ENGINEER TOGETHER

Practical Inclusion Strategies for Student Leaders

As part of the Engineer Together initiative, the College of Engineering's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is excited to share practical inclusion strategies that can be implemented in any event where students are gathered. This list will continue to grow and change over time, so we hope you will check our DEI website (eng.auburn.edu/dei) for the most up-to-date list so we can continuously improve our inclusion efforts within the College. (Updated December 2023)

I. Acknowledge Bias

a. Take the initiative to learn about different cultures (foods, festivals, religions, etc.).
b. Undergo bias training with prompted self-reflection.
    i. Have leadership take an implicit bias test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html
    ii. Are decisions motivated purely by the advancement of the organization or are there ulterior motives?
    iii. Do friends of those on the leadership team get assigned tasks or given preferential treatment because of their relationship with leaders?
c. When making decisions that will impact the entire group, only consider necessary skills.
d. Consider anonymous member surveys to ensure their interests are considered rather than putting members where they don't want to be.
e. Create a safe environment for others to ask questions.
f. Have anonymous check-in surveys throughout the year for members to complete to receive feedback on any bias they feel they may be experiencing.

II. Acknowledge Holidays and Celebrations

a. Be aware of ALL holidays, even those not observed on the official AU calendar. Have a conversation with members about the process of being excused from a meeting for religious holidays and set the expectation that members can come to you with questions about holidays and celebrations.
b. Be aware of holidays that involve food restrictions for participants (fasting or no-meat on Fridays) – provide to-go boxes for participants to eat the food later or vegetarian options.
c. Incorporate all holidays into meetings so members know you are aware of those "less celebrated" holidays such as Good Friday, Ash Wednesday, etc. Have a conversation with your organization at the beginning of the semester about the process of requesting an excused absence for religious holidays. Set the expectation early on that members can come to you with questions about holidays and celebrations.
d. Turn on the "Religious Holidays" calendar in whatever platform you use (Outlook and Google calendars both have this feature).
e. Create a shared calendar that would allow any members to add a holiday they may celebrate.
f. Celebrate all end-of-the-year holidays with your members, not just Christmas.

g. Refer to breaks in school more generally instead of using the Christian holiday names. (i.e. Winter Break instead of Christmas Break)

III. Apologize and (re)Commit

a. Provide structured time and guidance for self-reflection to help individuals identify problems in their own behavior. This could be incorporated into an organization meeting once a month or on an as-needed basis.
b. Include statements in your membership packets encouraging students to inform you about actions they find problematic.
c. Identify and train third-party allies who can facilitate conversations when an apology is needed.
d. Send an email – don't be embarrassed about fixing a mistake or clarifying information in an email after a misunderstanding.
e. Be willing to admit your faults, and show intent to improve.
    i. Don't be defensive – stay calm
    ii. Don't make it about you – the other person's feelings are real regardless of your intention

IV. Celebrate Inclusive Behavior

a. Encourage your organization to set goals for inclusion with awards or rewards for those who meet them.
b. Be intentional about making sure celebrations such as birthday shoutouts are done for everyone. If you do it for one, you should do it for all.
c. Make outcomes related to respectful teamwork a part of the foundation for your organization.
d. Be quick to compliment others when you notice inclusive behavior as a way to encourage additional efforts.
e. Acknowledge and warmly welcome the addition of new members.
f. Ask people about their backgrounds to acknowledge their diversity.
g. Have a new member survey where you can gain insight into what new members want to get out of their membership. Also makes new members feel like they have a voice.

V. Consider Implications of Time

a. When planning events outside of normal meeting hours, consider the schedules of members with children and those with pets. It's always a good idea to check with potential participants about life conflicts before planning an event. Be considerate of students who may have jobs that prevent them from being able to meet to work on a group assignment outside of normal meeting times. Also consider family and church obligations.
b. Consider the time of your meetings. Some students may not feel comfortable walking home in the dark after late meetings. Students can park closer to buildings after 5 pm.
c. Be aware of major project and exam schedules when scheduling additional meetings. Consider moving regularly scheduled meetings to a different date/time if most members have a large exam the next day.
d. Consider religious periods/holidays during the day when scheduling meetings or events. Be flexible as needed when employees or students have a religious conflict for religious reasons during the day.
e. Consider offering an online option for students who want to attend but cannot physically be on campus for a meeting.
f. Utilize GroupMe and ask if meeting times work for students before scheduling.
g. Alternate meetings to be held on M/W/F and T/R to allow more students to have the opportunity to attend based on class schedules.

h. Record meetings for students unable to attend to watch later to stay in the loop or take minutes to share with all members following each meeting.
i. Proactively communicate about key meetings each semester.
j. Consider extending election voting so students unable to attend in-person could vote virtually.
k. Consider only scheduling meetings when 75% (or whatever percentage works for your organization) of members are able to attend. Can decide on this by a poll (GroupMe, DoodlePoll, WhenToMeet, etc.).
l. To stay on track during the meeting, set a timer for each portion and move on from that topic once the timer goes off.
m. Respect people's time: begin and end meetings on time.
n. Discuss with speakers ahead of time to respect the ending time of the meeting.
o. Post what was discussed for students who were unable to attend so they can still receive any updates or news they missed.
p. Have announcements at a standard time so participants, if they choose, can just attend that part of the meeting.
q. Have plans in place on how to keep meetings on track and not allow one person to ramble and get off topic, president or otherwise.

VI. Foster an Environment of Transparency and Feedback

a. Provide leadership training that includes guided conversations on how to support transparency with members and how to effectively give feedback.
b. Make meetings more informal so everyone feels comfortable expressing opinions and concerns.
c. Make an effort to have a diverse leadership team so everyone sees themselves reflected in their leadership.
d. Be honest with members about the state of the organization, including mistakes and failures.
e. Host an exec board Q&A so members can ask questions – questions could be asked directly or submitted anonymously.
f. Offer consistent updates and provide documentation as needed.
g. Provide anonymous surveys for members to complete to give feedback.
h. Let all members vote on any proposed changes to the organization instead of leaders making all of the decisions.
i. Be open-minded about other people's schedules, yet encourage accountability.
j. Be open and honest about the goals of the organization and talk about how we can reach them.
k. Give opportunities for people to talk about their passions.
l. Have executive board happenings summary presented in general body meetings.

VII. Cultivate Community from Multiple Touchpoints

a. Facilitate formal introductions at events.
b. Actively invite people in person to events.
c. Offer a mix of formal meetings and social events to build community among members.
d. Ask members what they want to see from leadership.
e. Coordinate a meet and greet between old and new members.
f. Be sure to send open invitations for lunches, events, etc. Send reminders and/or a calendar invite to help increase attendance.
g. Encourage students to join other clubs/organizations they may not have considered.
    i. Combine efforts with other organizations as appropriate to host similar events.

h. Be mindful when creating student groups to ensure that you are promoting new interactions without isolating certain students.
i. Create programs for populations with specific needs.
j. Ensure accessibility to attend programs and opportunities. Create an easy registration process and ensure the point of contact is noted if someone needs to request accommodation.
    i. Can also include the "Accommodations" box in the registration form.
k. Utilize multiple forms of communication when relaying information: email, GroupMe, social media.
l. Offer more in-person outreach opportunities that specifically target freshmen students.
m. Ask professors and advisors to advertise events to students in their classes.
n. Utilize box so students can access information anywhere at any time.
o. Encourage members to participate in various avenues within the organization
p. Host events outside of typical meeting locations
q. Arrange new types of events to meet people within their understanding and community.

VIII. Food Choices at Events

a. Include a disclaimer when sending out invitations to events that will include food so participants know what to expect and can plan ahead as needed.
b. Describe the food being served, including the ingredients list.
    i. If doing a potluck event, be sure everyone writes out the ingredient list on an index card.
c. Ask during the registration process for an event that will serve food if a participant requires dietary accommodations that will not be met with what is being served.
d. Include options for major allergies and food preferences (gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, etc.).
e. Plan for food offerings at events by providing adequate choices.
f. Order as many food types as possible, vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, no-pork, etc to accommodate as many people and cultures as possible.
g. Be mindful when passing out snacks/candy at meetings and ensure that no students have a severe allergy to what you are passing out (i.e. allergic to peanut butter).
h. Accommodate students who are bringing their own food due to dietary restrictions, such as providing a microwave or refrigerator if needed.
i. Get input from members on food choices/restrictions.
j. Letting people with food allergies go first in the line so as not to have food or serving utensils contaminated.
k. Admit and take action when food has sat out too long and may no longer be safe to eat.
l. Provide a list of ingredients, especially for homemade foods.

IX. Names and Pronunciations

a. Ask how to pronounce it at the beginning of your conversation and repeat it back. You can follow up at the end to ask one more time and ensure whoever you are talking to will do your best to remember their name.
b. Try to correctly say someone's name when first meeting someone. Always make an effort to pronounce their name in future interactions – everyone appreciates the effort.
c. Write their name down in the way it is pronounced to help you remember the pronunciation but be discreet and remember to write their name correctly on official documents.
d. Acknowledge your limitations with committing a name and its pronunciation to memory. Again, the effort is what matters.
e. If you pronounce someone's name wrong, apologize and ask for pronunciation again.

X. Utilize Gender Pronouns

a. Add your pronouns to your email signature and on Zoom meetings to encourage others to share their pronouns.
b. Add your pronouns to your nametag as applicable to encourage others who want to share their pronouns to do the same.
c. Introduce yourself as your pronoun (Hi. I'm John Doe and I use the pronouns he/him/his).
d. Make the effort to use pronouns correctly!