

Classified Leadership Institute – June 2026



From Silence to Strategy

Empowering Classified Professionals to Address Hierarchical Microaggressions



We're in This Together

Classified Leadership Institute

Community Agreements



Assume positive intent,
focus on impact



Honor confidentiality
within this space



Participation is always
your choice



Take care of yourself —
stretch, breathe, step out

By the End of This Session, You Will Be Able To...

1

Identify four types of hierarchical microaggressions and describe how they show up in community college environments.

2

Recognize the impact of role-based slights on belonging, morale, and collaborative campus culture.

3

Apply the P.A.R.D. model to respond effectively — whether acting as a target, ally, or supervisor.

4

Implement at least one microaffirmation or meeting norm that reduces harm and uplifts marginalized voices across campus roles.

What Are Hierarchical Microaggressions?

Everyday behaviors that subtly devalue someone because of their role or status that are often unintentional, but with an impact that adds up over time.

Devaluing by Role

An idea gets ignored until someone with a higher title repeats it.

Behavior Shift

Warm to managers, curt to classified professionals.

Exclusion

Left out of decisions that directly affect your work.

Diminishing Language

Called 'just staff' or referred to by job function instead of name.

Why They Matter

Impact on Climate, Belonging & Student Success



Individual Impact

- Erodes belonging & confidence
- Contributes to burnout & turnover
- Creates silence in important conversations



Organizational Impact

- Reduces engagement & collaboration
- Weakens shared governance participation
- Limits innovation and problem-solving



Student Impact

- Classified professionals are closest to students
- When classified professionals are dismissed, students feel it
- Respect for classified = better student support

Reflection: Think of a time you felt dismissed because of your role. What made that moment impactful?

The P.A.R.D. Response Model

A framework for responding with agency, clarity, and care

P

Pause

Breathe. Let your nervous system catch up before you respond.

A

Assess

Is it safe? Who's in the room? Public or private response? You never owe an immediate reply.

R

Respond

Choose language that fits your comfort level — from gentle curiosity to naming impact directly.

D

Document

Patterns matter. Keep a record to track trends and support future conversations if needed.

You choose the tone that reflects your safety and communication style.

R — Respond: Language Toolkit

Choose the approach that fits your comfort level and context:

Gentle Curiosity

"Can we pause? I want to make sure we hear Jordan's full thoughts on the subject."

Clarifying Credit

"I want to circle back to the idea Sam raised earlier."

Naming Impact

"When the decision moved forward without front-line classified present, it felt like our perspective wasn't valued."

Redirecting

"Let's use the title that reflects her role: Program Specialist."

Scenario Lab

Pair Share — Target & Ally

1

Round 1: The Silent Cc

You spent two weeks preparing a report for a district-level presentation. The day before, you receive a calendar invite, and you've been moved to a 'support role.' A colleague with a higher title will present your work.

No one asked you.

Person A — you are the Target. Person B — you are the Ally who found out what happened.

Discuss with your partner:

- Target: What do you feel in your body first? What would you actually say — and to whom?
- Ally: What do you say to the Target? What do you say (or not say) to others?
- Together: What makes it harder or easier to speak up in this kind of situation?

Scenario Lab

Pair Share — Target & Ally

2

Round 2: The Invisible Expert

Your department brings in an outside consultant to address a recurring student services problem. You've been managing this issue for three years and have deep knowledge of the root cause. In the meeting, you try to share your perspective twice, but both times you're talked over. The consultant is asked to come back next month.

No one follows up with you.

Person A — you are the Target. Person B — you are the Ally who was in the room.

Discuss with your partner:

- Target: What does it feel like to be the unconsulted expert? What would you want someone to say?
- Ally: You were in that room. What did you do — or wish you had done?
- Together: What systems or habits allow this pattern to keep happening?

Scenario Lab

Pair Share — Target & Ally

3

Round 3: The Missing Seat

Your department is piloting a new student intake process. A manager is brought in to train staff. You later find out the training already happened, and classified professionals weren't included because "it was mostly for faculty and admin."

The new process directly affects your daily work.

Person A — you are the Target. Person B — you are the Ally who heard about this after the fact.

Discuss with your partner:

- Target: This exclusion wasn't personal — it was structural. How does that shape your response?
- Ally: What can you do now, after the fact, that would actually help?
- Together: What would need to change institutionally for this not to happen again?

Prevention: Microaffirmations & Meeting Norms

From Reactive to Proactive — Small Practices, Big Cultural Impact



Microaffirmations

- Attribute ideas by name and role
- Invite missing voices:
- "Anyone from Facilities want to weigh in?"
- Use chosen titles consistently
- Acknowledge contributions publicly



Meeting Norms

- Rotate airtime — share the floor intentionally
- Rotate note-taking — don't default to classified roles
- Start meetings: "Whose perspectives do we need?"
- Pause & credit when an idea is repeated

From Silence to Strategy

You Already Have What It Takes.

Today you gained:

- Language to name what you've experienced
- A model (P.A.R.D.) to respond with agency
- Practices to prevent harm and build culture
- Community with others doing this work



Thank you for participating!



Let's stay connected!

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