

# Invisible Inequities

## Community Guidelines<sup>1</sup> for FIRST® Online Discussions

The FIRST® online discussion board is a professional community brought to you by FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) and NAPE (National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity). The discussions are designed to give participants a place to explore topics addressed in the threads, and to further consider topics introduced in the modules. We encourage participants to have reflective discussions and active engagement in this space. We see the discussions as a place where participants have the opportunity to connect with other FIRST Coaches, Mentors, Volunteers and staff and discuss aspects of equity, inclusion and diversity so that every student has the richest FIRST experience possible.

This is a shared community founded on trust and respect. Consider the recommendations below to ensure all participants feel comfortable and safe in online discussions. We reserve the right to remove any participant, material and/or comment, which in our sole judgment does not adhere to these guidelines.

### Recommendations for Successful Participation

- **Respect each other.** The focus of the discussions is to improve equity, diversity and inclusion within FIRST teams. Topics may bring up sensitive issues about race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, or socioeconomic background. It is critical that participants are respectful and thoughtful in their posts so that everyone feels comfortable to participate. Some topics may hit a nerve--consider taking a step back and waiting until you've calmed down if you become heated during the discussion to ensure respectful dialogue.
- **Assume good intent.** It can be challenging to determine someone's tone just from reading online text. A message that was intended as lighthearted might come across as an attack when received. Try to assume good intent from your colleagues in the discussions. You can ask for clarification or explain how the message sounded to you.
- **Stay focused on the topic at hand.** You will see that different threads are focused in on different topics to discuss. Please be mindful of the topic and keep your conversation aligned with the topic. If you have other ideas you would like to share, feel free to send an email to: [diversity@firstinspires.org](mailto:diversity@firstinspires.org)
- **Encourage discourse and be open to other perspectives.** Discussing topics of inclusion and inequity may be intimidating and uncomfortable. Interacting in these discussions may require making yourself vulnerable to others. Abrasive responses may end conversations rather than enrich them. When responding to posts, be open to different perspectives and respond in a way that encourages rather than inhibits discourse. Understand that some people may still be learning about the right words to use or may have not considered the impact of their statements. Rather than attack a post that could be considered offensive, understand we are all learning material together and use this as an opportunity to educate



others by highlighting the potential impacts of their words. It is important that participants are honest and open with their thoughts and do not feel limited in what they can say. Make this a space where people feel comfortable to keep a conversation going.

- **Protect your own and students' privacy.** Although your discussions are posted within a closed course, assume that anything you post here could be made public and respond accordingly. Be particularly mindful of disclosing details that violates the privacy of students or others, such as: phone numbers, email addresses, home or work addresses, *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> team names or numbers, student names, or similar personal information. Use initials or change names to protect the anonymity of students or others.
- **All comments will be moderated.** Although we hope discussions are completely respectful and lead to informative discourse, we reserve the right to make moderator decisions regarding comments and posted material including their removal if necessary.

### Questions or Suggestions

If you have questions regarding posting to the discussion board or suggestions for how to address problems, please contact: [diversity@firstinspires.org](mailto:diversity@firstinspires.org)



<sup>1</sup> The community guidelines are adapted from the following:

- <http://blog.thearc.org/about/online-community-guidelines/>
- <http://www.phoenix.edu/students/online-communities/community-guidelines.html>