

## **CHAPTER 5:** **Precepting Culturally Diverse Students**

### **A. Why This Chapter?**

The face of America is changing. The 2000 census shows that the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States is increasing. In urban America, this diversity is even more apparent. Projections are that by 2050 the United States will no longer be a society where there is one racial majority.

Even with the increase in racial and ethnic diversity in the United States, the institutions of higher learning are not experiencing comparable enrollment rates, especially for African American and Latino students. Ethnically diverse populations, particularly in nursing schools, remain underrepresented.

Loyola's Health Systems Management program recognizes these disparities, and is committed to the education and nurturing of ethnically diverse nurse leaders in order to:

- Provide role models for ethnically diverse individuals considering a career in nursing, and
- Provide the leadership to assure the cultural competence of health care institutions in the future. Cultural competence is defined as an "ongoing commitment or institutionalization of appropriate practice and policies for diverse populations" (Brach and Fraser, 2000).

The HSM program believes there is a rich and unique learning experience that can be gained by precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Therefore this chapter is dedicated to those of you who have this opportunity.

#### Definitions of Culture

A way of life. It is developed and communicated by a group of people, consciously or unconsciously, to subsequent generations. It consists of ideas, habits, attitudes, customs, and traditions that help to create standards for people to coexist. It makes a group of people unique.

Culture is a collection of mindsets, standards, or models that tell us who we are and how we should behave. For each area of our lives our culture provides "a set of rules and regulations that: 1) defines boundaries; and 2) says what we must do to succeed within those boundaries".

From Transcultural Leadership by Simons, Vazquez, & Harris (1993)

### About Culture:

*Culture is a mold in which we are all cast and it controls our daily lives in many unsuspected ways... Culture hides more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.- Edward T. Hall*



*Culture determines what we see and what we notice. It is a “frame of reference” which gives meaning to what we experience. We each wear a set of invisible glasses – cultural filters – which cause us to view things in certain ways. – Anonymous*

## **B. Creating Conditions for Creative InterChange**

The ability to learn what others have learned, to appreciate what others appreciate, to feel what others feel, and to add all this to what the individual has acquired from other sources, and finally to form out of it all...one’s own individuality is what distinguishes the human mind from everything else.

- From Man’s Ultimate Commitment by Henry Nelson Wieman (1958)

The great American philosopher, Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman’s (1884-1975) life’s work was dedicated to understanding the process required for human transformation - the ability to learn, grow, change, and perform to our highest potential. He called this process “Creative InterChange”. In Man’s Ultimate Commitment and subsequent works by protégé’s of Dr. Wieman, the conditions required for achieving Creative InterChange are explored. Four conditions are distinguished:

- Authentic Interacting
- Appreciative Understanding
- Creative Integrating
- Expanding Capacity

The four are sequential, meaning that the previous condition must be met in order to move successfully to the next.

**Authentic Interacting** reflects an open, two-way exchange of thoughts, feelings, values, and perspectives – free from conscious deceit, distortion, exploitation, domination or manipulation. Diversity surfaces and the uniqueness of each individual is exposed. The outcomes of this type of interaction are increased knowledge and trust.

**Appreciative Understanding** is an interchange in which the thoughts, perspectives, emotions, and worldviews of each person are recognized, understood, and appreciated. It is the conscious effort of each person to discover value in what someone else is expressing. It is not an attempt to seek agreement, only to understand and appreciate why the other person sees things the way they do. The outcome is shared meaning.

**Creative Integrating** is a process which actively seeks to integrate outcomes that are inclusive of the strengths of the ideas, emotions, and values of each person while eliminating or minimizing the drawbacks, negative attributes, or perceived barriers. It synthesizes the diversity into ‘both/and’ opportunities (opportunities that are built upon or invented from the mutual inclusion of each person’s contribution). The outcome is a shared approach, vision, or ownership.

**Expanding Capacity** is the process of ‘acting’ on what we have created together and continually improving it. It refers to the enhancement or change that occurs and the increased capacity derived as a result. The outcomes are recognition of interdependence, cohesiveness, and a shared commitment.

There are considerable mutual benefits to both the preceptor and student if an environment for Creative InterChange is established during the preceptorship. The remainder of the chapter focuses on specific actions and behaviors that enhance the likelihood of realizing the four conditions. These actions and behaviors are then translated into specific steps when preceptoring a student from a cultural background different from your own.

*For more information on “Creative InterChange”  
we recommend the following books:*

**The Chicken Conspiracy** –  
*by Hagan and Palmgren (1998)*

**The Greatest Good** –  
*by Palmgren and Petrarca (2002)*

## 1. Authentic Interacting

As a preceptor, to create conditions for authentic interacting, you:	When precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Balance inquiry and advocacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the preceptorship as an opportunity to share your thoughts, feelings, values, and perspectives as well as to learn the thoughts, feelings, values, and perspectives of the student.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set aside quality face-to-face time, devoid of interruptions and distractions</li> <li>- Share your personal story with the student.                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When giving your perspectives, thoughts, feelings, and values, inquire whether the student looks at it in the same way.</li> <li>- When the student offers their thoughts, feelings, values and perspectives, share your way of looking at it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Listen as much as you talk.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discover for yourself through inquiry and interacting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismiss stereotypical assumptions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That the student's educational preparedness varies depending on his or her race or ethnicity;</li> <li>- That there is some formulaic methodology that can be employed to effectively preceptor an individual on the basis of their cultural status;</li> <li>- That all members of a particular ethnic group respond in the same way;</li> <li>- That precepting will be different because the person comes from a diverse background;</li> <li>- That a preceptor of the same diverse background would be more successful with the student than you will be; or</li> <li>- That a student can only attain a certain amount of success due to their cultural background.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effectively listen and paraphrase to assure your interpretation equals the student's intention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and listening are conditioned by each person's cultural background and experience.</li> <li>• Two people must cooperate by exchanging what they listen to, in order to create understanding and commitments that are as congruent as possible.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paraphrase frequently and state the interpretation in your own words, minimizing parroting.</li> <li>- Pause when speaking and encourage the student to paraphrase your comments as well.</li> <li>- Paraphrase the person's words, and also his or her non-verbal (tone, pitch, volume) and non-vocal cues (e.g. body language, facial expressions, hand gestures).</li> <li>- Become adept at paraphrasing beyond the content</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>As a preceptor, to create conditions for authentic interacting, you:</b>	<b>When precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds:</b>
	<p>level, and learn to interpret your student’s emotions and values as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be persistent in your efforts to understand what the student has communicated. Do not feign understanding if it is not present.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrate openness and permeability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let the student know that you want to learn more about his or her background, views, and values.</li> <li>• Inform the student that even though you may have different perspectives, it’s important to you to hear other ways of looking at something. Inform the student that your viewpoint may be simply based on a lack of knowledge, and not a conviction of being right or an entitlement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exhibit a willingness to be vulnerable – to expose yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak from your own experiences.</li> <li>• Share with the student your thoughts, feelings, and anxieties about this relationship.</li> <li>• Tell the student if this is your first experience precepting a student with a cultural background different from your own.</li> <li>• Tell the student about your experiences with individuals from his or her ethnic group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share what you were told about individuals from their background and how it impacted you as you grew up.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Acknowledge any biases or lack of knowledge that you possess.</li> <li>• Inquire about the student’s perceptions and biases regarding individuals of your cultural background.</li> </ul>

## 2. Appreciative Understanding

<b>As a preceptor, to create conditions for appreciative understanding, you:</b>	<b>When precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain an attitude of genuine curiosity about the student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore several areas in the search for distinctions.</li> <li>• Learn about the student’s background and how it informs and shapes the student’s beliefs and behaviors.</li> <li>• Values or “what’s important” to the student is fertile ground for discovery.</li> <li>• Determine where ‘family’, ‘religion’, ‘education’, and ‘career’ fall in priority of importance for the student.</li> <li>• Inquire about the student’s motivation for seeking</li> </ul>

<b>As a preceptor, to create conditions for appreciative understanding, you:</b>	<b>When precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds:</b>
	<p>higher education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the student the first in their family to go to college?</li> <li>- What has been the family's response to the student's pursuit of education?</li> <li>- Is there a particular burden placed on the family with the student pursuing this level of education?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek to understand what makes the student unique</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the student's experiences in a culturally diverse environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did they attend schools that were multicultural?</li> <li>- Have they had many experiences with diverse populations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were these experiences positive?</li> <li>▪ If no, are there any anxieties about this current experience?</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Has the student been mentored or preceptored in the past by someone from another cultural background?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Value the perspectives, thoughts, feelings, emotions of the student, even those that are different from your own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discern the expectations the student has of the precepting experience. Discuss where there is convergence and divergence from your expectations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify what's useful from both yours and the students ideas, suggestions, way of looking at something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are several other areas related to the preceptorship where the student may have perceptions that are defined by their cultural background. Explore these with the student and share your own perceptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of teacher</li> <li>- Role of student</li> <li>- Accountability</li> <li>- Communication and the use of emotions to convey meaning</li> <li>- Time</li> <li>- Honoring hierarchy</li> <li>- Learning styles</li> <li>- Professional practice patterns</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Suspend negative judgment when a viewpoint is different than your own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the legitimacy of the student's worldview.</li> <li>• Show appreciation for the openness and authenticity of the student.</li> </ul>

### 3. Creative Integrating

As a preceptor, to create conditions for creative integrating, you:	When precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain a willingness to modify your own views, beliefs, behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let the student know that a successful preceptorship is based on building on and synthesizing what each of you bring to the relationship.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tolerate ambiguity and be persistent in the struggle for new possibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find support systems for both you and the student. Sometimes hearing information in another voice can help to shape understanding:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A support system for you might include a nurse leader who represents the cultural background of the student or someone with a positive experience precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>- A support system for the student might include:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Other students representing the culturally diverse background;</li> <li>b. Individuals representing the same background who have gone through the preceptorship in the past;</li> <li>c. Professional organizations representing the culturally diverse background such as:                       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Black Nurses Association</li> <li>• The Association of Hispanic Healthcare Professionals</li> <li>• The National Association of Health Services Executives.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Generate creative ways of merging diverse perspectives into new, mutually supported alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Together, establish a set of ground rules for the relationship. Consider ground rules like:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When we don't understand the actions or behaviors of the other, we will seek this understanding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ When there is an issue that requires resolution and there are convergent ideas, strive for solutions that synthesize the strengths of the ideas and approaches of both you and the student.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listing the positives and drawbacks of each of the convergent ideas is a useful tool for finding the solution that works for you both.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and respect where there are issues, perspectives, and values that cannot or should not be integrated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Don't try to assimilate the student (trying to get the student to adapt or conform to the norms of the preponderance of other students).</li> </ul>

## 4. Expanding Capacity

As a preceptor, to create conditions for expanding capacity, you:	When precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognize the interdependence both you and the student have in accomplishing a meaningful preceptorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commit to gaining extensive knowledge of and appreciation for the student’s culture – achieving your own level of ‘cultural competence’ - during the preceptorship.</li> <li>▪ Take great care to help the student learn to navigate the system.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take actions consistent with the agreements reached with the student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assess any unmet expectations.</li> <li>▪ Routinely check to see if agreements have been upheld.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remain current and aware (self awareness and process awareness) of what can be improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step back and watch your interactions. Ask for feedback from the student and your support system.</li> <li>• Be honest with yourself and the student about the areas that you still need to work on to enhance the relationship and the preceptorship.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have the discipline to continuously and consciously strive to improve the preceptorship relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate frequently.</li> <li>• Discuss concerns before they exacerbate.</li> <li>• Don’t give up, even though the effort is difficult and time-consuming.</li> <li>• See endless possibilities for the student. Don’t set limitations based on past experiences or biases.</li> </ul>

In summary, precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds can be a rewarding and positive growth experience. Remembering the conditions required to achieve an atmosphere of Creative InterChange (in which human beings excel to their highest potential) and adding a few special insights for precepting students from culturally diverse backgrounds provides a framework for success.

However, there is one caveat to this chapter. No matter how much we suggest additional steps that can be taken to enhance the likelihood of establishing an environment of Creative InterChange when the student is from a culturally different background, in the end – we are all human. Whatever you see – see the human first!