Recognize Implicit Biases

**Definition:** Implicit biases are *unconscious* negative associations we hold about groups of people, which are embedded in our culture and which often contradict our conscious beliefs.

**Goal:** Improve student learning by counteracting unconscious biases prevalent in our society.

**Advantages**
- Sends students the message that you believe they can succeed in your courses and in the geosciences
- Helps students identify and overcome their own implicit biases

**Strategies**

Develop your awareness of your biases: Take the Implicit Association Test.\(^1\) Pay attention to your assumptions about members of groups.\(^3,4\) Make the effort to treat each student as an individual, regardless of gender, race, or other identities.\(^3\)

Consider the potential for bias when you are making decisions: When you are grading student work or considering whom to invite to participate in a special event or project, ask yourself whether you would make the same decision if the person in question belonged to a different demographic.\(^3\)

Engage with individuals and communities that are different from you: Spend some time getting to know people who have backgrounds and identities that are different from yours.\(^2,3,4\)

Build counter-stereotypical associations: Actively work to build conscious associations for yourself between stigmatized groups and positive characteristics. Educate yourself and your students about counter-stereotypical individuals, such as scientists who are women, people of color, or both.\(^2,3\)

Develop an awareness of your own cultural identities: Cultural biographies are a means of exploring our multi-faceted personal identities – the ones we are born with and the ones that we learn. Recognizing and affirming our one cultural identities helps us to be more aware of others’ identities.\(^5\)

**Implementation**
- Take the Implicit Association Test from [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html).
- Keep a journal of your assumptions about people and/or incidents as a tool for awareness and reflection.
- Connect with your multi-cultural affairs office.
- Attend social / cultural events on campus.
- Encourage students to reflect on their identities, including their cultural identities, and to write about what they value and why.
- Review objective criterial immediately prior to evaluating student work. Focusing on criteria can interrupt unconscious patterns of thought.\(^2\)
- Find a way to grade assignments without knowing whose work you are evaluating as you grade.

**References**
4. Reese, B., Workshop on Unconscious Bias. Reese is the Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer for the Office for Institutional Equity at Duke University.