



**OBTC 2017 at Providence College  
June 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Submission Template**

**SUBMISSION GUIDANCE**

- \* Remove all identifying properties from this document \**
- \* All files must be saved in PDF format \**
- \*Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document\**
- \*Only one document should be submitted\**

## **Submission Template for the 2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

### 1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

*In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

#### **Teaching about diversity, equity and fairness as part of a business curriculum: Can we navigate the riptides or should we avoid those waters?"**

Higher education is intended to educate, enlighten, challenge, and prepare students for post-graduation life. Management programs are also tasked with developing individuals to become future leaders and managers of organizations which are often diverse and increasingly, international. Adequate preparation should include an understanding of diversity, equity and fairness. In our current political and social climate these topics have taken on a controversial nature that can make it feel like being caught in a rip current. This interactive session is intended to open the discussion around how we successfully navigate these challenges. Participants are encouraged to bring ideas/resources to share.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, EEO, Equity

### 2) Teaching Implications:

*What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

This session is intended to make a practical contribution to instructors and to their curriculum. The current climate around diversity is complex and subject to multiple opposing forces. For example, there has been an increase in the use of “trigger warnings” to alert students to potentially difficult or emotional topics. In response there has been a backlash against these warnings arguing that this “hyper-sensitivity” to difficult conversations erodes critical discourse and may restrict freedom of speech. As some see a need for increased “safe spaces” for targeted and traditionally marginalized groups on college campuses, some conservative groups are asking for their own “safe spaces” to protect themselves against liberal ideology. Movements such as “Black Lives Matter”

are confronted with growing narratives in support of white supremacy, nativism, and bigotry.

Conflicting attitudes and values held by individuals and groups are likely heightened by broad divisions in our country: Communities are becoming more segregated at the same time that we become a more diverse country; there is an abundance of niche- media channels that allow people to simply avoid contrasting points of view; and our social media is often configured to filter out the “other” and their opinions. All of these trends can serve to reinforce an “us” versus “them” mentality. As a result we see our civic discourse becoming more uncivil and intolerant.

Against this backdrop of increasingly vocal clashes of opinion, values and experiences, colleges and universities strive to build community and to educate. For some students, their university experience may represent the most diverse setting they have ever been in. Some may find themselves in unfamiliar settings that don’t feel particularly welcoming to them. Students may come unprepared to navigate these diverse communities in productive and effective ways. As educators, and particularly as management educators, part of our job is to equip students with the tools to be successful in dynamic and diverse organizations. However our ability to do this has become increasingly complex. How *do* we teach concepts of diversity, equity and fairness? How can we navigate these changing currents in our country? How do we address the added complexity of assertions that University faculty are often “too left-leaning” and try to impose our values on students?

The goals of this session will be to come together to explore these issues, discuss current challenges to teaching about diversity and inclusion, develop appropriate learning goals, share resources, and initiate collaborations for future actions. Some specific topics that may be discussed include:

- What role does/should higher education, and specifically business education, play in educating students around issues of racism, sexism, classism, etc.; equity, privilege and fairness?
- How can we effectively teach topics of diversity, EEO, Affirmative Action?
- How can we create a safe and productive class environment for these discussions?
- What skills do we, as educators, need to facilitate and lead these learning opportunities?
- What skills do we want to help our students develop so they are prepared to critically assess and discuss these topics?
- How does the current environment (media, politics, etc.) factor into/influence our approach?

Topics of diversity and EEO are typically covered in Management survey courses (introductory Management classes), Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior and Development, Leadership and Business Ethics. Most textbooks cover laws and regulations related to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). Coverage of diversity-related topics varies and can be integrated with broader management theories such as Equity Theory, Organizational Justice, and Social Identity to name a few.

### 3) Session Description and Plan:

*What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.*

I envision this to be a very interactive session. The goals of the session would be 1) to explore the current challenges discussed above and brainstorm *how* we can most effectively approach teaching diversity in the current climate, and 2) to explore *what* we actually teach. As the session leader I would provide a high-level overview of some of the challenges and then invite further discussion through the use of related questions and group activities. I also intend to share some of the resources and activities I use when covering diversity in my Human Resource and Organizational Behavior courses. As indicated in the abstract, participants would also be encouraged to come and share their own approaches and resources.

I am requesting a 90 minute session. The general timeline would be the following:

#### **I. 10 – 15 minute opening ice-breaker**

As part of this activity, participants will:

- Reflect on their unique identities and explore how their identity may influence their approach to teaching diversity-related content.
- Identify their specific challenges/sticking-points around teaching about diversity
- Consider their current campus environment and how it may impact their curriculum

#### **II. 10 minute overview of the current challenges to discussing/teaching issues of diversity, equity, fairness, etc.**

- This is not intended to be an exhaustive review of all of the current challenges to discussing topics related to diversity! Rather, it is simply a jump-start to set the stage for our discussion on the current challenges that instructors are facing when trying to address these, and related topics, in their classrooms.

### **III. 25 minute break-out sessions to discuss challenges and response to challenges**

Participants will break into small groups to:

- Discuss their reactions to the challenges presented to the whole group
- Brainstorm additional challenges they face
- Explore potential solutions/approaches to address the challenges

### **IV. 15 minute report out**

Each group will have the opportunity to report back on what they discussed and to share potential solutions/approaches.

### **V. 15 minute resource review**

So that everyone leaves with some potential resources for their classes, this time will be allotted to sharing specific activities and materials that instructors have found useful. I will provide some examples of things I have used and invite others to provide some of their favorites as well.

### **VI. 10 minute wrap-up and call to action**

Given the complexity of the current environment, it is unlikely that we will end the session with a feeling of “problem solved!” Therefore, I would like to wrap-up the session with the invitation for participants to plan some collaborations with fellow instructors. Potentially these collaborations might include (for example)

- Plans to share additional materials
- Creating “think-tanks” for continuing the dialogue on these issues
- Creating support systems to use when facing a particular challenge

### **4) Application to Conference theme:**

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

This session was completely inspired by the theme of the conference. I have always been mindful of the possible tension between teaching from a strong belief in social justice and equity while still allowing space for students (and others) to bring differing views of “fairness” and justice to the classroom. This is always challenging. However, the current state of our political, economic, and justice systems have left what feels like landmines scattered all over the terrain of topics of diversity, EEO, affirmative action, etc. It has the potential to elicit the “fight or flight” response – dive in and address the issues head-on with fists-a-flying or run for the safety of a watered-down syllabus.

I believe there is value in spending time with colleagues discussing these issues, challenging one another in productive ways, and focusing on how we can best serve our students and institutions so that we build inclusive and respectful communities.

**5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:**

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

I have not facilitated this discussion/session before. It is not under review anywhere.

I would like to note that I am very open to suggestions on the format or approach to the session. My goal is to create a shared space to explore these issues. Any/all suggestions for achieving that goal are completely welcome!