

## Please Feel Free to Intervene:

### *Designing an Interactive Bystander Intervention Program*

**Include U's Bystander Intervention Program has three main goals:**

- To educate faculty on cognitive biases and how they can shape decision-making
- To explain how bias incidents can undermine diversity and inclusion on campus
- To illustrate different ways faculty can intervene effectively when a bias incident occurs



**We aim to take the stigma out of talking about bias by recognizing that we all have biases. Learning how to recognize them in ourselves and others and addressing them in a productive way will help to mitigate their negative impact.**

#### **Overview**

Include U™ is a group of faculty at the University of New Hampshire who developed an online, interactive, research based training program to provide faculty with the tools they need to intervene when they encounter bias incidents on campus. Developed by faculty, for faculty, this online professional development program guides faculty through a series of familiar academic settings where bias can emerge: search committee deliberations, department meetings, promotion and tenure evaluations, and casual interactions. The training program identifies the many different ways in which faculty can intervene to address these bias incidents, and provides opportunities for faculty to see how suggested intervention methods might play out in different settings.

#### **Pedagogical Approach**

The training program is built on the premise that we all have cognitive biases that can shape our attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, the social psychology literature illuminates the many ways in which cognitive biases help us to navigate a complex world efficiently. However, some biases, particularly those involving members of historically under-represented groups, can have pernicious effects. We aim to take the stigma out of talking about bias by recognizing that we all have biases. Learning how to recognize them in ourselves and others and addressing them in a productive way will help to mitigate their negative impact.

#### **Identifying Bias Incidents and Their Impact on Underrepresented Groups**

In a series of focus group sessions, we spoke with faculty about the type of bias incidents they had observed and/or experienced in an academic workplace. We wanted to ensure that the program reflected the real world experiences of faculty, and that the simulations would be familiar and authentic.

After soliciting faculty accounts of bias incidents in their workplace, we worked with subject matter experts specializing in social psychology, cognitive bias, and bystander intervention to further refine the list of behaviors. We used these literatures to design the first part of the program, which explains what bias is, how people's minds develop bias, and how to recognize examples of bias in academic settings. We relied upon faculty input to design familiar scenarios where different types of cognitive bias emerged.

In the development process, we strived to make this program accessible, interactive, and interesting. We did not want to design a training program that would elicit groans or reluctant participation. We wanted the training program to be engaging and illustrate the ways in which bias tends to creep into common academic workspaces (e.g., search committees, promotion and tenure processes, faculty meetings, and casual interactions). To illustrate how bias can intrude into these academic workspaces, we created a series of animated video vignettes based upon the actual experiences of faculty. Additional animated vignettes showcase different types of bystander intervention approaches that faculty can use to address bias incidents and mitigate their negative impact.

### Now That Faculty Recognize Bias, How Can They Intervene?

The program consists of three modules. Module 1 provides an introduction to cognitive bias, and engages faculty in short quizzes to apply what they have learned, particularly as to how biases can have deleterious effects on members of historically underrepresented groups. In module 2, we identify ways in which faculty can intervene to address these bias incidents.

## The course consists of three modules

MODULE

1

**Bias Incidents in the Academic Workplace**

MODULE

2

**How to Intervene When We See Bias Incidents**

MODULE

3

**Scenarios and Approaches to Intervening**

Once again, we relied upon faculty input to design these modules. We administered surveys to faculty at five university campuses across the United States (one university in the Northeast, one in the South, one in the Midwest, and two on the West Coast). In this survey, we asked faculty if they had witnessed at least one bias incident at work, and seen someone intervene to mitigate its effect. If faculty responded affirmatively to both of these questions, we asked them to describe the types of bystander intervention behaviors they had witnessed. The analysis of these surveys identified 33 different bystander intervention behaviors.

To determine which of these bystander intervention behaviors were most common, we conducted a second survey at the same five universities (faculty who responded to the first survey were not recruited). We asked faculty to review the 33 different bystander behaviors, and identify the ones that were most prototypical of bystander intervention. We also examined respondent demographics to determine whether the behaviors – especially those listed as core to the concept of bystander intervention – were shaped by respondents' faculty rank, gender, ethnicity/race, and/or sexual orientation. We also investigated whether some intervention behaviors were considered riskier for some than for others. The analysis identified 18 bystander intervention behaviors that faculty consistently ranked highly. The

analysis also found that intervention behaviors that directly confronted the offender were riskier than those that were more indirect (e.g., providing contradictory evidence). In some cases, the scores of some bystander intervention behaviors did vary according to gender and racial/ethnic identity.

We used these empirical findings to inform the writing of the scenarios in the training program. In module 2, we portray a variety of scenarios where bias emerges (based upon faculty input), and use the survey data to develop animated vignettes that illustrate the different ways in which faculty could intervene effectively to address the bias incidents and mitigate their impact. This module is interactive – faculty can select different types of bystander intervention behaviors, and see how they could play out in each of the scenarios.

How faculty may wish to intervene can depend upon several factors: personality type, relationships with both the offender and the target, and status in the department. Given the realities of academic culture, where there is plenty of room for subjectivity when colleagues evaluate assistant and associate professors for tenure and promotion, we stress that faculty should also consider risk when deciding how to intervene. While all faculty should intervene to address bias, they should also think about the risks associated with that intervention, and what to do about them. The intervention strategy chosen by an untenured assistant professor might differ a great deal from the one chosen by an associate or full professor. Fortunately, as we explain in module 2, there are many options for intervening. Intervention strategies range from indirect to direct, and immediate to delayed. For example, an indirect approach is that the bystander might offer the target of bias support privately or, alternatively, the bystander could directly tell the offender that a behavior was inappropriate. The good news is that according to this research, both indirect and direct bystander intervention strategies can be effective in mitigating the impact of bias in the academic workplace.

### Practice Makes Perfect

In module 3, we provide additional opportunities for faculty to view scenarios where bias incidents have occurred, and select the bystander intervention behaviors that they think would be best for them to intervene. Once again, we use animated video vignettes to provide examples of bias in the academic workplace, as well as different ways for bystanders to intervene to mitigate the negative impact of bias. We include a variety of bystander intervention behaviors for each scenario, so that faculty can learn about the wide range of ways they can intervene. Throughout the course, there are a series of short quizzes for faculty to check their knowledge and to learn more about the risk associated with different types of bystander intervention behaviors. A printable takeaway guide is provided as an easy-to-use reference for faculty to consult, particularly when they serve on search committees and promotion and tenure committees. We also provide a list of resources for faculty who would like to have more information, which includes peer-reviewed research that we have used as the foundation for building this research-based bystander intervention program.

 97%

of faculty who  
have taken the  
course reported  
it increased their  
understanding of  
the various ways  
to intervene as a  
bystander



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