

2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Harvard University

Lighting for Diverse Skin Tones

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Prevention: Leadership Education and Skill Development
2. Prevention: Identifying and Enforcing Community Values

Description of Work:

Within the field of video production, there is an unconscious bias regarding video equipment and its use. Video production equipment has traditionally been created and calibrated for white skin. Within the film industry, this bias has been recognized but has yet to become fully addressed, with new strategies implemented by all professionals in the field. Dialogue around this bias must occur within all corners of the field, including video production professionals beyond the walls of large media companies. This project fills the gap in training video production professionals in higher education.

The *Lighting for Diverse Skin Tones project* is innovative for higher education, bringing together the diverse individuals who comprise Harvard's media professionals. These staff members strive to make subjects look natural and like their best selves. This is important for all ways that communication and media relay information to audiences. However, many within the field do not always have the know-how to address the difficulty in lighting skin tones even though they might be acutely aware of trying to light skin properly in a variety of circumstances. Addressing this with a dedicated community workshop and educational resource gives this community of media personnel the proper tools to create better images and will foster a culture of inclusion for all members in the Harvard community.

This project fits squarely within two rubric areas, 1) the purpose of the workshop is to provide *education and skill development* for the leaders in this work within Harvard and 2) the project highlights and *enforces the community values* of embracing diversity such that each member of the Harvard community feels psychologically safe to show up fully in their studies or work as well as in front of the camera.

Media professionals at Harvard record students, faculty, staff, and guests for a wide variety of videos including live broadcast panel discussions, educational presentations, and videos for Harvard's social media channels. However, media training often overlooks the simple discussion and techniques around lighting all skin tones properly.

This project provided a day-long workshop, held in early 2024, led by an expert in the field of lighting people of color. This educational opportunity allowed Harvard media professionals to take the time and space to discuss how to really see people -- their variety of colors, and to adjust lighting for

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their skin as easily as they would adjust the volume for recording someone's voice. Participants in the workshop discussed their daily work and how they were committed to do their best work for the University in its commitment to excellence in all forms including how the Harvard community is documented and recorded. The response to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive with 100 percent of the participants rating the training as "Excellent".

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