

## Top stories in this newsletter



Thanks for reading the first issue of the Faculty Newsletter! If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please email me at [jsummers@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jsummers@email.arizona.edu). Better yet, would you like to serve on the Faculty Newsletter editorial board? Having a board will allow for others (besides me and Amy) to submit content so we can provide greater breadth and depth of reporting.

## What are Microaggressions? by Amy Fountain, Secretary of the Faculty



This term is defined within the context of the University culture in Jessica's report in this newsletter, but of course it can be applied to a range of subtle, perhaps unconscious, slights or insults experienced by members of marginalized groups. I have recently had the privilege of learning more about this term from several of my colleagues at the University of Arizona.<sup>1</sup> I take three primary insights away from these discussions.

The first is that microaggressions are 'micro' only when (mis-)understood as isolated incidents.

The erosive effects of microaggressions on those who suffer them, and on the community at large, comes in part from their frequency – creating a 'death by 10,000 papercuts'.

The second is that what distinguishes microaggressions from (macro?)aggressions is that the former are not delivered in a way that anthropological linguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson<sup>2</sup> would call 'bald on record'. 'Bald on record' utterances are those in which the speaker takes no action that would mitigate potential harm or embarrassment for the listener. Aggression that is bald on record is, therefore, easily recognized by its target(s) as well as by bystanders.

When an insult or slight is hidden in a habitual turn of phrase, or presupposed in a statement whose overt structure is complimentary of the individual, while contrasting the individual's goodness against low expectations about the group that the individual identifies with, or expressed as a matter-of-fact about the world, it becomes weirdly pernicious. Confronting the embedded insult risks derailing communication, offending others, and exposing oneself to criticisms about being 'too sensitive' or 'imagining things'. The path of least resistance for members of targeted groups is to just internalize the negative judgments they experience in this way. Sadly, many people do just that.

The third insight is that all of us are capable of microaggressions, and that the more power we have over others, and the less our daily lives and work involve close interactions with members of targeted groups, the more likely it is that we'll habitually, if unintentionally, commit them. Learning that you've committed a microaggression is a terrible feeling, and responding productively is hard. The only thing worse than knowing the effects of your behavior is not knowing, and, as a result, becoming an author of a nontrivial number of those 10,000 papercuts.

<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Drs. Celeste González de Bustamante and Nolan Cabrera, and the participants and organizers of the Diverse Faculty Career Discussion on dealing with microaggressions in the classroom. All errors here are my own.

<sup>2</sup>This term came into general use in the late 70s based on a cross-cultural study of politeness strategies undertaken by Brown and Levinson. The terminology and framework proposed at that time have, of course, undergone significant development and modification – but I find this concept to be particularly useful in this context.

## Indigenous Peoples' Day by Amy Fountain, Secretary of the Faculty



October 8, 2018, is the first Indigenous People's Day since the Faculty Senate unanimously endorsed a student-lead proposal for our institution to recognize this holiday.

The proposal, which came to a Senate vote last March, was introduced by a group of student leaders who represented several of the many Native American Nations, and who spoke in the languages of those Nations. It was supported by 15 UA clubs and organizations. It included a statement of these shared values and principles:

- Acknowledgement:** That the University of Arizona acknowledges Tohono O'odham lands as the foundation on which our education is based on from which it is informed;
- Respect:** That the University of Arizona recognizes the contributions of Indigenous Peoples and their respective lands to the advancement of knowledge and understanding worldwide;
- Reciprocity:** That the University of Arizona recognizes the central role of education in Indigenous communities. As such, the University of Arizona values and assures the maintenance of active relations with the communities of Indigenous Wildcats;
- Tradition:** That the University of Arizona celebrates a tradition of diverse Indigenous People's on campus and supports appropriate representations of their respective histories and practices; and
- Sustainable Inclusiveness:** that the University of Arizona affirms the crucial role of Inclusive Excellence on campus and includes focus on the support and retention of Indigenous Peoples who look to the UA as another home, of which they can be proud, as Wildcats for life.

In recent years, the University of Arizona lost its Federal designation as a Native American Serving Institution. Perhaps we can use the celebration of Indigenous People's Day to start a concerted effort to regain that designation. The University of Arizona is a Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native-Serving Institution, and I hope we continue to live up to the promise reflected in these shared values and principles. (error was Amy's, corrected 10/12/2018)

## COACHE Results by Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty



The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey faculty was administered to the University of Arizona Faculty in March of 2018 and the results are in. The last time COACHE was administered (2013-2014) questions about shared governance were not included. This year, a series of questions about governance trust, shared sense of purpose, understanding the issue at hand, adaptability, and productivity were administered. Of the 42% of faculty who participated, the summary of results indicate the following:

- Areas of concern for **all faculty** ( $n = 886$ ) include **productivity** and **trust** in governance (bottom 30% as compared with cohort\* and peer\*\* institutions)
- **Tenured faculty** ( $n = 456$ ) are more concerned than **pre-tenured** ( $n = 192$ ) and **career-track faculty** ( $n = 238$ ) on areas of **shared sense of purpose**, **adaptability**, and **productivity** in governance
- **Underrepresented minority faculty** (Hispanic, Indigenous, African-American;  $n = 133$ ) are more concerned than **white faculty** ( $n = 651$ ) on **all issues** of faculty governance.

How did specific groups respond to items within each subscale? I wanted to dig deeper, particularly on the low ratings of governance for underrepresented minority (urm) faculty. However, the COACHE directors were not informed in advance that I or any faculty member would want to access data, and responded that releasing the data to anyone but staff violates the spirit of confidentiality that participants were guaranteed before taking the survey. Upon the recommendation of Tom Miller and Laura Hunter, I was able to work with Jessica Hamar Martinez, an Associate Research Scientist, to look at differences between groups on specific items. Here is what we found when comparing urm with non-urm\*\*\* using chi-square analyses on item response sets (findings are reported if  $p < .05$ ):



These disparities are serious problems and need to be addressed. So what do we do? COACHE researchers suggest we follow guidelines in their white paper: [https://coache.gse.harvard.edu/files/gse-coache/files/coache\\_effectiveacademicgovernance\\_2015.pdf](https://coache.gse.harvard.edu/files/gse-coache/files/coache_effectiveacademicgovernance_2015.pdf)

However, this white paper does not address the issues that are apparent in these data. Specifically, that microaggressions, defined as “the everyday slights found in higher education that communicate systematic valuing (or devaluing) of a person because of the institutional role held by that person” (Young, Anderson, & Stewart, 2015, p. 6), continue to be endemic for underrepresented minority faculty on our campus, and agents of shared governance (administration and faculty leaders) need to do something about it. Why? Because research indicates:

- Microaggressions limit learning**
- Microaggressions create a toxic campus climate**
- Microaggressions affect people’s sense of belonging**
- Microaggressions lower the retention of students, staff, and faculty**

The damaging effects of microaggressions are cumulative, and occur because they are both very common and by their nature are typically difficult to confront. Some suggestions to reduce microaggressions on university campuses are proactive (e.g., creating educative spaces) while others are reactive (e.g., workshops and training). However, even with the best intentions to increase a sense of inclusion and diversity, leadership can get it wrong because we often tell people what we think they need to hear rather than getting feedback from those who have been the target of microaggressions. I’d like to offer a process to allow faculty to share their experiences AND make suggestions about what shared governance can do to remedy the disparities seen in COACHE. You can submit your feedback anonymously at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8q3rncj>

These individual records will not be shared with anyone – I will be the only reader and receiver of these messages. If you share feedback, I would like to summarize experiences and ideas in order inform future practice of leaders in ODIEX (Marla Franco, Kendal Washington White, Teresa Graham Brett, and Rebecca Tsosie).

\*Cohort institutions include 109 COACHE partners who identify as generally similar to the UA.  
 \*\*Peer institutions represent those most similar to UA in the faculty labor market (NC State; UC Davis; University of Missouri – Columbia; UNC Chapel Hill; UT Austin).  
 \*\*\*Non-urm faculty include those who identify as white, Asian/Asian-American, or non-Hispanic.

# TOWN HALL ON FACULTY INITIATIVES FOR HSI AND DIVERSITY

October 26 \* Haury Lecture Hall \* ENR2 \* 8:30-12:00

Breakfast will  
be served  
beginning at  
8:00 AM

Sponsored by  
ODIEX and the UA  
Faculty Center

## Meet others who are conducting similar work with diverse groups

Your contribution plays an important role on our campus, and the recent recognition of UA as a Hispanic Serving Institution brings even more attention to the work that needs to be done.

### Goals for the town hall

1. To learn more about your efforts
2. To discover possible connections between efforts lead by faculty across campus
3. To generate themes of interest moving forward

### Questions? Want to RSVP?

Please contact Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty at [jsummers@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jsummers@email.arizona.edu)

OR

Include your name on the sign-up sheet and Jessica will contact you

*"My hope is that HSI status will help our students recognize that we see them; at the same time, I also think the UA can do much more to help students; particularly students who face financial challenges. HSI status is recognition that we are doing a good job with our students, but we can do better. ..."*

-Dr. Frans Tax

