INFORMATION ON BIAS IN SELECTION PROCESS

1. What is Bias?

Bias is an inclination of temperament or outlook; a systematic error introduced into sampling or testing by underlying <u>selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others</u>. In other words, bias is a mistake in reasoning, or remembering, often occurring as a result of holding onto one's preferences and beliefs regardless of contrary information.

Defining bias:

- Favorable or unfavorable attitudes or beliefs about a group that informs how we perceive or interact with members of that group.
- Typically based on traits, such as race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation.
  - It is a bias to immediately *disapprove* of people just because they display a certain trait, like those listed above.
  - It is also a bias to have an unfair *preference* for people with certain traits.

2. Types of Bias

There are two main types of bias:

<u>Conscious/Explicit Bias</u>
- Often what people think when they hear the word "bias"
- Traditionally expressed directly, noticeable to other people

<u>Unconscious/Implicit Bias</u>
- Social stereotypes and associations about groups of people that individuals form outside of their own conscious awareness
- Can manifest into anything from subtle microaggressions to outright physical or verbal harassment
- May not be aware of these biases

3. Implicit Bias

There are different types of implicit bias. These categories evolve as new research comes out.

- <u>Affinity Bias</u>: The tendency to prefer someone similar to us in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality.

- <u>Attribution Bias</u>: When certain notions are attributed to a person because of our prior interactions with or observations of another person of the same gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation, etc.

- <u>Confirmation Bias</u>: The tendency to search for, interpret, or recall information in a way that confirms or supports the views we already hold, while discounting information that contradicts those views.

- <u>Conformity Bias</u>: Also known as peer pressure. We want to conform to the people or things around us even though they may contradict our personal beliefs and principles.

- <u>Gender Bias</u>: When one gender is favored over another because of stereotypes or based on previous experiences with another person of the same gender.

- Halo/Horn Effect:
    - Halo Effect: When we unconsciously put someone on a pedestal just because there's something about them that we find impressive.
    - Horn Effect: When we unconsciously dislike everything about someone because they have some negative characteristics we don't like.
    - The Halo Effect and the Horn Effect can both involve an over-reliance on first impressions.

4. What has the Community Foundation in efforts to reduce bias?

The Community Foundation has taken steps to lessen ways bias can affect the selection process by reducing the visibility of applicants' personally identifiable information (personally Identifiable Information or "PII" means information in any format about an identifiable individual, including, name, address, phone number, e-mail address, birthday etc.) in the application, including:

- Reduced the amount of identifying information on the applications by:
    - Removing names (instead the students create Application IDs), demographic information including gender and race, and contact information
    - Hiding pictures
    - Instructing applicants to block out identifying information on their application attachments
    - Instructing applicants to avoid including demographic information in their (essay) responses
- Hiding applicant information from reviewers that does not pertain to eligibility criteria, such as financial information
- Making eligibility criteria in the Scholarship Profiles clear
- Developing Online Evaluation Forms
    - Evaluation Forms have been built do only include questions that pertain to the eligibility criteria of the scholarship
    - Clear instructions have been included to the evaluation questions to avoid confusion and different interpretations of questions

Reviewers are strongly encouraged to use the online evaluation forms because they standardize the evaluation process from committee member to committee member and guide reviewers' attention to the points that matter for the specific scholarship. **If a question is not asked about in the evaluation form, it should not affect the reviewer's decision about the applicant.**

5. What can committee members do to reduce bias impacting their review process?

People reviewing applications are more susceptible to implicit bias when they:

- Have time constraints and feel rushed
- Feel fatigued or distracted
- Have vague or partial information to make a decision
- Not taking time to consider personal biases

Committee members can do their part in reducing the amount of bias in their evaluation process by:

- Increasing their self-awareness and understanding their own explicit and implicit biases affecting their judgement.

- Examining their conclusions and pausing their reaction: why is this applicant making me feel this way, why am I drawing this conclusion, am I making assumptions or hasty decisions based on partial evidence?

- Not rushing through the evaluation process – this opens the door for unconscious bias

- Taking breaks when tired.

- Reviewing the whole application to form a holistic picture before making a recommendation decision.

- Actively participating in the committee meeting conversation and sharing their thoughts regarding potential bias, including both negative and preferential biases.