

Advancing a Bias-Free and Inclusive Culture: Allyship

What is allyship?

Allyship is a continuous process of learning about other people's identities and lived experiences, as well as working in partnership with historically marginalized communities to advocate for their fundamental rights, equitable access, and ability to thrive in the workplace ([National Institutes of Health, 2023](#)).

What is an ally?

An ally is any person who supports, empowers or stands up for another person or a group of people. Furthermore, being an ally is being deliberate about building an equitable and inclusive work environment for all ([University of Kansas, 2023](#)).

What key roles can an ally play?



Mentor

A person that supports, advises and guides to help with personal growth



Sponsor

A person that serves as a champion and takes an active role in an employee's professional development and career advancement



Advocate

An agent of change willing to speak up, amplify and champion someone else and helps them achieve their goals.



Coach

A coach helps set and meet goals, helps identify strengths and weaknesses, and provides opportunities for growth.



Challenger

A challenger provides critical feedback and goes the extra mile to help with growth and development in new and meaningful ways.

Active Allyship Framework

Acknowledge the privilege you hold

- Understanding our individual privilege is central to allyship; this will allow you to use this privilege to amplify those who do not have it.
- We must acknowledge systemic societal issues which may have played in our favor.

Own Your Positional Power

- Positional power: the power you have based on your role and level.
- We all have some form of power; we must be willing to exert it to effect change.

Identify Inequities in the Learning Environment

- Recognize **systematic** inequalities and realize impact of bias and subtle acts of exclusion.
- Believe underrepresented people's experiences.

Take Action

- Advocate for others
- Share opportunities for growth
- Design to the margins

What does Allyship look like?

In our journey towards a bias-free and inclusive workplace, it's crucial to understand allyship. It's not merely about intentions, but about actions and impact. Here's what allyship looks like:

1. Equity over Equality: Rather than aiming for mere equality, we strive for equity. This means recognizing and addressing systemic disparities to ensure fairness for all.

2. Environment Awareness: Instead of singling out 'at risk' individuals, we acknowledge that the environment itself may not be inclusive for everyone. Allyship involves creating environments where everyone can thrive.

3. Focus on Impact: It's not enough to intend well; what truly matters is the impact of our words and actions. We must be mindful of how our behavior affects others and be ready to learn and adjust accordingly.



Recommended Resources

Internal Resources

- [Northwestern's Human Resources office](#)
- [Office of Civil Rights and Title XI](#)
- [Human Resources Business Partner](#)
- [Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Feinberg's Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#)

External Resources

- [Inclusify: The Power of Uniqueness and Belonging to Build Innovative Teams](#) by Stephanie Johnson
- [So You Want to Talk About Race](#) by Ijeoma Oluo
- [Engaging in Authentic Allyship as Part of Our Professional Development \(2022\)](#) by Sally Arif et al.
- [Code Switch](#) by [NPR](#)
- [Leading with Empathy & Allyship](#) by [Catalyst](#)
- [“I cannot believe you just said that” \(2021\)](#) by Deloitte

