

What are the Challenges to Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Campus?

<http://www.arizona.edu/diversity/what-are-challenges-creating-diverse-and-inclusive-campus>

There are many challenges to achieving inclusive programs in higher education, from recruiting and retaining a diverse student population, faculty, and staff to managing diversity in ways that present desired outcomes. Even in the best situation, achieving a diverse, inclusive campus will clearly require planning, cooperation, and hard work. However, it will also require institutions of higher education, and the people who make up those institutions, to identify and overcome barriers that are not easily recognized and that may even be denied. These barriers include hidden or unconscious bias.

- **There are inadequate support structures for underrepresented students.**

In a study of the participation and completion rates of African American, Latino/as, and white students that institutions, Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee (2005) demonstrated the need for institutions to improve their support for underserved groups as their numbers are increased. They point to the disparity between retention rates of white and African American college students with the same SAT scores and note that "Unless colleges and universities create structures to monitor educational achievement among all students— African American, Latino/a, Native American, Asian American, white—the ideal of inclusive excellence will be meaningless" (p. 12).

- While most faculty members report believing campus diversity positively affects students and faculty, most have not made many changes in their classroom practices as a result of student and faculty diversity (Maruyama and Moreno, 2000).
- Only one-third of responding faculty report raising issues related to diversity and creating diverse work groups, although they feel well-prepared to teach diverse classes.* diversity (Maruyama and Moreno, 2000).
- Findings from a nationwide survey of faculty members responding to questions about diversity in their classes and on campus showed that only one-third of responding faculty report raising issues related to diversity and creating diverse work groups, although they reported feeling well-prepared to teach diverse classes. (Data analysis based on n=1,210 eligible in final sample; surveyed faculty were from Research-I institutions) (Maruyama and Moreno, 2000).

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Despite the benefits that a diversified faculty, staff, and student body offer to a campus, diversity also presents considerable challenges that must be addressed and overcome. Some challenges of diversity include:

- **Women and minority faculty members are less satisfied with many aspects of their jobs.**

Numerous studies show that women and minority faculty members are considerably less satisfied with many aspects of their jobs than are majority male faculty members, including teaching, and committee assignments, involvement in decision making, professional relations with colleagues, promotion and tenure, and overall job satisfaction. (Allen et al., 2002; Aguirre, 2000; Astin & Cress, 2003; Foster et al., 2000; Milem & Astin, 1993; MIT Committee on Women Faculty, 1999; Riger, 1997; Somers, 1998; Task Force on the Status of Women Faculty in the Natural Sciences and Engineering at

Princeton, 2003; Trower & Chait, 2002; Turner, 2002; Turner & Myers, 2000; University of Michigan Faculty Work-Life Study Report, 1999; Study of Faculty Worklife at the University of Wisconsin – Madison).

- **Faculty of color can experience exclusion, isolation, alienation, and racism in predominantly white universities.**

A recent study of minority faculty in universities and colleges in eight Midwestern states (members of the Midwestern Higher Education Commission) showed that faculty of color experience exclusion, isolation, alienation, and racism in predominantly white universities (Turner and Myers, 2000).

- **Minority students may feel isolated and unwelcome.**

Minority students often feel isolated and unwelcome in predominantly white institutions and many experience discrimination and differential treatment. Minority status can result from race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, disability and other factors (Amaury & Cabrera, 1996; Cress & Sax, 1998; Hurtado, 1999; Rankin, 1999; Smedley et al., 1993; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

- **Women students may experience chilly climate.**

Women students, particularly when they are minorities in their classes, may experience “a chilly climate” – which can include sexist use of language; presentation of stereotypic and/or disparaging views of women; differential treatment from professors; and sexual harassment (Crombie et al., 2003; Foster 1994; Hall & Sandler, 1982, 1984; Sands, 1998; Swim et al., 2001; Van Roosmalen, 1998; Sandler & Hall, 1986; Whitt et al, 1999).

- **Positive experiences increase comfort between groups.**

Studies show that the lack of previous positive experiences with “outgroup members” (minorities) causes “ingroup members” (majority members) to feel anxious about interactions with minorities. This anxiety can cause majority members to respond with hostility or to simply avoid interactions with minorities (Plant & Devine, 2003).

Influence of Unconscious Assumptions and Biases (WISELI, University of Wisconsin)
Research studies show that people who have strong egalitarian values and believe that they are not biased may nevertheless unconsciously or inadvertently behave in discriminatory ways (Dovidio, 2001). A first step towards improving climate is to recognize that unconscious biases, attitudes, and other influences not related to the qualifications, contributions, behaviors and personalities of our colleagues can influence our interactions, even if we are committed to egalitarian views.

Although we all like to think that we are objective scholars who judge people based entirely on merit and on the quality of their work and the nature of their achievements, copious research shows that every one of us brings a lifetime of experience and cultural history that shapes our interactions with others.

The results from controlled research studies in which people were asked to make judgments about subjects demonstrate the potentially prejudicial nature of the many implicit or unconscious assumptions we can make. Examples range from physical and social expectations or assumptions to those that have a clear connection to the environments in which we work.

Examples of common social assumptions/expectations:

When shown photographs of people of the same height, evaluators overestimated the heights of male subjects and underestimated the heights of female subjects, even though a reference point, such as a doorway, was provided (Biernat et al., 1991).

- When shown photographs of men with similar athletic abilities, evaluators rated the athletic ability of African American men higher than that of white men (Biernat et al., 1991).

- Students asked to choose counselors from among a group of applicants of marginal qualifications more often chose white candidates than African American candidates with identical qualifications (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

These studies show how generalizations that may or may not be valid can be applied to the evaluation of individuals (Bielby & Baron, 1986). In the study on height, evaluators applied the statistically accurate generalization that men are usually taller than women to their estimates of the height of individuals who did not necessarily conform to the generalization. If we can inaccurately apply generalizations to characteristics as objective and easily measured as height, what happens when the qualities we are evaluating are not as objective or as easily measured? What happens when, as in the studies of athletic ability and choice of counselor, the generalization is not valid? What happens when such generalizations unconsciously influence the ways we interact with other people?

Examples of assumptions or biases that can influence interactions:

- When rating the quality of verbal skills as indicated by vocabulary definitions, evaluators rated the skills lower if they were told an African American provided the definitions than if they were told that a white person provided them (Biernat et al., 1991).
- When asked to assess the contribution of skill and luck to successful performance of a task, evaluators more frequently attributed success to skill for males and to luck for females, even though males and females performed the task identically (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974).
- Evaluators who were busy, distracted by other tasks, and under time pressure gave women lower ratings than men for the same written evaluation of job performance. Sex bias decreased when they gave all their time and attention to their judgments, which rarely occurs in actual work settings (Martell, 1991).
- Evidence suggests that perceived incongruities between the female gender role and leadership roles cause two types of disadvantage for women: (1) ideas about the female gender role cause women to be perceived as having less leadership ability than men and consequently diminish women's rise to leadership positions, and (2) women in leadership positions receive less favorable evaluations because they are perceived to be violating gender norms. These perceived incongruities lead to attitudes that are less positive toward female than male leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway, 2001).
- A study of nonverbal responses of white interviewers to black and white interviewees showed that white interviewers maintained higher levels of visual contact, reflecting greater attraction, intimacy, and respect, when talking with whites and higher rates of blinking, indicating greater negative arousal and tension, when talking with blacks (Dovidio et al., 1997).

Examples of assumptions or biases in academic contexts:

Several research studies have shown that biases and assumptions can affect evaluation and hiring of candidates for academic positions. These studies show that assessment of resumes and postdoctoral applications, evaluation of journal articles, and the language and structure of letters of recommendation are significantly influenced by the gender of the person being evaluated. As we attempt to enhance campus and department climate, we need to consider whether the influence of such biases and assumptions also affects selection of invited speakers, conference participants, interaction and collaboration with colleagues, and promotion to tenure and full professorships.

- A study of over 300 recommendation letters for medical faculty hired at a large American medical school in the 1990s found that letters for female applicants differed systematically from those for males (Trix & Psenka, 2002).
- In a national study, 238 academic psychologists (118 male, 120 female) evaluated a résumé randomly assigned a male or a female name. Both male and female participants

- gave the male applicant better evaluations for teaching, research, and service and were more likely to hire the male than the female applicant (Steinpreis et al., 1999).
- A study of postdoctoral fellowships awarded by the Medical Research Council in Sweden found that women candidates needed substantially more publications to achieve the same rating as men, unless they personally knew someone on the panel (Wenneras & Wold, 1997).
 - In a replication of a 1968 study, researchers manipulated the name of the author of an academic article, assigning a name that was male, female, or neutral (initials). The 360 college students who evaluated this article were influenced by the name of the author. They evaluated the article more favorably when written by a male than when written by a female. Questions asked after the evaluation was complete showed that bias against women was stronger when evaluators believed that the author identified only by initials was female (Paludi & Bauer, 1983).

Biases and assumptions can influence interaction between colleagues in the following ways:

- Women and minorities may be subject to higher expectations in areas such as number and quality of publications, name recognition, or personal acquaintance with a committee member.
- Colleagues from institutions other than the major research universities that have trained most of our faculty may be under-valued. Opportunities to benefit from the experiences and expertise of colleagues from other institutions, such as historically black universities, four year colleges, government, or industry, who can offer innovative, diverse, and valuable perspectives on research, teaching, and the functioning of the department, may consequently be neglected.
- The work, ideas, and findings of women or minorities may be undervalued, or unfairly attributed to a research director or collaborators despite contrary evidence in publications or letters of reference.
- The ability of women or minorities to run a research group, raise funds, and supervise students and staff may be underestimated, and may influence committee and teaching assignments.
- Assumptions about possible family responsibilities and their effect on a colleague's career path may negatively influence evaluation of merit, despite evidence of productivity and may affect committee and teaching assignments.
- Negative assumptions about whether female or minority colleagues "fit in" to the existing environment can influence interactions.

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Overview of Research on Unconscious Bias Related to Performance Evaluation

- **When we evaluate others, we generally hope to base those evaluations entirely on individual merit. But research shows that everyone brings social stereotypes and a lifetime of cultural experience to the evaluation process.**

- Controlled studies on performance evaluation have shown that implicit or unconscious hypotheses about members of various social groups may influence evaluation of individuals, despite evaluators' best intentions to be fair and accurate.
- In most studies that have found unconscious gender bias in evaluations, the gender of the evaluator was not significant, indicating that both men and women share and apply the same assumptions about gender (Biernat & Manis, 1994; Steinpreis et al., 1999).
- Studies have also shown that recognizing biases and other influences not related to actual performance can help reduce their impact on evaluations (Bauer & Baltes, 2002).

• **Research shows that both positive and negative assumptions based on racial and gender stereotypes may influence evaluations.**

- When shown photographs of men with similar build and physical qualities, evaluators rated the athletic ability of African American men higher than that of White men (Biernat & Manis, 1994).
- When rating the quality of verbal skills as indicated by vocabulary definitions, evaluators rated the skills lower if they were told an African American provided the definitions than if they were told that a White person provided them (Biernat & Manis, 1994).
- Evaluators more frequently credited successful task performance to skill for males and Whites, and to effort, luck, or help from others for females and African-Americans (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993).
- Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders proposes that received incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of unconscious bias: (a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential leaders and (b) evaluating behaviors associated with a leader role less favorably when they are done by a woman (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

• **Research on Unconscious Bias in Evaluation in Academic Job-related Contexts**

- A study of over 300 recommendation letters for medical faculty who were hired by a large American medical school in the 1990s found that letters for female and male applicants differed systematically. Letters written for women were shorter, raised more doubts, and portrayed women more as students and teachers while portraying men more as researchers and professionals (Trix & Psenka, 2003).
- A study of evaluators' rating sheets for postdoctoral fellowships awarded by the Medical Research Council in Sweden found that women candidates needed substantially more publications (the equivalent of 3 more papers in Nature or Science, or 20 more papers in specialty journals such as Neuroscience) to achieve the same rating as men, unless they personally knew someone on the panel of evaluators (Wenneras & Wold, 1997).
- Two studies at universities in Italy and the Netherlands found no gender differences in the self-reported work commitment or work satisfaction of male and female doctoral students, while faculty in the same universities perceived female students to be less committed to their work. Female faculty endorsed these gender stereotypical perceptions most strongly. Additional measures suggested that female faculty perceived themselves as non-typical females, allowing stereotypical views of other women to continue unchecked (Ellemers et al., 2004).