

Tips for Tough Discussions

Introducing an equitable Learning and Teaching Culture Policy to a school that hasn't given enough attention to the concept before can be an uphill battle. In general, a good first step is to lead with openness and to emphasize and say thank you for work that's already been done (knowingly or unknowingly) by agitators to help aid this effort towards a more equitable community.

Here are some speed bumps you may run into and how to get over them:

1. "There's no time to talk about learning & teaching culture right now. We have too much going on!"
 - a. Actually, right now is a great time to discuss the culture by which we learn and teach because there is so much up in the air. Remembering these promises will help us be more flexible in areas that won't compromise the tenets of what makes this school a great place to learn.
 - b. We want to be as respectful of everyone's time as possible. It's not too long of a document to go through, even if analyzed line by line. Making any changes should be a conversation, and doesn't have to be taxing or aggressive.
 - c. Particularly in the realm of architecture, when the culture is shifting, we must react; the way we learn and teach is no different.
2. "We're already doing these things, why do we need this document?"
 - a. The fact that we already do most of these things is a testament to how much we should hold onto the current culture. When new faculty and students come in, we want them to know what they can expect, and what about our current culture is worth protecting.
3. "This is too much to ask of faculty!"
 - a. If faculty are more concerned with perpetuating toxic teaching styles than they are about actually teaching, then that says more of the school than it does of this document.
 - i. Finding faculty allies can be beneficial when they stand up and say that they're more than comfortable with these standards.
 - ii. Listen to antagonists when they tell you the truth; if they cannot hold themselves accountable for the bare minimum of basic decency in teaching, then students don't need to develop bad habits in order to compensate. The least that administrators are obligated to do as administrators is to entertain the conversation.
 - b. The pursuit of a healthy studio culture is not something that will happen overnight. A grace period of implementation as we work towards the lifestyle is perfectly reasonable as we all learn, grow, and try our best.
4. "This isn't in compliance with our University Policies or Codes of Conduct"
 - a. This Model policy is built on equity and other core values of this university. Referencing other documents and editing what's written here to better match the

architecture department is the primary intent. The secondary intent is to inspire a dialogue between and among our community which leads to better understanding of the universal policies that apply to our campus.

5. "Students don't feel like there's an issue with studio culture here right now."
 - a. Again, an even better reason to put something in writing that more clearly states our values and promises only solidifies what is good and what could be better about our learning community.
 - i. Having big conversations about fears or resistance to certain changes can air out inequities that are invisible. When the school allows structured time to do this in the curriculum and schedule, the school actually has more control and better optics in the situation.
 - ii. A healthy day-to-day culture is integral to a good education and definitely isn't something that students should leave up to chance.
 - b. Students might feel that there are certain aspects of their curriculum that are also not worth studying, but ultimately, there are skills to be gained in the process of working towards this kind of culture. It's a professional development exercise for everyone.
6. "We don't have the capacity to police this."
 - a. The best way to enact change is not to "police" the situation, but to make time to talk it out when issues arise. There will probably always be issues, what matters is the structure that allows us to discuss them and drawing a line in the sand about what is unacceptable.