

Weight Bias and Pedagogy: A Learning and Sharing Session for Nutritional Sciences Faculty

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Project Overview

Weight bias is rooted in widely-held stereotypes that people with high body weights possess negative characteristics, such as laziness and lack of motivation, poor self-discipline, low competence, and limited morality.¹ As body size increases on a population level, so too does weight discrimination,² which has negative impacts on individuals' social and economic opportunities, and their health.^{3,4}

Weight bias is common even among health professionals; public health researchers and practitioners often hold and communicate anti-fat attitudes.^{5,6} Weight and obesity are widely discussed in schools of public health, yet issues of weight bias and size diversity are rarely addressed. Weight-biased content within schools of public health poses a threat to the well-being of public health students as well as the population at-large as public health trainees enter the workforce.

Careful consideration of how weight and body size are talked about in schools of public health is warranted and best practices for reducing weight bias within the classroom and in public health practice are needed.

Proposal

To design and implement a weight bias "learning and sharing session" for Nutritional Sciences faculty that addresses common faculty concerns surrounding weight, body size or obesity in teaching, mentoring, and/or colleague interactions

Project Leads

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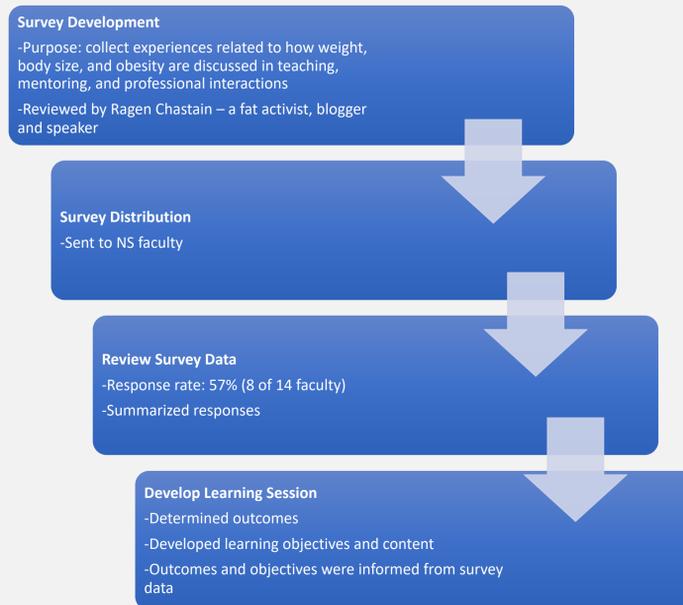
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Citations

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5. Puhl, R.; Brownell, K.D. Bias, discrimination, and obesity. *Obesity Research* 2001, 9, 788-805.
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Steps to Develop the Session



Learning Objectives of Session

1. Learn about **appropriate imagery** to use when discussing weight, body size or obesity
2. Increase **awareness of physical space** to accommodate all students
3. Understand **diverse terminology** to use when discussing weight, body size or obesity
4. Reflect on **classroom specific teaching scenarios** where weight bias may be present

Example Content from Session



Appropriate imagery was shared as well as resources for stock photos



Discussion of physical space and strategies to accommodate all



Evaluation

- Post-evaluation survey: Likert-scale items in regard to **helpfulness of session** in relation to meeting learning objectives and **confidence in addressing weight bias scenarios** (also related to objectives)
- Index card open-ended question: How should we proceed as a department?

Outcomes

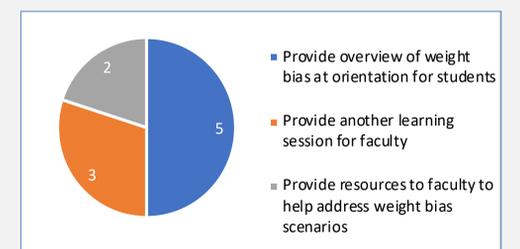
Table 1. Average rating to the statements regarding the prompt: Rate how helpful this learning community was related to the following session objectives (n=11 respondents)

Survey item	Avg response
Understand the appropriate imagery to use when discussing weight, body size or obesity in my courses	5.6
Think about the physical space in my classroom to accommodate individuals of all body sizes	5.5
Recognize appropriate terminology surrounding weight, body size or obesity	5.6
Obtain strategies to use in my classroom to address situations in my classroom in which a student may be perpetuating weight bias	5.2
Obtain strategies to use unbiased approaches to discuss weight and size with students	4.9

Table 2. Average rating to the statements regarding the prompt: Rate how confident you are to address the following scenarios (n=10 respondents)

Survey item	Avg response
Use appropriate imagery when discussing weight, body size or obesity in my courses	5.3
Provide equitable accommodations for students of all body sizes	4.0
Use acceptable terminology surrounding weight, body size or obesity	4.6
Address situations in my classroom in which a student may be perpetuating weight bias	4.6
Minimize ways in which I may perpetuate weight bias in my classroom	4.6

Figure 1. Themes to open-ended question: How should we proceed as a Department?



Next Steps

- Summarize outcomes to Nutritional Sciences Chair and Faculty Representative for DE&I committee (department-level)
- Work with DE&I committee to continue faculty conversations around weight bias