

(Re)Centering the Student

A Humanistic Approach to Student Appointments



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Introductions

Blazey Heier

Director of Student Services

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- she/her
- Cis gender woman
- White
- First-Generation college student
- Pell student
- Never stayed in a dorm room in my life
(commuter student at an open access university)
- Graduated college in four years while working 60 hrs/week between two jobs

Lindsey Vaughan

Lead Academic Advisor

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- she/her
- Cis gender woman
- White
- College was a non-negotiable
- While in undergrad I did not know you could withdraw from classes
- It took me two years to change out of a major I knew in my first semester wasn't a good fit



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Workshop Overview

- Implicit-Bias Overview
 - Individual Reflection on Positionality
- Humanistic Psychology
 - Active Listening Exercise
- Small Group Scenarios
- Put it into Practice



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Implicit Bias



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Implicit Bias

Implicit biases are favorable or unfavorable attitudes or dispositions toward social objects.

What are “social objects”?

- Social Identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)
- Proxies for Social Identities (clothing, religious and cultural objects, etc.)
- Human Experiences (housing status, substance use disorder, etc.)
- etc.

(Greenwald & Banaji, 1995)



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Implicit Bias

Implicit biases:

- Exist at a **subconscious** level
- Learned through **socialization**
- May **be in conflict** with a person's explicit biases or attitudes
- Can show up in **subtle** ways (e.g., body language, tone, etc.)

Implicit biases can be activated by when we experience **cognitive strain** (Meidert et al., 2023).

Cognitive strain can happen when people are under high pressure, high work volume, time constraints, or when we are experiencing fatigue.

When do you experience cognitive strain in a work environment?



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Positionality

Positionality: The aspects of ourselves we bring into a space.

- Social identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.),
- Relational identities (parent, advisor, etc.)
- Beliefs and values

Our positionality isn't stable - it's fluid and context-specific.

Some of identities and values may be more salient in some spaces than others.

(Jones et al., 2021)



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Reflection Activity



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Self-Reflection on Positionality

Reflect on your social and relational identities.

Which identities are most salient for you in your work context? Why?



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Self-Reflection on Positionality

Reflect on your personal and professional experiences with higher education.

What does higher education mean to you?

What assumptions or beliefs do you hold about college education?

What experiences or teachings have contributed to how you understand or value higher education?



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Self-Reflection on Positionality

What beliefs, values, or assumptions do you bring into your student appointments?



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How was that for you? What did you notice or learn about yourself?



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Humanistic Theory



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Humanistic Psychology

- Centers the inherent potential for growth, autonomy, and self-actualization.
- Emphasizes subjective experience, personal meaning, and free will.
- Prioritizes authenticity, emotional awareness, and the individual's lived inner world.
- Sees people as active agents capable of creating change in their lives.

Major Contributors: Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Viktor Frankl, Charlotte Bühler



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Rogers' Three Core Conditions

1. Unconditional Positive Regard

- a. accepting and valuing another person completely, without judgment or conditions

2. Empathetic Understanding

- a. ability to understand another person's feelings and what they might be experiencing

3. Congruence

- a. alignment between a person's inner experience and their outward expression



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The Humanistic Advisor

- ❖ Humanistic advising means being present, authentic, and open - grounded in empathy, autonomy, and cultural humility.
- ❖ Advisees are active agents capable of creating change in their lives.
- ❖ Students are the expert on themselves. They self-identify goals and self-evaluate; we help them think through options and create realistic, actionable plans.



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Active Listening Activity



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Active Listening Activity

- Pair up.
- Each person speaks for 3 minutes about something important to them.
- Listener remains silent:
 - No comments, no questions, no “mhm/aha/uh-huh.”
 - Eye contact and nodding are okay.
 - Focus on understanding, not responding.

After the 3 minutes: The listener will paraphrase in their own words the main points they think they heard the speaker say, while the speaker remains quiet. Use paraphrasing lead-ins such as “I think I heard you say ...” and “It sounds like...”



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Conversation Prompts

- What would be your perfect weekend? Walk us through it.
- Who had the biggest impact on who you are today? How?
- If your best friend were asked to describe you, what would they say?
- What were you really into as a kid, and why did it capture you?
- If you opened a business, what kind would it be, and why that idea?



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Share Out

Listener:

- Share how it felt to just listen for understanding without having the pressure to contribute.
- Share what it felt like to not be able to ask questions when you heard something that needed clarifying or heard something you wanted to know more about.
- Discuss what happened to your internal dialogue.
- Did you actually need to plan your response? Why? Why not?

Speaker:

- How did it feel to have the listeners full attention?
- How did it feel having the freedom to speak without interruption?



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Scenarios!



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Scenarios

You are meeting with this student for the first time:

- How would you approach this appointment?
- What are important things you would want to be sure to cover?
- What additional information do you need about the student?



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Scenario #1 Sofia Delgado



Major/Minor: Biochemistry major with a pre-health interest

Current Enrollment: Not currently enrolled

GPA: 1.279

Actions & Alerts:

- **You must pay past due balance**

You have a financial hold because you owe a past due balance. The balance due is \$1,500 or more.

Impact: You cannot register for classes until you pay the past due balance.

- **Academic advising required**

First Gen Status: A054 - FirstGen - First Generation

Academic Standing: ALRT

Desired Outcomes: “Need help getting enrolled”



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Scenario #2 Connor Whitaker



Major/Minor: Economics, hoping to IUT to Leeds School of Business

Current Enrollment:

- ECON 2010
- MATH 2510
- ENGL 2212
- GEOG 1001

GPA: 1.872

Actions & Alerts:

- **Academic Standing - Suspension**

Description: You are on academic suspension.

Impact: You are not eligible to enroll in Main Campus classes during the fall or spring semesters.

First Gen Status: N/A

Academic Standing: SUSP

Desired Outcomes: “Enrolling in summer classes”



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Scenario #3 Jordan Reyes



Major/Minor: Physics

Current Enrollment: Not currently enrolled

GPA: 1.651

Actions & Alerts:

- Academic Standing - Dismissal
Description: You are on academic dismissal.
Impact: You are not eligible to register for Main Campus or Continuing Education classes during the fall and spring semesters.

First Gen Status: A054 - FirstGen - First Generation

Academic Standing: DISM

Desired Outcomes: “Classes for spring”



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Scenario #4 Sienna Park



Major/Minor: Psychology major with a Minor in Business and a Minor in Political Science

Current Enrollment:

- PSYC 2606
- PSYC 2111
- PSCI 2004
- MCDB 2150
- RLST 2400

GPA: 3.674

Actions & Alerts: N/A

First Gen Status: N/A

Academic Standing: Good Standing

Desired Outcomes: “I want to update my graduation plan to include summer.”



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Reflection

What did you notice about your positionality/biases during this activity?

What assumptions did you make?

What would unconditional positive regard look like in this appointment?



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Putting it into Practice



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How do students experience us?



Students primarily experience the university through university agents (i.e., us)

- ↳ Students' prior experiences with university agents shape their perception of current interactions with those same agents or agents in a similar role
- ↳ These perceptions or construals (positive/negative) compound over time (with early experiences being more impactful)
- ↳ These construals inform sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy



What can we do?

How do you create trust with your students?

What are practices that you do toward these goals?

Any new ideas from today that you would like to incorporate into your practice?



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What would it look like to *not* prep
for appointments?



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Questions?

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