COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

Research shows that groups with higher social diversity (i.e., diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) share more information, are more creative, and perform better than those with lower social diversity. However, diverse groups may exhibit less cohesion and may encounter greater conflict and communication challenges.

How, then, do we maximize the value of diversity and ensure that all group members have an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the conversation? It all starts with communication. Below are some of the strategies we use in the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

- ❖ **Please, don't interrupt**
- ❖ **Listen *actively*, instead of just waiting to speak**
  - o If it's helpful, jot down your idea so you can provide your full attention to the speaker (just as you would like them to do for you)
- ❖ **Step up/step back**
  - o Be mindful of total talk time and speak up if you are being particularly quiet
- ❖ **Check in with the quieter folks in the room**
  - o If a person has not spoken in a while, pause the conversation to ask for their input directly or indirectly, without unnecessary pressure (e.g., "Does anyone else have anything they'd like to share?")
- ❖ **Embrace friction**
  - o Be open to different perspectives on a topic
    - ➢ It might take a bit longer, but the best problem solving usually occurs in environments that value and nurture diversity
    - ➢ Recognize friction as evidence that multiple ideas are entering the conversation, not that the group isn't getting along
- ❖ **Give credit where credit is due**
  - o If you are building upon someone's previously-stated idea, echo the comment with appropriate credit to the original person
- ❖ **Ask for clarification, don't assume**

  If you are unsure of someone's point, ask for clarification instead of talking over them or trying to interpret on their behalf
- ❖ **Words and tone matter**
  - o Be mindful of the impact of what you say, and not just your intent
  - o Don't be condescending
  - o Maintain a respectful tone of voice
- ❖ **Be an active participant in the conversation**
  - o Use statements like "*Let's let _____ finish their thought before you jump in,*" "*Does anyone else have anything they'd like to share?*" or "*That's a great point, similar to the one _____ just made*" to maintain these best practices

If you have suggestions for what to add to this list, or examples of when using these strategies has worked well for your team, we'd love to hear from you. Email us at WeListen@equity.ucla.edu with "Communication Best Practices" in the subject line.

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