Diversity and the Environment Webinar Series

Presented by:

Diversity in Higher Education: Creating Equity in Evaluation of Faculty

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020
12:00 PM-1:00 PM ET
Everyone should be connected via Audio Broadcast upon entering the webinar. You do not need to call in & you are automatically muted.

The presentation will be recorded and posted to the Antioch CCPCR website within one week.

Please submit any questions you have for the presenter in the Q&A section.

If you are having trouble with any aspect of the broadcast, use the Chat section to message the Host directly.
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Diversity in Higher Education: Creating Equity in Evaluation of Faculty
Change won’t come without intentionality

- Why is DEI at institutions of Higher Ed important broadly to ESS?
- Peer-reviewed studies show the impacts of bias (cognitive and systemic) at all stages of faculty careers

What can we do to mitigate biases and remove systemic barriers to success?

- Faculty searches
- Retention of faculty
  - Focus: Evaluation of teaching and literature review on Student Evaluations of Teaching
- Need for students to have a voice and responsible role
Barriers to Progress

From Williams and Wade-Golden (2013):

1) Pipeline challenges (and use of pipeline challenges as an excuse)
2) Need for updated faculty recruitment and retention practices
3) Myths and misunderstanding about diversity in higher education
4) Decentralized administrative culture of academia
5) False argument that diversity is incompatible with academic excellence

Faculty Search Process: Change Recruitment

- Strong intentionality built on long-term relationships
- Consider cohort hire
- Consider cross-institutional collaborations
  - Consortium for Faculty Diversity
  - [https://www.gettysburg.edu/offices/provost/consortium-for-faculty-diversity/](https://www.gettysburg.edu/offices/provost/consortium-for-faculty-diversity/)
Faculty Search Process: Interrupt Bias

Include a Diversity Search Advocate on every hiring committee

- Trained tenured faculty, administrator, or staff, outside the hiring department
- Engages in entire process (advertisement to onboarding)
- Asks questions designed to test the thinking of the group
- Brings to surface unexamined norms, assumptions, practices based on anti-bias training
- Intervenes, if needed; supported by hiring authority
- Training available through: https://searchadvocate.oregonstate.edu/about/search-advocacy-beyond-osu

Points adapted from HERC Webinar (2017) on Oregon Search Advocate Program
Retention of Faculty:
Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs)

Three-part report, I co-authored with two other tenured, full profs at Roanoke College:

1) Account of explicitly biased and/or harassing comments received by faculty members on SETs
2) Report on statistical methods that can be used to detect bias, and statistical methods for improved analyses of faculty SET scores
3) Literature review of peer-reviewed studies of SETs (my part)
Factors that influence SETs

- Gender and race (larger literature on gender)
- Perceived norm for discipline: role incongruity (e.g., physicists expected to be white men; education faculty expected to be women...)
- Power dynamics
  - Adjuncts and untenured faculty are vulnerable; students are often aware
- Gender and race of students, prevailing institutional and regional cultures
Do learning outcomes and grades correlate with SETs?

- Learning outcome achievement
  - Little correlation—widespread finding
  - Confirmed in meta-analysis by Ut tl, White & Gonzalez (2017, p.22)
- Grades earned by students in course (e.g., Mengel et al. 2017)
  The authors used a “dataset of 19,952 student evaluations of university faculty in a context where students were randomly allocated to female or male instructors…:”
  - Grades not correlated with SETs
  - Gender of instructor was correlated; women received significantly lower scores
  - Bias driven by male students (female students’ SETs did not have a gender bias)
Pedagogy and course content should influence SETs…but are they overridden?

Snap judgments and influence of bribes…

  - Undergraduates viewed <30 second silent video clips of instructors at the start of the semester and rated faculty
  - End of semester student evaluations changed little from initial, video clip ratings (p. 431)

- Cookie experiment: Hessler et al. (2018)
  - Found a statistically significant effect of providing cookies to third-year medical students ($N = 118$) in the class session during which they filled out their evaluations. (p.1064).
  - With cookies, students rated:
    - Instructors as significantly better teachers (than control group)
    - Course materials as significantly better (than control group)
    - Course overall as significantly better (than control group)
Why do institutions use SETs?

- Numbers have strong appeal in decision-making processes
- Students should be given opportunities to provide feedback
- Universities were initially a construct of white men for white men
  - SETs may have reflected more about teaching with that forced uniformity
- SETs (comments) could play a formative role
Haven’t faculty always complained about SETs?
What’s the evidence that SETs are biased?

- Large sample size, multivariate statistical analyses
  - Recent examples: Mengel et al. (2017)
- Experimental manipulations meant to control all variables but the one of interest (e.g., gender)
  - Physics lecture experiment with actors playing physics profs (Graves et al., 2017)
  - Online course studies
  - Stick figure video experiment (Arbuckle and Williams, 2003)
- Studies addressing specific ways the system can be manipulated (e.g., bribes)
  - Cookie experiment (Hessler et al., 2018)
Bias in SETs against faculty who are people of color

- Wachtel (1998) in a major review paper of SETs—claimed no research existed on bias against people of color
- Smith (2007) and Smith and Hawken (2011) showed bias against faculty who are black in SETs at Southern, R1 institutions
- Pittman (2010) conducted an interview study of faculty who are women of color.
  - Results “depict white male students as challenging their authority, teaching competency, and scholarly expertise, as well as offering subtle and not-so-subtle threats to their persons and careers” (p.183)
- Aruguete, Slater, & Mwaikinda (2017) studied student ratings of professors based on a description of expertise and a photograph of a black or white professor in casual or formal dress
  - Found that “students rated the black professor less favorably than the white professor” (p.494). Furthermore, this effect was accentuated when the professor who was black wore casual clothing.
Conclusions

The peer-reviewed literature on SETs indicates:

- Bias against identities that don’t fit the student’s view of the “norm” for faculty in each field
- SETs work most strongly against those of lower rank, those in adjunct and other contingent positions
- Disadvantages to students: SETs put students in a position of being ‘customers’
- SETs turn individual, implicit & explicit biases into systemic bias with palpable consequences: lower retention, slower advancement, lower pay (fewer merit raises), fewer awards and recognition for women, people of color, and others from under-represented groups in academia
How can evaluation of teaching be made less biased?

• Minimize the role of SETs in the dossier of evidence related to teaching
• Rely more on peer observations (for direct, non-self-reported evidence)
  • Anti-bias training for faculty is needed
• Emphasize review of the course materials provided by the instructor: syllabi, assignments, teaching philosophy…
• Teach students about implicit bias, discrimination, and discuss effects of bias with the entire community
  • Discuss positive ways students could use their opportunities to deliver feedback about teaching and have a positive impact on their institution’s community
Questions for discussion

• In ESS, evaluation of faculty *research* may also be biased. Some faculty report bias against research that focuses on areas of interest to members of historically underrepresented groups. Have you seen examples of this? Solutions?

• Peer review of teaching has been put forth as a superior form of direct evidence of teaching quality. How do we mitigate impacts of biases of faculty peers?

• Does your institution have a system of evaluating teaching that is more equitable? Please share.

• What are some strategies for making institutional change? What strategies will remove some of the burden for making change from those most affected by bias?

• What is your institution doing to try to mitigate impacts of COVID-19 situation on faculty and students with respect to equity and inclusion?
Thank you!

- Thanks to Antioch University and the AESS Diversity Committee for making these webinars possible! Thanks to the speakers in the series!
- Please watch for future announcements about a virtual conference to be held by the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences
REFERENCES


Questions?
Race and the Environmental Movement: History and Legacies

THURSDAY, JUNE 4th 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

https://conta.cc/2W2H1Jy

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