

## **Workshop: Social Identity- Back to Basics**

**Samantha Kennedy, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities**

Sam Kennedy is the Assistant Director of Student Engagement & DEI Initiatives at the University of Minnesota's College of Science and Engineering (CSE). With nearly a decade of DEI and higher education experience she specializes in designing and implementing programming that focuses on professional development, academic success, and community development. In addition to her role responsibilities, Sam has collaborated with the CSE First Year Experience Curriculum Committee to revamp and enhance their DEI and Implicit Bias lessons to better support students. This is her fifth year and seventh section of teaching this course and she is proud to also have led this workshop for professionals across her university. Prior to her role in CSE, Sam held positions in collegiate recruitment and national student success initiatives. She is a passionate higher education disrupter who works on expanding access and support programming for her students and colleagues. Sam is proud to join FYEE as a first time presenter to share her experiences as a Latina, a first generation college graduate, and dedicated member of her community. She is her ancestors' wildest dream.

## **Workshop: Social Identity-Back to Basics**

Presenter: Sam Kennedy, she/her/hers

University of Minnesota, College of Science & Engineering

### Brief Description:

This session invites higher education professionals to participate in an interactive session that will utilize social identities and comfort zone models to create the groundwork for future DEI education. These activities have been used in workshops for professional development and first year experience courses with participants from a variety of backgrounds. Attendees can implement these tools in the workplace/classroom to navigate identity development and personal growth goals.

### Abstract:

First year students arrive at our schools with vastly different levels of exposure to – and fluency in – the core concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion education. When the Curriculum Committee for our First Year Experience course began developing a lesson to ground our STEM students in these concepts, we faced a big question. How can we meet each member of a diverse student body where they are while also fostering their growth?

As a predominantly white institution, we wanted to challenge our students to reflect on their own identities and how that ties them to other students in the college. We designed a lesson that focused on individuals' social identities and how those identities affect their comfort levels in different scenarios, then used guided reflection to connect this mindset to other course lessons. This allowed our students to then tackle more complex topics such as implicit bias, structural racism, and how to be social justice accomplices – while also creating space for marginalized students to explore these issues in new ways. As this lesson has evolved over the past few years, we have been especially focused on preparing our instructors to guide this work in ways that does not require BIPOC students to take on additional work in educating their peers. This initiative required collegiate buy-in, educating 40+ instructors, and ultimately implementing these activities for 1600+ first year STEM students each fall.

By taking it “back to basics”, we create an opportunity for attendees to play with the building blocks themselves and discuss their own experiences in the classroom. I will demonstrate two classroom activities that will challenge participants to reflect on their own identities and how to grow beyond their comfort zones.

### Learning Outcomes:

- After this session, participants will understand the importance of establishing the social identity groundwork that leads to effective personal growth development and further DEI engagement.
- This session will provide and demonstrate tools and resources that can be used to assist participants in education spaces.
- This session will help participants identify their own learning outcomes for groups that are predominantly white (i.e. What can EVERYONE walk away with?).

### Activity Descriptions:

Social Identity- The activity and discussion will include participants completing the Social Identity Wheel, reflecting on their own identities, and how those intersecting identities influence their experiences in different scenarios. The Wheel activity allows them to identify and reflect on visible and invisible identities and when they are more aware of them personally and among others.

Comfort Zones- Using a growth mindset we present participants with different scenarios and have them identify whether they would be very uncomfortable, uncomfortable, comfortable, or very comfortable. The scenarios are presented via Kahoot and answers are anonymous to encourage honesty and to further support that there is no “right answer”. This is essential in allowing participants to sit with where they are and think of strategies for how they can grow or challenge themselves to do something differently.

### Outline:

Activity 1: Welcome & Background (15 minutes)

Activity 2: Social Identity (20 minutes)

Activity 3: Comfort Zones (20 minutes)

Activity 4: Guided Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Activity 5: Q&A and Conclusion (15 minutes)