

Cultivating Culturally Informed Courses: Innovations Across HBCUs & Catholic Institutions

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The Power of Collaboration

Bridging Institutional Differences

In the spirit of continuous improvement in quality assurance, a unique collaboration emerged between professionals from two distinct educational environments:

- A Historically Black College and University (HBCU)
- A mid-sized Catholic University

This partnership demonstrates that **academic innovation can emerge from any institution**, regardless of size or classification.

Innovation should have no institutional boundaries - we believe it thrives wherever educators are committed to student success.



i This collaboration showcases how different institutional cultures can unite around a common goal: creating more effective learning experiences.



Our Mission: Culturally Informed Design



Focus

Design and delivery of culturally informed online learning experiences



Impact

Demonstrated successes in enrollment across different institution types



Innovation

Proving that transformative education can happen anywhere



Learning Outcomes for Today's Session



Understand Cultural Impact

Explain the importance of culturally-informed course design and its impact on engagement and success in online learning environments



Identify Key Strategies

Recognize strategies for incorporating cultural relevance into course content, assessment design, and student interactions



Analyze Implementation

Examine institutional challenges and opportunities for culturally-informed approaches at HBCUs, Catholic institutions, and beyond

Why Cultural Relevance Matters

Today's Classroom Reality

In today's evolving educational landscape, designing culturally-informed courses is **essential** for:

- Generating effective communication
- Building social connections with students
- Creating effective learning environments
- Improving student engagement and retention

When students see themselves reflected in the material, learning transforms from obligation to opportunity.



HBCU Success Story: Online Program

Personalized Learning Through Cultural Connection

At Florida A&M University, an innovative online program department & the #1 HBCU Online program in the nation nominated by Forbes, demonstrates the power of culturally-informed design by incorporating:

Real-World Scenarios

Training modules reflected actual challenges that former students & trainees encountered in their professional and personal contexts

Personally-Relevant Examples

Case studies and examples used familiar language and situations that resonated with the trainees' lived experiences

Student-Centered Approach

Created an environment where learners saw themselves reflected in the material, fostering deeper engagement



Beyond Instructional Methods

Personal Connection
Students see themselves in the content

Greater Success
Improved outcomes across all metrics



Deeper Engagement
Meaningful connections drive participation

Stronger Retention
Cultural relevance enhances memory and recall

This approach reinforced that **personalized learning extends far beyond adapting instructional methods** - it's about creating authentic connections between content and culture.

Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy in Action



Community-Centered Design

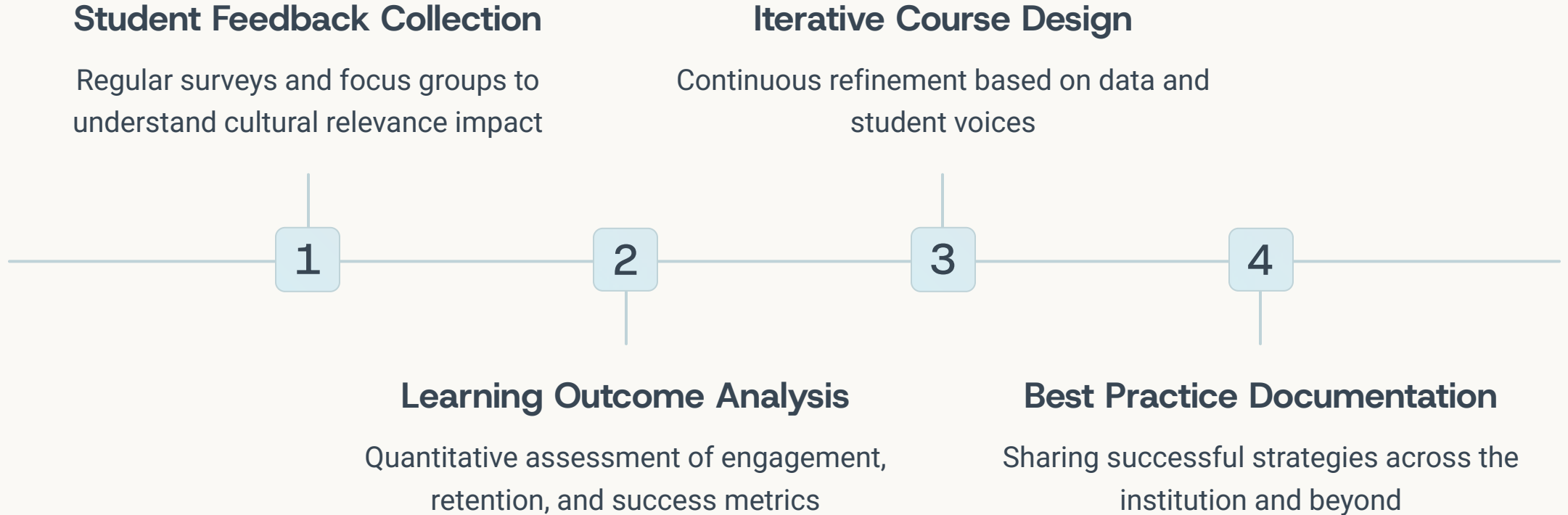
The HBCU approach leverages **culturally-relevant pedagogy** by:

- Drawing from African American community strengths and values
- Incorporating historical and contemporary perspectives
- Using storytelling traditions as pedagogical tools
- Celebrating cultural assets rather than focusing on deficits

This methodology transforms the classroom into a space where cultural identity becomes a *strength* rather than something to be overcome.

- ✓ Utilizing aspects of the African American community as guides for successful course design creates authentic learning experiences that honor student identity.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement



Presenters will highlight specific methods for evaluating the effectiveness of culturally-informed courses and demonstrate how to create sustainable improvement cycles.

Catholic Institution Perspective: Cultural Humility

My Journey to Cultural Humility

At Walsh University, Dr. Amy Heston underwent formal training in cultural humility(CH), implementing strategies that transformed her approach.



Formal Training

Three day course in cultural humility principles, practices, and interactive activities



Designation Achievement

Earned CH designation for my courses (chemistry) and others that satisfy Gen Ed.



Strategic Implementation

Applied learned strategies in alignment with Quality Matters (QM) standards



Cultural Humility in Practice

Empowering Student Perspectives

Through intentional course design aligned with QM standards, Dr. Heston's approach empowers students to:

- **Embrace Varying Perspectives**
- Engage in critical thinking about cultural differences
- Develop strategies for leading with humility
- Build intercultural competence

Cultural humility isn't about knowing everything about other cultures - it's about approaching differences with curiosity, respect, and a willingness to learn.



Quality Matters Integration

<p>QM Standard 1</p> <p>Course Overview</p> <p>Clear learning objectives related to culture humility</p>	<p>QM Standard 2</p> <p>Learning Objectives</p> <p>Culturally-responsive goals that honor a wide range of perspectives</p>
<p>QM Standard 3</p> <p>Assessment</p> <p>Culturally-relevant evaluation methods and authentic assessments</p>	<p>QM Standard 4</p> <p>Materials</p> <p>Resources representing multiple cultural viewpoints</p>

Real-world examples demonstrate how intentional course design creates transformative learning experiences while maintaining rigorous academic standards.

The Roadmap to Success

Our Strategic Framework

Our collaborative "roadmap to success" for creating culturally-informed courses provides a clear pathway for institutions seeking to emphasize quality assurance that drives academic innovation.



Cultural Assessment

Understand your student population and institutional context



Intentional Design

Integrate cultural elements into curriculum and pedagogy



Strategic Implementation

Launch with support systems and feedback mechanisms



Continuous Improvement

Evaluate, refine, and scale successful practices



Key Strategies for Implementation

Course Content Integration

- **Wide-ranging Perspectives**

Include multiple cultural viewpoints in readings, case studies, and examples

- **Relevant Context**

Connect abstract concepts to students' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds

- **Intentional Language**

Use terminology and communication styles that resonate with all learners



Assessment Design

- **Multiple Formats**

Offer various ways for students to demonstrate knowledge and skills

- **Cultural Connections**

Allow students to relate assignments to their own cultural experiences

- **Authentic Tasks**

Create assessments that mirror real-world applications in a variety of contexts

Institutional Challenges and Opportunities



HBCU Advantages

- Strong cultural identity and community connections
- Historical commitment to serving underrepresented students
- Faculty and staff who understand cultural nuances

Opportunity: Leverage existing cultural strengths to create innovative pedagogical approaches



Catholic Institution Strengths

- Mission-driven commitment to academic excellence for all
- Emphasis on developing future leaders in service to society
- Resources for faculty development and training

Opportunity: Integrate cultural humility with institutional values and academic excellence



Universal Challenges

- Faculty training and development needs
- Resource allocation for best design
- Measuring cultural relevance effectiveness

Solution: Collaborative partnerships and shared best practices across institution types

Thank You!

Questions & Discussion

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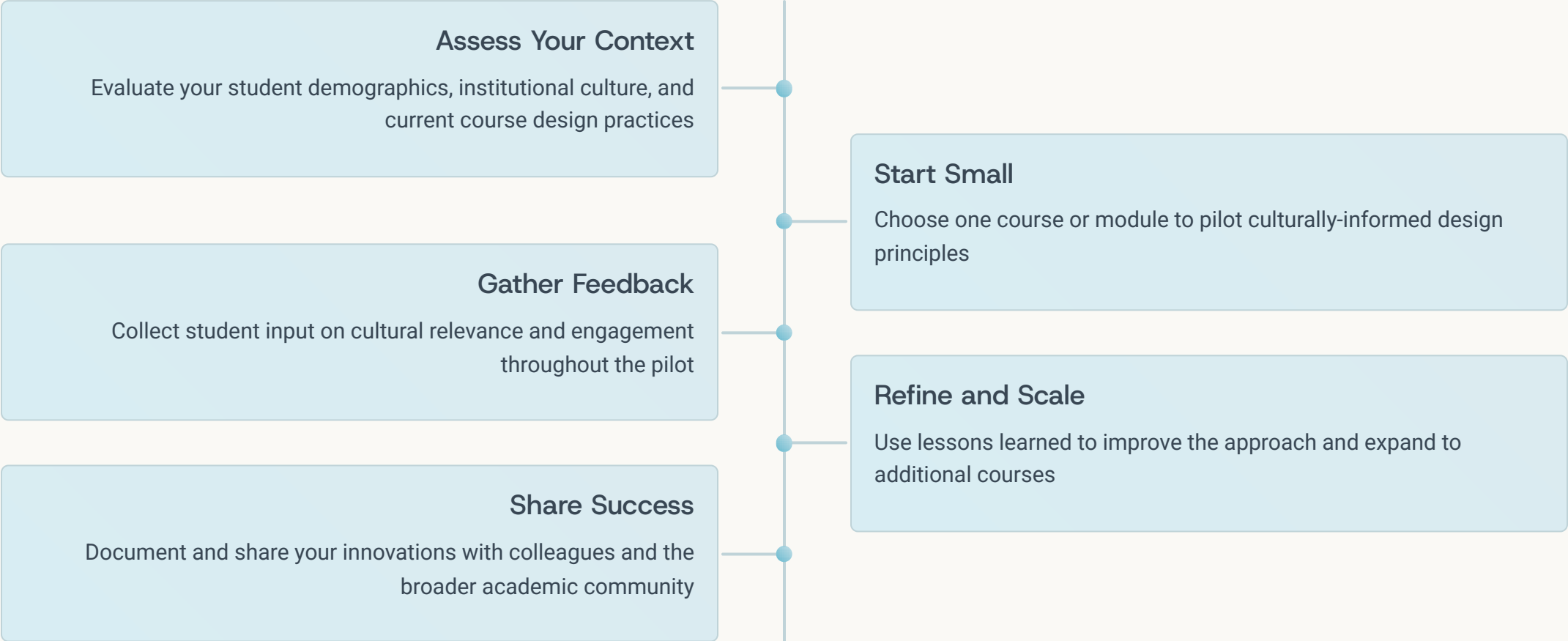
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Let's continue the conversation about creating culturally-informed learning experiences that drive academic innovation across all institution types.

Together, we can transform education through cultural understanding and design.

Additional Resources

Action Plan



🔍 **Ready to get started?** What's one small change you could make to your next course to increase cultural relevance?