TIPS FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION SESSIONS

SUGGESTED TIME:

An hour minimum; 90 minutes allows for more reflective, in-depth conversation.

SUGGESTED GROUP SIZE:

10-15 is ideal, but up to 20-25 people will work. It's best to allow more time for larger groups.

BACKGROUND/SETUP (SUGGESTED 15-20 MINUTES):

At the beginning of the session, use the attached slides and/or this interactive video to help explain why bias busting matters and to provide attendees with introductory information on how bias works. You might also have attendees read one or more of the following short articles before the session.

- Rise Above the Hate-Filled Banter: Realize, Recognize, and Respond to Bias in Our Systems and Ourselves
- Silent Technical Privilege
- Consciously Overcoming Unconscious Bias

BIAS-BUSTING PRACTICE (SUGGESTED 15 MINUTES):

Distribute the attached scenario grid and the attached "Questions and Considerations for Bias-Busting Discussions." Have attendees break into groups of 3-5 people, choose a scenario, read the Questions and Considerations, and then discuss different ways they might intervene. Have them record possible interruptions or solutions that they identify and any lingering questions they may have for the larger group.

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION (SUGGESTED 30 MINUTES):

Bring small groups back together as a whole group to discuss the possible solutions and remaining questions they have. If more than one group discussed the same scenario, it's helpful for them to report out together, with one group starting and another adding on or chiming in. Everyone in the larger group should also chime in with their own questions or additional ideas for action.

WRAP-UP:

Thank everyone for participating and encourage them to continue these conversations. Give them the online link to these grids in case they want to use them in other contexts.

INTERRUPTING BIAS IN INDUSTRY SETTINGS

What (if anything) would you do or say?

Feel free to alter the scenario or CREATE YOUR OWN!

In the hall, a colleague mentions Ramira has potential, if only she could learn to tone it down a bit and not be so abrasive.

You notice that someone is repeatedly interrupted in a meeting.

You hear someone coach a colleague on how to get ahead, encouraging her to take it "low and slow," meaning to lower her voice and speak more slowly.

You're sponsoring an employee who is unsure whether or not they should take on a risky assignment.

You see someone getting credit for something another colleague said earlier in the meeting.

While standing at the buffet at a company-catered event, you overhear someone ask a colleague of color for more coffee.

You recommend an employee you're sponsoring for an opportunity, but get the response, "we're not sure she's the right fit; she's not really a natural leader."

Work meetings typically include spirited discussion and argument, but Janelle consistently avoids engaging in that manner; instead, she prefers to respond via email later on.

You hear someone say that there's been a push to hire more women (or other underrepresented groups) and that they are being hired over men or other groups, even when not as qualified.

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR BIAS-BUSTING DISCUSSIONS

SHOULD YOU INTERVENE? SOME BENEFITS AND COSTS

There can be benefits and costs to intervening, especially when considering clear status and power differences in relationships. For example, it can be more costly to confront someone more powerful. There might be less cost when intervening with a student than with a professor who outranks you, so different strategies may be needed in these different situations.

Not intervening can lead to "rumination" (repeatedly reflecting on and regretting the inaction), which can have physical, emotional, and job-related effects for bystanders.

Benefits of intervening include reducing the harm experienced, reducing future bias, promoting equity, shifting norms, and increasing the bystander's self-esteem and positive affect.

BEFORE YOU ACT, ASSESS THE SITUATION BY ASKING YOURSELF:

- Is it bias?
- Is it important to address?
- Should I interrupt now?
- Should I take the person aside later or address this issue at a later time?
- Is acting too costly for me or someone else?
- What is stopping me from intervening?
- What could you, anyone in the scenario, or the organization do to prevent future instances?

CONSIDER HOW YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AND ROLES AFFECT HOW YOU INTERVENE:

- What kind of relationship do I have with the people in the scenario? Do I know them well or not and how does that influence what I could or could not say/do?
- How does my role or status in my team or in my organization influence what I could or could not say/do?
- How might my gender, race (or other identities) influence what I could or could not say/do?

SOME POSSIBLE WAYS TO INTERVENE:

- Ask a question.
- Avoid accusations and instead invite clarification (E.g., "what do you mean by that?").
- Arouse dissonance: people don't like to be inconsistent. E.g., "I'm surprised you would say something like that, considering how supportive you are of women in computing."
- "Pivot": this is a way of not confronting directly, but letting people know they made a mistake in a socially graceful way. E.g., If someone thinks that a colleague is a clerical worker, walk up and say, "Hi, have you met our new software engineer?" Or If someone is interrupting someone, say "I think Jamie had a thought she wanted to finish?"
- Use humor (when appropriate for the situation or your relationship with a colleague).

BE READY TO DEBRIEF THE FOLLOWING WITH WHOLE GROUP:

- At least two ideas you came up with for handling the scenario.
- Any questions that arose or things you weren't sure how to handle.