



Departmental Climate

Society for Neuroscience Department Chair Training to
Increase Women in Neuroscience (IWIn)

April 12, 2011

Marie Chisholm-Burns, PharmD

Randy Richardson, PhD

Helena Rodrigues, PhD



Overview

- Introduction to Climate
 - Why focus on departmental climate?
 - What are the benefits of positive climate?
- Departmental Climate: Case Study of the Department of Pharmacy Practice and Science
- Scenarios of Climate Issues



Why focus on departmental climate?

- Improve departmental stability
- Increase faculty & student productivity
- Recruit & retain faculty and students
- Promote respect, collegiality, inclusion, collaboration, and cooperation in department



Definition and Benefits of Positive Climate

- The degree to which the environment is supportive of individuals' work success and satisfaction (Riger et al., 1997)
- Dynamic process, not a condition
- Improves research excellence, productivity, faculty & student recruitment & retention efforts, & departmental stability



Credible Ideas

- Research shows a tendency to ignore women's ideas (Eagly & Carli, 2007)
 - Propp (1995) studied legal decision making by a 4-person group. Specific case information was given to 1 or more members of the group, who discussed and reached conclusion
 - Overall, group used male-supplied information more often
 - When only 1 had case-specific information it was used 72% of the time when supplied by a man, but only 13% of the time when presented by a woman



Does it matter if there is only one?

- People are more likely to be assigned labels when there are few members of their social group represented – e.g., female scientist vs. scientist or Latina scientist vs. scientist (Kanter, 1977; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998)
- People in minority social groups are often treated as extremes, either overly visible or isolated and ignored (Kanter, 1977; Wright & Taylor, 2003; Xie & Shauman, 2003)



Power of Perceived Fairness, Collegiality & Collaboration

- Women and minorities are given more departmental housekeeping tasks such as more advising, more teaching, and more committee work (Antonio, 2002; Hart & Cress, in press; Porter, 2007)
- Women faculty report fewer resources than their male colleagues (Trower, 2001) and they perceive the resource allocation as favoring men (Akin-Little et al., 2004)



Commitment & Work-Life Balance

- Both women and men rank science higher than their private lives (64% vs. 61%, respectively) (Sonnert, 1995)
- Both women and men report working harder when they can contribute to the department (Bowen & Schuster, 1986)
- Both women and men report marriage impacts careers (Sonnert & Holton, 1995)
- Men are just as likely as women to report difficulty in work-life balance (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997; Hill et al., 2001)



Importance of Partner Hiring

- 2-3X more female scientists are married to other scientists than their male colleagues (Rosenfeld, 1984; McNeil & Sher, 1999; NAS, 2007)
- Female scientists are 2X as likely to have a partner who works full time (NAS, 2007)
- Partner hires and job search assistance are especially important for attracting and retaining high quality women faculty (NAS, 2007; USC, 2007)



Discussion on Climate

- How would you describe a bad departmental climate?
- How would you describe a good departmental climate?
- What daily practices lead to a good climate?



Breakout Groups: Scenarios of Climate Issues



This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. SBE-0548130. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.



What's Going on Here?

Maria: I think we need a mentoring program for our grad students; it's been demonstrated to reduce time to degree.

Paul: We tried that a few years ago and it was a big waste of time.

Peter: I've been grad director for 12 years, so our last effort must have been before my time, but I agree these things can consume a lot of time with little reward.

John: While I wasn't directly involved, we did that in my last department and it worked really well. We saw retention rates go through the roof.

Paul: John raises some good points. And Peter, we've been discussing the fact that our student retention rates are too low. Maybe we should listen to John because he brings expertise to the table.

John: I'd be happy to work up a plan if you'd like.

Peter: It seems to me that you're busy enough so why don't you give the details of what you did at Penn to Maria and let her write it up. Can you get it to me in 2 weeks? If it looks good, I'll present it during our next department meeting.



As a department head, in what ways might this conversation cause you concern?



What could you do?
When life intrudes on work

- Cliff, an associate professor, typically teaches the required course for undergraduate majors from 6:00-8:00 p.m. on Monday nights. His ailing mother has recently moved in with him. He must be home by 6:00 p.m. when the nurse leaves. Cliff is spending 10-15 hours a week managing his mom's health care issues.



What can you as department head do to facilitate maintaining Cliff's productivity and commitment while still attending to his family obligations?



What could you do?

The Power of Inclusion, Collaboration & Fairness

- Janet, an assistant professor, has been asked by Mark and Tom to join a team submitting a grant proposal that has a required component on faculty and/or student diversity. They tell her that they really need her to be part of the team to legitimate the proposal. When she asks when they will next meet, Mark replies that he just needs her cv and asks if she can work on the logistics of the site visit with the department admin, and that she won't need to attend any meetings. She asks about the budget and Mark replies that he is working that out with Tom. Janet is feeling that something is amiss.



If Janet came to you for advice about her possible involvement, how might you respond? Reflect on what you might do.