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**Institute for
Inclusive
Leadership**

The Work of the Inclusive Leader™

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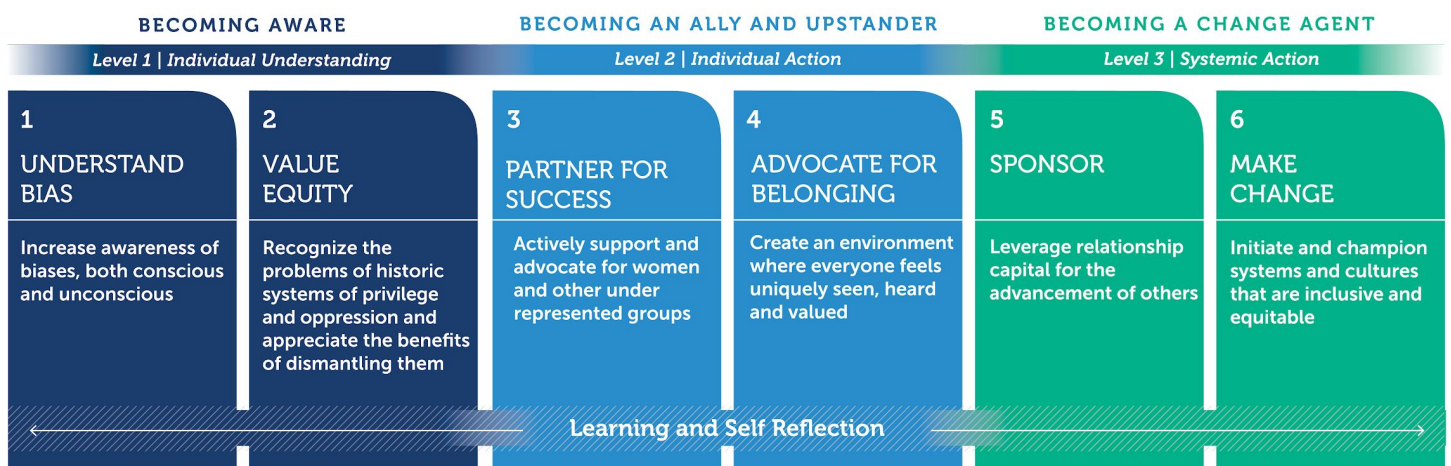
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The Work of the Inclusive Leader™

As organizations and individuals strive to be more inclusive, the path forward isn't always clear. Many organizations have invested in interventions like increasing awareness of unconscious/implicit bias, and launching Employee Resource Groups. Although these can be important tools, organizations generally aren't seeing the impact they hoped for, and the rate of change is far too slow.

The Simmons University Institute for Inclusive Leadership is determined to see real change in our lifetime. Achieving our goal will require leaders at all levels to engage deliberately in fostering cultures of inclusion where all can equitably thrive. Our new framework, The Work of the Inclusive Leader™, demystifies inclusive leadership by providing a “road map” of 6 key practices across three levels of engagement.

The Work of the Inclusive Leader™



We have grouped the work of the inclusive leader into three overarching activities: becoming aware, becoming an ally and upstander, and becoming a change agent. The first is all about the internal work of increasing understanding and awareness. The second is about supporting others, and the third is about advocating for systemic change.

Within each activity there are two practices. The ability to perform each of these practices is built from the work in the practice before - in other words, we have to learn to walk before we can run. For example, in order to be an effective upstander and ally, an individual must have a good understanding of their own biases and privileges. If not, they run the risk of not knowing when in-the-moment allyship is needed, or perhaps intervening in a way that isn't helpful. Although each practice builds on the practices that come before, the *Work of the Inclusive Leader*[™] isn't a linear path. Instead, through continuous learning and action, leaders incorporate each new practice while continuing to engage in the previous practices.

Understand Bias

The first practice under “becoming aware” is understanding bias in all its forms. We all have unconscious biases that can shape our actions and decisions if we aren't aware of their impact. This practice is about examining our own belief systems to uncover how bias might be a factor for us, and also understand how biases may be shaping the actions and beliefs of others.

Value Equity

The second practice of individual understanding is increasing our knowledge of the history and the current context around different dimensions of diversity, including gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, and many more. The work in this practice is to deepen our understanding of how systems have historically privileged some people and oppressed others, and how those systems continue to create inequity today.

1 UNDERSTAND BIAS

Increase awareness of biases, both conscious and unconscious

2 VALUE EQUITY

Recognize the problems of historic systems of privilege and oppression and appreciate the benefits of dismantling them

3

PARTNER FOR SUCCESS

Actively support and advocate for women and other under represented groups

In Level 2 we move from individual learning and awareness to individual action.

Partner for Success

The term “ally” has been used to describe a person who supports the advancement of someone from a different social identity - for example, men as allies for women, or white people as allies for BIPOC people. In this practice, we use situations where we have privilege to take action to amplify the voices and increase the visibility of people who don’t “look like” us. It can also mean educating other people who share our social identity and helping them to correct biased and discriminatory behavior. At Simmons, we define allyship as *using a position of power and/or privilege to actively support and advocate for women and members of other underrepresented groups.*

4

ADVOCATE FOR BELONGING

Create an environment where everyone feels uniquely seen, heard and valued

Advocate for Belonging

Most people need to feel like they belong in order to feel happy and be successful at work. The practice of advocating for belonging is about creating an environment where everyone feels like they are appreciated and respected for who they are, and where they don’t have to hide aspects of their identity. This practice involves creating a sense of trust and safety, and making sure that all contributions are seen and valued.

5

SPONSOR

Leverage relationship capital for the advancement of others

6

MAKE CHANGE

Initiate and champion systems and cultures that are inclusive and equitable

Learning and Self Reflection

In level three, we move into activities that are focused on changing systems.

Sponsor

The first activity is sponsorship, defined as using relationship capital to support the advancement of someone else. Sponsors are generally one or more levels higher in the organizational structure than the person they are sponsoring, providing sponsors with the opportunity to be in “conversations of influence” where opportunities are discussed. A sponsor puts their reputation on the line to actively advocate for someone from an underrepresented group.

Make Change

Our final practice is making organizational change. This practice involves initiating and driving changes in systems, policies or procedures to level the playing field. This can be at the team level, like creating norms around how meetings are run to ensure all voices are heard. This can also be at the department level or even organization wide, like changing how performance evaluations are done to minimize the impact of unconscious biases. Although this is the highest level and most complex practice of the model, leaders at all levels (even individual contributors) can and should suggest and engage in these activities.

Learning and Self Reflection

The foundation of the *Work of the Inclusive Leader*[™] is learning and self-reflection. This includes requesting, accepting and processing feedback from others on how we are doing.

The work of an inclusive leader is never done. To maximize our impact as inclusive leaders, we must have an ongoing commitment to deliberate practice and seek to evaluate our impact.

About the Simmons University Institute for Inclusive Leadership

With the recent formation of the Institute for Inclusive Leadership, Simmons has made an investment in ensuring that equity in leadership is a reality in our lifetime.

The core expertise of the Institute lives in the space between what has traditionally been the domain of Diversity and Inclusion, and what has traditionally been the domain of Leadership Development.

For more information, visit leadership.simmons.edu/institute/

Like any model, this is a high-level overview, and there are a lot of nuances that aren't reflected in these practices. We'll delve more deeply into the meaning of this work - and specifically, each of the six practices - going forward.

This work is all about fostering environments where everyone can thrive. The type of action that an individual is ready to take on behalf of someone else will vary depending on awareness and familiarity with different social identities. For example, an individual might be ready to act as a sponsor across racial differences, while just starting the process of understanding historic systems of privilege and oppression when it comes to people who have a disability.

The practices are arranged from low risk/low vulnerability to higher risk/higher vulnerability. The practices in Level 1 are relatively lower risk (mainly individual learning and introspection), requiring less social and relationship capital expenditure than the practices in Level 3 (advocating at the group or organizational level for change).

For more information about the *Work of the Inclusive Leader*[™], the skills required to effectively engage in these practices, as well as learning and development opportunities to strengthen inclusive leadership practices, please contact:

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