

DCRI Diversity and Inclusion program launched with a new lecture series

The DCRI's new Diversity and Inclusion Program kicked off with the first talk in the *Diversity Lecture Series* with a [presentation by Dr. Benjamin Reese](#) on *Implicit Bias* ([watch the video here](#)). The room was packed, and people seemed surprised and fascinated to learn how implicit bias can impact many everyday decisions ranging from hiring to promotion and more. The *DCRI's Diversity Lecture Series*, which aims to foster understanding and awareness of issues related to diversity in all its forms, will examine topics such as culture, race, class, lifestyle, gender, beliefs, and experience in the months to come.

Dr. Reese is the vice president for the Office for Institutional Equity at Duke and is a frequent speaker both nationally and internationally on topics of diversity and inclusion. He has also worked as a consultant for 40 years with educational institutions and various non-profit and for-profit corporations to help them with cross-cultural education and race relations. At the start of his guest lecture at the DCRI, he asked the audience in the North Pavilion to define what diversity and inclusion meant to them. Responses included "being respectful of anyone you cross paths with," to "learning to understand and accept differences." Dr. Reese noted that things like race, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities are all factors that are important but can carry different weight depending on who someone is speaking to.

"Implicit bias impacts your judgement unconsciously, and it can have a significant impact on who gets selected for job interviews, who gets hired or promoted, who gets to work on important committees, and much more," said Dr. Reese. "You can minimize this by understanding how bias works, identifying your potential personal biases and situations that trigger those biases, and working to catch those things before you act. We will never be free from biases, but our goal can be to be appropriately reflective and understand how our biases might impact our decisions."

"The makeup of a group influences what is emphasized in different conversations. Duke and Durham have a history around race, and that influences how we speak about diversity at Duke," he noted.

During the lecture, Dr. Reese explained that most people are not explicit in their negative reactions toward people of different races, ages, weight, gender, ability, or religion, but we all have ingrained biases that start very early in life, and these implicit biases can influence our behavior towards others in a negative way.

What is the Diversity and Inclusion program?



Gina Streaty, who is leading the DCRI's diversity initiative, has always been passionate about breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of inclusion and community. "I hope that the Diversity and Inclusion program will help us to be more connected with each other and to build on our similarities," she said at the beginning of Dr. Reese's guest lecture. "But it's not just a series of programs and events. This is a process, and we are going to learn how to take steps forward together. I hope it will help us all to be more empowered and help us create an even more welcoming and inclusive environment at the DCRI."

The Diversity and Inclusion initiative – launched in response to feedback from the Executive Team roundtable discussions, Workplace Pulse Survey, and dialogue with staff – will focus on our workplace culture and engagement. Bill Shannon, director of Employee Engagement and Learning, is overseeing the effort. Programming will look at how our differences in age, race, gender, and experiences can impact our work, beliefs, perceptions, and actions. Subjects may include: race and justice, religious traditions and cultures, women's issues (equality, equity and inclusion), cultural competency and cultural literacy, how our beliefs shape who we are, health disparities in medicine and research, ethical implications for research and intervention, valuing ethnic diversity, and diversity of culture and viewpoint.

"Topics are being selected for the Lecture Series to encourage critical thought, promote open dialogue, and collectively identify, acknowledge and leverage our similarities and differences," said Bill Shannon, Director of Employee Engagement and Learning. He has experience with Duke Medicine's Work Culture Survey and received Duke's Diversity Leadership Award and is looking forward to sharing his experience with the DCRI.

"I'd like to establish a Diversity and Inclusion Committee at the DCRI, and create fun and informative events on the theme of 'appreciating diversity,'" said Gina, who will be partnering with the School of Medicine's diversity/inclusion programs and with Duke's Office of Institutional Equity to develop meaningful events.

The Diversity & Inclusion program is part of our Employee Engagement initiatives along with the event efforts of the Engage Brigade. A diversity-themed film series is also envisaged as part of the program, along with 'Lunch & Learn' sessions and 'awareness' workshops.

“Gina brings great passion and energy to this assignment, and I know she will create impactful experiences,” Bill noted.

“My hope is that DCRI staff will continue to embrace diversity and inclusion, to understand our beautiful differences—and make the DCRI a microcosm of the type of world we’d ideally like have,” said Gina.