

Final Report for Professional Development Grant

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B. Restatement of problem/creative work

In May 2019 I presented at the NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) regional conference in Sioux Falls, SD, for a program entitled, *Cognitive Bias in Academic Advising*. Upon my acceptance of the program, I was invited to host two of these sessions at the conference.

C. Brief review of creative work

This presentation shared information from interdisciplinary sources regarding bias in working with others. Limited research is available concerning unconscious (or cognitive) bias within higher education, so I reviewed some biases that have been identified in secondary education among teachers and students of different ethnicities, as well as in hiring practices. All of these can be applied to our work in higher education. The presentation tied in directly with the conference theme of “Blazing a trail to success.”

D. Summary of findings, outcomes, or experiences had

In this conference presentation I discussed Harvard’s Implicit Association Test, shared examples of personal experiences where I questioned whether I had been biased toward a student, and led an enthusiastic discussion on unconscious bias in higher education hiring practices. Understanding that everyone holds some level of bias is a first step I bringing unconscious bias to our awareness.

E. Conclusions and recommendations

These two sessions were well-attended and generated lively discussions. One participant told me she was a chair for current hiring search on her campus and found the topic timely. Others shared experiences of geographical bias they have noticed in hiring searches (i.e., not seriously considering an applicant from out-of-state). My recommendation would be that there is

much room for education on this topic. Most employees are aware of illegal interview questions, but the biases we hold still often shape our first impressions and affinity toward others.