



Strategic Diversity Initiatives
Training, Consulting, Direction.

What Now? Next Steps for Staff after DiversityEdu

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Approach and Assumptions

- Diversity and inclusion work is about creating community, which involves building trust through ***careful listening, respectful disagreement, and taking risks***
- We are doing the best we can. Growth and learning can be uncomfortable; remember ***it's ok to make mistakes*** - we all do
- Individuals and organizations can – and do – grow and change, but it doesn't happen overnight; ***this is lifelong work***
- Every person is capable of moving equity and diversity forward; ***it is always about social identities AND personal values***
- ***There is no “silver bullet”*** and we don't have to fix everything immediately; so we need to do this work in a ***strategic and sustainable way***. And taking care of ourselves as we do this work is critical.



AGENDA

Microaggressions/Micro-inequities

Small Group Exercise: St. Olaf Context

Tips for Acting as an Ally: Conversations on Diversity & Inclusion

Scenarios

Next Steps

Micro-inequities or Microaggressions

From Microaggressions: Power, Privilege and Everyday Life

microaggressions.com

This blog seeks to provide a visual representation of the everyday of “microaggressions.” Each event, observation and experience posted is not necessarily particularly striking in and of themselves. Often, they are never meant to hurt - acts done with little conscious awareness of their meanings and effects. Instead, ***their slow accumulation during a childhood and over a lifetime is in part what defines a marginalized experience***, making explanation and communication with someone who does not share this identity particularly difficult.

Social others are microaggressed hourly, daily, weekly, monthly.

Examples of Micro-inequities

- **“Maybe you should consider [a completely different career path].”** My workplace, after I requested disability accommodations. Made me feel like professional success isn’t an option if you’re disabled.
- **I’m an Asian woman. Whenever there is another Asian woman in my workplace, I inevitably get called by her name, multiple times a day.** One day, my white colleague told me “You should realize how hard this is for me and stop caring so much!” after calling me the other Asian girl’s name. Saying “I’m trying!” or “you know it’s not racist” doesn’t help when you’re not trying and it IS racist.
- **Are you a man or a woman?”** Repeatedly, everywhere.
- **“She’s Mexican. She can be our maid.”** My white step grandmother talking about me when I visited her house. I felt like I was being made the butt of a joke because of my race.
- My boyfriend who is a disabled veteran at 26 years old was walking (with his cane) to class when he slipped and fell. **A group of people walked by and laughed at him yelling “watch out gimp!”**



Examples of Micro-inequities

- I'm sitting in a restaurant with my husband and mother-in-law. Our server comes to take our order. He has a soft, somewhat feminine sounding voice. As he walks away, my mother-in-law turns to me and loudly snaps **“Oh, I don't know why the hell they don't just go back into the closet and stop harassing the normal people. Nobody wants to hear them whine about marriage.”** My husband kicked my foot under the table when I opened my mouth. He knows that I am a straight ally who supports GLBT rights, and he didn't want me to confront her bigotry.
- **“What are you?” I'm a mixed-race American, and I get asked this question all the time by people I've either just met, or haven't said a word to in my whole life.** People just walk up to me and ask “What are you?” If I'm too tired to come up with something witty and I just answer the implied question (“what is your race?”), they usually say something back like “That's a beautiful mix!”



Examples of Micro-inequities

I was standing in the cafeteria of a major academic medical center wearing shirt, tie, and the same white coat that all my medical school classmates wear (with stethoscope). **An older white lady tapped me on the shoulder and asked “Excuse me do you work here? I’m trying to find the soups...” and even once I fully turned around it never occurred to her that I am a medical student, not a cook.**

I am a black male medical student in a major Northeast academic medical center.

Examples of Micro-inequities

“You must be new, they keep getting such cute nurses! I heard a medical student was coming in to discuss my medications with me, where is he?” Said to me when (I, a female medical student) entered the exam room of this elderly man to discuss his diabetes.

(Any time I see the doctors at my college's health service clinic.)

Doctor: Are you sexually active? **Me:** Yes.

Doctor: Is there any chance you could be pregnant? **Me:** No.

Doctor: Are you taking birth control pills? **Me:** No.

Doctor: Do you use condoms? **Me:** Nope.

Doctor (beginning to look concerned): Is there a medical reason you can't become pregnant?

Me: Not that I'm aware of. **Doctor (looking even more concerned, now speaking in a condescending tone):** *Then how do you know there's no chance of pregnancy?*

Me: *Last I checked, my female partner would have a hard time pulling that off.*

St. Olaf's Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

The Diversity and Inclusion Initiative was established to address concerns raised after a series of racist acts on campus throughout the year, including written racial epithets and messages targeted at students. St. Olaf College's mission statement "challenges students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition."

An inclusive community is a foundational value. St. Olaf is committed to creating a campus that welcomes difference, invites dialogue, and builds community.

Small Group Exercise: St. Olaf Context

Do you think microaggressions/micro-inequities exist at St. Olaf? Why or why not? Have you experienced and/or witnessed these dynamics as a staff member?

Consider both St. Olaf's mission statement and the statement that "an inclusive community is a foundational value." And also consider St. Olaf's informal "culture" – and what it's like to work here.

How does St. Olaf live up to its mission and commitment to inclusion? And where is St. Olaf falling short? Be as specific as possible.

Acting as an Ally

*An Ally is someone who is willing to **pay attention to** – and **take action around** - the social, economic & political **differences and inequities that attend to people** based on distinctions of race, ethnicity, age, class, sexual orientation, gender identity & expression, disability, religious or spiritual identity, and nationality (this is not an exhaustive list)*

TIPS FOR ACTING AS AN ALLY: CONVERSATIONS ON DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

SCENARIOS

NEXT STEPS

Consider St. Olaf's Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion:

- ***What can you do***, right now and in the next year, to develop as an ally?
- ***What can St. Olaf do***, right now and in the next year, to live out its commitment to creating an inclusive campus?

Thank You!

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