

Workshop on Unconscious Bias - Faculty Meeting 10/15/2019

Reasoning Behind the Workshop

Unconscious bias affects everyone, because it is unconscious and unintentional. In order to combat it, we have to actively think about it and become conscious of it.

This is the first of two workshops covering these topics. This one will focus on learning to recognize unconscious bias. The second will focus on how to promote active inclusivity.

Unconscious Bias Definition

Unconscious bias is the unconscious and unintentional attribution of particular qualities to a member of a certain social group.

Scenario Discussion

Please discuss the scenario assigned to your group (found on the back of this sheet). Use the space below to record your thoughts on the following questions:

What do you think is the reason for the behavior described in the scenario?

How have your life experiences informed this opinion?

What would you do as a faculty member in this scenario?

Reflection

Please use this space to write any other thoughts you've had throughout this discussion.

Scenarios

Scenario 1:

You are having a conversation with a few colleagues over lunch. Ronald, a senior faculty member, starts complaining about one of his graduate students, who he feels has been performing inadequately. He says, "I have explained the same concepts multiple times and they still do not understand - I expect more from them at this point." Most of the other faculty members nod in agreement but a junior faculty clearly appears uncomfortable. Ron turns to the junior faculty and says, "Do you not agree?"

Scenario 2:

In your advanced biology seminar, a couple of your students have been performing poorly. One student in particular, Henry, has seemed distracted during lectures. Even after missing some Friday lectures for athletic commitments, he hasn't attended office hours to get extra help. You ask your TA about Henry's performance in recitation, and she reports that he seems unengaged.

Scenario 3:

You're on a hiring committee for a new position, and after on-campus interviews, the committee has agreed on two frontrunners. One of your colleagues points out that while on campus, the first talked strictly about science, while the second also asked questions about the departmental culture and work-life balance. Your colleague characterizes this difference as a difference in dedication: the first clearly is thinking about science foremost, while the second is worried about time off.

Further readings on the effect of unconscious bias

Moss-Racusin, C. A., J. F. Dovidio, et al. (2013). Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109(41): 16474–16479

Budden, A. E., T. Tregenza, et al. (2008). Double-blind review favours increased representation of female authors. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 23(1): 4–6.

Jung, Kiju, et al. Female hurricanes are deadlier than male hurricanes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111.24 (2014): 8782-8787.