

Top 10 Things Ramapo College Students Wish Professors Knew About Diversity in the Classroom¹

10. Your mentoring and support means a lot to us! We feel most supported when professors get to know us as individuals and don't make assumptions based on appearance or stereotypes (where we are from, or our sexual orientation).

9. We face micro-aggressions on a daily basis from other students AND some professors. These hurt, and distract us in the classroom. ("You're very well-spoken for someone from _____." or "Can't people take a joke?")

8. It's hard for us to voice concerns to professors about micro-aggressions. We're more comfortable coming forward when we know you will take us seriously without becoming defensive.

7. Please don't ever ask us to speak for a category of people because it makes us feel tokenized. ("I'm sure you can speak to the Latino vote, José.")

6. You might be surprised by the offensive language that some professors use, or that other students use that doesn't get addressed afterwards by professors. (Words like "ghetto" "retarded" or "slutty" used in a derogatory way.) We count on you as the professor to provide a context for why language matters and who it might impact.

Tip: Not sure how to address a micro-aggression or offensive remark? You can unpack it by saying:

- "That's a good point but I'm going to challenge you on your word choice."
- "What do you mean by that?"
- "Interesting theory. What do others think of this argument- do you agree or disagree, and why?" This starts a dialogue and gives you an opportunity to reflect on the best way to respond.

5. Just because we have a physical disability doesn't mean we should be pitied, or on the other hand, always treated like a pillar of bravery and resilience.

4. Professors sometimes make heterosexist assumptions or completely ignore the fact that not all people are heterosexual. You can avoid this by incorporating relevant LGBTQ+ examples, history, authors, etc. in class readings or discussions.

3. We may have mental health issues that can hinder our participation and performance (speaking in class, group work, etc.) Please let us know that you are open to reasonable accommodations and avoid casually using terms like crazy, schizophrenic, or OCD.

2. We appreciate it when professors don't make generalized blanket statements about one culture, gender, or religious group.

1. Everyone has some identities that are privileged and some that are not. We count on you to be knowledgeable about privilege, and to be a role model with awareness of your own privilege in society and at the college. You can do this by learning how to correctly pronounce our names even if you don't share our cultural background, not assuming we can all afford a smartphone or a car, or not assigning major projects on religious holidays.

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¹ Our "Top 10" list is not numbered in order of importance, nor is it an exhaustive list. Our intention is to share some of the most commonly expressed student concerns.