



# Rethinking Diversity Tutor Training: Addressing Blind Spots & Biases in Tutoring

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Rasmussen College

National Organization for Student Success  
Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup> 4:00pm to 4:50pm  
Location: Jackson C

# Today's Agenda!

- Rasmussen College: Who are we?
- Why diversity?
- Training content inspiration
- Tutor feedback
- Demo of training content & corresponding assessment
- What's next?

# Rasmussen College: Who Are We?

- Private, proprietary college founded in 1900
- Programs in Business, Design, Education, Health Sciences, Justice Studies, Nursing, and Technology
- Associate, Bachelor, & Master Degrees
- 23 campuses/6 states
- 15,000 students
- 80% online
- Majority non-traditional students
- CRLA Certified Program
  - Campus-based and online Peer Tutoring



# A little bit about me...

- 15 years in Higher Education
- 7 years at Rasmussen College in Library & Learning Services
- B.A. in Psychology & M.S.Ed in Adult and Higher Education
- Served as Co-Chair on the Diversity & Inclusion Council for three years

# Why Diversity?

**Passion Project**

**Diversity & Inclusion Council**

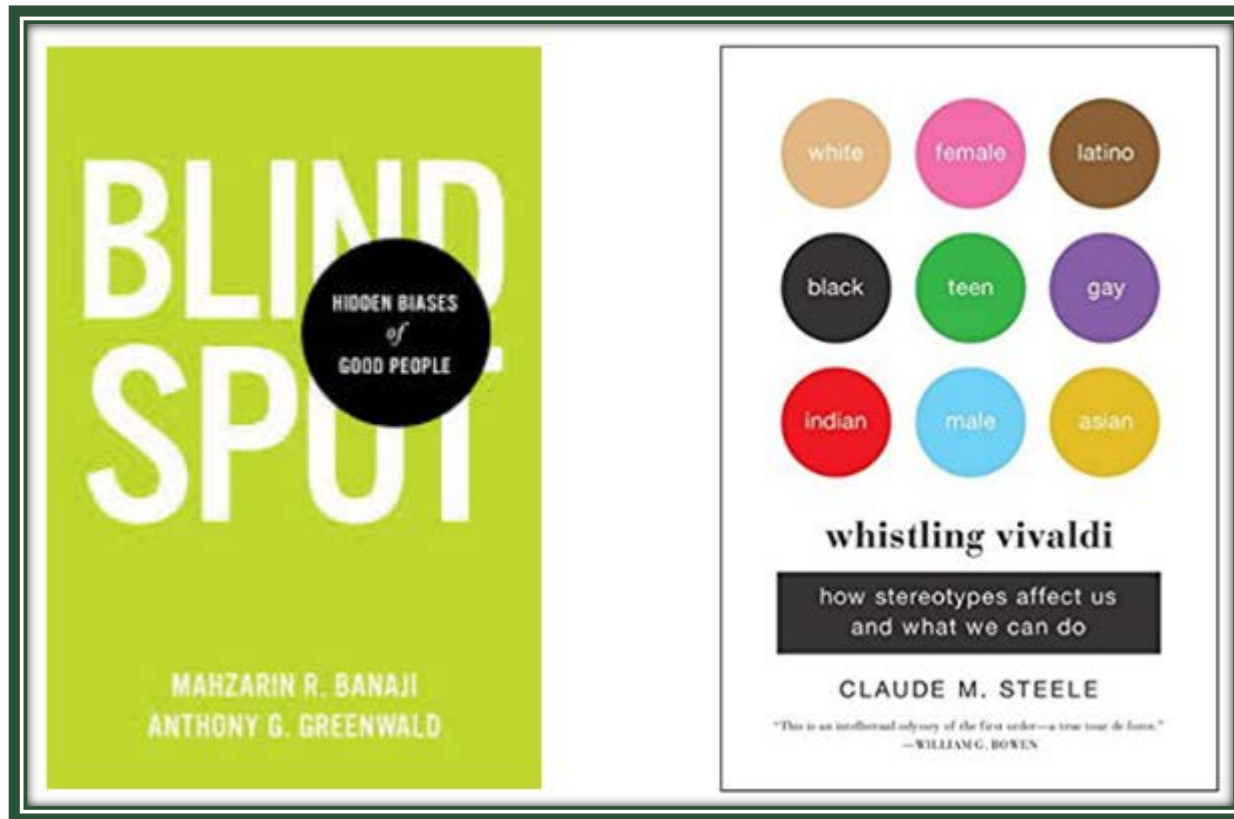
**Attended webinars on bias & cultural awareness**

**Independent Research: Texts/Articles**

# My Goal

To arm students/tutors with knowledge to understand, respect, and welcome diverse interactions, while engaging their abilities to *thoughtfully* and *meaningfully* reflect on those interactions (both inside and outside the institution), with the goal of reducing *harmful* bias

# Inspiration



# Key Points

- **Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People**
  - We all have hidden biases & operate under stereotypes
  - Explores how our brains process information
  - Implicit Association Test research
  - How to challenge our biases
- **Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do**
  - Everyone is stereotyped by others
  - Understanding identity & stereotype threat
  - Reducing identity & stereotype threat



# Tutor Feedback

“After attending the webinar, I realized that there was a quite a bit of stereotyping and assumptions that people do in life. As humans, we naturally tend to stereotype and assume even if we are not purposely meaning to do this or not intending to hurt anybody’s feelings since this is our nature. By making these stereotypes and assumptions of people, this can do more harm than good. This is true in our everyday life, but the webinar really brought to light about how this can affect tutoring sessions. When you have a tutoring session, your mind starts to assume about the student or about how the session will go and this is harmful. The webinar really showed how this can affect a session for worse instead of having a good and productive session. Another part of the webinar that was very helpful was about how to make a conscious effort to not stereotype or assume. I feel that by making a conscious effort and recognizing that we stereotype and make assumptions as humans, life and sessions can be more productive.” ~ Moriah King

# Tutor Feedback Cont.

“The idea of false memories (i.e. the misinformation effect) was a brand new concept to me. This webinar helped paint a detailed picture of how to become better aware of hidden bias, as a tutor, a professional and more importantly as a person. I plan to counter bias by practicing objectivity in my sessions through active listening and asking questions.”

~ Alex Howell

“I learned that bias is something that we can never truly separate ourselves from. However, it is important to combat it every way we can. The ways I will personally combat it is avoiding presumptions as much as possible, relying a lot on flexibility, and disassociation. I will avoid presumption by using the student's information only for communication and logging information. I will rely a lot on questioning techniques and flexibility to come up with a plan for the student based off of their struggle, not my impressions of the student themselves. After meeting a student, I will focus on evaluating my performance and not who I am as a person.” ~Josh Bailey

# Training Content Demo

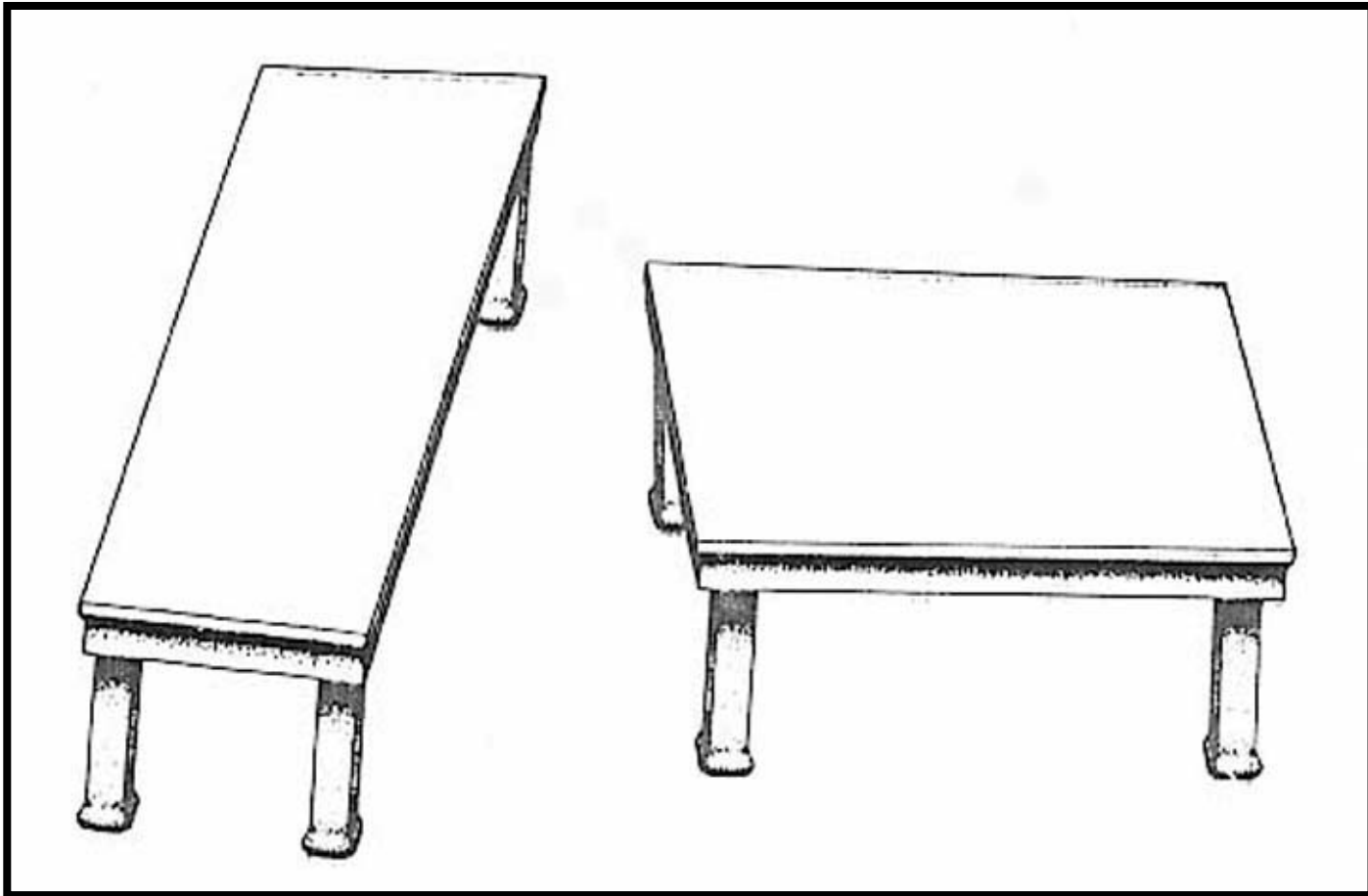
Understanding Hidden Blind Spots and Biases

*Strategies for Tutoring*

# Learning Outcomes

- Learn how the subconscious mind processes information and *recognize* how to *analyze* instinctive reactions for accuracy
- Understand how to *identify* hidden blind spots and stereotypes and *apply* techniques for practicing objectivity
- *Describe* the Student Accommodations Policy and know under what circumstances to share this policy with students

**Clearly both of these tables are the same size and shape.....But, really, they are!**



# How does this happen?

- Our retinas do in fact receive them as identical in shape and size-so the retinas see them accurately. However, when the eye transmits this information to the brain's visual cortex, where depth is perceived, it gets confusing...
- The incorrect perception occurs because the brain automatically converts the 2D image to a 3D interpretation of how it must be in the real world.
- Even once you know the tables are the same size and shape, when you look at it again, your brain is still like “uh, no way, let's double check that.”

The point is, the brain does so much of its work automatically, unconsciously, and unintentionally... even as our conscious minds know the truth.

**In conclusion, it takes a lot of work to see what is actually in front of you, instead of the illusion.**

# Take a minute to review these words for recall on the next slide

Ant

Bee

Feelers

Wing

Small

Spider

Web

Bite

Fly

Fright

Poison

Wasp

Slimy

Creepy

Crawl

Bug

# Write down the words you remember from the previous slide

Maple          Birch          Small          Willow

Ant            Wing          Oak          Fright

Poison        Leaves        Crawl        Spider

Fly            Tree          Acorn        Pine

Stem          Roots        Wasp        Creepy

Berry        Bite          Branch        Bug

Feelers        Web          Insect        Slimy

Bee



# Results!

Maple	Birch	Small	Willow
Ant	Wing	Oak	Fright
Poison	Leaves	Crawl	Spider
Fly	Tree	Acorn	Pine
Stem	Roots	Wasp	Creepy
Berry	Bite	Branch	Feelers
Web	<b>Insect</b>	Slimy	Bug
Bee			

- Anyone write down “Insect”? To be correct, all tree related words and insect should be left out
- Why do some people select Insect?
  - The mind automatically makes associations to help us process information
- 82% remembered seeing Insect but it was never there
  - False Memories: Mistakenly remembering something that did not occur
  - Misinformation Effect: Language can also affect memory (hit vs. smashed example)

# Stereotyping, Evolution, & Outcomes

- Example:
  - Which of these people seem the most trustworthy?
  - Which one is more likely to dominate others?
  - Which one will be the most competent at work?
- We instinctively make assumptions based on nothing more than a photo or a glance and we do it all the time (think ‘first impressions’)



# Stereotyping, Evolution, & Outcomes

- Why does this happen, how did it start?
  - Evolution! Our ancestors lived in small, homogenous groups, surround by constant, physical danger... social choices became important to basic survival (i.e. staying away from those different or not like us may have once been a safe strategy but now it can hurt us)
- Does stereotyping hurt not only others, but ourselves?
  - What do we believe about ourselves?
    - Example: male=career associations vs. female=family (how do we limit ourselves?)
  - How do we structure our interactions based on stereotypes?
  - Stereotyping can also be very individualized (i.e. I knew someone named George once and he was the WORST. I don't trust people named George!)

# What can we do?

- Self-awareness is only the first step in counteracting deeply ingrained ‘mindbugs’
- Stereotyping and association making will happen
  - Stopping that completely is a long ways off as it’s an evolutionary development but, we can be smarter than our subconscious
- We need to question what is really true/accurate
  - What do we know? What do we not know? Is there something else at work here? Why am I making this assumption? Do I need someone else’s help/support if I feel I might be making biased judgments?
- We need to *train* our brains out of it’s automatic stereotypes and hidden biases or *trick* our brains!
  - Some examples: “blind” auditioning; developing evidence-based guidelines that eliminate judgement (meets this need or doesn’t); practice making assumptions about folks that aren’t stereotypical (i.e. thinking of a ‘programmer’ as female instead of male)

# So what does this have to do with tutoring?

- Do we make assumptions or rely on stereotypes *before* we even meet a student?
  - I.E. course the student needs help with, the student's name, the frequency of appointments, the types of notes indicated in the Tutor Match appointment
- Do we also make assumptions or rely on stereotypes *after* we meet a student?
- Now...don't feel bad for gathering information! It is important to notice others. But, what is also important is **HOW** we notice others.
- Practice objectivity and truly see each interaction as a chance to gather information to put together a plan for tutoring
  - Questioning Techniques and Active Listening are Key!



# How do we practice objectivity?

- First, let's reflect.
- Have you ever felt misunderstood? How did you feel? How did you react?
- Have you felt stereotyped? In what way(s)? How did it change your thoughts, your behavior, your interactions with those individuals?
- Now... what would have made a difference for you? What actions/words/gestures could someone have done, or *not done* to create a positive space/interaction?
- Another question to consider.... Does practicing objectivity mean we can't have or express personal feelings/thoughts/ideas?
  - Hint: The answer is no 😊 It's not about not having opinions, feelings, or reactions but about *questioning* our uninformed opinions and reactions and proceeding forward with accurate knowledge.

# Let's Chat!

- What can you do before, during, or after a tutoring session to support objectivity and resist stereotyping? Remember! Information gathering is important; Making uninformed judgements is the problem.
- Let's look at some scenarios.
  - Student did not provide any information when making the Tutor Match appointment and comes to the session unprepared and is very flustered.
    - Potential stereotype thoughts/responses?
    - Objective thoughts/response?
  - Student comes to the session very positive and announces they have been at Rasmussen for a long time and have years of professional experience in this field and are just stuck on one particular concept.
    - Potential stereotype thoughts/responses?
    - Objective thoughts/response?

# Student Accommodations Policy

Rasmussen College



# Student Accommodations Policy

- The mission of Rasmussen College in disability services is to create an accessible college community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of the educational experience. Rasmussen College recognizes its obligation under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and commits to the success of its students and faculty by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability and requiring reasonable accommodations to qualified disabled students in all programs and activities.
- Students with disabilities do not have to self-disclose or register with the Campus Accommodations Coordinator, although the College encourages them to do so. Students seeking academic accommodations or adjustments must contact the Campus Accommodations Coordinator to request such services. Students who are unsure who to contact should check with their Academic Dean or Campus Director.

# Where is this information?

The pages can be accessed directly at: [www.rasmussen.edu/student-life/disability-services](http://www.rasmussen.edu/student-life/disability-services) or you can navigate there via [www.rasmussen.edu](http://www.rasmussen.edu) > Student Life > Disability Services

<b>Postsecondary Accommodations Process</b>	<p><b>Requesting an Accommodation</b></p> <p>Although you may request an academic accommodation at any time, you should request it as early as possible. Some academic adjustments may take more time to provide than others.</p> <p>Please note that disabled students are not required to self-disclose or register with the campus accommodations coordinator, although we encourage them to do so. Students seeking academic accommodations or adjustments must contact the local campus accommodations coordinator to request such services. Students who are unsure whom to contact should check with their academic dean or campus instructor.</p> <p><b>How Does the Accommodations Process Work at Rasmussen College?</b></p> <p>First, you'll want to contact the campus accommodations coordinator (CAC) at your campus so they can help you locate the necessary forms and guide you through the process. You will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Student Request for <b>Accommodations and Document Review form</b>, which can be obtained from the CAC and completed electronically or handwritten.</li> <li>• Obtain the necessary disability documentation to submit with this form. You can either submit:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your most recent IEP evaluation (contact your high school for a current copy).</li> <li>• The <b>Qualified Professional Documentation form</b>. This should be completed by a recognized professional, such as a learning disabilities specialist, educational specialist, physician, licensed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Student Rights and Responsibilities</b>	
<b>Available Services and Accommodations</b>	
<b>Accommodations Process</b>	
<b>Disability Services Operations and Committee</b>	
<b>Non-Discrimination and Grievance Policy</b>	

# Accommodations & Tutor Talking Points

- If we suspect a student might have a qualifying disability, can we suggest that student seek an accommodation?
  - The answer is NO. Why not?
- It is not our place to make assumptions or judgements about a student's disability status or his or her individual needs/desires.
  - A student may have a qualifying disability but not wish to seek an accommodation.
  - A student may not have a qualifying disability.
- So when can I, or should I, share this information?
  - If a student self-discloses a disability **and** also expresses a desire for an accommodation, that is an appropriate time to share where they can find information on accommodations at Rasmussen College.
- Additional Notes
  - *We cannot speak to the types of accommodations a student could receive.*
  - *If you ever experience questions around a tutor session and an accommodations issue, please notify your LSC for clarification, advice, and support.*

# Scenarios

- A student is struggling with reading comprehension and mentions she has ADHD and typically finds it hard to read for long periods of time. To deal with it, she reads in short bursts and takes a break after. Should you suggest accommodations?
- A student mentions that he has difficulty reading the online text due to a vision impairment and wishes the school could do something for him. Should you suggest accommodations?
- A student does not disclose a disability but you feel the student is transposing some letters and numbers when working together and you suspect the student may have dyslexia. Should you suggest accommodations?

# In conclusion...

- Our brains are doing a lot of subconscious work all the time. Sometimes we have to consciously step in and monitor what it is doing
- Question your initial thoughts/reactions and check for accuracy
- Practice objectivity as you gather information
- Know where to find the Student Accommodations Policy and share only when appropriate

# Next Step!

Complete the assessment found on the Tutor Excellence Guide and submit to your Learning Services Coordinator as soon as possible for completion credit

<http://guides.rasmussen.edu/tutorexcellence/TETrainingandDevelopment>

**Thank you for attending!**



# References

- Banaji, M.R. & Greenwald, A.G. (2013). *Blind spot: Hidden biases of good people*. New York: Bantam Books
- Project Implicit. (2011). Retrieved from: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- Steele, C.M. (2010). *Whistling vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Diversity vs. inclusion. (2016, May 1). Retrieved from <https://siyanasokolova.wordpress.com/category/diversity/>
- Pixabay. (2017). Retrieved from <https://pixabay.com/>

# Assessment Questions

**Question 1:** How can stereotyping and/or making assumptions affect a tutoring session?

**Question 2:** Give an example of a stereotype or assumption that you may experience before or during a tutoring session. Describe how you can counteract that stereotype.

**Question 3:** What individual should students contact if they would like more information on accommodations? Where can they find more information on this policy? Finally, if you suspect a student might qualify for an accommodation, are you able to suggest one? Why or why not?



# What's Next?

- Continuing the conversation on diversity and inclusion
  - 1 on 1's and evaluation processes
  - Ask tutors about biases they may have experienced and how they worked through them
- In Development: 3 part Diversity Training series for tutors
  - Topics in Part 2: Additional forms of bias
  - Topics in Part 3: Understanding privilege

# Additional Resources to Consider

- Robbins, S.L. (2009). *What if? Short stories to spark diversity dialogue*. Boston: Davies-Black
- Stanier, M.B. (2016). *The coaching habit: Say less, ask more & change the way you lead forever*. Toronto, Canada: Box of Crayons Press
- Willink, J. & Babin, L. (2017). *Extreme ownership: How the U.S. Navy SEALs lead and win*. New York: St. Martin's Press

# A few final thoughts...

- Biases happen and that's okay! Learning to recognize them, reflect, and work through them is what matters
- Continue the discussion with tutors to encourage regular reflection and practice
- Consider using this topic as a professional development share amongst staff
- Additional questions/discussion?

# Contact Information

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