

College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Conscious and Unconscious Bias (CUBA)

---

# Summary Report

June 8, 2015

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **Narrative Description of Initiative:**

NC State continues to struggle to achieve optimal recruitment, retention, and graduation outcomes for students of historically underrepresented groups. A review of the literature on factors that influence diversity enrollment in higher education revealed that conscious and unconscious bias may contribute to the lack of success in those areas. To increase representation of underrepresented groups, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the proposed initiative (1) addresses the need to increase awareness of conscious and unconscious biases that may exist during the review and selection stage of admission, and (2) recommends strategies for minimizing the likelihood that admissions review committee members will rely on conscious and unconscious biases in the application review process. The goal of the CUBA Project is to develop, implement and evaluate workshops that target graduate faculty members prior to review of applicants for admission

### **Program Objectives:**

- 1) To disseminate information about bias that can have a negative impact on the selection and admission of historically underrepresented groups
- (2) To raise awareness about the impact of biases on application decisions for applicants from historically underrepresented groups
- (3) To decrease the likelihood that admissions review committee members representing Graduate Programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences will rely on conscious and unconscious biases in making admission decisions about students applying to graduate programs.

### **Cuba Workshops**

The first workshop is a "Preview Session," which is conducted with Graduate Program review committee members before they begin reviewing graduate applications. Each Graduate department identifies members of the review committee who evaluate graduate applications for their programs. It is presumed that these reviewers have knowledge of criteria used to determine admission to their programs.

The participants discuss key attributes of a good candidate for their program, both educational and tangible qualities, and describe how these will inform the review process. Next, the participants engage in activities to identify and catalogue stereotypes and conscious or unconscious biases that influence decisions about key criteria for admission selection, such as aptitude for learning and potential for academic success. They then explain what resources and techniques they can use to combat these biases and how best to use these resources in a cohesive and inclusive process of reviewing applications. Participants are encouraged to come up with a rubric that could be used by all reviewers in the reviewing process that is, hopefully, transparent and bias free. They are asked to continue to share ideas and expand their repertoire of diversity materials and resources.

During the spring semester, the "Follow up session" (post-workshop) is conducted for each committee. The committee reviews the effectiveness of the rubric they used during the review process. In addition they are asked to discuss where their biases were unavoidable, and to develop best practices for going forward. A year-

end colloquium is hosted and open to all pilot groups to further encourage sharing of best practices and to get feedback and input of the participants.

**Year-1 Program Report:**

Three Graduate Programs participated in the CUBA Workshops. The departmental participants included two Masters programs (Communication; History) and one PhD program (Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media).

Department / Level	International	Unkwn	Hisp.	Native Amer	Asian Amer	Black Afr Am	Pacific Isl	White	Two or More	Female	Male
University	2868	327	297	25	328	596	7	4948	120	4283	5233
College	51	25	32	2	17	98	1	561	13	534	267
CRDM	6	3	3	0	0	2	0	36	1	27	24
Com	4	1	0	0	0	3	0	26	1	25	10
History	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	48	0	38	18

**Fall 2014 Demographic Comparison Chart of Minority and Gender Enrollment**  
 NC State - Fall 2014 - REPORT BC: College and Department Totals by Degree Level, and Race

**First Workshop**

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Define stereotypes and biases commonly used in admission review processes
- Discuss personal and departmental stereotypes and biases
- Review university and departmental goals
- Understand core interpretation of information and experiences
- Reflect on/ explore how individual reviewers first became conscious of prejudice, discrimination, and the feelings associated with this consciousness and how to avoid relying on them in review process
- Identify awareness of prejudice and discrimination that may exist in various forms
- Understand the difference between individual experiences of bias and systemic oppression.

**Summary**

Three Humanities and Social Sciences Graduate programs participated in the CUBA pre-review workshop. Each Graduate Program participated separately with their graduate review committees, which ranged from four to five faculty members for the Pre Review Workshop. The CUBA pre-review application workshop helped reviewers to determine and establish a commonly agreed upon review process, which examined internal or unintentional bias or stereotypes prior to reading candidate applications.

To implement the pre-review workshop, three separate PowerPoint presentations were created for each program to tailor the workshop to fit specific programs. The committees were not only different in the

arrangement of committee members (time served as a committee member) and the review process of candidate (how they ranked candidates), there was also variation in prior knowledge of diversity within their program. The workshops addressed such differences and established continuity among all reviewers. The goal was to respond to the challenges that might influence opinions about applicants and help to ensure that reviewers have a level of knowledge and awareness to engage in an effective review of applicants that does not bias their decisions for or against certain applicants. Workshops were able to achieve the learning outcomes.

For completing the first Workshop, each program received four hundred dollars for recruitment. These recruitment funds were to be used to recruit or bring minority candidates to campus either for an open house or on campus visit. Two programs (History and CRDM) used their money to host program open houses, which invited prospective students to campus for information sessions and overviews of these Graduate programs. Communication used its money to bring in a prospective underrepresented student to campus for interview. It has been reported that the student accepted the admission offer to attend NC State University.

## **Second Workshop**

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Reflect on interpretations and judgments around stereotypes
- Review learning objectives
- Recognize stereotypes, bias and the potential for negative impact
- Build understanding of the value and benefits of diversity
- Improve intergroup relations

## **Summary**

Each of the three committees met separately to (1) review the effectiveness of the rubric used during the review process, (2) discuss if biases were unavoidable, and (3) develop best practices for going forward. In examining the effectiveness of the first workshop, the review committee revisited the demographic data on their program and compared them to expected candidates in this year's cohort. Most programs agreed that the workshop helped to establish a better understanding for recognizing stereotypes, bias and the potential negative impact on review of candidates. They also agreed that the workshop shed light on the lack of resources to recruit and support underrepresented populations.

In addition, during the second workshop, committee members discussed the intergroup relationship that developed during the reviewing process and explored if they had established a climate of respect for members' experiences, ideas and contributions among the group. One member who was serving on her first review committee thought it was very helpful to participate in the workshop because participation helped define key diversity points such as race, sexual orientation, research topic and institutional fit. Another committee member stated that the workshop created a safe place to discuss topics around race, gender and economics.

Finally, they agreed that the workshops allowed them to talk more openly about the process and the way in which they reviewed applicants. Overall, the committee members agreed that the workshops helped to examine obstacles to the recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented groups

**2015 Applicants'/Accept Student Demographic Comparison Chart of Minority and Gender as reported by participating programs. (Waiting on final data)**

Department	Total Applicants / Accepted	International	Unkwn	Hisp	Native Amer	Asian Amer	Black Afr Am	Pacific Isl	White	Two or More	Female	Male
CRDM	74/30	17/7	3/1	3/1	0	13/4	6/3	0	50/20	3/2	38/19	38/11
Communication	85 /39	0	1/2	0/0	0/0	15/9	3/3	0	26/23	5//2	60/31	25/8
History	105/28	0	4/1	1/0	2/1	2/0	6/3	0	81/20	9/3	55/16	50/12

**Program Evaluation:**

In evaluating the effectiveness of the workshops a Qualtrics survey was used. Committee members were encouraged to respond to several questions regarding the effectiveness and usefulness of the Conscious and Unconscious Biases workshops. In regard to effectiveness, 100% of the responding committee members agreed that information covered in the Conscious and Unconscious Bias (CUBA) workshop was useful in establishing core competencies expected of a successful graduate candidate. In responding to question, "To what degree did the workshop increase your knowledge on Conscious and Unconscious bias in the review process" most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the workshop improved their knowledge on conscious and unconscious bias. When asked, "What did you find least useful about the workshop", one committee member said all of it was useful, but was surprised there was no reference to difference pertaining to sexuality and/or religion. When asked, "What was most useful about the workshops?", committee members agreed that seeing the graph of how their department's graduate student population compares with the rest of campus, it reminded them of lenses we all use to filter information about applicants. In addition, they felt that it was useful to hear the responses to questions that went beyond the typical discussion of male/female, race/ethnicity and included discussions about other factors such as type of educational background, including "students from Ivy League schools...." Another participant stated, "I also liked the video; it was both humorous because of its familiar cast of characters and a good way to visualize issues we needed to keep in mind about how departmental committees negotiate."

**Sustainability**

We wish to build on the success of this year's workshops by 1) providing these same workshops for all graduate program review committees, and 2) offering the workshop to those departments that have already participated, when they welcome new members to their review committee. We are currently in the planning phase for next year's CUBA workshops. We have begun meeting with directors of graduate departments to understand the needs, determine ways of maximizing the program's effectiveness, and develop a protocol for infusing best practices and effective workshop strategies into our presentation. Moving forward, more funding will be sought (1) to support this program directly as a college initiative and (2) to support this program indirectly as part of a research grant that examines the effectiveness of committees during the reviewing process.