Introduction to the OSU Search Advocate Program

Anne Gillies
Search Advocate Program Director
August 2020
Today I join you from Oregon State University, located in Corvallis, Oregon. This is the ancestral homeland of the Ampinefu or Mary’s River Band of the Kalapuya people, stewards of these lands for countless generations.

Following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855, the Kalapuya people were forcibly removed from their homes to reservations in Western Oregon. Today their living descendants are part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of the Siltez Indians.

We honor their elders, past and present, along with the original stewards of the lands from which you join us. Please take a moment to reflect on the often unspoken history that has led to our presence here today.
What is a Search Advocate?

Neutral external process advisor who:

✓ Advocates for diversity/inclusive excellence
✓ Attends to equity, validity, and rigor
✓ Encourages proactive evidence-based strategies to mitigate implicit bias
✓ Recommends practices/process enhancements to enhance equity, validity, and diversity
✓ Asks questions to help committee members recognize and test their thinking
Empathy – imagining what another might be thinking or feeling without imposing one’s own perspective.

Collaboration – working together towards a common goal

Inclusion – showing value for each person and respect for their differences, supporting full participation and ensuring that all are able to reach their potential

Integrity – being honest and trustworthy; aligning actions to values

Curiosity – letting go of certainty; seeking to understand the unfamiliar and resist the rush to judgment

Equity – ensuring that each person has what they need to succeed; addressing continued barriers to a level playing field

Hospitality – welcoming others with respect, regard, and sensitivity to their needs and desires

Respect – honoring, admiring, esteem, treating others with courtesy and dignity yet not being silenced
Search Advocate Mission

Enhance

Validity

Equity→Justice

Diversity

in search & selection
Assumption is that everyone will benefit from the same supports – they are being treated equally.

* or equality

Individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access—they are being treated equitably.

All three can see now without supports or accommodations since the cause of the inequity is addressed; the systemic barriers are removed.
What are Biases?
Preferences or inclinations which can impair judgment; often used synonymously with “prejudices.”

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<th><strong>EXPLICIT</strong> (CONSCIOUS/INTENTIONAL)</th>
<th><strong>IMPlicit</strong> (NOT CONSCIOUS/UNINTENTIONAL)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL</strong></td>
<td>Personal Prejudice:</td>
<td>Cognitive Bias:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bigoted beliefs and stereotypes,</td>
<td>Pre-conscious cognitive categories/</td>
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<td>often leading to <em>intentional</em> negative</td>
<td>shortcuts/thought patterns that</td>
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<td>or positive treatment based on</td>
<td><em>unintentionally</em> advantage/disadvantage</td>
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<td>identity</td>
<td>people based on identity</td>
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<td><strong>SYSTEMIC</strong></td>
<td>Institutional Discrimination:</td>
<td>Structural Bias:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Laws, policies, and practices</td>
<td>Seemingly neutral norms, policies,</td>
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<td><em>designed</em> to advantage/disadvantage</td>
<td>patterns, practices, procedures,</td>
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<td>or include/exclude based on identity</td>
<td>standards and symbols that, <em>in effect,</em></td>
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<td>advantage/disadvantage people/groups based on identity</td>
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**IMPACT with INTENT**          **IMPACT without INTENT**
Implicit Bias develops within societal and institutional context
Search Advocate Approach

**Flexible** – no “one-size-fits-all” requirements; Work with current practice, responsive to feedback

**Facilitative** – not the “HR police”

**Proactive** – discuss risks and strategies *before* issues arise

**System 2 over System 1 thinking** – favor slower analytical thinking (System 2) to reduce cognitive bias

**Evidence** – examine evidence that supports and contradicts conclusions; question assumptions

**Processes, not people** – strategies are non-blaming, non-judgmental
Search Advocate Approach

**Training** – robust interactive learning experience commensurate with the complexity of the goal

**Shared governance** – Explicitly affirm/support shared governance

**Relationships** – maintain collaboration with stakeholders including academic faculty, faculty senate, employees of color, leadership, administrative units, relevant programs

**Community of practice** – advocates learn together, discuss challenges and share effective approaches in a confidential environment
Developing Search Advocates

Workshop series
- Mission, values, role
- Implicit bias (cognitive & structural)
- Diversity and inclusion
- Legal context
- Search stages – risks/remedies
- Inclusive excellence practices

Applied Learning
- Serve on search committees

Continuing Education
- Community of Practice
- Coaching & peer mentoring
- Workshops, website, listserv
What might a similar role look like?
P&T “Process Consultant” or “Process Proponent”

Advocate for integrity and validity of the P&T process

Have sufficient distance from the academic unit to have no other stake in the outcome; not limited by disciplinary norms, power dynamics, or working relationships

Thoroughly grounded in:
  ◦ Mechanisms of implicit cognitive and structural bias
  ◦ Specific bias risks in P&T process – assumptions and practices that can have unintended exclusive consequences
  ◦ Current institutional P&T process requirements
  ◦ Facilitative questioning strategies
  ◦ Bias mitigation tools tailored to P&T review

Initiate conversation with P&T committees before dossier review begins - current/past practice, criteria, risks of implicit cognitive and structural bias, strategies to mitigate these risks

Serve as neutral process resources – ask and answer questions, offer tools

Expected continuing education
DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS