

REPORT OF THE PROVOST'S TASK FORCE ON UNCONSCIOUS BIAS RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROGRAM FRAMEWORK AND CURRICULUM

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Executive Summary

On November 15, 2015, Provost Jeremy Haefner formed the Unconscious Bias (UB) Task Force. Dr. Haefner stated that “everyone has some form of unconscious bias and the effects of UB have been well documented in the research literature. Without mitigation, UB impacts faculty, staff, and student interactions in ways that undermine RIT’s commitment to an inclusive excellence culture”. The Task Force was charged with developing a program framework and curriculum, specifically:

- Reviewing the literature and research regarding UB – the ADVANCE team has done much of this work;
- Developing a “curriculum map” that outlines the types of UB training needed and specifies the training’s target audience;
- Developing of an evaluation methodology to assess the effectiveness of the training;
- Identifying an administrative home from an existing unit on campus that will oversee UB training at RIT and ensure that appropriate personnel deliver the curriculum; and
- Identifying resources (personnel and financial) that will be needed to develop, assess, and sustain our UB training effort.

The reports of the four sub-committees within the Task Force are included in the Appendices:

- Research and literature surrounding unconscious bias
- UB training and initiatives that are currently happening at RIT
- UB training and initiatives that are happening at other universities
- Other components (beyond traditional training) that can mitigate unconscious bias

Based on the collective work of the sub-committees, the UB Task Force is pleased to submit its recommendations for consideration.

Background

The Task Force began its work with a brainstorming session and received several recommendations concerning the areas in which unconscious bias training would be beneficial. These ranged from training for administrators and faculty to staff and students. These recommendations were aimed at addressing a number of issues: rankism, diversifying the faculty, diversifying the staff, review and assessment for merit, promotion, tenure, and awards (both funding and recognition), student interactions with faculty, staff, and each other, and more. We divided into sub-groups and continued our work.

Unfortunately, but importantly, forward momentum toward our initial plan was interrupted when the literature search indicated the following:

- the effectiveness of unconscious bias training is still unclear
- caution should be used when introducing unconscious bias training
- some training actually has a negative effect
- unconscious bias training should be based on data

One study indicated that unconscious bias training for faculty search committees did not diversify the faculty, though it did raise awareness. Another study points to an organization that sought to address LGBT bias. The results of that initiative, however, indicated more evidence of gender bias than LGBT bias.

These findings raised a number of issues for discussion, especially given the major concern of lacking data:

- Is rankism pervasive across the RIT campus or isolated?
- Is there evidence that bias has crept into awards processes?
- Have there been reports of bias related incidents to the Office of Human Resources, Student Conduct, or elsewhere?
- Is there evidence of bias in the interactions between faculty and students?
- What are the findings of these bias complaints?

These are just a few of the many questions we pondered. Another major topic of discussion was the goal of unconscious bias training. We discuss our findings in the next section.

Findings, Precepts, and Recommendations

The UB Task Force recommendations are grounded in the following sources:

- Research of “best practices” in higher education
- Review of many RIT-based initiatives to address bias
- Assessments and work of the ADVANCE Team
- Review of the survey distributed by sub-committee of the Task Force
- RIT’s Office of Human Resources
- RIT’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion

We also conducted a preliminary review of the previous RIT initiatives to enhance diversity and inclusion, with a special focus on those efforts to address unconscious bias in the hiring, promotion and tenure processes. A key result of this work formed our first precept:

Precept 1: Addressing unconscious bias is but one dimension to achieving the larger goal of “Inclusion Excellence.”

RIT must support effective, sustainable and measurable methods to ensure that students, faculty, and staff members have evidence that would lead them to believe that they have equal opportunities to thrive and be successful at RIT. Everyone at RIT should feel included and engaged in a culture that embraces diversity and creates a climate where all members feel as valued members of the RIT Community.

Precept 2: Training and a curriculum to address unconscious bias, as a singular concentration, may be limited and limiting.

Unconscious bias training is limited in addressing all the issues surrounding bias, unconscious or otherwise. The UB Task Force discovered the following:

- The majority of research into unconscious bias has been conducted in laboratories. We recommend caution in generalizing findings to real-life settings.¹
- The success of bias reduction through training has been difficult to demonstrate because of poor design and ineffective evaluation of the impact of such programs—see Paluck and Green, 2009 for a systematic review.
- Reduction in unconscious bias attitudes may not translate into real-world changes, e.g., interracial interaction quality, interview and hiring decisions.²
- The goal of RIT’s own unconscious bias training implemented in 2005 for faculty search committees was to increase the diversity of our faculty. The results are reported below in

¹ <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/unconscious-bias-in-higher-education>

² <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/unconscious-bias-in-higher-education>

Table 1. There has been minimal impact. It is unknown, however, whether the unconscious bias training affected these results.

Table 1. Unconscious bias training for faculty search committees.

Population	Fall 2005	% Total	Fall 2015	% Total	% Change
AALANA	72	7.7%	102	9.4%	+1.7%
Non-AALANA	860	92.3%	985	90.6%	-1.7%
Total*	932		1087		
Male	646	69.3%	696	64%	-5.3%
Female	286	30.7%	391	36%	+5.3%
Total*	932		1087		

*Includes Lecturers, Pre-tenure, Tenured, and Visiting Faculty.

Precept 3: The strengths and challenges to addressing bias at RIT need to be clearly determined. After which, establish clear goals and desired outcomes.

As stated previously, research into unconscious bias shows that plunging headfirst without planning and understanding of current culture and climate can negate (or even worse, reverse) the very issues that RIT is attempting to address.

Precept 4: Interventions to improve the climate at RIT must be based on data.

Thus, we must address these two questions:

- What are the climate issues at RIT?
- Is unconscious bias training the best way to respond to those issues?

Consider these two examples:

- In the article on “Reducing Unconscious Bias – A Highly Effective Toolbox” from the Women’s Empowerment Principles website (<http://weprinciples.org>), the product of collaboration between United Nations Women and the United Nations Global Compact, one of their non-academic clients extended the duration of maternity leave at full pay in an effort to reduce turnover among young mothers. As it turned out, young mothers, in fact, had initially the lowest turnover rate of all employee segments at the company and the extended maternity leave actually increased turnover among women. Another client intended to invest massively in changing the perception of women as leaders while in fact the organization’s main bias related to women and family.³

³ [http://weprinciples.org/files/attachments/Reducing Unconscious Bias - a highly effective toolbox.pdf](http://weprinciples.org/files/attachments/Reducing%20Unconscious%20Bias%20-%20a%20highly%20effective%20toolbox.pdf)

- At RIT, there was a widely held perception across campus that there was a gender gap for faculty salaries. Through the data analysis work done by the ADVANCE team, it was recently reported that this is not the case, and there is no gender gap. (It should be noted that the ADVANCE team has collected data regarding other issues related to gender which will require some interventions.)

These examples demonstrate organizational implementations that either had a negative effect or failed to address the real issues. The RIT example demonstrates the importance of due diligence before the implementation of interventions.

Our research informed us that RIT should collect data continuously. The data should include feedback on training itself, evidence of attitude change, and objective data on whether training is actually increasing inclusion of targeted groups. Bias can be directed towards a wide variety of groups, can change in intensity over time, and can be expressed in a variety of ways (Abrams, 2010).⁴

Precept 5: Future recommendations for an effective plan to address bias at RIT requires analysis of existing data, evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of existing efforts and approaches to create an inclusive community, and establishing clear and measurable goals to determine the specific areas where RIT needs to improve.

RIT has undertaken many efforts to evaluate the climate and address implicit and explicit forms of bias and discrimination in the culture and community. Like many other organizations, some of those initiatives are centralized and others reside within divisions and individual units (see Appendices). The short and long-term goals and outcomes have not been identified nor measured in any comprehensive way so it is difficult at this time to ascertain what is being implemented consistently, what is working or not working, and – with respect to training interventions – what components are working/not working.

The Task Force recommends that the following examples of RIT data be reviewed:

- Great Colleges to Work For Climate Survey
- Students’ Course Evaluations (for gender bias – when evaluating female faculty)
- Student surveys: NSSE, Noel-Levitz, etc.
- Student Conduct Report, including hearing outcomes categorized by gender, race/ethnicity, age, year, academic status, type of offense
- Ombuds Report
- Exit interviews
- Public Safety Incident Report, including hearing outcomes categorized by gender, race/ethnicity, age, year, type of offence
- RIT’s Compliance and Ethics Office Title IX and other related compliance reports

⁴ <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/unconscious-bias-in-higher-education/>

- CPD Training Evaluation Forms

New potential sources of data:

- Annual climate surveys designed specifically for faculty, for staff, and for students
- Upward and/or 360 evaluations of supervisors, e.g., staff managers, department chairs, deans, and administrators
- Exit interviews regarding climate for all terminating employees

Based on the above precepts and findings, we present our recommendations in the next section.

Task Force Recommendations

Based on the Task Force's five guiding precepts, we submit the following recommendations for consideration.

Recommendation 1:

Identify an administrative home from an existing unit on campus that will oversee UB training at RIT and ensure that appropriate personnel deliver the curriculum.

The Task Force unanimously agreed that the scope of this effort and effective plans to address explicit or implicit bias requires continued, ongoing work. We recommend that the President and/or Provost establish a "President's/Provost's XX Advisory Council" (where XX will be determined) to continue our work. Overwhelmingly, the current Taskforce members have expressed an interest in serving on the Council. Goals set for the Council would determine additional and/or changes in membership.

There is a strong sentiment that this should be a Provost's or President's Council primarily because many of the recommendations directly influence faculty and their responsiveness will be greater if implementations are directed from either the President and/or Provost.

There was concern using the term "unconscious bias" and "differences" in the name of the Council. Both can be seen as limiting. Research literature we studied points to negative connotations associated with these terms.

The Task Force recommends that the Council will do the following:

- continue to examine the internal and external research and efforts to address unconscious bias as well as other forms of bias-based behaviors, policies, practices
- fully research and document RIT efforts to address bias
- examine the research on impact and effectiveness for these internal and external efforts
- review the data within RIT to determine what and where there are concerns related to bias, exclusionary practices
- assess or add to the various climate surveys or create methods to assess the campus culture that promotes or impacts the goals of inclusion
- consult with an organization with a known track record of implementing and assessing successful interventions

The Council's responsibilities would include:

- electing a chair (with three-year term)
- collecting and analyzing data related to issues affecting climate
- making recommendations to President/Provost on interventions (training and other)
- developing assessments
- ongoing review of research and literature

- identifying speakers and training providers
- submitting annual budget request to funding to support interventions
- identifying interventions beyond training (passive campaign to raise awareness on where to go when bias is apparent; analyzing policies and media materials for bias)
- creating a part-time Program Coordinator position to support the Council

The Council Program Coordinator could report either to the Council Chair or to the President/Provost's Office and be assigned to support the Council. The Coordinator would be responsible for

- directly supporting the Council
- collection of data
- organizing major training events
- updating web content
- making travel arrangements for guest lecturers/consultants
- reconciling the budget, processing expenses
- and other related tasks

The Program Coordinator could be a shared full-time position if there were other unmet needs in either the President's or Provost's Office.

There was some discussion as to whether the responsibilities of the program coordinator could be carried out by the existing staff within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Given the recent appointment to that office's leadership, the Task Force felt it was pre-mature to ask whether they could take on an additional 25 hours of work per week to support the Council. There was also concern expressed that initiatives that directly affected faculty should come from the Provost's/President's Office.

Recommendation 2:
Develop a "curriculum map" that outlines the types of UB training needed and specifies the training's target audience.

Based on the extensive published research, the Task Force can immediately recommend training for the following members of the RIT community listed in Table 2 and explained below:

- This training should not be a one-time initiative. The Council should develop a schedule for updating training providers, materials, and follow-up plans for sustainability. For example, RIT's Office of Faculty Recruitment requires faculty search committee members to participate in training every three years, which implies that a new training module must be available or the requirement should be changed.
- The training should also be offered to captive audiences, such as faculty and staff search committees or freshman orientation, rather than bringing speakers to campus and expecting people to attend.
- When possible, guest UB trainers/lecturers will be videotaped and made available to DCE account users. In time, a UB library of resources will be available for faculty, staff,

and students. This will require a contractual agreement between RIT and the trainer/lecturer.

- The Council will review training evaluation assessments to determine the effectiveness of the training providers and to inform their recommendations for future contracts and/or assignments.
- Because it is overall campus climate that will either maintain or mitigate bias, we also recommend that bias training be required for staff managers, administrators, and their search committees, similar to the requirement for faculty. The Task Force recommends that the College Liaisons participate in the review and selection of the training provider for faculty search committees and that the Office of Human Resources participates in the review and selection of the provider for staff search committees. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion should also participate.
- The Council will continue its work of reviewing Institutional data, including a comparison of the 2012 and 2016 Climate Survey results, and external research to identify and recommend future focused and general training for the RIT community.

Table 2. Recommended training for RIT community members

Target Audience	Subject	Approach
Presidential Search Committee	Managing cultural and gender awareness in the assessment and selection process	Focused topic
Faculty Search Committees	Managing cultural and gender awareness in the assessment and selection process	Focused topic
Faculty Promotion and Tenure Committees	Bias in the consideration of promotion and tenure	Focused topic
Tenured and tenure-track faculty	Faculty interactions (rankism, including power dynamics between tenured/tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty)	Focused topic
2 nd year Faculty	Bias in the academy	General topic
Staff Managers/Administrators and their Search Committees	Managing cultural and gender awareness in the assessment and selection process	Focused topic
New students	Living and working with people from different cultures and genders	General topic

Table 3. Potential training providers

Training Providers and Guest Lecturers	Website
The Kirwan Institute on Implicit Bias, Ohio State	http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/
The NeuroLeadership Institute	https://neuroleadership.com/
Dr. Brian Nosek, University of Virginia, Project Implicit	https://www.projectimplicit.net/about.html
Dr. Shelley Correll, Stanford University, Center for the Advancement of Women	https://casbs.stanford.edu/shelley-correll
WISELI	http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/
DiversityEdu	http://www.diversityedu.com/
RIT's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (for staff and students)	https://www.rit.edu/diversity/diversity-inclusion

Need further assessment:	
Tracey Laszloffy, PhD	http://www.drtraceytherapy.com/
Katherin Nukk-Freeman, JD	http://www.nflegal.com/team-member/katherin-nukk-freeman-esq/

The Task Force continues to identify potential training providers.

**Recommendation 3:
Develop an evaluation methodology to assess the effectiveness of the training**

We recommend that the Council will do the following:

- work with RIT’s Educational Assessment Office and/or consultants to develop a tool to evaluate training
- evaluate the RIT’s Climate survey to determine if bias related questions are included
- establish a list and schedule of Institutional reports which should be reviewed in relation to bias and climate on the RIT campus (i.e. gender salary gaps – annual assessment; bias reported incidents – annual assessment)
- evaluate the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Cultural Analysis Tool (CAT) to determine its applicability to RIT. See <https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk>.

**Recommendation 4:
Identify resources (personnel and financial) that will be needed to develop, assess, and sustain our UB training effort.**

The Task Force recommends that the Council submit an annual budget request to support its activities for the upcoming year. For the 2016-17 fiscal year and based on the tasks identified, the budget request is as follows in Table 4.

Table 4. Proposed budget.

Estimate Cost	Description
\$20,000	Part-time Program Coordinator Salary (25 hours/week for 40 weeks)
7,520	Benefits
5,000	Training for Presidential Search Committee
7,500	Training for Faculty Search Committees
7,500	Training for Promotion and Tenure Committees
8,000	Training for 2nd Year Faculty (including meal)
15,000	Consulting fees for NeuroLeadership and Project Implicit
6,000	Website development
3,000	Potential travel to evaluate prospective trainers
\$79,520	Estimated Total

Closing

While there is some research regarding unconscious bias and students, the Task Force recommends that representation from Student Affairs (Student Conduct) and from Public Safety be part of the future Council. We understand that a Bias Incidence Response Team for the RIT community will be in place by Fall 2016 through the Division of Student Affairs and RIT's Diversity Theater group is working with Student Affairs to pilot a program for new student orientation. The Council may need to expand membership to remain inclusive and representative of the RIT organizational interests and efforts.