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Strategies for Increasing Cultural Communication Competence

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Interactive Session Proposal

Strategies for Increasing Cultural Communication Competence

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Being an effective communicator is essential to being a successful academic chair. The role itself brings with it ever-increasing opportunities for intercultural interaction: in the classroom, during the hiring process, at faculty meetings and with colleagues and administrators. In order to increase cultural communication competence, individuals must possess knowledge of the process of communication and motivation to learn skills associated with enhancing personal communication abilities.

This interactive session will answer the questions: “what happens when we communicate with someone who has a different cultural background than our own?” and, “what can we do to improve the outcomes of those interactions?” Through facilitated discussion and a small group problem-solving exercise, participants will have the opportunity to enhance their current level of cultural awareness, recognize the impact this has on communication competency and improve skills in these areas.

The session begins with an ice-breaker designed to raise awareness around the influence of culture on self-identity. Next, we will discuss **Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions** supplemented by American co-cultural distinctions to heighten consciousness around the communication challenges these can produce. At this point, attention will turn to characteristics of cultural competence: flexibility, cognitive complexity, empathy, self-monitoring and commitment with specific suggestions for strategies for improving personal skills in each.

Participants will then be organized into small groups and provided with a current news story illustrating a dilemma in higher education exacerbated by lack of cultural knowledge and poor communication skills. Each group will be instructed to come up an effective response to the event and present it to the whole. Some possibilities for this exercise are included as additional documents in the submission process.

The session will conclude with de-briefing and suggestions for further reading.