



# ADVANCE BU

Advancing and Maintaining Equity

September 2024

Monthly Newsletter

## Markers of Progress and Opportunities for Growth

When Bradley's Gender Equity Task Force administered a survey to faculty in 2018, the results revealed a striking difference between men's and women's experiences and perceptions. When asked how often they had experienced or witnessed varied kinds of discrimination, women were up to six times more likely than men to report having such experiences "sometimes," "often" or "very often." When ADVANCE BU administered a similar survey to faculty in Spring of 2024, women and non-binary faculty still reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination more often than men, but the gaps between them were narrower, ranging from just one percentage point higher to three times higher for all but one category of discrimination. This narrowing gap appears to indicate a growing awareness of these issues among those who previously had not noticed patterns of discrimination on campus. This is good news, because awareness is the first step toward improvement. One exception in this good news story is in the area of subtle discrimination against women, that is, singling out, overlooking, ignoring, interrupting, and treating women with condescension. Women were more than twice as likely to report such experiences in 2018, and that gap grew slightly in 2024. In an effort to address this persistent problem, ADVANCE BU is hosting an interactive **workshop on bystander intervention strategies**. This nationally recognized workshop by FLS Theater features live performances by professional actors who play out numerous university workplace scenarios. As the characters navigate situations of bias, workshop participants are asked to reflect on what they are seeing and how they might respond to the situation. The goal is not only to make us better attuned to subtle forms of discrimination, but to give us the tools we need to effectively respond to such incidents. All faculty and staff are invited to join us for this live (virtual) workshop, Tuesday, Sept. 17, 12–1:15 p.m. [Register here.](#)

## Equity Quick Takes: How to Combat Email Incivility

We've all received them (and maybe even sent them):

- *The outburst: an emotionally-charged email, often with accusations and ALL-CAPS YELLING!*
- *The shade: a passive-aggressive or subtly insulting email, often challenging someone's competence*
- *The brush-off: a non-response, terse reply, or response that ignores your question or concern*
- *The "drive-by": upsetting or consequential information cloaked in a routine email*
- *The manifesto: a lengthy diatribe designed to silence dissent*

As researchers out of the University of Michigan note, "[Such] incivility may be subtle, but its effects are not," as it leads to lower job satisfaction, lower engagement, lower commitment to the organization, lower productivity, and even insomnia and stress-related illnesses. And some groups experience more incivility than others. Researchers suggest several ways to combat overt or subtle email incivility.

**Pick up the phone.**

Because emails don't capture tone of voice or

	body language, misunderstandings can arise. For difficult conversations, phone calls or face-to-face interactions allow for more subtlety of expression and create fewer opportunities for misinterpretation.
<b>Signal your attention.</b>	If you receive an email that will require further thought or research, let the sender know that you will look into it and get back to them as soon as you can. Ignoring emails communicates disrespect.
<b>Get a second opinion.</b>	If you receive an upsetting email, don't respond immediately. Walk away and read it again later, possibly with another person. Have you interpreted it correctly? If you have composed a potentially upsetting email, don't send it immediately. Let it sit, read it again once you have had time to think, and consider running it by another person first.
<b>Establish email norms.</b>	Unit leaders should engage faculty and staff in discussions about professional communications, establish expectations around response times and civil language, and lead by example. Even seemingly minor acts of incivility can have substantial cumulative effects through workplace disruption, distraction, and dissatisfaction.

Sources:

**Unit-wide Email Blow-up: Climate Case Study #2** (University of Michigan RISE 2022);

**Email Incivility: Don't be Rude!** (Grabarek 2020);

**When an Email Exchange Turns Ugly** (Thomas 2018).

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## Spotlight: Bradley Faculty Collaborate on Louis Stokes Alliance Initiative

In collaboration with five other downstate Illinois universities, three Bradley faculty recently learned that they are among the recipients of a \$700,000 Louis Stokes Alliance grant from the National Science Foundation. Named for Louis Stokes, the first African American member of Congress, the program supports efforts to increase the participation of historically underrepresented groups in the STEM fields, and to prepare them for graduate studies or careers in STEM. Michelle Edgcomb Friday (Biology), Jacqueline Henderson (Mechanical Engineering), and Sherri Morris (Biology) joined with faculty from Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Southern Illinois University - Carbondale, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Western Illinois University to create the South Central Illinois Alliance (SCI-LSAMP). Members of the Alliance will implement activities to build learning communities at their home institutions, foster faculty mentorship through research, improve academic performance, and facilitate applications to STEM graduate programs. "Student success, knowledge and discovery, inclusiveness and connectivity, and excellence are the core values that support the mission and vision of Bradley University," notes Sherri Morris. "A [Louis Stokes initiative] focused on the needs of students in central and southern Illinois directly supports Bradley University's efforts to expand diversity and retention of historically underrepresented groups in the STEM fields."

With barriers to equal participation in STEM nationwide, the need for such a program is clear. "We believe it is unethical to allow institutionalized racism to perpetuate under-representation in STEM fields. And under-representation in STEM fields stifles innovation, progress, and humanity's ability to solve modern technological problems," Michelle Edgcomb Friday observes. Therefore, as Jacqueline Henderson explains, "Bradley faculty in science and engineering will work to expand cohorts of STEM students, and help them develop skills that have been demonstrated to be successful in STEM fields. We will encourage participation in summer research and summer internships as they investigate career and academic interests within STEM." In addition to these efforts on Bradley's campus, collaboration across downstate universities will provide students and faculty with a broader support network as we strive to make STEM more diverse and inclusive. In the coming months, the Alliance team will be reaching out to the Bradley community with details on programming and research opportunities. Contact **Michelle Edgcomb Friday** for more information.



**Michelle Edgcomb Friday**,  
Tenured Lecturer in Biology,  
Associate Dean, LAS



**Jacqueline Henderson**,  
Associate Professor of  
Mechanical Engineering



**Sherri Morris**, Professor of  
Biology, Interim Dean, LAS

## Higher Ed Equity in the News

**Women, People of Color Underrepresented in Higher Ed’s Top Professional Staff Positions**

**Two Factors Challenging Faculty’s Sense of Inclusion**

**Disability Ruling for California College is “Wake-up Call” for Others**

**Faculty Members are Burned Out—and Technology is Partly to Blame**

## Upcoming ADVANCE BU Events

**FLS Theater Bystander Intervention Workshop | Sept. 17, Noon–1:15 p.m.**

This virtual, live workshop uses evidence-based scripts performed by professional actors to explore issues of bias, equity, and inclusion in university settings. Free and open to all faculty, staff, and administrators.

**Register here.**

**Learn More About This Workshop**

**Lunch and Learn for Past, Present, and Future Academic Chairs and Directors**

**Sept. 30, Noon**

*Location TBA*



**Contact Us**

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