Cultivating a climate for equity: Lessons learned from a campus-wide faculty change model

WHY THE FOCUS ON CLIMATE?
The need for earnest attention to university climate issues is urgent. Identity-based inequalities continue to be exacerbated by the pandemic and other crises. It is more important than ever to thoughtfully explore practices for creating inclusive, respectful spaces—whether they be virtual, physical, or hybrid.

RISE’S APPROACH
Who is our primary audience? Faculty leaders, broadly described. Whose experiences do we center? Marginalized faculty, who per our ADVANCE data, report a poorer climate. See our website for ADVANCE’s exit interviews, climate studies, and focus groups. What were our initial goals? To identify and share evidence-based actions that leaders can take to foster a more respectful work environment. What are our modes of interaction? Interactive workshops, Climate Case Studies, small group discussions, RISE Together email group, resources including U-M Climate Resources for Faculty.

HOW DO WE TREAT EACH OTHER?

Behavioral Climate Gauge

incitement
condescension
exclusion
inclusion
engaged listening
support
mentoring
respect
exceptional acts of cruelty

What Are We Saying to Each Other?

incitement
condescension
exclusion
inclusion

Interference with individual well-being (e.g. job stress, anxiety, depression)

INCIVILITY

What are we saying to ourselves? (Intentions to leave)

condescension

Interference with institutional well-being (e.g. lack of support at work, intentions to leave)

exceptional acts of kindness

exceptional acts of cruelty

“Who are you again?”
“...said to a female associate dean while she was introducing the agenda for a meeting.”

“The associate chair in my department won’t speak to me.”

“...a colleague said in a meeting once that minority professors had been tenured in this department with lower criteria.”

ADAPTED FROM HURTADO, GRATIN, ARELLANO, & CUELLAR, 2008; MILEM, CHANG, & ANTONIO, 2005

PROCESS: 3 FRAMEWORKS

1. Hurtado Climate Model
RISE adopted an empirical model by Hurtado and colleagues that defines the internal forces that affect campus workplace climates around five factors. The five factors are represented by overlapping circles to emphasize how they can change in response to the others.

2. Incivility may be subtle, but its effects are not
We often focus our workshops on behavioral climate and how we can shape it by our own actions. We introduce the behavioral climate gauge, spending most of our time on the incivility of the orange zone.

Incivility is defined as rude, condescending, and ostracizing acts that violate workplace norms of respect but otherwise appear mundane. Examples: condescending comments, constant interruptions, actions that exclude an individual from professional camaraderie.

Low intensity, subtle
Intent to harm is ambiguous
Low intensity, subtle
Intent to harm is ambiguous

Some groups experience more incivility than others


3. Eight Levers to Shift Climate for Respect & Inclusion
RISE adapted a framework from Harvard’s Project Zero and developed its own working definitions and applications of the levers specifically for the higher education employment context.

b. Unit-wide Email Blow-up
In RISE’s approach to RISE workshops, the “I can’t believe our climate is this poor” meeting once that minority professors had been tenured in this department with lower criteria.

c. Proactive New Leader
Some groups experience more incivility than others.

1. Resistance to Mentoring Responsibilities
2. Unit-wide Email Blow-up
3. Proactive New Leader
4. Interrupting a Bad Actor
5. Racially-motivated Threat
6. Diversity and Excellence
7. Distribution of Labor
8. A Climate Supportive of Disability

LENSONS LEARNED
Campus leaders are hungry for strategies Consistently strong workshop evaluations (4.5/5)

“Great workshop...among the best I’ve attended here at U-M.”

“...if this could be done for the leadership of each college/school/institute I think it could transform U-M.”

“Incredibly applicable to our daily functions.”

Climate Case Studies offer applications of the eight levers to common climate concerns

By the Numbers

U-M campus leaders who have attended a Raising Respect Workshop: 451

Works by experts that have been read, discussed, and shared by RISE: 738

Subscribers to the RISE’s Climate Case Study series: 52

RISE workshops delivered to the university community: 15

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