

Storytelling is a powerful tool for fostering inclusion, belonging, and student success. At the University of Michigan–Dearborn, **Chancellor Domenico Grasso** has championed storytelling as a key component of their inclusive excellence efforts. This toolkit provides guidance on how institutions can implement storytelling initiatives to build a more connected and empathetic campus community.



Why Storytelling Matters in Higher Education

- ✓ Strengthens campus belonging and inclusion
- ✓ Enhances faculty–student engagement
- ✓ Supports mental health and well-being
- ✓ Builds compassion, empathy, and connection
- ✓ Improves student success and retention rates

Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing Storytelling Initiatives

1. Establish Your Goals

- What do you want to achieve with storytelling? (e.g., enhancing inclusivity, increasing student engagement, reducing bias)
- Define measurable outcomes (e.g., student participation rates, impact on campus culture, retention improvements).

2. Identify Your Storytellers

- Encourage voluntary participation from students, faculty, and staff.
- Invite individuals with unique perspectives and lived experiences.
- Consider faculty incorporating storytelling into coursework.

3. Create Safe Spaces for Storytelling

- Offer workshops on effective storytelling techniques.
- Establish digital or in-person spaces for sharing (podcasts, video recordings, campus events).
- Ensure ethical storytelling practices—consent, privacy, and agency in sharing stories.

4. Integrate Storytelling into Campus Culture

- Develop a digital archive to preserve stories.
- Encourage faculty to use storytelling in teaching.
- Leverage social media and campus publications to amplify voices.

5. Measure Impact and Sustain Growth

- Collect feedback from participants.
- Track engagement metrics and analyze the impact on student retention and belonging.
- Expand initiatives based on data-driven insights.



Tips and Tools

Tools & Resources

- › University of Michigan–Dearborn’s Office of Holistic Excellence
- › NPR’s StoryCorps
- › Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk: The Danger of a Single Story
- › Inclusive Storytelling Best Practices

Tips for Faculty & Administrators

- › Start with personal stories to build connections in the classroom.
- › Use storytelling as a tool for reflection and learning.
- › Incorporate digital storytelling into the curriculum and student projects.
- › Encourage students to share their experiences to foster empathy and understanding.

Final Thoughts



Storytelling is more than a tool—**it’s a movement toward holistic excellence and meaningful inclusion.**

By elevating individual voices, institutions can cultivate a sense of belonging and create lasting change. Ready to start your storytelling initiative? Want to brainstorm solutions with peers or troubleshoot funding options? Head on over to **BTQ’s national higher education forum** to exchange ideas, find support, and build your network of Higher Education professionals trying to create change on campus.

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