Diversity and Bias in the Search Committee Process

Educational Case for Diversity

- Better prepares students to live and work in a globally diverse society

- Increases college satisfaction, student development, intellectual engagement and growth of students

- Positive impact on educational outcomes of both minority and majority student populations

- Presence of women faculty correlated with greater success for women graduates

- Diversity success does not require extra effort, only what is appropriate

- Christopher D. Lee, *The Diversity Advantage*, June 11th, 2015.

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Educational Diversity as a Strategic Goal

EMU Strategic Themes

Institutional Effectiveness

- **Goal 1:** Foster a diverse, ethical, safe and respectful workplace with effective and transparent communications that support the university's mission and values.
   Objective 1.1: Develop and recruit leadership that reflects the diversity of the student body.

Student Engagement and Success

- **Goal 3:** Prepare students to successfully and meaningfully interact with people from diverse backgrounds.
  - *Objective 3.1:* Support students in becoming actively engaged global citizens with strong cultural awareness.
  - *Objective 3.2:* Build a university culture in which respect, responsibility, pride and diversity are valued, encouraged and celebrated.
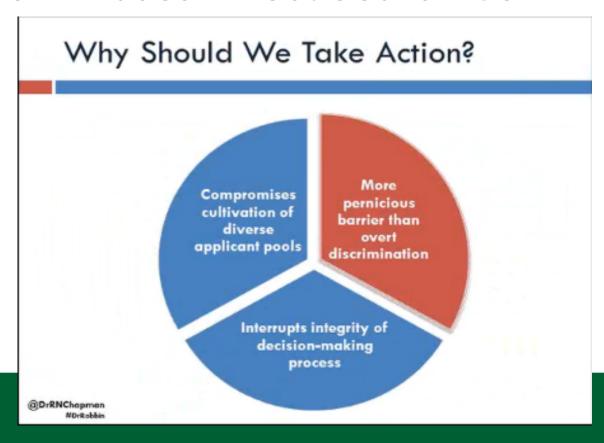
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Faculty Ethnicity/Student Ethnicity

EMU	Total	Female	White	Total Minority	Minorities					
					Black/African American	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
Total Faculty (as of Fall 2016)	691	51%	78%	21%	7%	1%	12%	0.6%	0.1%	0.3%
Total Students (as of Fall 2016)	21,105	60%	65%	35%	18%	5%	3%	0.3%	0.06%	4%

How Biases Affect Search Committees

Implicit Bias

- Everyone has bias, it lives deep in the subconscious and everyone <u>unconsciously</u> has these thoughts
  - Affects our attitudes and actions/behaviors
  - Not directly controllable
  - Bias can be positive or negative
  - Tends to favor our own group
  - Difficult to change, but not impossible
  - Starts developing from birth
- Often our declared beliefs do not align with the implicit associations we hold in our subconscious
- Implicit Association Test

Where Does Implicit Bias Come From?

All Around Us!

- Exposure to media, news programming, family, teachers, peers

- Direct and indirect (unconscious) messages

- Impossible to resist not taking into your subconscious

- Our brain receives **11 million** pieces of information every moment, but are only consciously aware of **40** pieces at best

- Messages can be framed to speak to our unconscious

- May initially be received as distorted but can be reinforced and internalized over time

(Buchanan, N., 2016)

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Cost of Implicit Bias

- For the Privileged
  - Limited self-awareness and difficulty empathizing with others
  - Increased fear, guilt, shame and isolation from those who are different
  - Financial costs through loss of valuable employees and customers

- For Diverse Student and Faculty
  - Experience campus as alienating, invalidating, and stressful
  - Qualifications and credentials questioned by students and colleagues
  - Research and teaching contributions not recognized or valued
  - Disengaged, possibly leaving the institution or changing careers

(Buchanan, N., 2016)

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Search Committee Preparations

- Form Search Committee
  - Can use people inside and outside department
  - It is recommended that the search committee has a diverse make-up to reflect the department, college, and university
  - Consider appointing a "diversity advocate" on the committee to review best practices for aligning with University's strategic goals for a diverse educational environment
- Review departmental and university goals for areas that are underutilizing females and minorities
- Review understandings of bias to encourage awareness through process

Search Committee Best Practices

- Examine planned search practices for micro-inequities
  - Practice detecting them in whole process
- Replace micro-inequities with micro-affirmations
- Know the bias profile of your specific discipline
  - Example: STEM fields and gender biases
- Question one another as a matter of practice – not only the diversity advocate's job, but everyone's job
- Have members take Harvard's Implicit Association Test to test their own biases (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)

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Defining Position Expectations

Examine the posting for micro-inequities and enhance inclusive language

- When clearly defining the expectations of the position, include an expectation for the person to work with multicultural populations (students, employees, communities, etc.)

- Can make it a competency requirement for selection. Research has shown that creating variables like this increases the probability of minority candidate selection (Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004)
    - "Require/Prefer experience with students similar to the ones we serve…or…experience with multicultural/multilingual communities like ours."

- Correlates to diversity-focused interview questions

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Passive Recruitment Strategies

- Expand your reach beyond traditional Passive Recruitment Techniques:
    - Posting advertisements
    - Relying on EMU's brand to attract the talent we need
    - Unsuccessful minority recruitment is like "fishing in the same lake with the same bait and same technique and expecting to catch a different type of fish"
- Targeted, outreached-focused networking by <u>individuals</u> (as opposed to by the organization) is more effective

Active Recruitment Strategies

No true *sourcing* strategy is complete without targeting diverse populations

- Just as faculty search committees target candidates with certain skills and expertise, those with specific backgrounds and enriching experiences that the college is lacking should be sought after as well

Continuous Recruitment Strategy

- Develop Relationships and Seek Referrals inside and outside EMU for potential staff/faculty

  - Local Organizations
  - Conferences and Professional Events

  - University Groups
  - Minority Organizations and Publications

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Tips for Diverse Recruitment

- Create a welcoming institution image from the first communication with the candidate

- Avoid micro-inequities through omission

- Use Professional Organizations in your discipline for women or people of color
  - Professional Org. Example: Searching for a minority Physics Professor?
  - Publication Example: Diverse Issues in Higher Ed Magazine
  - National Society of Black Physicists (http://nsbp.org/)
  - If using an Executive Search Firm, monitor and examine their process for bias and their "ideal candidate picture"

Screening Candidates

The debate on using social media and Google to pre-screen candidates:

- Pros: Can learn important information, can view academic preparation and commitment to the field
- Cons: Can reveal private or protected class information, influence unconscious bias, and promote gossip

- Same process should be used for all candidates
  - Structured pre-screen questionnaire should be developed so the same questions should be asked of all candidates
  - If reference checks are done, the search committee must apply process to all candidates
  - Document all processes; rationale for all decisions should be given in writing

Illegal Interview Questions

- Many questions commonly asked of candidates are not only too personal, but illegal. Questions also cannot be asked that elicit this information.

  - Age
  - Marital Status
  - Birthplace of applicant and his/her relatives
  - Citizenship
  - Disability
  - Height

  - Weight
  - Genetic Information
  - Race
  - Sex
  - Religion
  - Misdemeanor, non-convicted arrests

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Interviewing

- If candidate begins to reveal protected category information, steer conversation back to job-related issues
  - If candidate is not chosen for job they can claim they were not hired based off of any personal information they revealed
- Reviewing diversity data before the interviewing stage helps committee members when responding to candidate questions about representation of groups across campus
- Candidate "fit" is often misinterpreted as someone who blends in
  - "Fit" should be evaluated objectively using previously agreed upon criteria that is measurable and observable

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Interviewing continued…

- Be conscious of first impressions of people and collective standards/triggers
  - Standards on handshaking, personal disqualifiers, etc.
- *Consciously* notice similarities between candidates before differences
- Process for interviewing candidates same for all candidates
  - Time for questions is equitably applied to each candidate
  - Ensure all committee members attend all interviews
- Notice how you verbalize and validate candidates

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Diversity-focused interview questions

- " Please describe your experiences with diversity in and/or outside the classroom."
- " Discuss some of the specific strategies you have found to be effective in developing and managing a diverse work team."
- " Have you ever had any experiences that increased your awareness of personal and cultural differences? How did this affect your relationships with individuals from different backgrounds than your own?"
- " Describe a situation when you needed the cooperation of many diverse people in order to succeed. What strategies did you utilize to ensure success?"

(Lominger's Competencies, 2016.)

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Selection

- The selection stage should be the one where the most discussions should and could be had about biases and the messages we are sending to others on campus
  - Engage in some amount of reasonable risk-taking during evaluations
  - Interrupt "I'm for diversity, but I want quality" and openly speak about bias
- Committee members who were absent for any part of the process should not participate in the rank ordering of applicants
- Be careful to not let the committee slip into "groupthink" or let the discussion become dominated by any particular individuals
- Track any patterns in hiring activity and reasons for accepting and declining offers to monitor the messages you are sending to applicants and what sorts of patterns may indicate a presence of bias

Welcoming and Retaining Colleagues
Best Practices

- Welcome any questions in advance regarding quality of life issues. We want to give them the most realistic job preview we can as well as a realistic assessment of the community.
  - Family care leaves, maternal/paternal leaves, housing, schools, community, etc.
- Inform employees about local attractions and/or provide resources
  - Ypsilanti Visitors Bureau, Ann Arbor Family Resources List
- Provide examples of EMU's commitment to diversity
  - Chinese recruitment efforts tripled number of Chinese students over 3 years
  - EMU recognized as one of the top 2 LGBT friendly colleges in the nation by the Campus Pride Index

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Welcoming and Retaining Colleagues
(continued)

- Introduce new employees to leadership and team members
- Make a point to get to know employees personally to better understand their needs and help ease their transition
- Match them with an appropriate mentor from the same department
    - Assists in acclimating the person to a new work environment, culture, mission, and vision
- Have employee meet with a group of students that are representative of the diverse audience they would regularly service

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Strategies to Reduce Bias

- Know your biases
  - Take the Implicit Association Test by Harvard
- Attend training seminars (bias, bystander, ally interventions) – awareness is not enough
  - Can reduce bias and its influence on our behaviors
  - Help prepare you for situations that are of greatest risk for bias
- View situations and concepts from alternative perspectives/viewpoints
- Look for opportunities for meaningful intergroup interactions
- Build relationships via similarities, increases trust and communication (but recognize and respect differences when appropriate)
- Commit to long-term engagement and personal change
- Apologize when you've made a mistake

A Few Last Words

- I hope we have equipped you with some tools to be an Agent of Change in our Search Committee Process

"We need diversity in discipline, intellectual outlook, cognitive style, and personality to offer students the breadth of ideas that constitute a dynamic intellectual community."

- **Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in Academic Settings**
Eve Fine and Joe Handelsman, University of Wisconsin, 2010

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Thank you!

- Questions?

"Diversity: the art of thinking independently together."

— Malcolm Forbes