law to the facts of a fictional case to attorneys, undergraduate law faculty, law school faculty and occasionally sitting judges. Moot court simulations can operate in both classroom environments and during competitions.

At CSUF classroom simulations are offered in several law classes in the political science department using cases previously discussed throughout the semester. During classroom simulations students are presented with either a hypothetical situation or an appellate court case that presents controversial questions. Students are asked to take the side they are ideologically least predisposed to take in order to help them learn the legal rules and debate but to also introduce perspectives they might not have considered. Students present their arguments during class in front of classmates and class justices. For example, students have been asked to address whether fines and jail for vagrancy (targeting the unhoused who sleep in public spaces) are consistent with the 8th Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment (recently decided by the 9th Circuit), and whether California's ban on gestational crates in factory farming violates the Commerce Clause (recently decided by the Supreme Court). They are paired together with a petitioner and a respondent and encouraged to respond or rebut others during their arguments. This experience fosters dialogue among students, and provides opportunities for self-exploration.

For the competition class, students must be prepared to represent both the fictional petitioner and the fictional respondent. Our affiliation with the American Moot Court Association (AMCA)⁸ affords students the opportunity to compete in qualifying and national tournaments every fall. AMCA writes a new problem each year with relevant issues affecting Americans. For example, fall 2020 students wrestled with a question about whether a vendor of stationery would be required to create wedding invitations for a same sex couple in accordance with a public accommodations law, and whether such a vendor had a right to free speech to refuse this service. The moot court experience requires students to read US Supreme Court, federal circuit, and district court cases in addition to state appellate and supreme

⁸ <https://amcamootcourt.org/>

court cases. The cases are not abridged and students must learn the legal language and then use the case law to support their arguments.

Students work as a team over the course of the semester, and must work collaboratively to understand the material. Students work together to develop arguments, to support each other legally, professionally, and emotionally. Personal and intellectual development is visible over the course of the semester as students learn to listen, think critically, and respond to stressful situations, relying on each other for support. Students travel together and experience the tournaments together. This exposes them to the different academic and personal experiences of their peers as they navigate the stress of travel and competition, family commitments, and academic pursuits.

CSUF's Moot Court team reflects the broader demographics of campus. Many first-generation college students, transfer students, and non-traditional returning students have participated over the years including parents. A Latina mother of 5 (also a first gen student) whose oldest was a senior in high school and youngest in 5th grade partnered with a transfer student from a community college. Several DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students have participated as well as Dreamers, those not eligible for DACA. Students from countries including Peru, the Philippines, and Mexico, whose native language was not English, have competed (and won speaking awards). Many of the students who participate must also work to pay for housing, textbooks and food. Extra-curricular activities are costly in terms of time and money and students must balance competing demands.

The program provides opportunities for interpersonal experiences that lend themselves to diversity learning among peers as they navigate the tournaments and travel. For example, differently abled students have taken the Moot Court class at CSUF and their experiences have shed light on academia's treatment of students with disabilities. One student we will call Urias (using middle name) has cerebral palsy (CP) and uses a wheelchair for mobility. The process of travel, assurances of ramps and proper space to navigate classrooms and equitable treatment in the competition presented challenges that were unanticipated. While host sites promised to make "every effort to accommodate" Urias, there was nothing in the rules of the tournaments that required the organizing body to ensure students' needs would be met. This meant that fellow students helped Urias by picking up their wheelchair and carrying them up the grand front stairs of the building when the doors connected to the ramps on the opposite side of the building were locked. This happened several times during competition despite repeated requests to gain access to the doors. Urias had to navigate classrooms with tables and chairs that could not accommodate their wheelchair and fellow students helped by sweeping chairs and desks aside when needed. The team witnessed students and coaches from other teams touching Urias' wheelchair or their shoulder and speaking to them as if they were a child, something that did not happen to other students. According to

Robey, Berkley and Kirschner (2006) this is not unusual, as differently abled people are more likely to be touched and patronized than able bodied people. We note the marginalization of people with disabilities as even DEI scholars often overlook the experiences of differently abled students and communities.

Social justice teaching also requires active faculty advocacy for students. In 2022 CSUF sent a student with more pronounced symptoms of CP to compete in the AMCA tournaments. This student, Daniel (again using middle name), had more noticeable speech and physical manifestations of CP including spasms and slowed or slurred speech. To ensure equitable circumstances for Daniel, we requested an accommodation in the rules for extra speaking time and the option to use an iPad during the competition. We first turned to our campus Disability Support Services but they were unable to provide any assistance. They determined that the Moot Court association was a private association and an extracurricular activity, and they could not assist in advocacy or even recommendations.

AMCA rules are strict for competitions. Students, in teams of 2, have 20 minutes to make their arguments and may break their time in a manner they prefer with the provision of 7 minutes minimum and 13 minutes maximum split. Most teams will split 10/10 on respondent and 9/9 or 8/9 on petitioner, reserving 2 or 3 minutes for rebuttal. The tournaments prohibit the use of electronic devices as students could use them to communicate with coaches and others or to look up answers to questions the other team might get during their time speaking. Student teams quietly pass notes among partners with advice for responses and rebuttals. They may have a binder or book of case law with them to review the law but must not distract the other team or judges. They may also use notes for the tournament during their turn to speak.

In response to the request for extra time, the Moot Court association advised us to provide Daniel with more time than their partner – perhaps 11/9 or 12/8. We were also initially denied the opportunity to use an iPad. Daniel cannot write with a pen or hold paper, and uses their iPad for notes typing with their nose. The iPad allowed the team to communicate as the other teams would with pen and paper. AMCA's responses reflected the lack of diversity among its board, the faculty, and the students typically competing in Moot Court tournaments in addition to a lack of concern and understanding for students' needs; the decisions to reject both requests were appealed multiple times.

During what became the final appeal, we met with representatives from the association (the President and the legal advisor – both attorneys). We were advised that the association does not provide “special accommodations” and referred us to the Supreme Court case *PGA TOUR, Inc. v. Martin* (2001) as a basis of refusal. The Martin case challenged a refusal by the PGA to accommodate a golfer under

Americans with Disabilities Act⁹ to use a golf cart during PGA meets instead of walking which is a requirement of the PGA. Ultimately the Court found that the accommodation would not confer an advantage on Martin nor would the golf cart "fundamentally alter the nature" of the tour. The Court found that an accommodation under the ADA could be rejected if it altered an essential aspect of golf like altering the diameter of the hole or if the accommodation gave a disabled player an advantage over others and therefore fundamentally alter the character of the competition.

AMCA argued extra time would fundamentally alter the nature of the competition since one of the scoring measures during competition is to complete an argument within the time constraints, neither to exceed nor end early. Extra time would confer an advantage other students would not receive. We argued that adding 2 minutes of time was not akin to altering the size of the hole in golf, rather, the accommodation would provide a measure of equity (but not equality since ultimately discrimination against differently abled people exists and manifests in ways including infantilization, pity and lowered expectations regarding abilities - see Robey, Beckley and Kirschner 2006). Finally, we argued that Moot Court is fundamentally about gaining academic experience for a professional career in law, one that would be severely limited to able-bodied students if the association did not rethink its policies and rules on accommodations and provide greater access. Unlike the PGA, there was no purse worth millions of dollars waiting for Daniel at the end of the tournament, and in that case, the Supreme Court sided with disability rights advocates. At most Daniel would earn a trophy, bragging rights, and important experience in legal argumentation. Very few differently abled lawyers have appeared before the Court and the numbers of differently abled law school graduates is low.¹⁰ We encouraged the AMCA to think carefully about why the numbers are so low. After months of advocacy and with only a month before competitions began, Daniel's request for time was granted as was the option to bring their iPad to counsel's table. Despite "winning" the experience was disheartening and shameful.

Learning Communities

Research has found that students in learning communities "are more engaged with teachers, peers, and the intellectual content of their course" (Bonet & Walters 2016, p. 229). This engagement leads to fewer absences, higher levels of course completion, and higher grades. Learning communities often

⁹ Title III of the ADA, requires public accommodations to make "reasonable modifications "when... necessary to afford such...accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of such...accommodations" (*PGA v. Martin* 2001, 663).

¹⁰ According to the American Bar Association (ABA) Profile of the Legal Profession sent directly to members found that 1.22% of the 70,980 lawyers surveyed across the country. As Lowrey (2018) documents some lawyers may opt not to disclose out of fear of bias by clients, firms and courts..

involve multiple courses that are connected to one another, and ask students to reflect on thematic questions whose importance extends beyond the course (Kuh, O'Donnell, & Schneider 2017). Because they are small, intentional settings, students in learning communities engage coursework and learning with other students, in addition to building stronger relationships with their faculty (AAC&U 2023). Importantly for our pilot project, learning communities have been found to be important for students making the transition to college (Brownell & Swaner 2009).

Further, studies indicate that retention and graduation rates for transfer students are lower than for first-time-freshmen (FTF) at four-year institutions (Glass and Harrington 2002; Alfonso 2006; Long and Kurlaender 2009; Reynolds 2012; but see Mongahan and Attewell 2017 for a more optimistic analysis). The situation is no different in the CSUF Political Science Dept., where internal statistics indicate that in the junior year, retention of transfers is 7 percent below FTF among political science/public administration (PS/PA) majors.¹¹ Research on closing the performance, retention, and graduation gaps indicates that the community college experience does not always prepare transfer students for the university (Townsend & Wilson 2006). Especially at large institutions like CSUF, transfers often need help integrating both academically and socially. To better meet these needs, in fall 2022 two of the authors piloted a learning community for PS/PA transfer-students called the Equity & Social Justice Cohort.

The Equity & Social Justice Cohort model (ESJ), involved two of the most common courses taken by PS/PA majors, POSC 300- California Politics & Policy, and POSC 320- Introduction to Public Administration. Course redesign for the cohort involved coordination of student enrollment and curriculum for the two classes. In addition, the courses were taught back-to-back, providing a longer time block that was conducive to introducing students to campus resources including academic advisors and the CSUF career center, as well as to engage in high-impact activities such as an alumni career panel, and a field trip to a local museum. The field trip included a docent-led tour discussing our region's first people, the Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe, and the early history of Spanish and White American colonizers. It ended with the students engaging in a discussion with one of the museum's vice presidents about the museum as a community resource and implications of its nonprofit status.

Curriculum included the typical academic content for each course, but allowed the opportunity to explore equity and social justice issues in greater depth, focusing on a common question: "Who has a voice in government decisions, and who does not?" The classes explored this question throughout, including in discussions of the importance of representation in California and the federal government, the

¹¹ Our thanks to Politics Administration & Justice Chair, Matt Jarvis, for sharing these data.

disparate impacts of Covid-19 on the Latinx community, and how governments can make amends for past injustices such as use of eminent domain to steal property in communities of color.

The text used for the California Politics & Policy course was *California: The Politics of Diversity*, 2020. David G. Lawrence and Jeff Cummins, 10th edition. Unfortunately, there are no public administration texts with a diversity or social justice approach, so a standard text was used in Intro to Public Administration. Both classes relied on supplemental readings from sources including *Governing*, *LA Times*, *Sacramento Bee*, and *CalMatters*, as well as videos and podcasts that highlighted issues of racial/gender/class equity and inequity. Due to the dearth of available materials, a second aspect of the ESJ Cohort involves writing a series of case studies with an equity and social justice focus, using examples of California government and politics; this project is discussed in the section on Diversity Learning.

The ESJ Cohort has an assessment plan including evaluation of data on probationers, retention, and graduation rates. The CSUF Office of Institutional Research and Faculty Development Center have assisted in this data collection, and pre- and post-tests of learning outcomes for students in the ESJ Cohort and those in a regular section of Intro to Public Administration. Surveys were also completed to gain feedback on improving the cohort model which we hope to implement again in fall 2024, at which point we will gather more data on learning outcomes.

Diversity Learning

Diversity learning involves coursework or programs that introduce students to a wide variety of worldviews, experiences, or issues that may be unfamiliar to them (Kuh, O'Donnell, & Schneider 2017). Its goal is to increase student understanding and awareness of diverse perspectives. Diversity learning is designed to engage students in conversation and study of "difficult differences," including race, gender, nationality, and religion in order to broaden student perspectives beyond their own (AAC&U 2023).

Although public administration as a field of study has long been concerned with issues of equity and social justice (see Frederickson, 1971; Blessett 2019; Gooden 2015; Guy & McCandless 2020), as noted above, introductory public administration textbooks have not widely incorporated these themes. To remedy this and help facilitate social justice teaching, the ESJ Cohort involved sabbatical leave for one of the authors to begin writing a series of case studies focused specifically on public policy and administration in California through an equity and social justice lens. Each case is rooted in political science and public administration literature to tie it to course concepts.

This project, *Cases in California Politics & Administration: Centering Equity & Social Justice Issues*, currently includes five case studies:

- *Government & Wicked Problems: The Death of Kelly Thomas*: The 2011 beating death of Kelly Thomas, an unhoused Fullerton, CA man by Fullerton Police Department (FPD) officers, illustrates many issues including the epidemic of homelessness in Southern California, the nation's embarrassing record of care for the mentally ill, and incidences of police brutality against the marginalized. The incident led to recall campaigns against several Fullerton City Council members, and major organizational reforms for FPD.
- *Implementing Ethnic Studies Courses in California High Schools: Who Decides?*: Beginning in 2030, every high school graduate in California is required to have completed at least one semester-long course in ethnic studies. While this is state law, not all parents or school districts are supportive, and in a number of communities the issue has gotten politically tense. This case follows two Orange County school districts, highlighting the new "parental rights" movement in public education and its repercussions for boards, teachers, parents, and students as the fight rages between proponents and opponents of ethnic studies curriculum.
- *In this Together? Pandemics, Politics, & the Public Interest*: The public health system is the quintessential example of government serving the public interest, however, the Covid-19 pandemic shed light on a number of difficulties the system faces. Among these are inequities that were on full display during the pandemic in terms of health care access and the disparate impacts of the virus on the elderly, the poor, BIPOC, and immigrant communities. All of this was further exacerbated by misinformation and partisan politics, resulting in vaccine hesitancy and refusal, threats against public officials, and failures of the health system that continue to threaten the public health.
- *We can't Change the Past: Government Lessons in Making Amends*: This case study considers what it means to make amends for historic injustice, including who should be responsible, what actions are required, and to whom amends are due. In particular, it highlights the story of Willa & Charles Bruce who bought a parcel of land in 1912, in what is now the City of Manhattan Beach. The property served as a resort for Black residents to enjoy the beach for over a decade until it was unjustly taken by the city. In 2022, Los Angeles County returned Bruce's Beach to the family of its rightful owners.
- *Power to the People: Recalls and Referendums*: In 2000, measles was considered eradicated in the U.S., however, in 2014-15, a large outbreak was traced to California's Disneyland theme parks. This outbreak revealed alarmingly high rates of unvaccinated children in wealthy South Orange County, home of Disneyland, and led the state to change its childhood vaccination policies. This was met with public protest, a referendum on the new regulations, and several attempts to recall a California State Senator.

These case studies are as an open-access eBook through LibreTexts that is available through CSU Open Educational Resources (OER). The cases are therefore available to students at no cost, and for use by other political science faculty across the CSU. The nature of LibreTexts means that new cases can easily be added to the collection.

Another effort to engage social justice teaching involves revisiting teaching strategies, curriculum, readings and assignment. Some of the "canon" in political science is rooted in understandings about the

world that bear the hallmarks of white nationalism and racism, patriarchy and homophobia to name a few. This is not to say the literature advocated any of these directly but simply viewed the political landscape as a given without uncovering the oppressive systems in which our politics are embedded. More recent work moves the focus from the center to the margins, exploring how the people in systems actually live (see for example *Decolonizing Politics: An Introduction* by Robbie Shilliam 2021).

In Law, Politics and Society, a 300 level political science course, a redesign with a lens towards social justice and equity took place. Older texts written mostly by white men were replaced with scholars of color and women (see for examples *White Rage* by Carol Anderson 2016, and *White by Law* by [Ian Haney Lopez](#) 2006). In addition to readings, students are assigned podcasts and videos that allow them to access material reinforcing the themes of the class. The class was “flipped” so that “lecture” was provided through recorded videos and class time was reserved nearly exclusively for discussion and team learning. Each week students received a discussion question and several smaller topic questions. Students were expected to know some of the required material to participate in discussion but did not have to complete it all thus leaving space for all students to contribute.

Global Learning through Study Abroad & Service Learning

Study abroad allows students to experience cultures, people, places, and communities unlike their own thus providing a better understanding of different perspectives, human differences, and worldviews (Kuh, O’Donnell, & Schneider 2017). It facilitates conversation and study of global struggles including human rights, freedom, and power (AAC&U 2023), and done well these lessons can be juxtaposed to similar struggles experienced in the U.S. Unfortunately, studies have long found that White students, particularly those from higher socio-economic status families are most likely to participate in study abroad (Lingo 2019; Perkins 2020). Over the past twenty years the number of BIPOC students in study abroad programs has grown dramatically, however, 68 percent are still White (Institute of International Education 2022). Fortunately for our majority-minority campus, CSUF students have several opportunities to study abroad. One of these paths is through the College of Humanities and Social Science where the Division of Politics, Administration and Justice is housed.

In addition to providing the opportunities available in a traditional study abroad, one of the authors has added a service-learning component to the study abroad experience. Service learning is applied learning, often engaging community partners, that allows students to work together to reflect on solutions to real-world problems (Kuh, O’Donnell, & Schneider 2017). It is an excellent way to bridge the divide between practical and theoretical. AAC&U (2023) argues that service learning allows faculty to model the practice of giving back to community as an important value in higher education. Further, these

opportunities improve moral reasoning, and increase a sense of civic engagement, social responsibility, and social justice (Brownell & Swaner 2009).

CSUF study abroad trips vary in location, size and scope and the experience led by one of the authors was a summer abroad to Italy during the summers of 2014-2018. The program integrated traditional study abroad classes with service learning components. Each year differed in opportunities, but the following describes the general experience students were provided. The traditional study abroad offers students excellent ways to learn about cultures and explore themselves as they begin to see themselves as foreign, wrestle with language and food differences and generally observe ways of life that are simply not “American.”

Students spent several weeks in Florence, a week in Rome and a week in a southern city in Italy like Naples or Palermo for a total of 6 weeks. During their time in Italy, students volunteered with refugees housed at “Welcoming Centers” in Tuscany and Rome. They assisted at a local soup kitchen and helped clean and garden at the centers depending on the needs. One year the migrants, having formed a choir and dance group, performed for the students. The choirs were created to help the migrants (mostly from Western Africa including Nigeria, Niger, The Gambia, Ghana) learn to speak Italian and gain more comfort with Italian culture.

Another year, students worked with migrants from the Fiesole Welcome Center (an all-male housing complex) to create a community fundraising dinner for the Center and introduce the community to their migrant neighbors. Selected students went on a shopping trip with some of the men, all of the shoppers navigating Italian supermarkets for ingredients that are “foreign” like peanut butter, tortillas, jalapenos and other non-native foods. Together in the kitchen of the Fiesole La Casa del Popolo (House of the People), groups of men from the center alongside students from CSUF made Jollof rice with a beef stew, chicken tacos with homemade salsa, and a garden salad. Wine was donated by a local café and the fundraiser was advertised in local media. The dinner plates sold out and the dining room was very full. After the tables were cleared, the men from the Center brought out drums and music and began to play and sing. For the next several hours students and migrants danced and laughed and played the drums. This experience broke down all barriers as the students and migrants joined in creating a meal and then simply enjoying their shared experience in music and dance. It was by far the most memorable experience students discussed in the post travel journals.

Students also spent time in Palermo in a center called Moltivolti (many faces) that employs migrants serving Middle Eastern, African and Sicilian food. It is a non-profit venture that provides work experience for refugees. The head chef, a former Mujahadin general spoke to the students about his

escape and acceptance at Moltivolti as a redemption story. CSUF students, some of whom are first generation Americans found themselves identifying with Afghani and Syrian refugees as they considered their parents' or their own journeys from Mexico and Central America. Finally, students had an important tour of parts of Palermo still scarred from WWII bullet holes and bombs where NGOs have provided art classes and opportunities for street art in the area. These are the poorest neighborhoods in Palermo, seemingly left behind, but empowered with brushes and paint to speak out against the mafia, human suffering, and racism.

In Florence students took a day course at the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights. The lectures included discussions about criminal justice and immigration, speaking truth to power, human dignity, mass incarceration, gender-based violence and racial justice. Through the Center students took a social justice tour of Florence that exposed students to the darker sides of the city including the historic jails (the Center is now housed in one), the area once called the Jewish Ghetto, the memorial to the car bombing victims by the mafia in 1993 among other important sites throughout the city. Students also visited the Islamic Cultural Center in Florence, the Grand Mosque in Rome and the synagogues in Florence and Rome where they were introduced to religions and people of faith in houses of worship to which they had little exposure prior to the trip. They learned what life was like for people not in the mainstream religions, heard about culture and food differences, and how they existed within and outside of Italian culture. They also learned about the treatment of the Jewish people in Italy during WWII.

Like social justice teaching in general, the experience of study abroad offers students important experiences in cultural and language competence, and potential for transformational worldviews (Smith and Mitry 2008). The shorter nature of the Italy program confers similar benefits to the longer semester and yearlong study abroad experiences according to Smith and Mitry (2008) and avoids some of the pitfalls for our students like disruption of family, financial and job responsibilities. For our student population, first generation and commuting students, the study abroad experience is important not just for professional, cultural and academic development, but also for personal, social, and psychological development. For example, students must learn to adjust to new housing and domestic circumstances during study abroad. The experience of navigating new living situations and addressing their own feelings of loneliness and companionship with their fellow students creates opportunities for growth often overlooked in the research.

Lessons from Incorporating Social Justice & Equity in High-Impact Practices

In order to bring social justice teaching to students, faculty first must be *intentional*, which takes time and commitment. For example, when there are no textbooks that focus on social justice and equity issues, faculty must supplement course material with readings, videos, TedTalks, podcasts, etc... all of

which takes time and effort. We have found that engaging with like-minded faculty is important as we integrate these issues into the traditional political science curriculum. Informal working groups have been instrumental to sharing resources and strategies. It may be necessary for faculty in small departments to look to those in sibling disciplines such as sociology and American studies for support.

Faculty also need resources from their departments, colleges, and universities. One example is the need for cooperation from campus research centers to track and assess the progress and success of these efforts in terms of retention and graduation of students engaged in social justice & equity high-impact practices, particularly their impacts on transfer, first generation, and students of color. Financial resources are also important and come in many forms, from funding for student travel, competitions, and field trips, to faculty sabbaticals and grants for pilot projects to revamp existing classes, and prepare new classes and materials. Too often faculty seeking to engage social justice programs and run high-impact programs must fight over scarce resources through competitive applications for funds.

At CSUF, the cut-throat nature of the application process has become time consuming and wasteful as faculty innovation is channeled into boxes to fit the criteria for funding, satisfy the University's "strategic plan," or meet goals established by administrators, many of whom have never served as teaching faculty. Take the CSUF Moot Court class as an example. The program requires extensive travel, a luxury most of our students cannot afford without campus support. Associated Student funds have supported the program for over fifteen years but increasing competition from other programs has meant that the percentage of funding per student has decreased while the costs of travel have skyrocketed. Add to that California's ban on travel to 27 states, and this has meant students must spend precious time fundraising tens of thousands of dollars to support the award-winning team.

In addition to financial resources, other significant barriers to realizing the goals of social justice and equity in the classroom include time, and respect for faculty work. While universities applaud any program, class or activity that results in positive press surrounding social justice, faculty often view these as marketing tools rather than tools to meet the goals of social justice teaching. Online publications and magazines feature pictures of smiling faculty and students with articles selling the accomplishments of the programs and the students, but this may be the only acknowledgement the faculty receives. Engaging in social justice teaching and high impact practices deserves recognition; particularly as faculty navigate the tenure and promotion process. As Kuh, O'Donnell & Schnieder note, "at many colleges and universities high-impact practices live a kind of apologetic existence, the extra things faculty and staff do that are not directly counted toward promotion, tenure, or salary increments" (2017, p. 13).

Finally, faculty may need to step out of their comfort zones and become advocates for their students in a variety of ways as they engage in efforts to teach and model social justice and equity. While not everyone will have to fight recalcitrant educational associations to meet students' needs, we should be prepared to defend changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and approach. Faculty interested in social justice teaching may meet resistance from their colleagues on questions of course titles and curricular changes, but we encourage them to continue to advocate for more just and inclusive practices.

Social justice teaching is important regardless of the make-up of a university's student body. Ideally, students take these perspectives and experiences outside of the classroom and translate them into action that benefits the broader community. The activities, programs, and approaches discussed in this paper provide a starting point for faculty to nurture deeper understanding of social and political systems. All of which can facilitate civil discourse and provide students with meaningful skills to support a healthy democracy.

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