



Overcoming Unconscious Bias:

Breaking Down Barriers to Equity &
Inclusion for School Board Members,
Administrators, and Staff

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Today's Objectives:

- Understand the effect of unconscious bias.
- Help everyone feel welcomed, accepted and engaged.
- Explore the various types of bias commonly experienced – **participate in structured self-reflection and strategic discussion so you can help cultivate satisfaction and belonging within your local school board.**

Today's Objectives:

- Examine your institution's systems, processes and individual dynamics – **overcome barriers affected by unconscious bias so you can become more inclusive overall.**
- Strategize to move forward to overcome bias within processes, systems and individual interactions.

Part 1

What is Unconscious Bias?



Defining Bias

- **Bias** is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another usually in a way that's considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences.

Conscious vs. Unconscious Bias

- **Conscious bias** (also known as **explicit** bias) and
- **Unconscious bias** (also known as **implicit** bias)
- Biases are not limited to ethnicity and race. Though racial bias and discrimination is well documented, biases exist in other forms.

(Source: UCSF Office of Diversity & Outreach, 2018)

Defining Unconscious Bias

- **Unconscious bias:** A social stereotype about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.
- Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups!

(Source: UCSF Office of Diversity & Outreach, 2018)

How does Unconscious Bias Affect Us?

- **Our Perception** – how we see people and perceive reality.
- **Our Attitude** – how we react towards certain people.
- **Our Behaviors** – how receptive/ friendly we are towards certain people.

(Source: socialtalent.com, 2018)

How does Unconscious Bias Affect Us?

- **Our Attention** – which aspects of a person we pay most attention to.
- **Our Listening Skills** – how much we actively listen to what certain people say.
- **Our Micro-affirmations** – how much or how little we comfort certain people in certain situations.

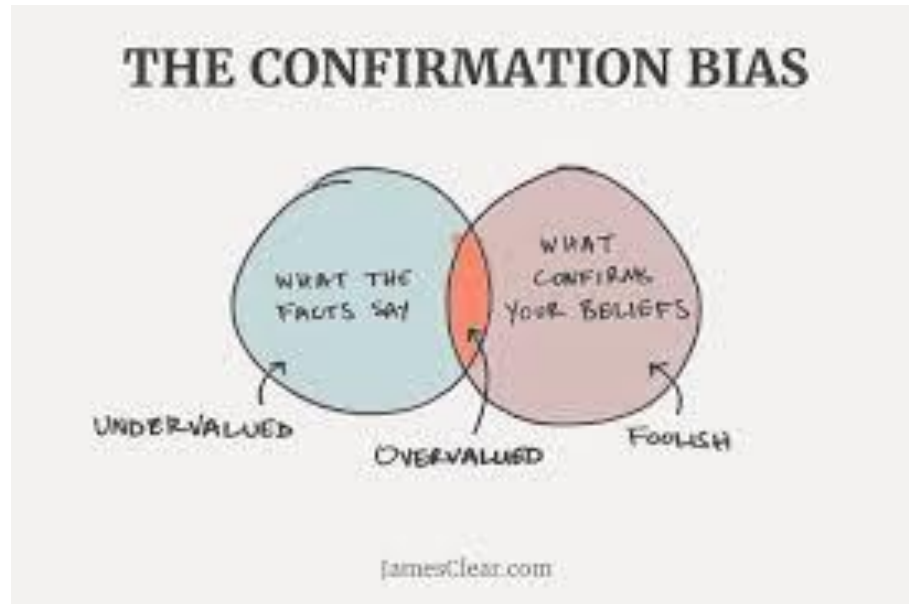
(Source: socialtalent.com, 2018)

Types of Unconscious Bias

- **Affinity Bias** – feeling an affinity towards someone like ourselves
- *Potential impact:* hiring, admissions, interviews, mentorship, leadership, and inclusion.

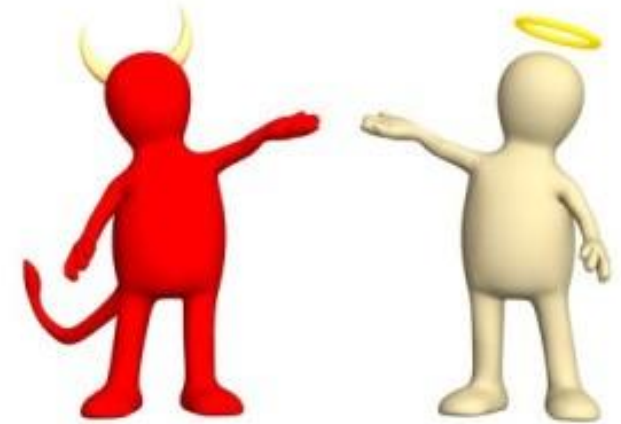


Types of Unconscious Bias

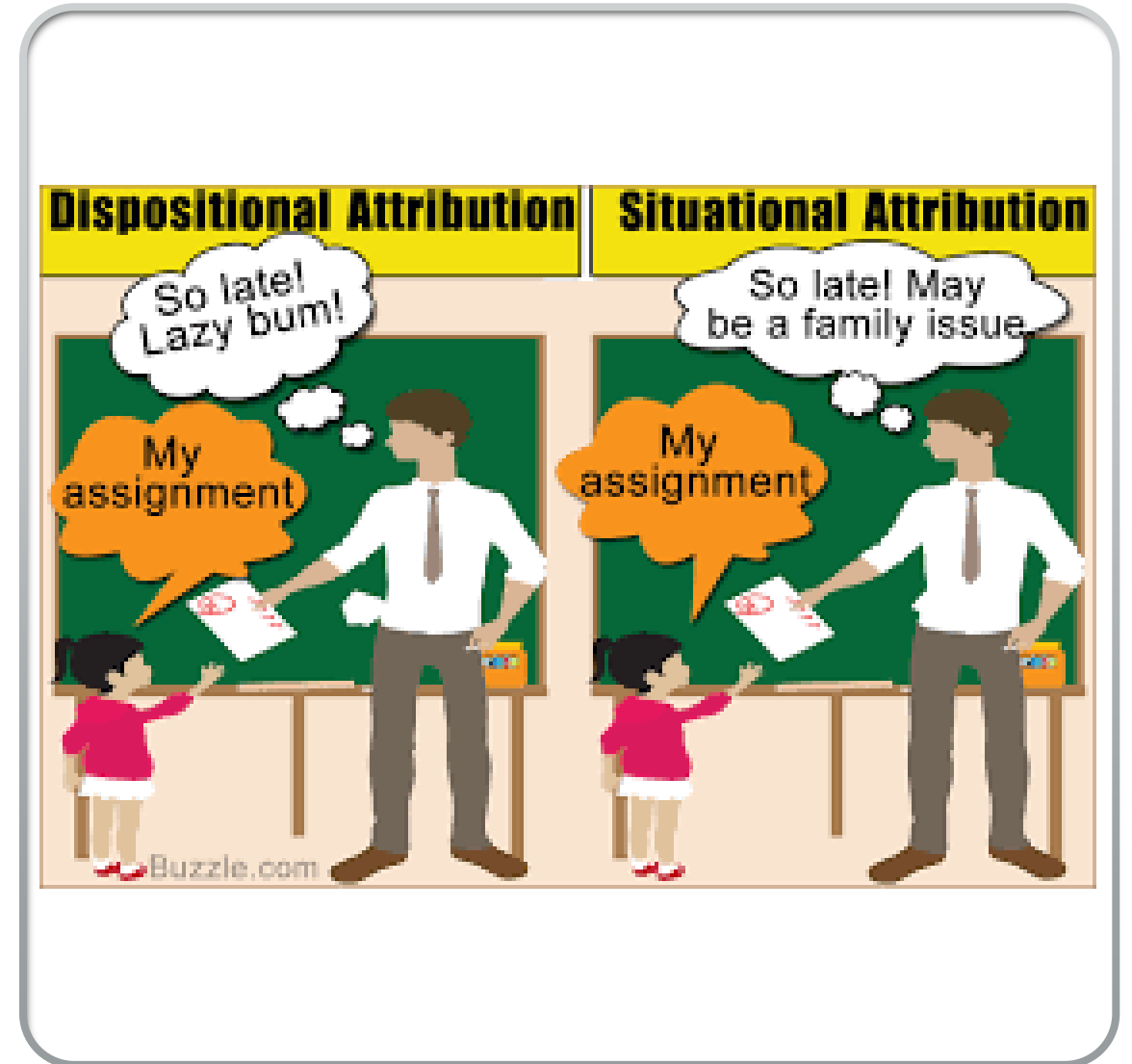


- **Confirmation Bias** – acknowledging information that confirms existing thoughts or perceptions about a person or action
- When people would like a certain idea/concept to be true, they end up believing it to be true.
- i.e. Jumping to conclusions
- *Potential impact:* evaluation, collaboration

- **Halo/Horn Effect** – Determining an individual as either praiseworthy or one who is not likeable due to initial experiences or overall impressions of that person
- *Potential impact:* student and staff performance and evaluation



- **Attribution Bias** – Determining an individual's successes as due to merit and failures as due to external factors; whereas the opposite for others
- *Potential impact:* interviewing and hiring



- **Recency Effect** – Determining a person's behavior, performance, or overall personality based on the most recent experience of that person
- Overemphasis of recent behavior
- Potential Impact: Evaluations, partnerships, collaboration, project assignments



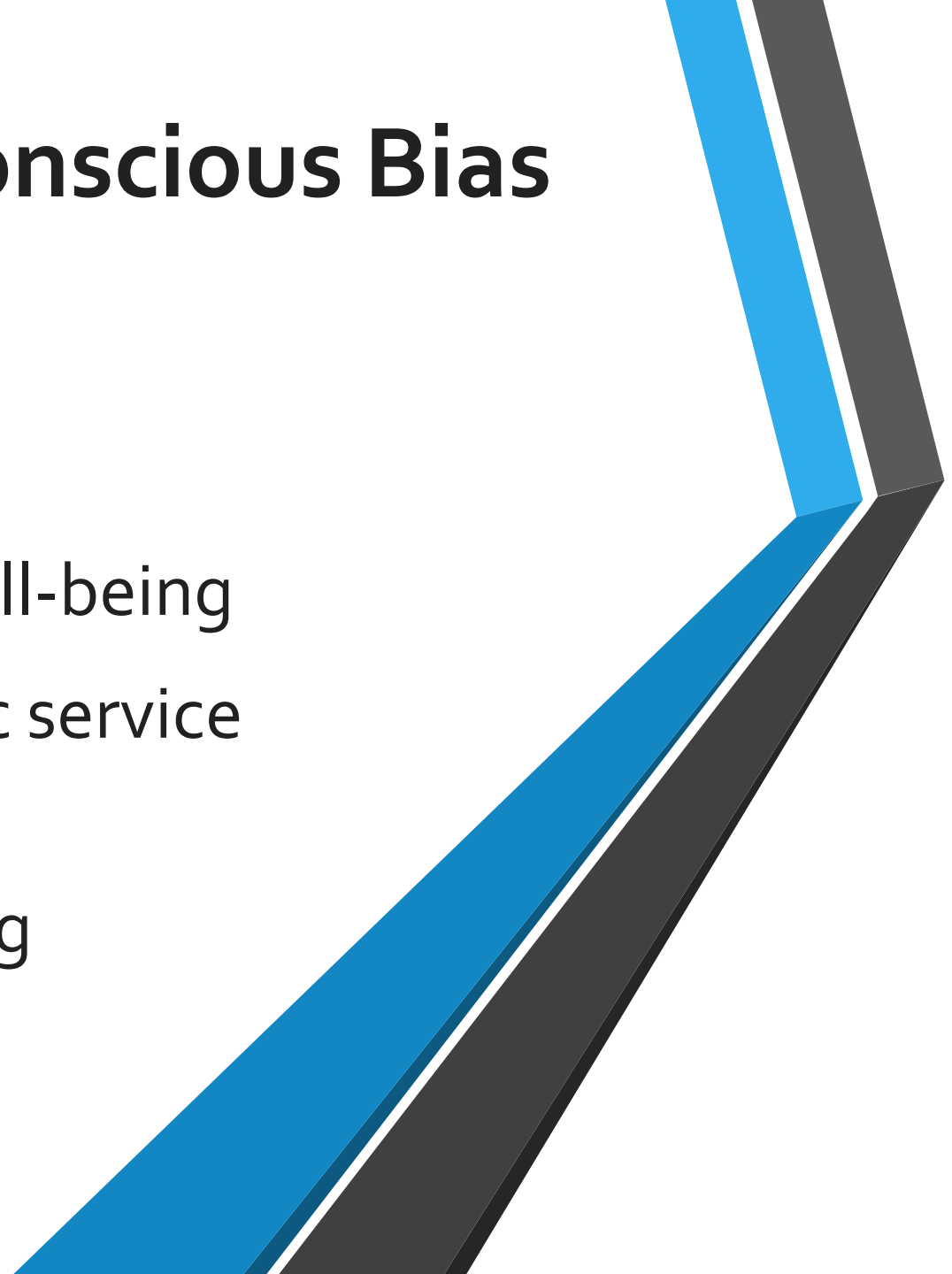


Part 2

The Impact of Unconscious Bias

Consequences of Unconscious Bias

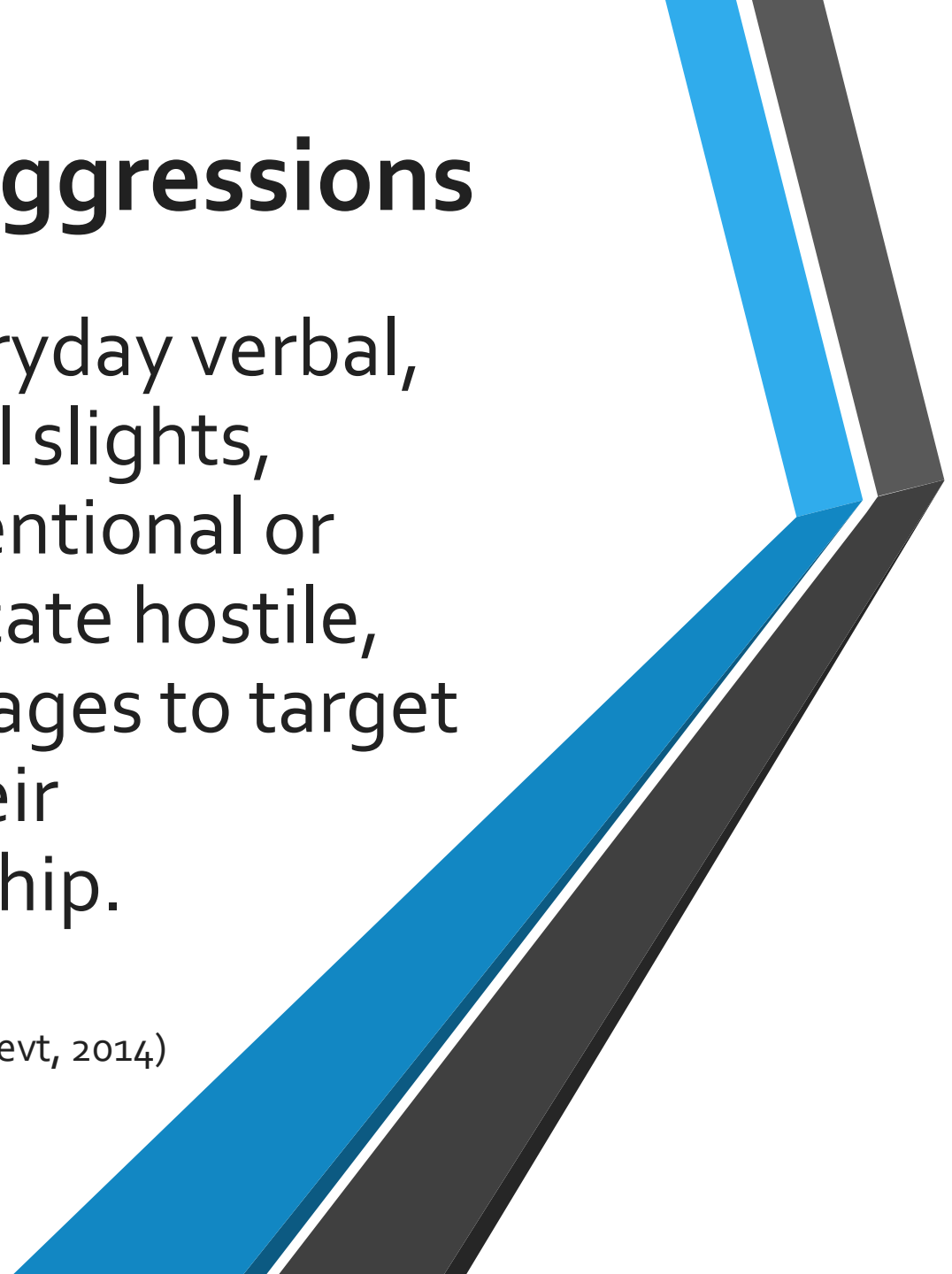
- Marginalization
- Lack of belonging/ exclusion
- Mental health risk, decreased well-being
- Diminished satisfaction with civic service
- Lack of access to resources and opportunities i.e. NMSBA training



Impact of Bias: Microaggressions

- Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

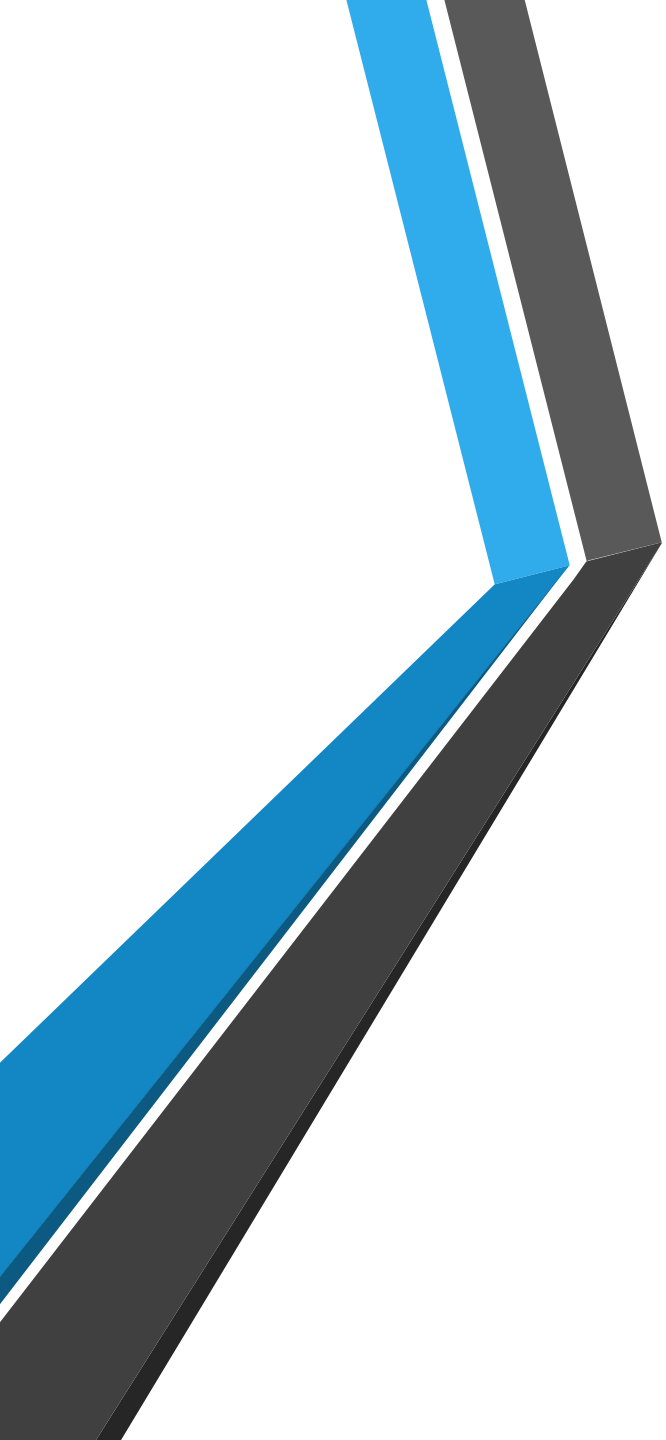
(from Diversity in the Classroom, UCLA Diversity & Faculty Devt, 2014)



Organizational Effect of Unconscious Bias

- **Cultural Fit** – replication of an organizational culture due to hiring and promotional practices that reinforce existing cultural norms
- **How do we interrupt this bias?**





Part 3

Interrupting And Overcoming Unconscious Bias

Recognizing the Root of Bias

- What messages are created through media, our limited interactions with others, or other influences such as gossip– that can reinforce bias perspectives?
- How do we interrupt the narrative that can be inaccurate and harmful?
- How to model this approach to others?

Exacerbating Factors

- Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and often incompatible with one's conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multi-tasking or working under time pressure.
- *Situations: Times of stress/ quick decision-making.
Example: Community Complaints, Media attention*

Interrupting Bias

- How do we reduce unconscious bias in our individual thinking and behavior?
- How do we reduce unconscious bias in our systems, policies, and processes?



Acknowledging Microaggressions

- The first step in addressing microaggressions is to recognize and acknowledge when a microaggression has occurred and what message it may be sending.
- The context of the relationship and situation is critical, and can help you determine an appropriate course of action.

(Resource: Dr. Kevin Nadal)



Overcoming Bias in the Community

What else can we do to support our local school board members?

Deeping Awareness

- Engage parents, thought leaders, and community representatives to share knowledge about school board decisions and experiences to create inclusion.
- Utilize storytelling and technology as a means of expression to engage learning and dialogue around the subject.



Suggested Strategies for Overcoming Bias

1. Build relationships with community members across different demographics, interests, disciplines.
 - A.) Encourage sense of belonging
 - B.) Cross-collaboration among groups
2. Address incidents immediately as they occur.
 - A.) Be immediate and purposeful in addressing instances where unconscious bias occurs.

Suggested Strategies (cont'd)

3. Examine what processes and efforts are on your campus to support the interruption and disruption of unconscious bias. What is needed?
 - A.) Committees, taskforces
 - B.) Services and programs: Training, counseling, peer-mentoring.
4. Review current processes and policies to ensure they cultivate an inclusive environment.

Suggested Strategies (cont'd)

5. Ensure interactions with fellow board members and administrators allows for the expression of a spectrum of experiences and viewpoints.

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5 Takeaways from Today:

1. Biases exist at an unconscious level due to messaging and systemic forces that have compounded cumulatively over time.
2. Cultivate awareness around recognizing and addressing unconscious bias within interpersonal relationships, fellow board members, and the institution overall.
3. Identify particular biases that manifest and determine ways to “interrupt” them.
4. Reflect on them and consider the multitude of experiences and consequences that result from unconscious bias, in order to determine a way to overcome them.
5. Determine key strategies and stakeholders who can lead the effort in addressing unconscious bias.

Resources and References

- "*Overcoming Bias*" – Tiffany Jana & Matthew Freeman
- *Implicit.Harvard.edu* – Implicit Association Test
- "*Unconscious Bias*" – LinkedIn Learning, by Stacey A. Gordon
- "*Healing Justice*" – a Film by World Trust Educational Services and Dr. Shakti Butler
- www.world-trust.org