Glossary of terms

**Diversity** is a **fact:**
Diversity is broad representation of contingent identities and lived experiences across multiple axes including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, and physical ability.

**Inclusion** is a **practice:**
Inclusion is the practice of interrogating and reforming institutional systems, structures, policies, and norms, as well as individual attitudes and actions, that disproportionately benefit members of dominant groups while marginalizing members of non-dominant groups. Such practices, attitudes, and actions need not be malicious in intent or even conscious.

**Equity** is a **goal:**
An equitable institution uses its resources to create welcoming and inclusive environments in which every member of the community is provided with the particular tools they need to succeed in their role. Equity is not the same as equality.

**Dominant identity groups**
Dominant identity groups design, build, and perpetuate social structures and institutions that reflect and reinforce the centrality and superiority of their identities, proclivities, and points of view. They need not do this with malicious intent or even be conscious of the effects of their group’s cumulative actions. Dominant group members need not be aware of their membership in a dominant group.

**Marginalized identity groups**
Historically, marginalized identity groups do not have the power or resources to design, build, or perpetuate social structures or institutions that reflect and reinforce the centrality and superiority of their identities, proclivities, and points of view. Members of marginalized groups must continually respond to and adjust their behavior in response to dominant group expectations. Members of marginalized groups are generally cognizant of the marginalized status of groups to which they belong.

**Contingent Identities:**
“The things that you have to deal with in a situation because you have a given identity, because you are old, young, gay, a White male, a woman, Black, Latino, politically conservative or liberal, diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a cancer patient, and so on.” (Steele, 2010)

- Your most recent errand
- Headwinds and tailwinds
- Institutional marginalization vs. individual prejudicial attitudes or actions
- Intent vs. impact
Implicit Bias and its Effects on Decision Making

“Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases:

- Implicit biases are pervasive. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own in-group, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our in-group.
- Implicit biases are malleable. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of de-biasing techniques.”

(From Kirwan Institute, Ohio State University)

Common forms of implicit bias in board interactions:

1) **Non evidence-based presumption of competence/incompetence**: membership in dominant identity groups (race, gender, native English speaker, non-disabled, meeting or exceeding conventional standards of attractiveness, charm, charisma, etc.) correlates with presumption of competence. (Members of marginalized identity groups must prove their competence.)

2) **Confirmation bias**: Our first impression (often informed by implicit bias) of a person, idea, or proposal is either positive or negative. We then unconsciously focus on evidence that supports our initial impression and discount evidence that weakens the case for our initial impression.

3) **Familiarity bias**:
   - Background, identity, or cultural affinity
   - Professional training or social standing similar to our own
   - Trained, works/ed at or associated with an institution we admire.
Building Inclusion into Scientific Culture  
The Nuts and Bolts of Structural Change  
AIP Annual Forum, March 23, 2023  
Mary James, Reed College

- Conventional path to a board position (philanthropist, well-connected senior member of a profession related to organization’s mission, etc.)

4) Presumption that dominant-group perspectives and norms are objective and neutral in impact on decision-making, while non-dominant group perspectives and norms are subjective and skewed in impact on decision-making.

Example (perspective): For generations, practical jokes have been part of firehouse culture. The practical jokes are an informal bonding ritual that increases the cohesion and effectiveness of fire-fighting teams. Now that women and racial minorities are entering the firehouse workforce, they report that they feel these practical jokes are alienating; they feel that the practical jokes are a form of harassment.

Example (norms): The speech patterns of powerful white men are seen as objective and neutral. The speech patterns of others are perceived (and often judged) as deviations from this “normal” speech. (Southern speech is slow. Women whose pitch rises at the end of declarative sentences sound unsure of themselves and weak.)

5) Protecting other’s biases: We are an enlightened group, but some important subset of our constituents/community isn’t ready for _____________.

6) Overconfidence bias: In the name of efficiency, it’s OK to shortcut our processes to avoid implicit bias because we are all so enlightened and well-intentioned.

Cultural Responsiveness

Culturally responsive leaders:
- Understand the ways in which their own embodied/social identities affect their interactions with others who do and do not share aspects of their identity that are salient in the educational environment, workplace, and broader community.
- Have cultivated skills to communicate with, collaborate with, and support others who do and do not share aspects of their own identity.
- Work from a framework of humility to value the cultural perspectives of students, colleagues, and other community members and to invite those perspectives into discussions and decision-making enterprises.

Tools for Mitigating Implicit Bias in Professional Interactions

1) Mitigating implicit bias is a collective undertaking, not a blame/shame game
2) Use your meetings agreements: practice, revise, practice some more
3) Remember intent is not impact. Impact is paramount.
4) Deep listening (contrast with predatory listening)
5) Cultural humility: “What do I need from others to do my best work?”