

# Academic Leadership Forum

## Scenario #1

Challenge: Academic freedom and a safe and inclusive learning environment

A student reports that an instructor's classroom materials contain historical content that repeatedly uses the N-word. The student indicates that the use of the word in texts and in-class projects and activities impacts their sense of safety as an African-American student.

The student reports that they discussed their concerns with the instructor during office hours. Per the student, the instructor discussed the importance of the use of original texts in the context of their course. The instructor also emphasizes the importance of students being exposed to these histories, especially the lived experiences of individuals of that time. The student mentions they are considering going to the media over this issue.

## Discussion Questions

- What are the main themes raised in this scenario?
- What are the potential barriers to resolving the concern?
- Who would you contact first, second, ...
- What would be an ideal outcome, and how might you help resolve the situation?

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## Scenario #2

Challenge: Reasonable disability accommodation and time-specific activities

A student reports they have encountered challenges in their science lab course due to a documented disability, which necessitates accommodations such as extra time on quizzes and exams, as specified in their accommodations letter. The challenge is that the course involves timed lab experiments conducted in small groups in which students are evaluated individually and as part of a group.

The student stated that when they approached the instructor to discuss an accommodation, the instructor spoke about the need for the experiments to be timed due to the practical application of the skills taught in the class. The instructor suggested that the inability to complete the labs within the allotted timeframes could impact the student's suitability for future roles in their field.

The student is hesitant to raise their concerns again with the instructor, as they fear that it might lead to them being viewed as unfit for future work in the field. They are considering dropping the major.

## Discussion Questions

- What are the main themes raised in this scenario?
- What are the potential barriers to resolving the concern?
- Who would you contact first, second, ...
- What would be an ideal outcome, and how might you help resolve the situation?

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## Scenario #3

Challenge: Misgendering and freedom of speech

A non-binary student reports that a faculty member in your unit refuses to use their appropriate pronouns of they/them. As per the student, during a private conversation with the instructor after class, they were told, "I will call you by your first name and by any singular pronoun you choose." Feeling unheard, the student left the conversation. The following day, the faculty member called them by their first name several times in class but then, in apparent frustration, simply referred to them as "you." The student now feels unsafe in the course and does not want to return.

When you asked the instructor about the incident, they stated that the student account of the incident was accurate, but to them, using the pronouns they/them is politically sensitive speech to which they are opposed. They said they will not use the pronouns they/them as it impedes their right to free speech.

## Discussion Questions

- What are the main themes raised in this scenario?
- What are the potential barriers to resolving the concern?
- Who would you contact first, second, ...
- What would be an ideal outcome, and how might you help resolve the situation?