

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Understanding Achievement Gaps Through Survey Research

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

In a statistics course centered on student equity, the instructor begins the semester by introducing students to news articles about achievement gaps across racial and gender groups. The instructor leads a discussion about why certain groups (e.g., black, Chicano, minority males) may not be performing as well within certain systems as white students. Students are asked to consider what factors they think contribute to achievement gaps. Students then convert these guesses into survey questions. For example, a student may hypothesize that one racial group works harder than another group. The instructor then synthesizes students' questions into a three-page survey. The instructor shares the completed survey with the students and instructs them to administer the surveys to individuals across campus, using a variety of sampling methods. The students return the completed surveys to the instructor, who then compiles the data. This activity is carried out during the first half of the academic term.

During the second half of the term, the instructor reviews the results with the students. The class discusses whether the data support initial hypotheses and stereotypes and then considers possible solutions to closing achievement gaps based on the data.