

Cultural Competency for DR Professionals

AUTUMN WILKE

MAURE SMITH-BENANTI

GRINNELL COLLEGE

Agenda

- Facilitator Introductions
- Cultural competency/awareness
- Implicit bias
- Complex, empowering disability identity

About Us

Maure Smith-Benanti

- Associate Dean of Students and Director of Intercultural Affairs
- Experience with bias response and LGBTQIA+ identity development

Autumn Wilke

- Disability Resources Staff Member
- Research on success for students with disabilities and identity development

Cultural Competency

...incorporates

Cultural Knowledge (you know something about cultural characteristics, values, history, beliefs and behaviors)

Cultural Awareness (you know something about other cultures and are open to changing cultural attitudes)

Cultural Sensitivity (knowing that differences between cultures exist, but not assigning value to those differences, such as better or worse, right or wrong) and operationalizes it.

A person who is culturally competent has the capacity to align policies and practices with the goal of recognizing, anticipating, and including every individual.

Developing Cultural Competency

- 1) Build capacity to value diversity and diverse perspectives
- 2) **Conduct self-assessment**
- 3) Manage dynamics of difference
- 4) Acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge
- 5) **Adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities you serve**

--National Center for Cultural Competence

Implicit Bias-Defined

Implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes, reactions, stereotypes, and categories that affect behavior and understanding. In higher education, implicit bias often refers to unconscious racial or socioeconomic bias towards students, which can be as frequent as explicit bias. (Boysen and Vogel)

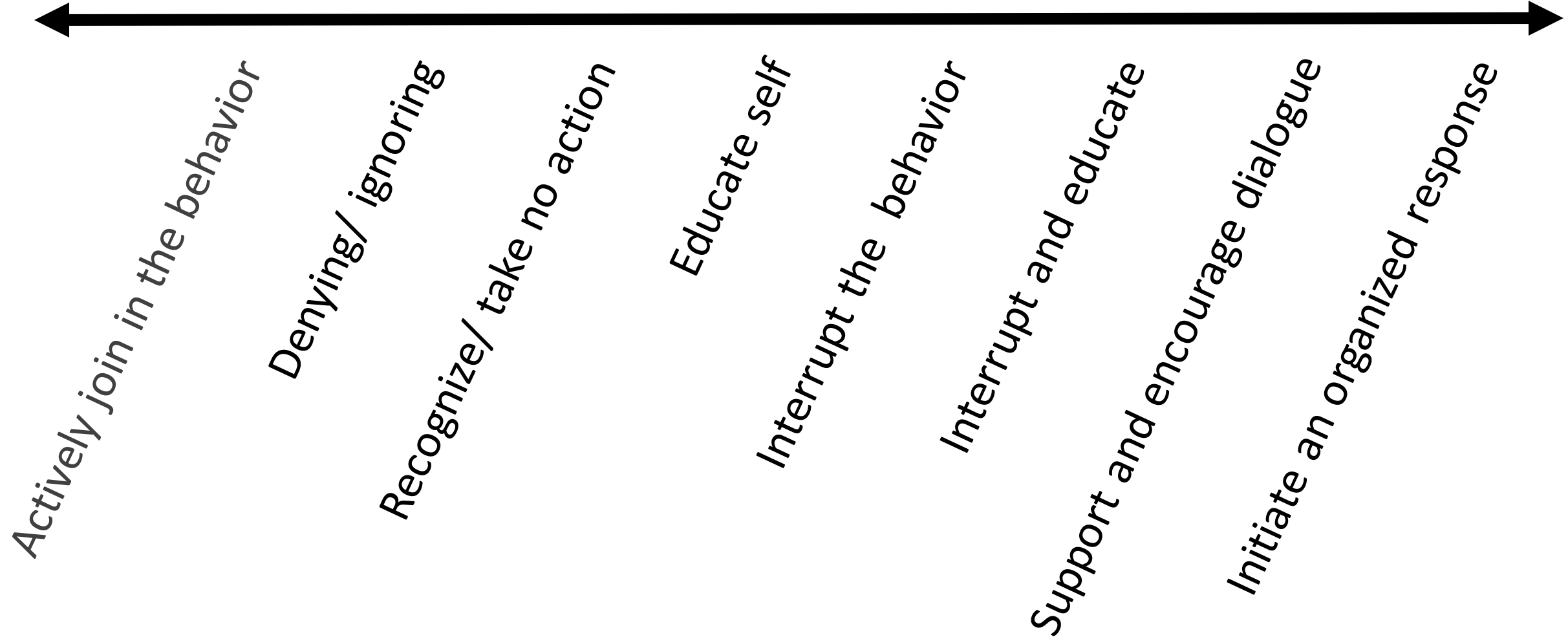
Combating Implicit Bias

- **Adjust your mindset**—be mindful and find ways to motivate towards change
- **Debiasing**—Implicit biases are malleable and if we receive/practice enough counter messaging we can begin to remold attitudes and stereotypes
 - Replacement 1) recognize, 2) label thinking as biased, 3) reflect on why it happened, 4) replace thought with a counter example
- **Decoupling**—break the cycle of behavior resulting from implicit bias

Implicit Bias, Cultural Competence & Disability Resources

- We don't know what we don't know
- The role of “professional judgement”
- We need to resist the urge to see Students with Disabilities as only SWDs or to assume this is their most salient or only salient identity

Ally Action Continuum



Gender Case Study—Grinnell Example

- Accommodation letter template included name auto-filled based on our campus data management system. DR staff then added additional information using pronouns.
- I had a student who shared with me that they use a name and pronouns that are different than what the letter auto-populated and what I used in the writing of additional information.

Reflection on Case Study

Before you think about how you would have responded...

First think about how implicit bias may have been at play.

Name those biases.

Identify ways to replace those biases.

Autumn's Response

1) Recognize

It did not occur to me that the database could be wrong or that I was using pronouns based on perceived gender.

2) Label thinking as biased

It was biased of me to assume that because the automated system works for me it works for everyone.

Autumn's Response Continued

3) Reflect on why it happened

I was implicitly assuming that all students I worked with were Cis-gender.

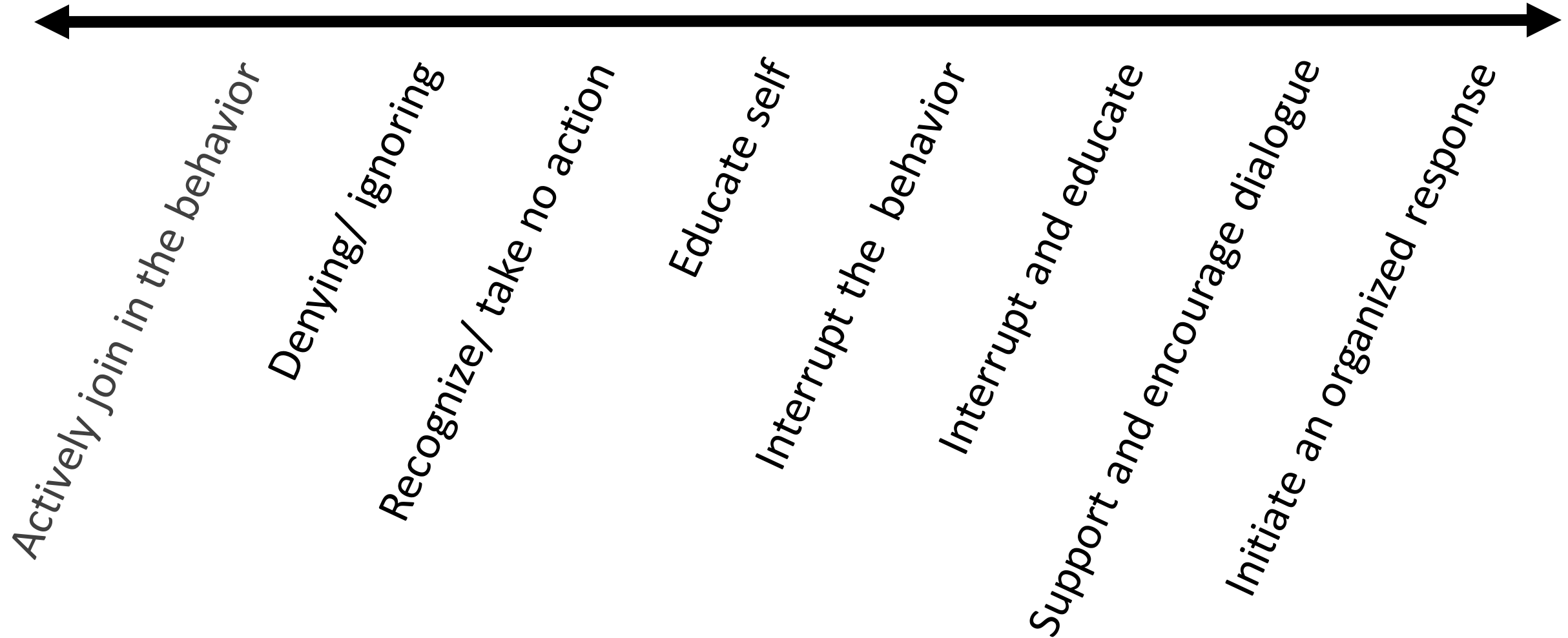
4) Replace thought with a counter example

I know that I work with trans students and it can be traumatizing and painful to be dead named or outed in order to receive accommodations.

Autumn's Actions

- 1) Partner with Intercultural Affairs to get additional training on gender and identity
- 2) Revise accommodation letters to use no pronouns
- 3) Build opportunity for students to share name/pronouns with me rather than assigning based on the database information tied to student ID
- 4) Think about other areas that may be adversely affecting populations of students I work with

Ally Action Continuum revisited

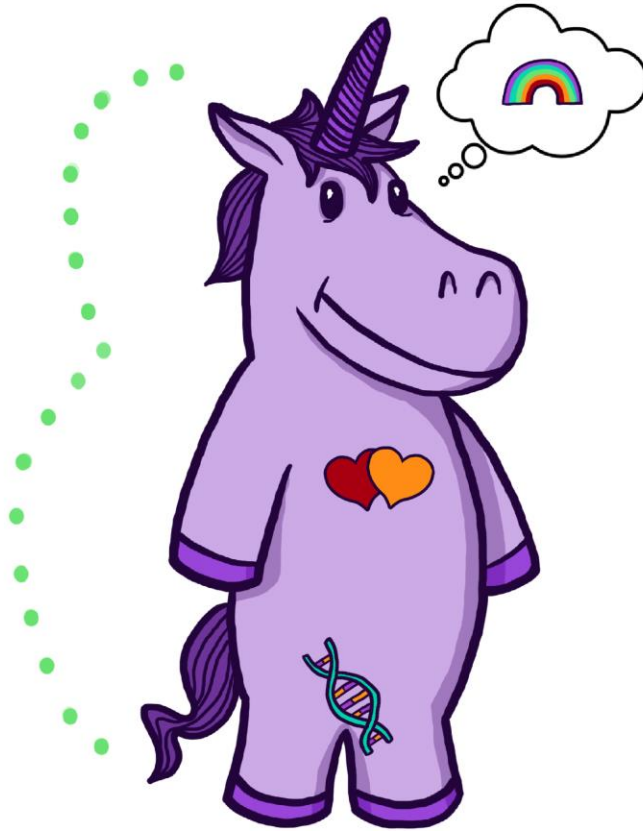


Pronouns and Resources

- They is a grammatically correct singular gender-inclusive pronoun.
- They has been used as a singular pronoun by Shakespeare, Thackeray, Austin, Byron, Defoe, Oscar Wilde, even Ronald Reagan.
- Students, faculty staff, and donors may all use the singular they, as well as other neutral pronouns.

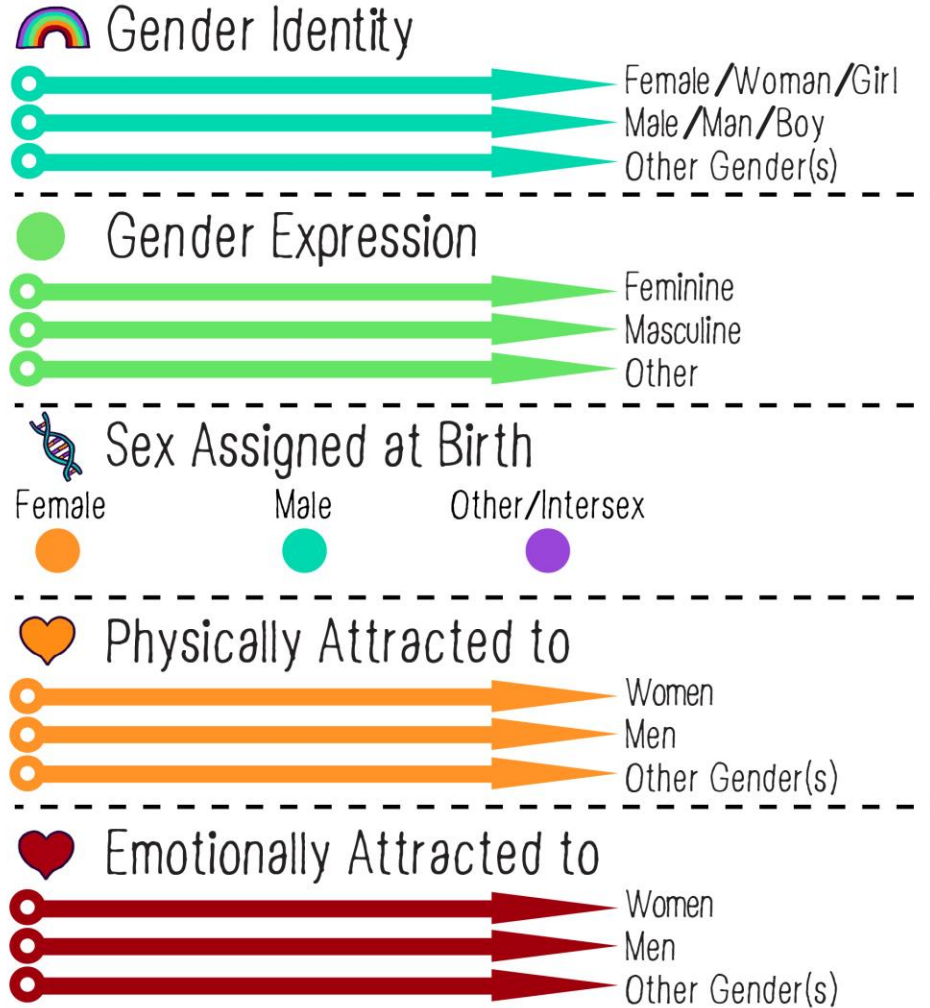
The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



Other Policies, Practices and Procedures

Examine policy related to documentation. Recognize that diagnostic processes are not neutral.

Explore programming that brings SWDs together to create communities.

Critique ways that development theory related to disability has ignored intersectionality and ways that theory on intersectionality has ignored disability.

Policies, Practices, and Procedures Cont.

- Enhance affordable disability related services for students with minimal financial support.
- Consider alignment of the office with other identity based offices
- Review imagery and materials provide by DR for representation of a wide range of experiences
- Implement universal design and inclusive teaching practices
- Ensure culturally relevant programming and spaces are accessible

Complex, Empowering Disability Identity

- Johnstone (2004) proposed that a complex, empowering disability identity:
 - Recognizes that people can see themselves in multiple ways-holistic view of identity
 - Disability can result in differing feelings (simultaneously or overtime)
 - People who claim a complex identity like see their identity as fluid and as one that changes over time
 - Recognizes disability as a shared experience or culture

Tools to Foster Identity

Consider "the interaction of impairment with other social identities, such as gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity, as well as the environmental contexts in which individuals find themselves" (Evans, 2008, p. 15)

Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their disability identity in relation to/partnership with other identities

Recognize variance in language and labels related to disability

Examine implicit biases we hold related to disability

- Audit language for reliance on medical or moral models of disability

Additional Resources

[Implicit Bias Series by BruinX](#) (Closed captions provided)

[Project Implicit](#)

Boysen GA and Vogel DL. (2009). Bias in the Classroom: Types, Frequencies, and Responses. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36(1): 12-17.

Evans, N. E., Broido, E. M., Brown, K. R., & Wilke, A. W. (2017). Disability in higher education: A social justice approach.