

## Admissions Committee: Guiding Questions and Protocol

Before going into the application and admissions process, it is important to discuss bias and understand everyone's individual vision of the 'ideal applicant.' Understanding these visions is crucial not only for navigating disagreements, but also for making the implicit explicit and thus mitigating bias. In addition to the other resources, we urge you to discuss the following questions in the first admissions committee meeting:

- How do we prevent biases within the admissions process?
- How does our department consider non-traditional applicants?

### Suggested Protocol:

- I. Individual freewrite: Who is your 'ideal applicant'? What are their qualifications? What are their stated goals? What are their personal characteristics?
- II. Gallery walk or group discussion:
  - A. What does bias mean to me?
  - B. Which biases do I worry about the most in the admissions process?
  - C. How do I confront bias within myself? Within others?
  - D. What tools and strategies do we need to mitigate bias during this process?
- III. Scenario discussion:
  - A. Scenario: Maya is a 35-year-old mother of two that has recently applied to your program. She originally attended community college 10 years ago to obtain her associate's degree, and recently graduated from a 4-year university with her bachelor's; her recommendation letters and transcript show she has always been a highly intelligent and hard-working student, though her standardized test scores are average. Due to the gap in her education, her research and/or applicable intern experience is limited. Her personal statement demonstrates a passion and thoughtfulness as well as a clear plan for her time in the program and how it will aid her goals afterward.
  - B. Discussion:
    1. What are your immediate reactions to this applicant based on the scenario? What other information do you need to know to assess her qualification?
    2. How have you assessed non-traditional applicants in the past? How have non-traditional students done in the program when admitted?
    3. Generally, how does our department consider non-traditional applicants?
- IV. Next steps identification
  - A. Based on the gallery walk, what 2-3 tools and/or strategies will we utilize in this process?
  - B. Who is going to be the point person in familiarizing us with this tool or strategy?
  - C. What do each of us need to do before our next meeting?