Evaluation Report

Equity and Inclusion in the Lab
The Lab as an Anti-bias Space: Techniques and Tactics

November 21, 2019  |  Genentech Hall S-261

November 22, 2019  |  Medical Sciences S-159

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Introduction

In his third visit to UCSF, Carlos Hoyt, PhD, LICSW facilitated conversations between UCSF graduate students, postdocs and faculty titled: Equity and Inclusion in the Lab. The major focus of these sessions was on microaggressions - what they are, how they can have profound impacts on members of our community, and methods to respond to microaggressions in a respectful manner. These workshops did not require attendance at Dr. Hoyt's previous workshop, but data collected from Dr. Hoyt's most recent set of workshops informed the design of current iteration workshop.

The session was started by Dr. Hoyt setting the tone for our discussions by going over some phrases and ideas he had written on the board (see Appendix). Dr. Hoyt then proceeded into an overview of equity vs. equality, identity, bias, microaggressions, and cognitive dissonance by walking the attendees through the materials that we printed for each person (see Appendix). Of particular note was the My Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Request for Feedback which Dr. Hoyt presented as a tangible tool that participants to adapt to their own labs in order to foster inclusivity and have a starting point from which to respond to instances of bias. Dr. Hoyt shared a video about microaggressions that introduced the concept and highlighted how they affect people, emphasizing the importance of responding appropriately to microaggressions. Participants then broke into small groups to discuss case studies of microaggressions (see Appendix). The case studies were collected from members of the UCSF community for the purpose of these workshops. The small group discussions were followed by a facilitated discussion designed to help participants recognize and respond to instances of bias and microaggressions.

The stated learning outcomes were:

Participants will be able to:

1. explain why it is important to be aware of and actively think about equity and inclusion, especially in the context of their lab and UCSF communities.
2. articulate what microaggressions are and how microaggressions impact others.
3. identify appropriate ways to resolve or address issues involving microaggressions.
4. identify appropriate and concrete ways share lessons learned from the workshop with other colleagues.

Attendance Report

Three workshops were offered in total – two at Mission Bay and one at Parnassus. Due to the limits of the rooms that were able to be booked, registration was capped at 25 for each Mission Bay workshop and 20 for the Parnassus workshop.
In total, 51 people attended the workshops. Of those that attended, 16 were faculty members, 14 were postdocs, 15 were students, and six were classified as “other” (i.e. partners of the graduate division). 33 attendees participated in our post-workshop survey, and a few did not answer all of the Likert scale questions.
Support for Continuing This Type of Event

When asked if UCSF should continue to offer opportunities for facilitated conversations about equity and inclusion, 94% responded “strongly agree” or “agree”, indicating that there is significant perceived value to workshops like these. When asked about what struck them from the workshop, some respondents provided comments that provides context for their responses:

“I found the dialogue helpful. I wish it was longer and required for all personnel at UCSF.”

“How difficult it is to talk about issues of diversity in normal academic settings, yet how important it is to be intentional about facilitating those types of conversations.”

“The specific UCSF examples used for discussion - we talked about ways to continue the conversation and expand the audience and I thought these alone would be a great tool to stimulate discussion among colleagues in a graduate program or in the lab.”

“The workshop was well structured and very stimulating. I wish there are more workshops like this especially for new faculty, which would really help them to run a lab with more awareness and openness out of their busy and stressful career. I would also like to see this workshop can be expanded into a series to help students and postdoc to handle some difficult situation during the times they are developing their career. ie. How to start a conversation with your boss or supervisor when you are uncomfortable about the situation.”
Impact of Workshops

When asked if the workshops were impactful, 75% responded “strongly agree” or “agree,” with another 16% responding “Somewhat agree.” 9% responded “Neither agree nor disagree” with zero respondents indicating any level of disagreement with the notion of these workshops being impactful.

Trends in the responses from the survey suggests that there are multiple factors associated with the value of these workshops. Most common are comments that express appreciation for a dedicated and safe environment in which to engage in dialogue about difficult topics. The impact, for some, comes not only from the chance to engage in dialogue, but also in the exposure to diverse perspectives and completely new content:

“Cognitive dissonance and the quotes written on the board. They were very impactful”

“The small group discussions allowed for an opportunity to really share personal experiences with microaggressions and bias within the scientific community. Not only did it allow for interesting discussion, but it also provided a safe space to share personal experiences that are not openly talked about.”

“The small-group discussions about microaggressions was useful for open discourse with others. (Seeing other peoples’ perspectives, and practice having honest discussions on these topics that I sometimes choose to avoid).”

“I found some of the microaggression examples surprising and started to think there are many incidence I might unintentionally cause micro aggression on other people. This workshop really opens my eyes about the importance of open communication and being sensitive.”

“The varying degrees of microaggressions, and the different i.pacts [sic] they have on people with difference experiences. I didn’t realize how much this varied between people.”

“The Diversity-Equity-Inclusion request for feedback - I thought this was a very helpful framework to both think about how to explicitly request feedback in this area from my lab, and to use in our lab manual to make it clear to anyone who joins the lab that this is the culture.”
“I found the 6 principles for "requesting feedback" … to be striking and will use this in my own work … I will use this at the beginning of the semester when I teach and when new lab members join my lab … I want my students to feel like they can approach me if I've made a mistake and I will be humble and gracious in receiving that.”

Some respondents explicitly shared what behaviors they planned to change after the workshop, further highlighting the impact that these workshops had on those individuals. One faculty member who attended partnered with members of the Graduate Division to build on the experiences of his lab members, all of whom attended the workshop, in order orchestrate a concerted effort to make their lab more inclusive for current and future lab members. As of the time of this evaluation report, that faculty member had not yet completed their lab’s follow-up discussion.

For the sake of measuring perceived learning gained from the workshop, the survey included additional questions asking about specific topics. These questions are especially helpful to determine if the learning outcomes were achieved.

Even though all of the questions had at least 50% of respondents that “strongly agree” or “agree,” the question with the least amount of agreement was the question meant to measure how well participants gained an understanding of the difference between equity and equality. This was one of the learning outcomes for this workshop based on the previous workshop’s content. During the workshops, it was noted that not as much time was spent on this topic as in the past and the method of discussing this concept was different than last year. The data suggest that, for this concept, more time and a different method of explanation might be beneficial. It is promising, however, that 52% of respondents answered “strongly agree” or “agree.”
Of particular note would be the responses that suggest that the participants achieved a better understanding of what microaggressions are, how they impact people, and that they can engage in constructive dialogue to address issues surrounding microaggressions. Consistent with these findings are the responses to the question about having a better understanding of identity. 70% of respondents answered “strongly agree” or “agree” with 85% answering in the affirmative to some degree. The concept of identity is foundational to understanding what microaggressions are and how they impact people, so the consistencies between the answers further highlights the impact of these workshops.

Suggestions for Future Workshops

The survey sent to participants included an option to leave suggestions for how we can improve upon these workshops for future iterations. Representative comments are:

“It would be super cool to have closed captioning on the video.”

“A little more time to discuss the microaggressions and how we can deal with it. Maybe some role plays. Also making this mandatory!”

“… Felt like it would be good to practice and role play different types of responses to microaggressions.”

“I was hoping to learn more strategies about how to respond to microaggressions in various scenarios. We discussed what they are and they many forms they can take, but I did not come away with a better understanding of how to respond, which to me is the hardest part…”

“… I knew about these ideas already, but didn’t leave with any concrete ways of dealing with issues, responding to them, etc. …”

“the introduction was long compared to the group break-out session, which was most helpful for me. I would enjoy getting more trainigng [sic].”

Thanks to one respondent filling out the survey immediately following the first workshop, we were made aware of our own blindspot in not providing closed captioning for the video. We were able to provide those for the other two workshops. Other suggestions focused on either wanting more time in general as well as more time specifically for discussing examples of microaggressions in the large group. This point was also something that Dr. Hoyt had mentioned as he noticed that more time would have allowed for a more thorough discussion. Dr. Hoyt suggested that future workshops be three hours in length, if possible. Additionally, we will consider incorporating role-playing as a method for practicing in small groups. Indeed, role-playing is a method recommended by evidence-based approaches to bystander trainings (Meg Bond, UMass Lowell).

Interestingly, many respondents commented on wanting to have more concrete methods for addressing microaggressions. The intention for having these workshops focus on microaggressions came from previous year comments expressing a desire to know how to address such issues. As helpful as it would be to provide pre-scripted, concrete ways to address microaggressions and other instances of bias, Dr. Hoyt stressed the importance to recognize that such an approach would be inappropriate and would demean the complexity and importance of addressing microaggressions. That being said, it is advised that future iterations of these workshops expand on that idea more so that participants gain a better understanding of the complexities while also providing opportunities to practice responding in a safe environment while getting feedback from an expert. This is
particularly important for faculty that may feel most in need to knowing how to reconcile generational differences when understanding the intentions and impacts behind microaggressions.

Our survey data support a general approach of raising awareness of bias as a method to decrease instances of microaggressions to begin with. Efforts to raise awareness can be incorporated into futures workshops for faculty. For example, faculty could be asked to reflect on how a better understanding of the unique life experiences/perspectives of their trainees might inform the communication of expectations of the PI for the lab.

Conclusions

It is clear from the data as well as from conversations with participants that these workshops have an incredible impact and are vital when it comes to changing the culture surrounding inclusion and mentoring at UCSF. This is not surprising given the importance of identity formation, both personal and professional, in the retention and success of members of marginalized groups in STEM (NASEM 2019). The literature on the science of mentorship continuously stresses the need of a mentor to have a deep understanding of the personal needs, experiences, and goals of their mentee. It is understandable, then, why the NASEM Consensus Study Report on the Science of Effective Mentorship published this year lists as one of its main recommendations the need to “recognize and respond to identities in mentorship.” Providing opportunities for discussions surrounding equity, inclusion, diversity, and identity should be a priority for the work of the Graduate Faculty Development program moving forward.