

READ what is SAID



Final Report

2020 Recipient of the Valuing Open and Inclusive Conversation and Engagement
(VOICE) Grant

University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement

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Project Description and Timeline:

The “READ what is SAID” project was originally conceived and awarded the VOICE grant under the title of “Acting Against Intolerance.” Its original premise was to create a training that utilized video simulations of difficult conversations in a variety of healthcare settings, sparking a dialogue amongst attendees regarding how best to address microaggressions, intolerance, and hostility through institutional and interpersonal interventions.

The project was placed on hold during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as in-person gatherings were suspended indefinitely. Throughout the year 2020, I worked with a variety of external vendors who were adapting their workshop hosting methods to a virtual setting. However, no agreements were reached to create a training that was in line with the original goals and budget of the grant proposal.

In 2021, I connected with members of the UCI School of Medicine Medical Education team, who had produced a series of videos in 2018 for faculty trainings entitled “MDs Too.” This “Acting Against Intolerance” project was determined to be in line with the desired expansion of “MDs Too” beyond faculty training in the School of Medicine. In collaboration with the School of Medicine’s media team, staff, and students, we worked toward creating an in-house set of training videos that would be mutually beneficial for our goals.

In addition to expanding the school’s set of training videos to a larger audience in the College of Health Sciences, the project also undertook the goal of providing attendees at trainings with a forum to dive deeper into the underlying root causes of microaggressions in order to promote a proactive culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that is not merely reactive to times of turmoil and crisis.

With this goal in mind, the “READ what is SAID” framework was devised as a tool for attendees to analyze the scenarios depicted in the training videos, and other incidents of microaggressions and conflict in any environment. “READ what is SAID” means:

Microaggressions occur when people READ what is SAID differently:

What is the environment/context?

- **Relationships**
 - Who is involved and how are they related to one another?
- **Expectations**
 - What do they owe each other?
- **Accountability**
 - Who holds collateral?
- **Doubt**
 - What is the burden of proof?

What was expressed?

- **Stakes**
 - What is the intrinsic/extrinsic value of the interaction?

- **A**uthority
 - Who can manipulate the environment?
- **I**dentify
 - Are personal characteristics assumed?
- **D**eserving
 - Who is entitled to positive (or even neutral) outcomes?

The READ what is SAID framework is a tool to understand the holistic context of an environment in which microaggressions occur. Using this framework to analyze future directions of your unit, program, department, etc. can create a proactive mentality that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion as proactive and ongoing, rather than reactive incidents that are confined to times of crisis or discipline.

I wrote scripts for eight training videos, which were edited and revised with Drs. Julie Youm and Warren Wiechmann of the UCI School of Medicine. With the budget and time allotted from the grant, four videos were shot and completed in Winter Quarter 2021. These four videos were used in two separate educational environments in the College of Health Sciences during Spring Quarter 2021:

1. An inter-professional education (IPE) session hosted by faculty throughout the College of Health Sciences, for graduate and professional students to learn about the relationships between the various disciplines (medicine, nursing, public health, pharmaceutical sciences)
2. A two quarter-long Health Equity Certificate Program, open to faculty, staff, and students throughout the College of Health Sciences

Objectives:

The revisions made to the project throughout the award period are largely logistical and cosmetic in nature. The core objectives of the project remained the same:

1. Attendees will learn how to recognize and act against discriminatory treatment, regardless of whether or not such treatment is protected under the First Amendment or any similar policy/law
2. Attendees will engage in meaningful dialogue about the root issues of misunderstandings/microaggressions and develop practical skills to support aggrieved members of our professional/educational community
3. Attendees will understand efficient and proper ways to disseminate this information to their respective units and organizations

Attendee Demographics:

As of June 1, 2021, over 200 UCI affiliates have seen at least one “READ what is SAID” video and engaged in a dialogue with their peers regarding its content. These attendees comprised of:

Undergraduate Students	10
Graduate/Professional Students	125

Staff	29
Faculty	37

Outcomes and Assessments:

“READ what is SAID” trainings were hosted virtually via Zoom in Spring 2021. The issue of “Zoom fatigue” was very prevalent, as some attendees and small group facilitators anecdotally reported limited engagement in small groups. However, large group discussion was never short on time, especially for the videos that addressed the contemporary topics of COVID vaccine hesitancy and racial inequity. Breakout rooms for small group discussion were intentionally organized ahead of time to diversify the rooms by role and affiliation of attendees.

Furthermore, despite all actors and the media team being fully vaccinated for COVID-19 at the time of filming the videos, physically gathering the team on campus proved challenging due to a majority of faculty and staff still working remotely.

This work was able to build upon multiple other initiatives in the College of Health Sciences and UCI more broadly, which tend to focus on microaggressions and implicit bias on a more individual scope. “READ what is SAID” provided a much-needed framework to discuss microaggressions as more than just actions and words to be policed. Rather, it created a forum to discuss the larger issues of power dynamics, complacency with the status quo, and re-evaluation of collective missions and visions. Thus, efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion were seen as a proactive part of our mission as UCI, rather than reactive discipline.

Future Directions:

Moving forward, we hope to find additional funding to create more videos that address a wider variety of environments and relationships amongst colleagues in all the various realms of academic medicine and health sciences.

Additionally, we look forward to the possibility of hosting in-person training events again during the 2020-2021 academic year, in order to spark more candid dialogue amongst attendees. In this regard, another creative goal would be to perform the training scenarios live, using trained actors.

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