As a leading institution of Christian higher education, Biola University is uniquely situated to model academic rigor paired with loving concern for others. Toward that aim, in scholarship and teaching we strive to employ non-discriminatory and bias-free language. Across academic fields and discourses, the use of non-discriminatory language is standard practice. Beyond professional motivation, as Christians we believe in the importance of speaking and writing in a way that respects others as made in the image of God.

**Recommended Language Usage:**

This is the recommended practice for written and verbal communication within the academic arena (faculty, academic staff, students) and comports to recommended practice at Biola more widely. We also suggest that faculty and students consult their own disciplinary guidelines.

Avoid the use of stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, language or national origin. Avoid drawing attention to irrelevant identifiers of race or gender. Avoid gender-specific language as much as possible when referencing people in general. Avoid terms that assume the universality of a particular human experience or presume the normativity of the socially dominant group.

**Culture, Ethnicity, & Race**

Understanding that diversity can exist within distinct ethnic and racial groups and that the use of stereotypes encourages inaccurate and superficial discourse will help us avoid sweeping generalizations regarding culture, ethnicity, and race.

When discussing culture, race, and ethnicity, use nuanced, well-rounded and accurate representations of individuals and groups.

**Age**

When writing for general audiences assume that your audience falls within a wide age range and include examples or evidence across the life span. Do not assume that one age span is preferable to another.

**Gender**

Gender specific terminology when referring to groups of people that may contain both men and women is not accurate. Utilize gender-neutral terminology, for example, substitute “humanity” for “mankind,” and “human beings” or “people” for “man.”

Use titles or descriptors that respect women as well as men (such as “Chair” or “Chairperson” instead of “Chairman”). Refer to female professionals by their appropriate titles. References to their marital status in a professional context are inappropriate.

Understand that both men and women contribute to human culture and accomplishment. Avoid the use of gender role stereotyping. For example, do not suggest that all doctors are men or all nurses are women.

Do not use gender stereotypes as a means of insult.
Non-Discriminatory Language Section 7.52
Dept: Provost’s Office March 1, 2015

Socioeconomic Status & Class
Avoid language that associates human value with possession, consumption, employment, or class status. Also, avoid language that gives undue or unnecessary preference to formal education as an indicator of intelligence, competence, or character.

Disability
Not all physical, emotional, or mental differences are easily identifiable; do not assume that being able-bodied is standard or representative of all experiences. Avoid language that assumes able bodiedness.

The person is more important than the condition. The phrasing “person with a disability” is preferred to describing a person as “disabled” or “handicapped.” When it is pertinent to mention or describe a person’s disability, try to be specific.

Language & National Origin
Be sensitive to the needs of a diverse audience. Avoid implicit or explicit privileging of one language, nationality, or culture over another. For example, be aware of cultural references or informal idioms that may not be familiar to your audience. Avoid using “we” to refer to citizens of the United States of America, for example “We can vote.”