

# Valuing Diversity and Inclusion in the Global classroom—and beyond



Go to college, they said. Get an education, they said. You need a college degree to get a decent job, they said. But what they didn't say is how transformative college can be. A college education not only prepares students to become productive professionals in the workforce, but a college experience also opens minds to different perspectives, to different ways of living, being, and thinking.

Professors in the College of Humanities, Arts, Behavioral and Social Sciences, such as Dr. Anne Randerson, who teaches courses such as Introduction to Global Studies, see themselves as advocates and activists who provide opportunities for students to view the world around them from different perspectives. Dr. Randerson's research focuses on human sensitivity, intercultural communication, mindfulness, contemplative pedagogy, and social justice issues, including LGBTQIA inclusion. She believes it's important to challenge students to expand their viewpoints and transform their understanding of what it means to be an informed citizen.

"My classes are very diverse, not just in the content I teach, but also with regard to the students," said Dr. Randerson. When she relocated from Europe to the USA in 2012 and was looking for a good place to teach, she was drawn to CSUSM because she highly valued the university's diversity. Additionally, its proactive inclusion of underrepresented minorities, first-generation students, and the LGBTQIA community aligned with her personal values and activism.

She grew up in San Diego, but as a young adult she developed a bit of a wanderlust, which led her to spend most of her adult life living, studying, and working in Europe and Japan. Her life abroad gave her a deep appreciation for diversity and the strength it provides society when people embrace it. "I want my students to know that their voice matters," she said. "I teach numerous minority first-generation college students and many feel they don't belong, so I try to teach in a way that gives them a chance to believe in themselves and in the power of inclusion and social justice," she said.

Dr. Randerson, who teaches in the Global Studies Department and is also a mindfulness instructor, begins her classes with an optional mindfulness practice. "For the first five minutes of class, students who choose to participate are invited to be still and quiet so they can concentrate on being present in the classroom. Just a few moments at the start of class gives them time to reflect, to feel, and to build confidence in order to let their voice be heard during class discussions." During class, she teaches about what's going on around the world, socially,

economically, and politically. “We discuss and examine how different cultures and societies approach these interdisciplinary subjects. For many students, it’s the first time they’ve looked beyond their own beliefs, attitudes, and values to gain a more global perspective. Sometimes they have a hard time relating, but that’s okay because at the same time they are opening their minds to different ways of doing things, different ways of living, of being, and that’s the point,” Dr. Randerson explained. “I want my students to challenge themselves and their long-held views. I want them to think critically about what’s going on around them, to be aware. This awareness brings curiosity, and curiosity leads to learning and becoming informed.”

When Dr. Randerson is not teaching or researching, she’s writing LGBTQIA fiction under the pseudonym Mickey Brent for Bold Strokes Books. “My books are my activism,” she said. “The LGBTQIA community is losing rights and I’m speaking out because I can, and because we need equality.” Dr. Randerson explained that when she published her first book in 2017 she was hesitant to let her colleagues and students know she wrote LGBTQIA books. She said she really struggled with talking about being an LGBTQIA writer because she felt there might be backlash and disapproval. However, she came to the conclusion that she wasn’t going to hide anymore. Instead, she’d embrace all the hard work she was doing for the community. “I write multicultural LGBTQIA fiction because I believe there should be authentic LGBTQIA representation in literature,” she explained. “Besides, I created my fictional characters to be genuine and true to themselves. So it was about time I did the same in my life. After speaking about my LGBTQIA books and sharing my personal story as an author at our University Library last October, I’m actually sleeping better at night.” Dr. Randerson taps into her world travels, her love of languages, and immersion into other cultures when she writes. “The settings in my books are mainly international, many of my characters are minorities, and I touch on all sorts of diversity so everyone can have a voice,” she said proudly.

Having embraced her role as an activist and advocate for diversity, inclusion, and the LGBTQIA community, Dr. Randerson travels the world for speaking engagements that aim to reduce human conflict, foster inclusive communication practices, and peace across cultures. “I’m just doing my part to help make it a level playing field,” she said.

Her next local speaking engagement is at the San Diego Pride Festival on Sunday, July 14, at 4pm to discuss her latest books. She’ll be on stage at the Lit Café in the Prism Zone with other local LGBTQIA authors. Just remember to call her Mickey Brent.

To read more about Dr. Randerson, she was featured in this 2016 article:

<https://news.csusm.edu/dr-anne-randerson-bringing-the-world-to-csusm/>