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Does unconscious bias effect higher ed hiring?

By TOM COLLINS

Before we dive into the topic, let’s start with a definition. Unconscious bias refers to the preferences or stereotypes that are stored or held in our brains but remain out of our conscious awareness. These biases can influence our judgments and decisions, even when we are not aware of them.

The first step that we need to take is to recognize that we have implicit biases. There are a number of studies that have supported this claim. In a study published in 2013, a professor at Harvard University found that although ethnic diversity has increased in the United States, many college students have difficulty acknowledging their own biases.

A special effort should be made to train students to recognize these implicit biases. There are several documents that can be found online that discuss ways to combat unconscious bias. One is the Implicit Association Test developed by social psychologists at Harvard University. Another is a document from the Mathematical Association of America that helps instructors to design courses that are free from unconscious bias.

Another important step is to keep track of the results of the hiring in the organization. For example, have you found more women or minorities than the standard hiring process? This can be a useful tool in helping to identify any biases in the hiring process.

But what if the result is not as expected? What should you do next?

Unconscious biases are defined as social stereo
types that are formed about certain groups of people by individuals outside of their own conscious awareness. Psychologists argue that everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, including one’s own kin. These beliefs tend to organize social groups, and it is important to be aware of these unconscious biases.

Does unconscious bias effect higher ed hiring? The answer is yes. Universities and colleges are not immune to unconscious biases, and these biases can influence hiring decisions.

For instance, in a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology in 2016, researchers found that university admissions officers were more likely to favor applicants from wealthy backgrounds than those from lower-income families.

Another study, published in the Journal of Applied Psychology in 2017, found that university admissions officers were more likely to favor applicants from prestigious high schools than those from lower-income schools.

In both cases, the researchers found that unconscious biases were influencing hiring decisions.

The good news is that universities and colleges are starting to recognize the problem and are taking steps to address it. For example, some universities are implementing training programs for admissions officers to help them recognize and overcome their unconscious biases.

Overall, it is important for universities and colleges to be aware of unconscious biases and to take steps to address them. This will help ensure that the hiring process is fair and equitable for all candidates.