

# What is the L.A.C.E Framework?

Division of Equity and Inclusion  
Office of the Vice President  
University of Oregon

The L.A.C.E. framework is a set of interconnecting values that are strength based, expansive and creative.

Each letter represents the first letter of values that make up the framework: L (Love); A (Authenticity); C (Courage); E (Empathy). The values operate together in the sense that authenticity, courage and empathy are most alive and expansive when they are done in loving ways.

Below, I share the ways in which we can utilize the L.A.C.E. Framework to spark and sustain learning in our classrooms.

## ***Start on Love Avenue:***

Feminist writer bell hooks advised, “When teachers teach with love, combining care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, we are often able to enter the classroom and go straight to the heart of the matter, which is knowing what to do on any given day to create the best climate for learning.” Here are some examples of how that takes shape:

- Model love and kindness for yourself by letting go of the need to design the perfect course. Let your students know that this will be a term of trial and error, but that you will figure it out together.
- Focus your attention on co-creating an environment for curiosity, discovery, awareness and collaborative learning, and include learning from mistakes as part of the process.
- Slow down. Rather than focusing on getting through the curriculum, identify the truly crucial information and focus on creating passion and interest.
- Cultivate a climate of patience and mutual understanding as the basis for all classroom learning, assessments and interactions. Incorporate these standards into participation and presentation grades.

***Take a Right on Authenticity Street:*** Authenticity helps the students to make meaning of the learning that is taking place in your classroom. Authentic assessments move beyond a focus on what students know intellectually to who they are becoming as learners and fellow citizens of the world.

- Take time during the initial days and weeks of the class to model authenticity by sharing what is genuine and sincere about you.
- Structure ways for students to explain new information to one another, using examples from their own lives and experiences.

***Proceed through the Curve of Courage:*** Every one of us has lived in step with our beliefs and values despite fear, difficulties or resistance, but we are often more courageous in some areas

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than others. Our online classrooms can serve as courage-building labs that provide students with an opportunity to build courage in a variety of cognitive and intellectual.

- Courage is contagious. Model it by daring to show up differently, assess differently or engage differently with students.
- Using the classroom as the context, invite students to select a relevant area to build courage and commit to using the term to build muscle.

*Ascend to Empathy Hill:* Be willing to accept as legitimate the realities that students are facing, and dare to see yourself in your students' struggles and achievements.

- Reflect on what you need to understand about the world today that the diverse students in your class are facing: Students with no internet or computers. Students living in abusive contexts and functioning with different levels of ability. Students for whom food and shelter are a daily struggle.
- Assign term-long groups of two for students to interact weekly with their class buddy via phone or text to talk about how the course material is resonating with their lived experiences.
- Put yourself into the students' shoes and provide step-by-step, systematic ways to learn, complete projects, write papers, prepare for tests as well as online access to examples of the kind of work that you wish to see.

The L.A.C.E.-hearted way provides a path from panic to purpose. We invite you to join us on the journey.