SC Diversity and Inclusion: Faculty and Staff

Full Course

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Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Most higher education faculty and staff members have some awareness of **diversity and inclusion**, as well as their institution's efforts to address changing demographics and any incidents of discrimination.

It's important to continue education in these evolving arenas, not only to remain in compliance, but also as a best practice.

The Benefits of a Diverse Community

Diverse and inclusive institutions of higher education offer many benefits to their members, communities and society.

Beyond enriching our culture, higher education has historically served as a model for the world around us. By diversifying our communities and serving as examples of inclusivity, we can affect K-12 education, workplaces and more.

Requirements in Higher Education Settings

Discrimination has been recognized in legislation and court rulings and is, therefore, illegal. (In addition,) All institutions are required by law to have a policy that forbids discrimination.

Impact of Inclusive Colleges and Universities

By following these requirements and guidelines, we can create diverse colleges and universities that more clearly reflect the changing landscape of this country.

We can increase recruitment and retention efforts by making our schools safer and more inviting for all community members.

(And) We can learn and grow inside and outside the classroom by valuing the unique experience and perspective of each individual.

Goal

This course provides college and university faculty and staff members with a basic understanding of diversity and inclusion, as well as strategies to help maintain a discrimination-free environment.

By the end of this course, you'll be able to:

- Recognize diversity terminology, regulations and underrepresented groups.
- Identify problematic behaviors. (and)
- Increase diversity awareness, understanding and knowledge.

So, if you're ready, let's get started.

Defining Diversity: Context and Value

What Is Diversity?

(In general,) **Diversity** is the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of different types of people – such as people of different races or cultures – in a group or organization.

Related terms include:

- **cultural competence**
- **bias** (and)
- **protected class**

Let's go over each of these.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that enable professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

A culturally competent workplace demonstrates inclusion in its communication and practices and ensures its staff is well-trained and comfortable around diversity issues.

Bias

Bias is prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

Some characteristics of bias include:
- A preference or tendency to like or dislike. This preference can be implicit or explicit, as well as intentional or unintentional.
- A habit learned over time through personal experience or lack thereof due to limited interaction with members of groups different from you. (and)
- An opinion formed from stereotypes, social norms or the expectations of those around you.

The most common examples of unfair bias are based on stereotypes about another person's race, ethnicity, gender, religion or other group association.

Protected Classes

Protected classes are the groups protected by law from employment discrimination on the basis of:

- race
- sex
- religion
- age
- national origin (and)
- ability

Basis of Discrimination

Other types of discrimination can be based upon:

- ethnicity
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- veteran status
- socio-economic status (and/or)
- political beliefs

Non-Discrimination Landscape

Laws and oversight regarding discrimination include:

- Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act
- (the) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- (the) Americans with Disabilities Act (and)
- varying state laws

Non-Discrimination Landscape (cont.)

Policies regarding discrimination may include your institution's:

- employee code of conduct (and)
- hiring practices

Identifying Behaviors

Microaggressions

Not all discrimination is overt or direct. Microaggressions are defined as "**brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership**."

Microaggressions can be insulting, invalidating or assaulting.

(And) Comments may result from ignorance, lack of exposure, poor teaching or stereotyping.

Source: (Sue, 2010. *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*)

Examples of Microaggressions

Examples of microaggressions may include:

- **asking "Where are you from?" to someone who is of a different race or ethnicity from you,** assuming the person or his/her ancestors could not also be American

- **assuming a woman in a meeting will take notes**, get coffee, schedule the next meeting or assist with other low-level tasks.

- **presuming someone's partner is of the opposite sex** by using "husband" or "wife" language

Examples of Microaggressions (cont.)

Examples of microaggressions may include:

- **minimizing disabilities through comments** such as, "I'm obsessive-compulsive about my office," or "I sounded dyslexic when I stumbled over that presentation." (or)

- **making blanket statements** such as wishing a group "Merry Christmas," when some members may not observe that holiday

Impact of Microaggressions

While microaggressions might seem minor in isolation, they can have a significant negative effect on an individual. Imagine experiencing them many times over, day in and day out.

Think of the impact on your ability to learn, work, form relationships and get the most out of your daily life. (And) Taken singularly or together, microaggressions can form a **hostile environment**.

Hostile Environment

A **hostile work environment** is a workplace in which unwelcome comments or conduct:

- unreasonably interfere with an employee's work performance (and/or)
- create an intimidating or offensive work environment for an employee

This conduct may be based on gender, race, nationality, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or other legally protected characteristics, and can severely diminish an employee's productivity and self-esteem both in and out of the workplace.

Hostile Environment (cont.)

When *anyone* in a workplace – a co-worker, a supervisor, a student or a guest – commits harassment, it creates a hostile work environment.

Harassment can affect many more people than just the initially impacted employee. If other employees witness harassment, they might find the work environment intimidating or hostile as well, and it can greatly affect their work performance.

Addressing Diversity Discrimination

Common Misconceptions

We often have some misconceptions about what diversity entails, including:

- **Just treat everyone the same.** – One size doesn't fit all. The goal is for equity, as opposed to just equality.

- **There's no real benefit to a diverse workforce.** – Look past just trying to avoid allegations of discrimination. The positive impacts to reputation, recruitment and retention are real and invaluable.

- **Compliance means doing the bare minimum required.** – Checking boxes is one thing, but striving for best practices captures the spirit of the law as opposed to only the letter of the law.

Common Misconceptions (cont.)

We often have some misconceptions about what diversity entails, including:

- **Creating a policy is all that is needed.** – Policy is the floor, but aim for the ceiling. Policies need to be accessible, communicated and revised.

- **One diversity training program is all we need.** – Consider varying your offerings. Online modules, in-person trainers, readings and facilitated discussions are all effective training methods.

- **Let Human Resources manage concerns about diversity.** – Diversity affects institutions across the board, requiring all departments to share similar values and enact them.

Proactive Strategies for Staff

(Instead,) Here are a few proactive strategies for faculty and staff to follow:

- Include diversity efforts throughout your employee programs, not just at orientation or once per year.
- Live your policy in practice, so it's not just a document but a framework for your approach to inclusion.
- Involve representative staff from across the institution in efforts to develop, rework and apply diversity programming. (and)
- Recognize and maintain what works instead of responding only when someone reports an issue.

Addressing Discrimination

A few strategies to address discrimination include:

- **Monitor your own biases.**
  Be cognizant of your attitudes, behaviors and language.
  Acknowledge that we all are shaped by our environments
  and our experiences; it is up to us what we do with our
  biases.

Addressing Discrimination (cont.)

A few strategies to address discrimination include:

- **Seek out different experiences –** (such as) **trying new foods, listening to new music or exploring varying cultural traditions.**

  You can often find a wide array of events on campuses and their surrounding areas. Take advantage of the opportunities available to you.

Addressing Discrimination (cont.)

A few strategies to address discrimination include:

- **Try not to be defensive if someone points out a microaggression; use it as a learning opportunity.**

   It's human nature to defend one's actions. Push past that initial response and be open to feedback.

Addressing Discrimination (cont.)

A few strategies to address discrimination include:

- **Don't expect members of diverse groups to always want to educate members of majority groups; it can be a burden.**

  Listen when others are willing to share their knowledge with you. Otherwise, use the resources available to you to research and learn more independently.

Witnessing a Microaggression

If you witness a microaggression, some options to respond include:

- speaking up in the moment
- walking away to signal your disagreement
- not laughing or signaling agreement (and)
- speaking to either party individually after the incident

Checkpoint

After taking this course, you should be able to:

- Understand diversity terminology and pertinent regulations.
- Identify problematic behaviors. (and)
- Apply diversity awareness, understanding and knowledge.

Review these points and repeat this course, if needed.