

Toward cultural proficiency: How much confidence can be gained and what benchmarks and standards can be met in a college course?

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Educators who first seek to understand their learners, are able to demonstrate their desire for deeper relationships by creating learning environments in which the unique qualities and characteristics of the students are integrated into the classroom. All pre-service educators, communicators and leaders need more exposure to, awareness of, and strategies for recognizing their own cultural uniqueness, and the consequent biases that might, unknowingly, lead to potential exclusion rather than inclusion of learners in their learning environments. To achieve the goal of building inclusive living, learning, and working environments, Agricultural and Extension Education 594 was written using the Woven Traditions Toolkit to assist students in moving along their Cultural Journey (Cross, 1980). Learners were assessed using a Pre/Post Confidence questionnaire. They wrote weekly “critical thinking” journal entries. Daily Class Reflections, selected by peers, were completed each session. Learners completed a Behind the Music project to research a genre of music, and Book Club to present the cultural significance of a book. The class selected a culturally-related movie to watch and reflect upon. The I am From Poem and the Racial Autobiography were used to become aware of their own cultural identity. Learners were responsible for participating in three Dialogues/Discussions at the OSU Multicultural Center. Learners joined an OSU Indian student at an Indian restaurant to be more exposed to other cultures. They were also responsible for creating a service learning project; their sphere of influence reached approximately 160 other people. The final exam was reflective and expressive. This study was designed to describe gain scores in confidence, and benchmarks and standards achieved in an OSU course given the assignments that were required.