Diversity Moment: Underrepresented Groups

**Diverse Abilities**

How to use this Inclusion Solution card in a group setting:

- Review the questions on the front of the card to help anchor the topic
- Extend a few minutes of personal reflection
- Ask individuals to relate the topic to the current work environment and/or campus climate and what a future state might look like
- Create a dialogue on how the topic might create innovative thoughts, new direction for programs/classroom instruction/services, or ways to address challenges in the work environment and the campus climate
Diverse Abilities in STEM

“Alexander Graham Bell was exploring ways to help the deaf when he invented the telephone,” Cynthia Brinkley, Senior Vice President, Talent Development & Chief Diversity Officer, AT&T.

Better representation of women and minorities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) is often a key topic when it comes to diversity and inclusion. What often doesn’t make the spotlight is the lack of representation of people with disabilities. Although this issue is not limited to just STEM, disabled students seeking degrees often face great challenges entering the field unaware of accommodations or resources available to help them pursue their careers. Those who do make it to the workplace don’t always feel comfortable sharing their disability—which is oftentimes invisible—with their peers, making it difficult for organizations to support their needs.

Many of our scientists, engineers, and mathematicians may not readily appear disabled, but could have learning disabilities, mental illnesses, or other non-evident disabilities. It is difficult for an organization to offer accommodations that might help STEM employees work more effectively or get accurate statistics on representation when disabilities are not evident or shared. Although fostering inclusion for persons with disabilities is difficult in any field, STEM has a tremendous opportunity to benefit from the great minds dedicated to innovation, technology, and thought leadership. Here is one example of how a diverse ability can be leveraged for innovation.

Google Engineer

T.V. Raman, a highly respected computer scientist and engineer at Google, led the work on Android accessibility for Google, as a person who is blind. In an article for the New York Times on technology for the blind, Raman’s approach was praised for the impact his Android Accessibility designs had on the broader public. “Instead of asking how something should work if a person cannot see,” he says he prefers to ask, “How should something work when the user is not looking at the screen?” His approach reflects a recognition that many innovations designed primarily for people with disabilities have benefited the masses.

Reference:

“Inclusion Solutions: Discussing a Diverse Culture is in the Cards,” Lessons Learned Consulting, Inc., 2016.

Associated services/resources at Mines

- Disability Support Services (DSS)