Characteristics That May Give Your Students a Unique Perspective

Our personal backgrounds affect the way our students learn and the way we teach, being mindful of both is necessary when teaching. Your students’ backgrounds can influence how they engage with the course and learn from it; your own background may influence your perspective on your students’ engagement. This worksheet contains some examples of background characteristics that can affect Teaching and Learning.

- Educational background
- Unique previous working or learning experiences
- Teaching experience
- Prior career(s)
- Academic discipline
- Hobbies, non-academic interests
- Preferred learning approaches
- Abilities or Disabilities (both those you can see and those you cannot)

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Language
- Religion
- Gender/Transgender
- Sexual orientation

- Economic background
- Location, size, demographic, etc of your hometown or home country
- Educational background of your family (e.g., a 1st generation college student)
- Children/no children/adopted children

There are many additional characteristics that may be important to you or others you know.

---

1 Adapted from the National Academy of Sciences Summer Institute on Scientific Teaching, 2008.