College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Implicit Bias and the Promotion and Tenure Process

Implicit Bias or Unintentional Bias: (https://advance.tamu.edu/implicitunintentional-bias/)

- Represents the unconscious mental models we have about social groups.
- Specifically, refers to the favorable or unfavorable attitudes or stereotypes that affect our unconscious assessment of others.
- These biases are automatic and are based on characteristics such as gender, race, age, country of origin, or other dimensions of identity.

Areas where Implicit Bias has been demonstrated in employment and the search process, letter writing, etc.

- Gender: male vs female vs transgender; potential (male) vs performance (female)
- Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian vs. African American vs. Hispanic vs. Asian vs. American Indian
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Graduate Admissions

Areas where Implicit Bias MAY BE present in the Promotion and Tenure Process

- Research Approach: basic vs applied; scientific method vs. survey vs case study; quantitative vs. qualitative
- Field of Study: biological science vs physical science vs social science; STEM vs. non-STEM;
- Land grant system: faculty that are teachers vs research scientist vs extension specialists
- Rank/Experience: junior vs senior faculty
- Tenure: tenure-track vs. non-tenure track (academic professional track)
- Color of Money: Federal vs. State vs. Internal vs. Industry

Recommendations for Reducing Implicit Bias in the Promotion & Tenure Review Process

(https://nsfadvance.rit.edu/assets/pdf/promotionandtenureworkshopunconsciousbiashandout%2030nov2016.pdf)

- 1) **Participate in a bias literacy workshop**. Research provides evidence that educational interventions lead to a reduction in unconscious bias
- 2) **Recognize/accept that all of us have bias** and assumptions, despite good intentions. Avoid considering yourself as "objective"
- 3) **Diversify P&T committee** membership by race, gender, rank (if appropriate), hearing status, age, etc. This will provide committee members with visible reminders that excellence comes in diverse forms. It will increase group members' motivation to respond equitably.
- 4) **Discuss criteria** that your review committee will use before evaluating candidates, and apply the criteria consistently **USE A RUBRIC**, one rubric for all or each evaluator develops their own.
- 5) **Periodically evaluate the criteria and the manner** in which the committee implements the review.
- 6) Evaluate the entire package of each candidate USE A RUBRIC.
- 7) **Devote sufficient time/attention to evaluating each candidate**, minimize distractions; minimize time pressure and stress from competing tasks.
- 8) **Recognize how the differential power/status** of committee members shapes group discussions; every committee member is 1/nth vote of the committee, so facilitate a balanced discussion.
- 9) Use an inclusive rather than an exclusive decision-making process (such as considering why candidate should be granted tenure or promotion rather than why they should be denied). This will cause evaluators to pay more attention to the merits of individual candidates and less attention to their membership in a specific demographic group
- 10) Hold tenure and promotion review committee members responsible for fair and equitable evaluation. In addition, hold them responsible for decisions based on concrete information, not on vague assertions or assumptions.

References

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