



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR ENHANCING DEPARTMENT CLIMATE

Discussions with and surveys of various groups across campus reveal the following common concerns:

- Lack of respect/consideration/politeness
- Ineffective communication
- Lack of recognition/visibility/value
- Lack of support/inequitable access to professional development opportunities
- Insufficient sense of community or belonging
- Difficulties achieving balance between work and family or personal life
- Illegal behaviors and demeaning, sexualizing, or condescending language and behaviors

In addressing these concerns it is important to note that though issues of climate may be common to all groups – faculty, academic staff, classified staff, post-graduate, graduate, and undergraduate students – the solutions or remedies for specific groups may differ.

To address these concerns we have developed the following set of recommended actions/activities/policies for the following areas:

- Basic manners – respect/consideration/politeness
- Effective communication
- Building a sense of community
- Promoting professional development
- Recognizing and valuing the work of departmental members
- Building sensitivity
- Balancing work and family/personal responsibilities
- Countering illegal behaviors and complaints about demeaning, sexualizing, or condescending language and behavior

To Enhance Basic Manners – Respect/Consideration/Politeness:

- Issue a policy statement that makes it clear that all individuals in the department – faculty, staff, and students - are to be treated with dignity and respect; that differential treatment of women and men, and minorities and non-minorities is not appropriate and will not be tolerated.
- Include showing respectful and considerate behavior to other departmental members and visitors in performance evaluations for both faculty and staff.
- Include, as an important element of showing respect and consideration, the need to address individuals by their appropriate titles. Program Administrators, for example, may prefer not to be called secretaries.
- Promote these policies by example.

To Improve Communication:

- Clearly and honestly communicate departmental values, intentions, expectations – and act in accordance with them.
- Clearly communicate departmental policies and procedures.
- Provide written clarification of conditions of employment, including information on vacation time, sick time, and grievance procedures to all faculty members, academic and classified staff members, post-graduate students, and other student employees.
- Provide informational documents to graduate students that include information about requirements, expectations, policies, procedures, and qualifications for applying for fellowships, project assistantships, teaching assistantships, rewards, etc.
- Clearly define qualifications and application processes for all faculty and academic staff position openings and promotions.
- Provide open and honest communication about the allocation of departmental resources.
- In communicating, be sure to include all people/voices in your department – see **“Building a Sense of Community”** (below). Be sure to solicit perspectives from diverse groups of people.
- Promote collaboration and sharing of information.
- Become aware of cultural and gendered differences in styles of communication, and about expectations regarding styles of communication. For example, many women tend to have a different communication style than men and are subject to cultural expectations regarding their communication. If women speak in softer tones, seem more hesitant, or make hedging statements they risk not being respected, but if they speak authoritatively, they may be seen as “aggressive” and also risk not being respected. Colleagues often unwittingly overlook or downgrade women’s thoughts and ideas for both of these reasons.

Building a Sense of Community:

- Give governance to all groups in your department.
 - For example, make sure you have representation from the academic and classified staff, and from post-doctoral and graduate students at all departmental meetings.
 - Consider giving these non-faculty representatives voting rights on departmental matters other than tenure decisions.
- Examine departmental committee membership and ensure that membership is diverse with respect to age, gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, etc.
- Examine departmental teaching assignments and ensure that teaching requirements are appropriately and equitably distributed.
- Examine departmental events such as seminar series and sponsored conferences and ensure that presenters of various ages, genders, nationalities, races and ethnicities are included.
- Time departmental meetings so as not to exclude participation of specific groups. Parents, for example, are often unable to attend late afternoon meetings and events.
- As chair of departmental meetings:
 - Make sure that everyone has a chance to voice opinions or concerns. See the UW Office of Quality Improvement's webpage on "**How to Lead Effective Meetings**" for valuable advice. (<http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/meetings/howto1.htm>)
 - Be sure to acknowledge and attribute ideas, suggestions, and comments accurately.
- Publicly recognize and praise faculty, staff, and students who perform work on behalf of the department:
 - For example, publicly thank individual faculty members who have contributed to efforts to recruit new graduate students into the department, staff members who have played an important role in organizing a departmental event, custodial staff who clean up after a departmental event, students who have served on special committees, etc.
- Promote inclusive behaviors:
 - Promote inclusive language by example, i.e., avoid using only male pronouns when referring to a group composed of males and females; avoid using language that makes assumptions about marital status and/or sexual orientation, i.e., use "partner" rather than "spouse."
 - Whenever appropriate include academic and classified staff in departmental social events.
- Host regular social events. Though some events may be appropriate for faculty only, or for faculty and graduate students, ensure that other events are open to all departmental members.
- Create a communal space – coffee room/lunch room.
- See the worksheet (next page) "**Engaging Everyone in the Life of the Department.**" Consider creating a similar worksheet that includes teaching responsibilities (e.g. large introductory lecture courses, small upper-lever seminar courses, laboratory intensive courses, etc.) and other functions pertinent to your department.

Engaging Everyone in the Life of the Department

(Developed by the Office of Quality Improvement)

“Getting lost in the crowd” is a common problem faced by new faculty and staff, and particularly by women and people of color. These individuals may be overlooked for departmental assignments that would bring them into a collegial circle. Often chairs make an intentional effort to shield new faculty members from departmental duties, but it is worth considering how to involve them without jeopardizing their scholarship.

Women in traditionally male departments and people of color are often in high demand for campus committees and efforts because of the diverse perspectives they bring. Ask to be made aware of these campus activities and wherever possible help those involved bring what they are doing at the campus level back to the department.

The grid below is a format that department chairs can customize. When assigning people to various roles and committees, use this chart to ensure opportunities are well distributed and that each person has some role in the life of the department.

Committee/Activity	Jones	Smith	Their	Chavez	Bloom	Ono
Personnel Committee						
Budget Committee						
Research Committee						
Undergraduate Committee						
Equity Committee						
Graduate Committee						
Search Committee						
Symposium Committee						
Receptions & Social Events						
Faculty Senate Representative						
Departmental representative to Campus Committee X						
Member of Key Professional Organization						
Conference Planning Committee						

Promoting Professional Development:

- Consider giving faculty, academic staff, and classified staff time off to attend courses/workshops/national meetings.
- Consider providing financial support for faculty, staff, post-graduate students, and graduate students to attend workshops/courses/present at national meetings.
- When appropriate, consider sending staff and/or students to give presentations, rather than faculty.
- Encourage faculty to invite staff/students to present lectures in their areas of expertise.

Recognizing and Valuing the Work of Departmental Members:

- Publicly thank departmental members for their contributions to the department being sure to attribute credit accurately – see “**Building a Sense of Community.**”
- Make public announcements regarding awards/recognition departmental members (faculty, staff, or students) have received.
- Develop and enforce departmental standards regarding authorship, or enforce standards established by your academic discipline.
- Encourage all faculty and students to become aware of the academic contributions of their colleagues in the department and the university and to provide citations to these contributions in their academic writing and presentations.

Building Sensitivity

- When/if a representative of one particular group (e.g. graduate student/minority faculty) approaches you with concerns about treatment or policies in the department, meet with him or her and listen respectfully to his or her concerns. Hold a separate meeting with the group against whom the complaint was lodged and raise the concerns presented to you. Be sure not to identify any individuals who complained, but rather refer to them as a group. Likewise be sure not to identify individuals complained against, but rather focus on the group as wholly responsible. Instead of focusing on blame and ill treatment, focus the discussion on solutions and means of improving the situation.
- If the complaint regards illegal behavior, your response will have to differ – refer to section on “**Countering Illegal Behavior**” below.

Balancing Work and Family/Personal Responsibilities:

- Foster inclusiveness in scheduling departmental meetings and events.
- Develop creative and flexible solutions to accommodate family and personal developments. For example:
 - o Find out how other departments have covered teaching and other staffing needs when faced with faculty members who need to take time off to bear and/or care for a new child, who have experienced serious illness, or who must care for ill and/or aging family members.
 - o Invite faculty and staff to provide solutions for such necessary leaves.
 - o Consult with relevant campus offices and resources to find solutions:
 - Office of Academic Personnel <http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/APO/index.htm>; Director, Steve Lund, 263-2511
 - Brochure summarizing family leave policy and giving examples showing various ways that family leave can be implemented:
<http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/polproced/fambroch.pdf>
- Budget for hiring lecturers and other staff members when needed for family and/or medical leave absences.

Countering Illegal Behaviors and Complaints about Demeaning, Sexualizing, or Condescending Language and Behavior

- Develop and clearly state a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and unreported instances of conflict of interest in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship. See the Equity and Diversity Resource Center's description of "**University Policies**" for more information. (<http://www.wisc.edu/edrc/services/Complaintprocess.pdf>)
- If approached with a complaint of such behavior do not dismiss the complaint. Rather, immediately recognize the complaint, apologize for the treatment, and quickly determine what the individual approaching you wants. Ask, "What would you like me to do?" or, "How would you like me to help you?" This will help you avoid misunderstandings and clarify the person's objective in approaching you. Respect his or her decisions and avoid imposing what you think you would do under the same circumstances.
- Consult early and often with a campus resource – See the Equity and Diversity Resource Center's (EDRC) **webpage on harassment** (<http://www.wisc.edu/edrc/sexualharassment/>) for more information and for a list of contact persons in each school/college appointed by deans/directors to assist in responding to sexual harassment concerns.
- Refer the individual approaching you to the EDRC and/or the contact person identified in your school/college.
- If the complaint requires action, act swiftly and fairly. Be prepared to deal not only with the principals involved but also with the influence any actions may have throughout the department.