

Memorandum

To: RIT Campus Community
From: Jeremy Haefner, Provost
Subject: Unconscious Bias Initiative
Date: 26 January 2016

Overview: For several years, RIT has deployed unconscious bias (UB) training to help faculty serving on search committees understand the impact of UB and equip them with strategies to navigate around its negative effects. Recently, the ADVANCE project has promoted UB training as an important tool for use in decisions affecting promotions, tenure review, and annual evaluations.

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. While we need to provide UB training to faculty to improve hiring, advancement, award selection, and evaluation decisions, the impacts of UB do not stop with faculty-to-faculty interactions. Students and staff also experience the impacts of UB and the effects are multiplied with interactions between these groups; e.g., faculty/staff relations ('rankism') and faculty/student ('power relationships').

This memorandum articulates a campus-wide initiative to address UB with proper education across academic affairs, building on the work done to date.

Developing a program framework and curriculum: Working with key stakeholders (colleges, ADVANCE, Faculty Career Development Services, HR, the Office of Faculty Recruitment, etc.), the provost will identify and charge a taskforce to construct the program framework and curriculum for our UB training.

Specifically, the taskforce will:

- Review the literature and research regarding UB – the ADVANCE team has done much of this work.
- Develop a “curriculum map” that outlines the types of UB training needed and specifies the training’s target audience;
- Develop an evaluation methodology to assess the effectiveness of the training;
- 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; and
- Identify resources (personnel and financial) that will be needed to develop, assess, and sustain our UB training effort.

I am pleased that Dr. LaVerne McQuiller Williams, Kim Shearer, and Dr. David Schwartz have agreed to co-chair the taskforce. The taskforce will consist of faculty and staff from across the institute: Margaret Bailey, Laura Tubbs, Anne Canale, Lee Twyman, Renee Baker, Michael D'Arcangelo, Hamad Ghazel, Kathryn Schmitz, Elena Sommers, Rebecca Johnson, Student Affairs, Student Government and Joeann Humbert.

Timeline: The taskforce will aim to present recommendations on the UB training framework, curriculum, resource needs, and administrative home by May 1, 2016. The president will consider these recommendations over the summer, and I would expect to implement recommendations beginning fall 2016.