

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



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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}

Implementation

- Take the Implicit Association Test from <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 criteria 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.

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 own cultural identities helps us to be more aware of others' identities.⁵

References

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2. Lai, C.K, Hoffman, K. M., and Nosek, B. A. 2013. Reducing Implicit Prejudice. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, v. 7, n. 5, pp. 315-330.
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