Climate Workshops
for Department Chairs

University of Wisconsin ADVANCE-IT
Slides courtesy of Eve Fine and Jennifer Sheridan,
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Why focus on departmental climate?

- Individuals experience climate in their immediate workplace – the department
- Numerous campus surveys show that women faculty experience a more negative climate than male faculty
- Improving department climate is critical for retention and advancement of women faculty
Why focus on department chairs?

- Initial individual interviews (26 women faculty in STEM in 2002) suggested department chairs have prominent role:

  Before I got here, when [X] was chair, two other people had babies … and [his reaction] was fine! ‘Oh! Congratulations! Good. Take the semester off. You have a grad student to fill in. … that’s no problem … do what you need to do.’ Versus [the new] chair [who] has never had kids [and] does not think the idea of parental leave is meritorious.
Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

Session #1

- Discussion of climate – what it is, why it matters
- Initial perspective on climate in own dept
- Discussion of findings from campus-wide surveys
  - 2003, 2006, 2009: ~50% response rate
- Introduction to Departmental Climate Survey
Why do assessment?

- Assessment is essential for targeting strategies for initiating change
- In a research environment, data (quantitative and qualitative) get respect
- Data are necessary for evaluating change (and detecting lack of it)
- Pitfalls – confidentiality and anonymity
Faculty Perceptions of Respectful Treatment in the Workplace, by Gender and Department Chair

I am treated with respect by ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Agree Strongly or Somewhat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleagues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (n=375)</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (n=864)</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Chair (n=76)</td>
<td>* indicates difference significant at $p &lt; 0.05$</td>
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<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
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</table>
51. With respect to the recruitment of, climate for, and leadership of women faculty, how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements about your primary department/unit?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle one number on a scale of 1 to 4 for each statement.</th>
<th>Agree Strongly 1</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat 2</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat 3</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly 4</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There are too few women faculty in my department.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. My department has identified ways to recruit women faculty.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. My department has actively recruited women faculty.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The climate for women in my department is good.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. My department has identified ways to enhance the climate for women.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. My department has taken steps to enhance the climate for women.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
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Figure 1. The climate for women in my department is good

* Statistically significant at p<.05
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Between Sessions 1 and 2

- Homework: Others’ perspectives of climate
- Implementation of Departmental Survey

Session 2

- Receive Survey Results
- Share Selected Results
- Obtain advice, resources, consider possible actions
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Session 3

- Report on Sharing Results with Department
- Report on Action Taken or Changes Made
- Continued Discussion of advice, resources, and possible actions
Since Fall 2003, 38 departments participated in and completed the survey

- Physical Sciences: 13 departments
- Biological Sciences: 17 departments
- Social Sciences: 3 departments
- Humanities: 5 departments

Total # of respondents: 1,836
Departmental Climate Survey: Results

Some positive results for faculty:

- 73% feel their department is a welcoming place to work
- 86% understand their roles & responsibilities in the department
- 71% are happy with the professional relationships they have formed with others in the department.
- 90% feel their work contributes to the mission or purpose of the department.
Some negative results for faculty:

- While 90% feel their work contributes to the mission of the department –only 64% report that others recognize how their work contributes to the department’s mission/purpose.
- 21% feel under-appreciated for their work
- 20% report a lack of agency in decisions made in the department
- 24% feel isolated in their departments.
- 10% report experiencing subtle or overt harassment or discrimination due to gender, race, or other personal attributes.
Examples of Changes Made

- Improving communication – especially in the area of decision-making
- Creation of departmental committees to further examine issues of climate for women and make recommendations
- Creating opportunities for social and/or professional engagement – weekly lunch, academic seminar series, community service projects, social events
- Changing traditions & practices
  - Mentoring – committees/individuals
  - Creating more inclusive departmental traditions/practices
Results – One department resurveyed 5x

Overall rating of department climate

New chair
Results – One department resurveyed 5x
Results – One department resurveyed 5x

I feel appreciated for the work I do in the department.

- Spring 2004: 3.17
- Spring 2005: 3.11
- Spring 2006: 3.43
- Spring 2007: 3.43
- Spring 2009: 3.63
Results – One department resurveyed 5x

The Chair of the department appropriately consults or delegates decisions to a group or committee.
Results – One department resurveyed 5x

I am aware of places or people to go to if I am faced with a problem or issue in the department.
Factors fostering success

- Interactive discussion and sharing of ideas and practices between chairs
- Skilled facilitators with broad knowledge of campus issues and resources and strong commitment to equity
- Commitment of chairs to the process of improving climate
Challenges limiting success

- Scheduling
- Chair responses to survey Results
- Commitment of chairs
Resources

- Departmental Survey
  http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/climate/deptsurvey_zoomerang.pdf

- Benefits & Challenges of Diversity (booklet)
  http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits_Challenges.pdf

- Enhancing Department Climate: A Guide for Department Chairs (brochure)
  http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/ClimateBrochure.pdf