

PSYCHOLOGY COLLOQUIUM SERIES 2015-2016

MARCH 4th, 2016, UCC, Room 37



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Putting Team Composition Research in Context: How the Mix of Team Members influences Team Effectiveness in and out of this World

Teams are the fundamental building blocks of many organizations. Prevailing team effectiveness models suggest that while teams may use multiple paths to accomplish their goals, they are better positioned for success when they are composed well. Despite the available evidence supporting a team composition and performance link, an existing scientist-practitioner gap leaves some to conclude that team composition research has not progressed to a point where prescriptions for team staffing can be made. I will present our recent research on team composition, which highlights the fundamental role of context in bridging this gap. I will draw on recent work completed for NASA and focused on team composition issues for deep-space exploration, and data collected from teams deployed to Afghanistan to illustrate how team composition research can be leveraged for the effective design and management of work teams.