IDEAs workshop – Question and Answer transcript :

Q: [Regarding the Count Me In Survey] The francophone community is small. Therefore, I am Francophone, female, LGBTQIA2S+ and Indigenous – won't I be identifiable in the data?
A: No. When there are less than 5 answers, that aggregate data will not be presented.
Follow-up question: Does this discount those small number of people?
A: I am of the opinion that confidentiality of those people is more important.

Q: [Regarding the Count Me In Survey] Can we conclude anything based on 5-10% response rates?
A: Yes. We are currently underpowered to provide an accurate assessment of the entire uOttawa population but with 7600 student responses (16.5 % response) we can look at this group of motivated responders to these issues. I implore us all to empower ourselves and those around us to fill out Count Me In survey to address this - to count us all in.

Q: [Comment regarding differing success rates of students] The university has different resources for Canadian vs. Non-Canadian students. For example, Canadians often have more financial support – at least at the graduate level. Students may enter with the same admission average, but some may then encounter more barriers once enrolled in the University (e.g. may have to work to be able to pay tuition).

Q: [Regarding differences in performance rates of racialized students]. I suspect that some of that difference may be due to language barriers. Perhaps, also the different proportions of international students. In addition, they may not have family support due to the distances involved.
A: Absolutely. In the dashboards [created based on the Count Me In survey] for basic demographics, you have the option to filter on domestic and international students. Moreover, with respect to the ongoing analysis of underlying intersectionalities that contextualize these data, we are exploring the number of hours required to work for financial support outside of academics, care-giving requirements and financial need, proximity to campus, international intersectionalities, etc. For students thus far across uOttawa, we have ~7600 student response of our 44,000 cohort (UG, professional students, and grad students). The percentage of students reflects the percentage of racialized vs non racialized. Thus 40% of the group were non-racialized and 5% of respondent in the case I presented self-identified as Black.

Q: [Regarding the Count Me In Survey] It looks like the admission averages were not the same, were they statistically different?
A: Admission averages were not statistically significant with respect to the data I presented but there are different populations: we binned students with admission averages of less than 80% and students with admission averages of greater than 80%. The latter is the majority of our undergraduate students and medical students as uOttawa has a very high admission average rate.

Q: [Regarding grant writing] Should we include a list of people in our lab that are from underrepresented groups, to show diversity? This presentation seems to imply that you could compare that to larger population averages. Can we do this in grant EDI sections?
A: You cannot disclose the identification to your lab members unless you have undergone the exercise of asking them to self-identify (ie. you can't make assumptions). This could be a practice in your lab – set up a 'personal' self-id survey for just your lab (keeping fully anonymous), results of which could be used to compare

to the institutional data that will be available through the Count Me In survey. Be aware, that the sample size for one lab may be too small to be unbiased.

Furthermore, granting agencies are looking for a more holistic approach, they want a much deeper analysis and reflection than simply saying how diverse your lab already is. It certainly shouldn't be the first thing mentioned in an EDI section of a grant application.

Q: When posting positions, would it be possible to attach a self-identification form along with it? Is that appropriate or clumsy? Does it make sense to include it with an ad so that we can do targeted hiring? Is that something the EDI office could help with?

A: The uOttawa EDI Office has tried different ways get answers. It is difficult to include this self-identification questionnaire for a position. In the U.S., they do this regularly, but in Canada it's more difficult. Applicants may wonder why this information is needed during the hiring process, might it be used against them, rather than to help them? People are worried they will be discriminated against based on their answer. It is difficult for people to accept that we have the best intentions.

Q: The diversity level present at uOttawa seem much higher than Canadian population. Therefore, we know that we have accumulated a student population that is very diverse. Additionally, students seem to be happy with their supervisors based on other surveys that have been done. How/what do we do to ensure an inclusive environment for them? What do we say we do without invading their privacy?

A: Just because you have a diverse group of students, it doesn't mean you have created a supportive and inclusive environment. We are not all equal in the research environment. How are you getting the students/PDFs to the next stage (career development)? For example, in the field of biotech, the field is highly biased and there is good literature on this. How are you getting them to the next stage, how can you address this bias? NSERC/NFRF reviewers are being trained: they do not expect researchers to have an answer for everything. You can focus on one thing and fully demonstrate that aspect. It is also possible to ask students what they need, but not with surveys but with honest and caring conversations.

Q: How will grant reviewers know if the composition of the research team is diverse - will they google each name to know? You can SAY what you plan to do, but who holds you to account?

A: No – reviewers are trained not to do that. A person cannot Google someone to get a self-identification just by looking at a name or a photo. As mentioned, the most important is how you thoughtfully and sincerely discuss diversity. Thus, you can use "numbers" to say for example, in Engineering 26 % of trainees are women, therefore our lab is actively recruiting exceptional women to give them additional chances in engineering training.

Q: It would be helpful to see some specific examples of what "works" in grants. I think the example given about putting aside a certain amount of travel funds for women was interesting. But this practice might inadvertently discriminate against someone else.

A: Even single lived "story" of trainees or individual PI challenges can be a great starting point for a grant. But as much as we are focusing on grant applications, it is more important to address the bigger issues of how we can create a more inclusive work environment. The final session will touch on best practices that you could implement. We will present only a very small sample or many practices that could be implemented in your lab!

Q: How can you recognize cognitive diversity?

A: There is tool that you can use in your lab to do some assessment to measure if your team is cognitively diverse. The uOttawa Faculty of Medicine is the only Faculty of Medicine in Canada that has this tool to

measure cognitive diversity. The Faculty also has a tool to measure psychological safety – again the only Faculty of Medicine in Canada to have this tool. If psychological safety is low in a group, then cognitive diversity is useless: people may think differently, but they do not actually feel safe to speak up.

Q: Proposed scenario: A lab embraces different ways or ideas from staff and students to create cognitive diversity in the group. Then, one student constantly compares our team with another team, saying this PI or group is doing that and this, etc. Can this still benefit cultural intelligence?
A: What is important to concentrate on is to first understand our own cognitive diversity and how small or big our own comfort zone is when it comes to being open to other people's point of views. This can be measured through a cognitive diversity assessment. When one person compares their lab culture to another one, it is important to understand what they are seeing in that lab that they are not seeing in their own lab. This understanding could help you benefit from this other lab. It could well be that they feel more comfortable with the culture of the other lab than their current lab based on their own comfort zone. However, this could also mean that there could be room to grow to show them how they can also benefit from their current lab. All this will be easier to address once we can assess the lab culture and lab member's cognitive diversity and psychological safety.

Q: Is it not true that good science will improve EDIA (equity, diversity, inclusivity, accessibility)? They are synergistic.
A: I'm not sure if good science can improve EDIA but there is research that shows that addressing cognitive diversity has been proven to increase innovation, problem-solving and reducing risk. Having a psychologically safe environment has been proven to facilitate inclusion and belonging.

Q: Are we advancing IDEA when we in our training focus almost exclusively on outcomes that conform with the western scientific tradition?
A: This is where we need to understand our culture and how cognitively diverse we are (or aren't). Once we get the results we can then take action to grow our natural comfort zone and therefore not only conform to one culture (i.e. western scientific one) but being open and seeing the benefits of other approaches which will help us advance IDEA from different perspectives.

Q: [Regarding language in job postings] What if 'leader' and 'competitive' are the characteristics you are looking for?
A: I think the example is really there to make you think through the type of words you want to choose when making a job posting, and that some words could be more geared to attract male or female, for instance. More neutral words should be considered to not deter anyone qualified to apply. You can, for instance, be a great leader without being competitive.