ADVANCE-Nebraska E-News

Advancing Women, Advancing STEM

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Impact of Implicit Bias/Assumptions on Evaluations

Mary Anne Holmes

Last week we focused on strategies for searches that help to broaden and deepen applicant pools. This week we address how our cultural milieu affects how we evaluate applications – and how we can minimize this.

Implicit bias is "*introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate [behavior or judgment]* (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995.

An ongoing study at Fermilab reveals that in the U.S. both men and women, boys and girls, think of a white man when they think of the word "scientist." But after a trip through the Fermilab, their concept of who can do science expands. Their implicit biases are made explicit, challenged, and allowed to not be a factor when envisioning who can do science. Both men and women in a given culture share the same implicit, or unexpressed, assumptions or biases.

We are surprised by skinny football players, women dentists, men nurses because our brains have made these implicit assumptions.

We wish to hire new faculty based on merit. The question arises, what IS merit and how do we measure it?

Talking Shop and Shooting the Breeze: A Study of Workplace Conversation and Job Disengagement Among STEM Faculty

S. E. Holleran, J. Whitehead, T. Schmader, and M. R. Mehl, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 2(1) 65-71.

In this study, both men and women scientists were less likely to discuss research in conversations with female as compared to male colleagues, and when discussing research with men, women were rated as less competent than men.

Finding only one or two female names on the faculty roster challenges our ability to attract new women to science. It also likely affects the day-to-day experiences of women who find themselves in these token positions. Although research has established that STEM women are more often dissatisfied with their jobs (Settles et al, 2006), a nuanced picture of women's experience in STEM disciplines emerges when these self-reported feelings of disengagement are supplemented by objective behavioral data in a multi-method framework. Read the full article.

Rebuilding the Mosaic

National Science Foundation Dear Colleague Letter (DCL)

Rebuilding the Mosaic
…reports the results of the year-long SBE 2020 visioning process … [and] finds that scholars in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences believe that future research will be interdisciplinary, collaborative, and data intensive. The Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) therefore encourages investigators to submit proposals that go beyond the boundaries of traditional disciplines, span across the existing core SBE programs, or extend outside the SBE sciences. The report identifies four cross-cutting themes that appear to be potentially fertile areas for this model of research: population change; disparities in experience and access to resources; language and cognition, including communication, linguistics, and the brain; and new technology/new media and social network analysis. This DCL does not limit eligible proposals to these cross-cutting umbrella topics. The directorate anticipates future activities that will support research in some or all of these thematic areas, and proposals that address research problems from an interdisciplinary perspective within these broad topics are welcome.

Highlights from the 2011 Faculty Network and Workload Study (FNWS)

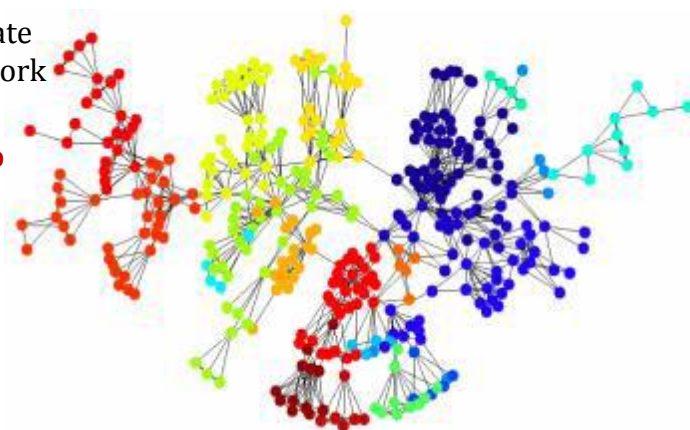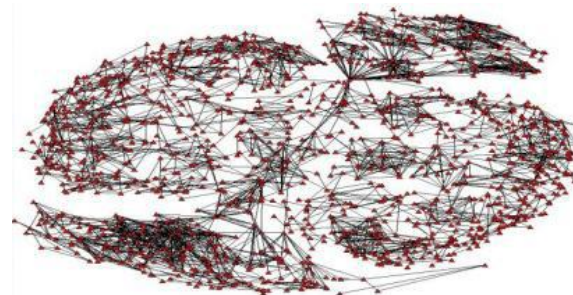**Friday, November 2, 2012**

11:30am -1:30pm

City Union * Georgian Suite

Dr. Christina Falci will present **Highlights from the 2011 Faculty Network and Workload Study (FNWS)**.

What does the faculty research collaboration network across the entire university look like? What can we do to promote research collaborations across disciplines?

How does a faculty member's position within departmental research and friendship networks shape their academic climate perceptions and productivity? What can we do to foster network connections among faculty within departments?

Lunch will be provided. RSVP by October 26, 2012 to advance2@unl.edu.

Reduce Impact of Implicit Bias, cont,

Each department may have its own answer as to what constitutes merit in our next faculty member, so it is important for the search committee to meet **before** reviewing the applications to decide how the candidates will be evaluated.

Develop a **rubric** of the merit criteria. Define "merit" as explicitly as you can. Creating the rubric will help the committee focus on the professional qualities of the candidates that the department wants, and not on the personal or other irrelevant qualities. If you and your colleagues believe that the prestige of the advisor should be a consideration, then by all means put it in your rubric. The point is to be explicit about what we value, about how we define "merit".

A sample evaluation rubric is on the ADVANCE website; Iowa State's ADVANCE program also developed evaluation rubrics. Many others can be found on the web to give an idea.

Implicit bias, implicit assumptions, cannot be eliminated, but a rubric defined by the committee, allowing plenty of time to evaluate each candidate, and simply being aware that we have preconceived notions about who our next faculty member should look like, will all help reduce the impact of implicit assumptions on selecting our next colleague and help to find the best match for the job.

News from ADVANCE *at Northeastern*

Northeastern University invites nominations and applications from candidates in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields for the

Northeastern University STEM Future Faculty Fellowship Program.

Please pass this link along to graduate students!

Have an article or news item of interest about women in STEM Fields you'd like to share? Send your article to advance2@unl.edu.