



TEA TIME WITH LESLIE:

REFRAMING

REPRESENTATION

TO CHALLENGE IMPLICIT BIAS+ IN COLLEGE MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

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WHY THIS **MATTERS**

- PERSONAL CONNECTION
- SIGNIFICANCE
- LEARNING EXPECTATIONS



DEFINING IMPLICIT BIAS AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

Implicit Bias:

- Unconscious attitudes or stereotypes
- Influences decisions, actions, and judgments
- Often unintentional
- Subtle and can be hard to recognize
- Affects behavior without awareness

Microaggressions:

- Small, everyday insults or slights
- Often verbal or behavioral actions
- Can be intentional or unintentional
- Direct but may seem minor or trivial
- Can perpetuate stereotypes



Both can harm brand reputation
Both can alienate diverse audiences
Both can perpetuate inequality in representation
Both require awareness and proactive change



SPILL THE TEA ON **BIASES**

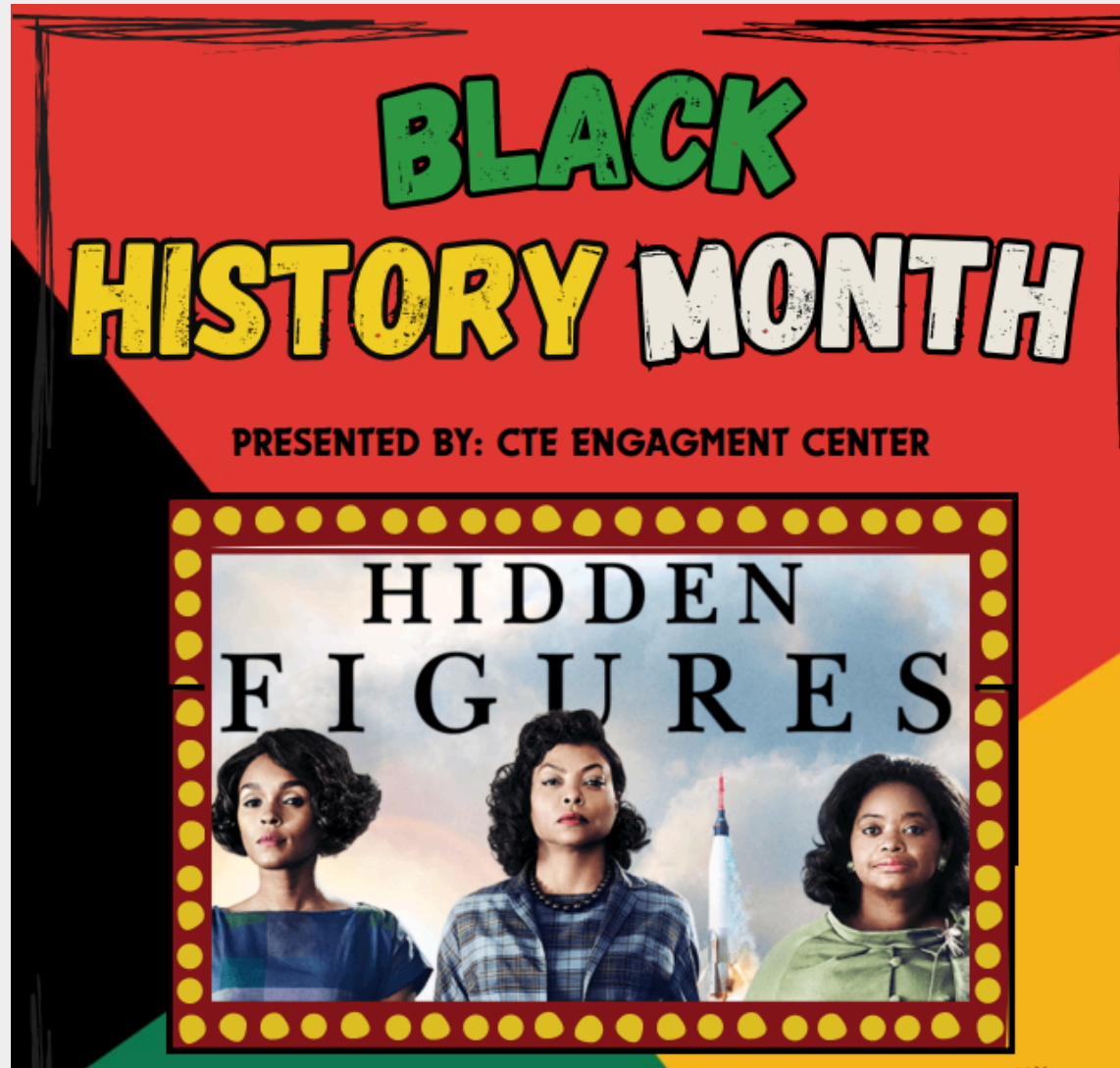


IMPLICIT BIAS AND MICROAGGRESSIONS IN ACTION

HOW THEY APPEAR IN MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



EXAMPLES



Join in the fun and watch "Hidden Figures" while you enjoy some food.

Food: Herb Chicken and Rice medley, cornbread and watermelon

Refreshments: Fruit punch and water

The CTE Peer Mentors will be responsible for the movie screening and have worked hard on decorating the room for the event.



We're celebrating history this Friday on Mt. Rubidoux!

Ward 1's busiest and likely most beloved park, Mt. Rubidoux, will be the home of a dedication ceremony later this week. The mountain, first owned by Mission Inn mastermind Frank Miller, has several historic tablets installed in various locations dedicated to significant figures in California and American history. On **Friday, February 28, at 2pm** a new tablet will be dedicated in honor of Miller and African American leader Booker T. Washington.

On March 22, 1914, Booker T. Washington visited Riverside and was a guest of Frank Miller at the Mission Inn. Washington spoke at two local churches, Sherman Institute, and the Mission Inn. Sometime that day, Miller took Booker T. Washington up Mt. Rubidoux to view Riverside and the surrounding area. A photograph of the two men standing near the summit was taken and is in the collection of the Mission Inn Foundation.

Join Mayor Lock Dawson, myself, and others up Mt. Rubidoux on Friday to commemorate history and dedicate this new tablet. It will be a sunny, cool day—perfect for a jaunt up the mountain.

See you there,

Philip Falcone

EXAMPLES



Print Close

Colleges Get Edgier to Stand Out in Marketing Campaigns, but Will it Get a Failing Grade?

Published November 17, 2014

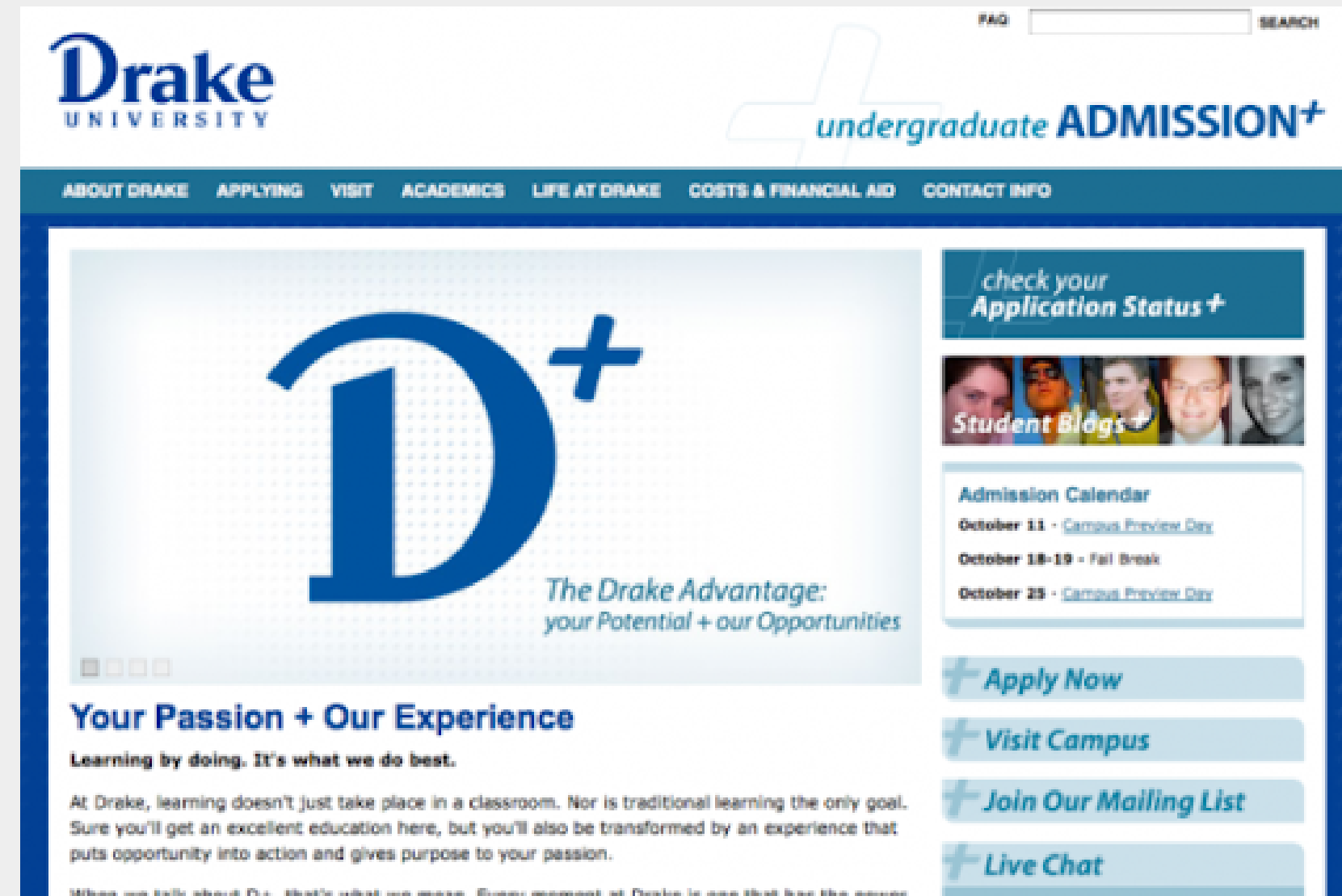
Associated Press

Drake University hoped a bold, blue "D+" on a direct-mail piece and its admissions website would grab the attention of high school kids inundated with same-old, same-old college recruitment material.

What looked like a pretty bad grade was supposed to entice teenagers to take a closer look at the pluses of attending the school in Des Moines, Iowa.

Drake officials didn't anticipate their daring idea getting ridiculed on advertising blogs, angering alumni who complained on Facebook that their degrees had been devalued, or inspiring a local store to market "D+ student" T-shirts to amused Drake students and underachievers alike.

Consider it a cautionary tale for colleges embarking on marketing and branding campaigns designed to set themselves apart in the cutthroat competition to gain prestige and grab their share of a shrinking student pool.



When a Diversity and Inclusion Campaign Goes Wrong... Oh So Wrong!



Andres F Rincon · [Follow](#)

Published in Marketing in the Age of Digital · 3 min read · Oct 27, 2019



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The University of Missouri's athletics' department had an epic social media fail last week as it intended to promote diversity and inclusion. This is a clear example of how detrimental a poorly executed marketing campaign can be to any brand. Unfortunately, these kinds of mishaps happen more often than not.

AND MORE EXAMPLES



Mizzou Athletics ✓
@MizzouAthletics

I am...

#MIZ | #ShowMe | #NCAAIInclusion



4:33 PM · 10/23/19 · [TweetDeck](#)

ALTERNATIVE SAMPLES

Problematic Term/Thoughts:

- "Underprivileged students"
- "Diverse students"
- "Food-insecure students"
- "Women in STEM"
- "Normal English"
(vs. dialects like AAVE, Spanglish, etc.)

Why It's Problematic:

- Frames students as lacking or inferior rather than resilient and resourceful.
- Treats "diverse" as an identity rather than describing a group's composition.
- Labels students by a struggle instead of focusing on the solution.
- Implies that women are exceptions in STEM rather than integral participants.
- Suggests that some English variations are incorrect.

Possible Alternative:

- "Students from historically marginalized backgrounds" or "Students from under-resourced communities."
- "Students from diverse backgrounds" or "Students of varied experiences."
- "Students facing food access challenges" or "Students supported by campus food resources."
- "Women leading in STEM."
- If there's no "standard English" be open to the culture of the community you are speaking to.

IMPACT ON MARKETING

On Students



On Employees



Long-Term Effects on Institutional Success

- Enrollment Impact
- Retention Issues
- Community Engagement
- Brand Reputation

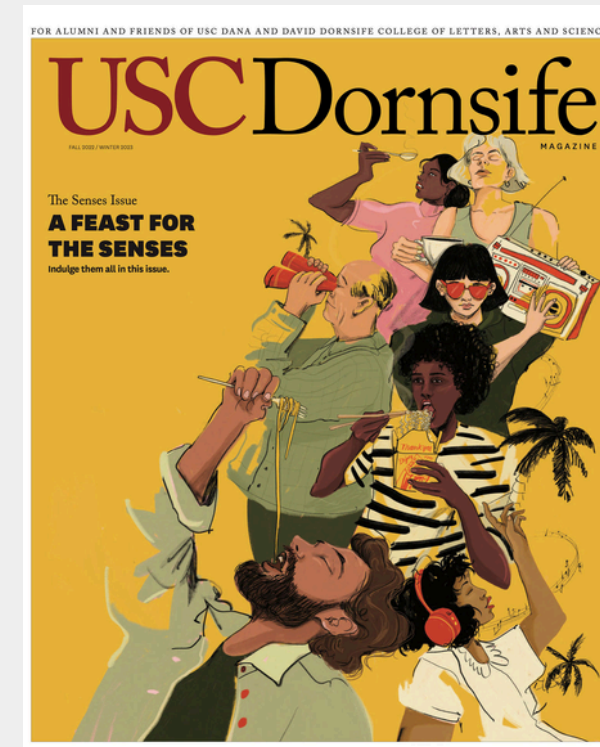
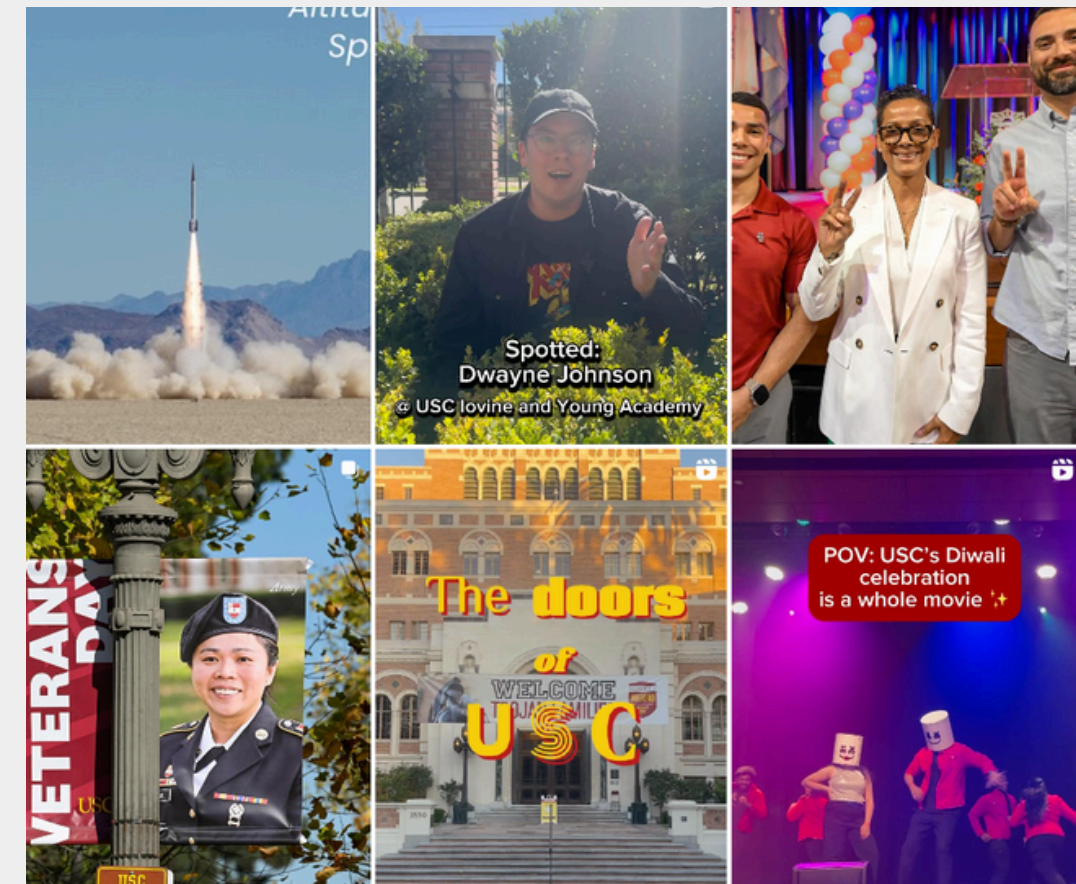
Broader Societal Impact



CASE STUDY

USC

- Diversity in Representation
- Inclusive Storytelling
- Inclusive Campaigns
- Cultural Competency and Inclusive Language
- Focus on Community and Global Engagement



Language

Examine the language used in your messaging to determine if it subtly reinforces stereotypes, overlooks certain groups, or makes assumptions about the audience.

Imagery

Examine the visuals in your marketing materials to identify whether they are perpetuating biases about who "belongs" in higher education. Images speak louder than words.

Cultural Representation

Examine whether the representation of cultural diversity in your marketing accurately reflects the broad spectrum of students and experiences, or if it limits certain groups to stereotypical roles.

RECOGNIZING

IMPLICIT BIASES AND MICROAGGRESSIONS IN YOUR WORK



ACTION STEPS FOR YOUR INSTITUTION



- Self-Awareness and Reflection
- Focus on the 3 R's: Recognize, Respond, and Revise
- Use Scenarios for Training
- Create a "Bias Spotting" Guide
- Encourage Peer Reviews
- Collaborate with Diverse Teams
- Provide Ongoing Education and Training
- Encourage Empathy and Active Listening

Bias & Microaggression Litmus Test

Before publishing or sending any message, answer YES or NO to each of these five key questions:

1. Language Check

Would I say this to any person, regardless of their identity? 

2. Stereotype & Assumption Check

Am I assuming something about someone based on their appearance, gender, race, ability, age, or background? 

3. Representation Check

Does this message include diverse perspectives, or does it reinforce a single viewpoint or stereotype? 

4. Impact vs. Intent Check

Could this be misunderstood or hurt someone, even if I didn't mean to offend? 

5. Tone & Empathy Check

Does this message reflect respect, inclusion, and empathy? 

How to Use This Litmus Test

If you answer "YES" to all 5 questions →  Safe to send!

If you answer "NO" to any question →  Pause and adjust. Seek feedback if needed.

If unsure →  Get a second opinion from a diverse peer group or use an AI bias-checking tool. (AI Fairness 360 , Google What If tool)

A photograph of three young adults sitting on the ground outdoors, possibly in a park or campus setting. A woman with long, curly dark hair is in the center, smiling and looking down at a red notebook she is holding. To her left, a man with glasses and a red hoodie is looking at a laptop. To her right, a man with short dark hair is looking at a white notebook. They are all dressed in casual attire. The background is slightly blurred, showing trees and a fence. The entire image has a purple tint.

"When you make the effort to include everyone, you don't just expand your audience—you create a loyal community that sees itself reflected in your brand."

–Lady Tea Time

THANK YOU
FOR JOINING ME FOR TEA TIME

Any questions?

