Cross-Cultural Competency

Karen Schwelle
Director, English Language Programs
kschwelle@wustl.edu

We, as members of the Washington University community, strive to engage, learn, respect, and include in order to know each other by name and story.

OUR COMMUNITY VALUES:

ENGAGE
- We are valued members of the Washington University community.
- We seek out different perspectives and experiences.
- We share our stories and listen to others.

LEARN
- We hold the courage to speak up, take risks and make mistakes.
- We challenge ourselves to think critically and reflect upon our actions and words.
- We discover and explore identity.

RESPECT
- We act with kindness and empathy.
- We are responsible to our community and for our actions.
- We will forgive and be forgiven.

INCLUDE
- We welcome differences as well as commonalities.
- We learn from others.
- We value others.

Washington University in St. Louis
Cross-Cultural Competency

First in a series of three sessions sponsored by
Office of Faculty Affairs
English Language Programs
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences
BJC Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

Panel Discussion, Cultural Competency in Pre-Clinical Settings
Wednesday, April 13, 1 p.m. – Holden Auditorium

Panel Discussion, Cultural Competency in Clinical Settings
Thursday, April 21, 11 a.m. – Holden Auditorium
Spoken and written communication

Workplace settings

Communication with colleagues

Challenges associated with cultural differences

Recognizing and dealing with the difference

Structural multilevel model of culture

(Glikson and Erez, 2013)
Where Challenges Might Arise

Solving problems as a group
Expressing disagreement or telling someone they are wrong
Conversation about non-work matters
Planning vs. changing plans
Using humor, idioms, and colloquial language
Taking and giving credit
Expressing ambition and desire to achieve
Demonstrating trust vs. ensuring accountability

And…?
Cross-Cultural Competency in Research, Pre-Clinical, and Clinical Settings

Your role, setting, and experience
Framework for discussing cultural differences
Scenarios
Reflections and solutions
Your role

• Faculty
• Postdoc or other staff
• Student
• Other role
Your experience – Framework – Scenarios – Reflections and solutions

Your setting

• Research setting
• Pre-clinical setting
• Clinical setting
• Other setting
Time spent working outside the country/countries where you grew up

- More than ten years
- Five to ten years
- Less than five years
Time spent working in a multicultural team

- More than ten years
- Five to ten years
- Less than five years
Cultural Dimensions
Power Distance: “[T]he degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.”
Individualism vs. Collectivism: Contrast between loose vs. strong ties of an individual to family, work groups, and other in-groups
Masculinity vs. Femininity: Societal preferences for either “achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success” or “cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life.”
Uncertainty Avoidance Index: Level of comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity, or “rigid codes of belief and behavior” vs. “a more relaxed attitude.”
Scenarios

- **Scenario 1**: PI and postdoc
- **Scenario 2**: Resident and senior resident/other members of the care team
- Feel free to discuss another scenario from your experience if appropriate.

See the handout for the full scenarios. The scenarios were written for the purpose of this workshop and are not based on real people or situations.
Scenarios for Discussion

Choose one of the following scenarios to discuss, and/or discuss another scenario from your experience if appropriate. In groups of three or four (with whoever is sitting near you), answer the following questions about the scenario(s) of your choice:

1. Describe objective facts and observations (to the extent that you can, given the limited information).
2. Interpret, considering multiple possible explanations.
3. Evaluate what the parties involved seem to feel about the incident.
4. Ask: How might the cultural dimensions fit in (Power Distance, Collectivism vs. Individualism, Femininity vs. Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance)? How might other factors fit in?

These scenarios were written for the purpose of this workshop and are not based on real people or situations.

Scenario 1: A PI and postdoc from different cultural backgrounds have been experiencing communication difficulties ever since the postdoc joined the lab. From the PI’s perspective, the postdoc waits too long to admit when she is encountering problems with her research projects. The PI has said in lab meetings and one-on-one meetings that he wants lab members to do a reasonable amount of troubleshooting on their own before approaching him, but that they should not hesitate to admit difficulties if the difficulties are impeding their research process. He has also discussed his rationale and expectations with this postdoc. However, the postdoc finds that the PI reacts with impatience and frustration when she does bring issues to his attention, so she thinks his behavior conflicts with his stated expectations.

Scenario 2: A resident physician who attended medical school outside the United States is experiencing communication difficulties with patients and some hospital staff. The resident is multilingual and was educated in English. Patients have complained that they cannot understand his accent, and that he did not appear to understand some of their explanations of their health issues. Other members of the care team have complained that the resident does not convey information efficiently during rounds and in other conversations about patient care. A senior resident, born and raised in the U.S., has already mentioned the communication issue to the resident. This conversation emphasized English language proficiency, and the resident was offended at the suggestion that his English proficiency is insufficient. The resident is anxious to be successful in his position and to provide good care for patients, but feels his communication skills are being judged by unfairly narrow standards.
“What Just Happened?”

1. **Describe** objective facts and observations.
2. **Interpret**, considering multiple possible explanations.
3. **Evaluate** your own feelings, and what others seem to feel about the incident.
4. **Consider** how the cultural dimensions might fit in (Power Distance, Collectivism vs. Individualism, Femininity vs. Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance). How might other factors fit in?

Building More Effective Intercultural Skills

1. Understand your own underlying assumptions and values
2. Adopt “cultural humility” (Hook et al., 2013) and a spirit of lifelong learning
3. Suspend judgment about individuals while you work through situations
4. Learn about the cultures important to your work life
5. Gain the communication skills to work through missteps
6. Focus on shared goals
7. Recognize that real change happens slowly


Please join us for the second and third sessions in this series

Panel Discussion, Cultural Competency in Pre-Clinical Settings
Wednesday, April 13, 1 p.m. – Holden Auditorium

Panel Discussion, Cultural Competency in Clinical Settings
Thursday, April 21, 11 a.m. – Holden Auditorium

Sponsored by
Office of Faculty Affairs
English Language Programs
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences
BJC Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Equity
Thank you!

Karen Schwelle
Director, English Language Programs
kschwelle@wustl.edu

We, as members of the Washington University community, strive to engage, learn, respect, and include in order to know each other by name and story.

OUR COMMUNITY VALUES:

ENGAGE
- We are valued members of the Washington University community.
- We seek out different perspectives and experiences.
- We share our stories and listen to others.

LEARN
- We hold the courage to speak up, take risks and make mistakes.
- We challenge ourselves to think critically and reflect upon our actions and words.
- We discover and explore identity.

RESPECT
- We act with kindness and empathy.
- We are responsible to our community and for our actions.
- We will forgive and be forgiven.

INCLUDE
- We welcome differences as well as commonalities.
- We learn from others.
- We value others.