



# Case Study: Recruitment & Retention



## Addressing Microaggressions in Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty

### Facilitation Overview

This document presents seven short case studies in which subtle, and not-so-subtle, microaggressions occur. Unfortunately, all cases are based on events that occurred in real life. Participants should identify the microaggression in each case and then discuss possible responses to help diffuse the situation and become an ally to the target of the microaggression.

#### Setup (5 minutes)

- Divide people into groups (6-8 people each) and encourage attendees to sit with people they do not know.
- Distribute easel paper to each group.
- Ask each table to identify a facilitator, note-taker and timekeeper for their table. Describe the roles to the group. The facilitator will lead the group through the discussion questions. The note-taker will record ideas on the Post-it easel papers. The time-keeper will keep track of time and give time warnings as needed.

#### Group Time (25 minutes)

- Instruct the groups to skim the scenarios and choose 3 to focus on together.
- Individuals should read the scenarios and then discuss them as a group.
- Instruct groups to write their ideas on the easel paper.
- The Large-group Facilitator should give a 5 minute warning before time is up.

#### Whole Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- What microaggressions did you notice?
- What strategies did you offer to address the issues?
- How could you be an ally in the scenario?

#### Reflection (15 minutes)

At the end of the activity, the facilitator should lead a large group discussion.

- Did we miss anything?
- What new ideas did you discover?
- Which of these will work on your campus?
- What will you take home and use?



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### Discussion Questions

- Identify the microaggression(s) in the following mini-case studies.
- What are the short and long term impacts of the microaggression? Who is impacted?
- How would/could/should you respond if you were witnessing this scenario?
- What social or professional pressures might keep you from responding?
- How might you encourage others to be proactive in responding to microaggressions?
- What are possible ally level responses to the scenario?
- What would change if the characters had a different social identity (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, disability) than what is explicitly stated or implied in the case?

### Scenario 1

A faculty member is introducing his student research group to a PostDoc who is visiting campus to interview for a tenure track position. To facilitate the introductions, the faculty member provides an anecdote about each student. Here's what he says, "We are so pleased to have you visiting our department. Allow me to introduce you to my talented research group. Dale just experienced one of those research milestones—he is working on his first first-author publication. Jeff has been accepted to an Ivy League School for graduate school, no surprise to me. Melissa makes a mean tiramisu and keeps our group organized."

### Scenario 2

Two years ago a department hired two new faculty members, Janelle, a Latina female and Paul, a Caucasian male. They get along very well and are excited to have a close colleague in the same department. However, when comparing notes about their interactions with their colleagues, they discover that Paul was invited to dinner at the home of several departmental colleagues, both his first year and second year. Janelle has yet to be invited to dinner by any colleagues. They also realize that the chair has been praising Paul for being proactive with grant proposals. Janelle has also been proactive with grant proposals, but has not received any feedback from the chair.



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## Scenario 3

A female assistant professor recently won a major competition at the annual professional society meeting. When one of her female senior colleagues shared this exciting news in the hallway with a male senior faculty member, the male senior faculty member responded, “Well, it helps that she is cute.” When the female colleague tried to protest the colleague’s remark, the senior faculty member proceeded to explain that he was just telling it like it is.

## Scenario 4

At a faculty search committee meeting, a committee member says “I don’t think an African-American male will find it easy to fit into this rural community. At least he’s engaged to be married. But still, I know I wouldn’t feel comfortable if I were him. I’d hate to bring someone in only to have them turn around and leave after a year or two. Then we’ll have to start a search all over again. Not sure it’s worth the risk.”

## Scenario 5

At an faculty awards selection committee meeting, committee members were brainstorming possible candidates to consider for the distinguished teaching award. When the list was made, a committee member noted that all the nominees were male. A fellow committee member responded that there was nothing they could do about that since 80% of the department faculty were male. (There were no female faculty on the awards committee.)

## Scenario 6

Greg was walking down the hall to his new faculty office when a senior faculty member approached him. The senior faculty asked Greg what classes he was taking this term, presuming Greg was a new graduate student. Greg replied that he was the newest faculty member, and the senior colleague chuckled saying “We interviewed so many people; I always have trouble keeping straight whom we hired. Welcome to the department.”

## Scenario 7

Mindy was reviewing applications for a prestigious faculty fellowship in which only two candidates from her institution could be nominated. As she was reviewing the applications she noticed a pattern in the recommendation letters. Many, though not all, of the letters for the female applicants included reference to good citizenship and mentorship. None of the letters for male applicants said anything similar. Instead, those letters often referred to the intellectual potential of the male applicant.

