Many have been in the uncomfortable position of hearing, overhearing, or being exposed to biased, stereotypical or prejudiced language or discussion at work. It is sometimes difficult to know how to react to this and how to confront what makes us uncomfortable. Confronting bias is difficult: if people point it out they may make the other party defensive, and by ignoring or glossing over it, they are letting unconscious bias go unchecked. Calling out a supervisor or colleague can be risky. Those concerned must evaluate the nature of their relationship with the other person before they respond. If the concerned party does not evaluate carefully, calling someone out can damage career opportunities and make the situation more difficult to manage. (Horton, 2019; Williams, 2017).

Ask the following:

• Does this need to be said?
• Should this be said by me, right now?
• Is this the setting and location to bring this up?

When people ignore biased comments, they tacitly make that type of language acceptable in the workplace. The effect of this validation is compounded by dissuading others from speaking up and tells those who are offended that their perspectives and voices are not valued. It is potentially devastating to employee engagement, creating a work environment that does not support speaking out, where someone is concerned to be fully who they are and engage with their colleagues, which could also harm participation and productivity. (Williams, 2017).

Outcome

Confronting biased language creates an opportunity for dialogue, and to do this people must model the behavior they want to see. Duplicating biased and offensive language and conduct in the confrontation itself does not do that (Williams, 2017). Instead, it’s best to listen to the other person’s side, even if there is disagreement. Shaming is also ineffective, as it puts people on the defensive and puts them into fight or flight mode (Horton 2019; Teaching Tolerance, 2020).

The goal is to address things in real time, framed in the moment of what happened or what was said in the hopes of exposing the other person to a different perspective. The goal is not to resolve the conflict or convince someone of something, but to indicate that there is a problem. It is not done so that the recipient of feedback will “get it” but so that those concerned have transmitted their message.

How

Create and use a framework of intervention. The interrupt-question-educate-echo model supports a “dialogue” approach to communication and allows for intervention and education.

Interrupt-Question-Educate-Echo Model

1. Interrupt: Speak up against every biased remark, in the moment. Think about what one will say ahead of time, so they are prepared to act in the moment.
2. Question: Ask simple questions to find out why the speaker made the offensive comment and how one can best address the situation. Try asking: “Why do you say that?” “What do you mean?” or “Tell me more.”
3. Educate: Explain why a term or phrase is offensive. Encourage the person to choose a different expression. Hate is not the driver of all biased speech, and sometimes it is due to ignorance or lack of exposure to a diverse population. Try saying: “Do you know the history of that word?”
4. Echo: If someone else speaks up against hate, thank them and reiterate their anti-biased message, supporting and reinforcing. Try saying: “Thanks for speaking up, I agree that word is offensive and we should not use it” (Teaching Tolerance, 2020).

INCLUSION INITIATIVES

Calling it Out:
Responding to Bias and Stereotypes

By Saiqa Anne Qureshi and Tolise Dailey

NCURA Announces a New Collaborate Community

The Diversity and Inclusion Collaborate Community strives to educate, engage, and empower our membership to actively participate in creating inclusive workspaces for all.

Educate on diversity and inclusion, providing information and suggestions of any resource material that will educate our members.

Engage with various topics related to diversity and inclusion, modeling conversations by way of posts to the Collaborate space.

Empower members to use the resources and conversations in the space to drive change at each institution.

Join us as we share ideas and practices to support a diverse and inclusive research administration community!

To sign up visit Collaborate, search NCURA Communities or click here.

Chair: Laneika Musalini, Tri-County Technical College
Vice Chair: Laura Barde, UCSF

“...be the change you want to see happen...”

— Lorrance, 1972
To encourage people to intervene in the moment, it can be helpful to have language that will allow them to speak up against bias in a simple, straightforward manner. The best way to avoid being frustrated when the moment occurs is to prepare. The below suggested terms can open a dialogue or just allow people to challenge bias and take a vocal stand against it. (Teaching Tolerance, 2020).

- That offends me.
- I do not find that funny.
- I am surprised to hear you say that.
- What do you mean by that?
- Why would you say something like that?
- What point are you trying to make by saying that?
- Using that word as a put-down offends me.
- Using that word does not help others feel safe or accepted here.

It’s about starting from a place of shared values, and understanding that bias is a human condition, rather than a character flaw.”

— Horton, 2019

References

NCURA is seeking an Editor for its scholarly journal Research Management Review (RMR). The peer-reviewed journal was established in 1987. The exclusively online journal provides a forum for the dissemination of knowledge about the study and practice of research administration. The RMR has helped establish NCURA as a definitive and authoritative voice in the profession of research administration.

The Editor is responsible for the overall production, including recruiting authors, recruiting the editorial board, assigning submitted papers to reviewers, overseeing editing and online publication. Support is provided by the NCURA national office. The volunteer position is a three-year term beginning in January 2021. To read the full position description click here.

Application Deadline: September 7

If you are interested or have questions please contact Marc Schiffman at schiffman@ncura.edu