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

ADVANCE PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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.
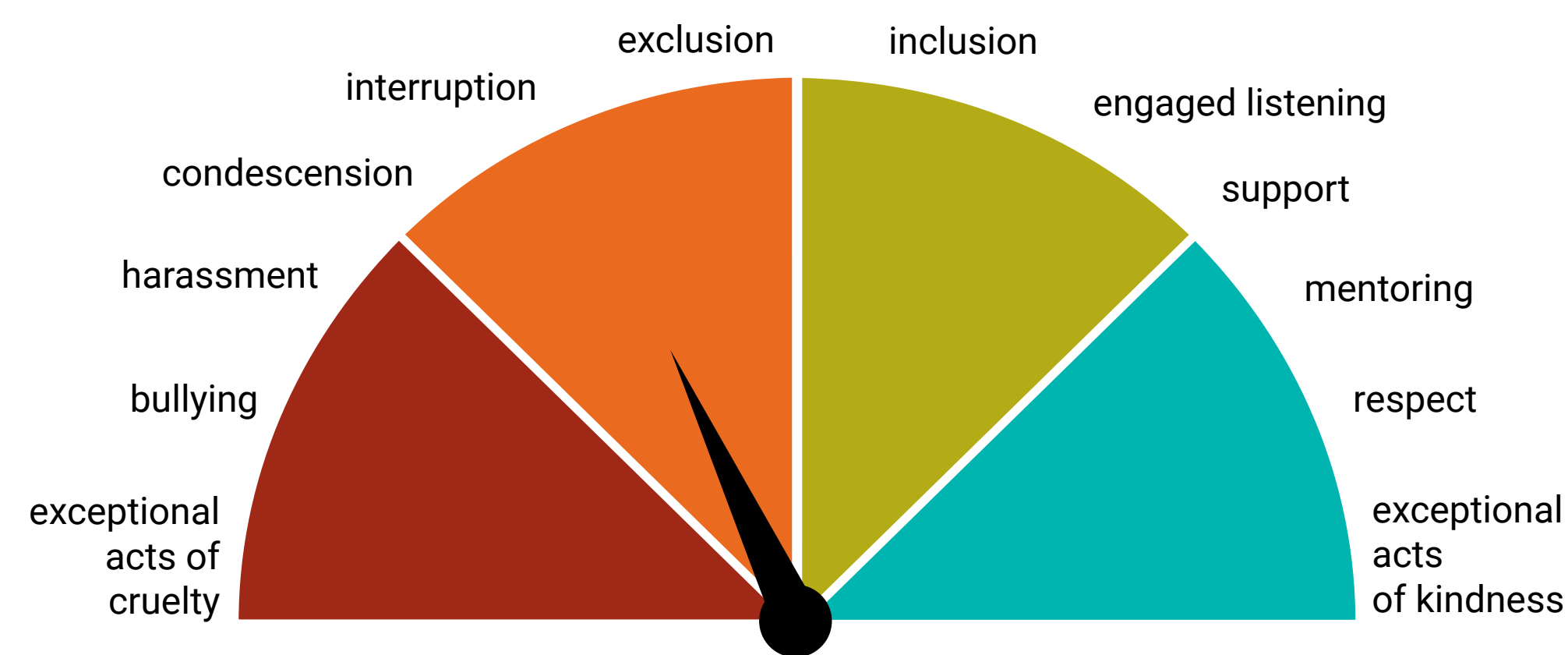
The **RISE (Respect in Striving for Excellence) Committee** is a group of faculty and staff working to support climates of respect and inclusion within academic units. This initiative to improve the workplace climate began in Fall 2018.

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

- exclusion
- inclusion
- interruption
- engaged listening
- condescension
- support
- harassment
- mentoring
- bullying
- respect
- exceptional acts of cruelty
- exceptional acts of kindness

"Who are you again?"
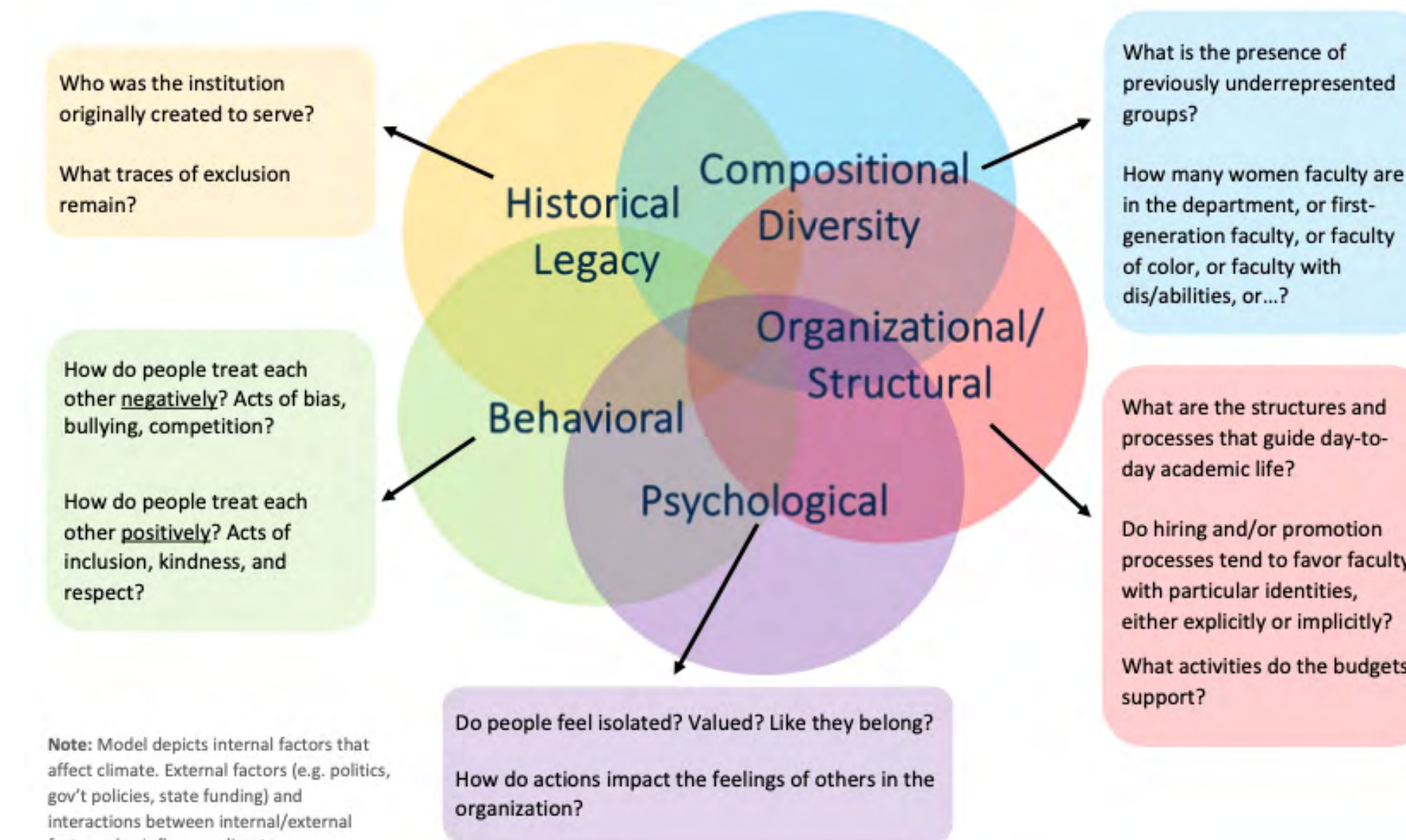- *Said to a female associate dean while she was introducing the agenda for a meeting.*

"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." - *Experience of a LatinX Professor*

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.
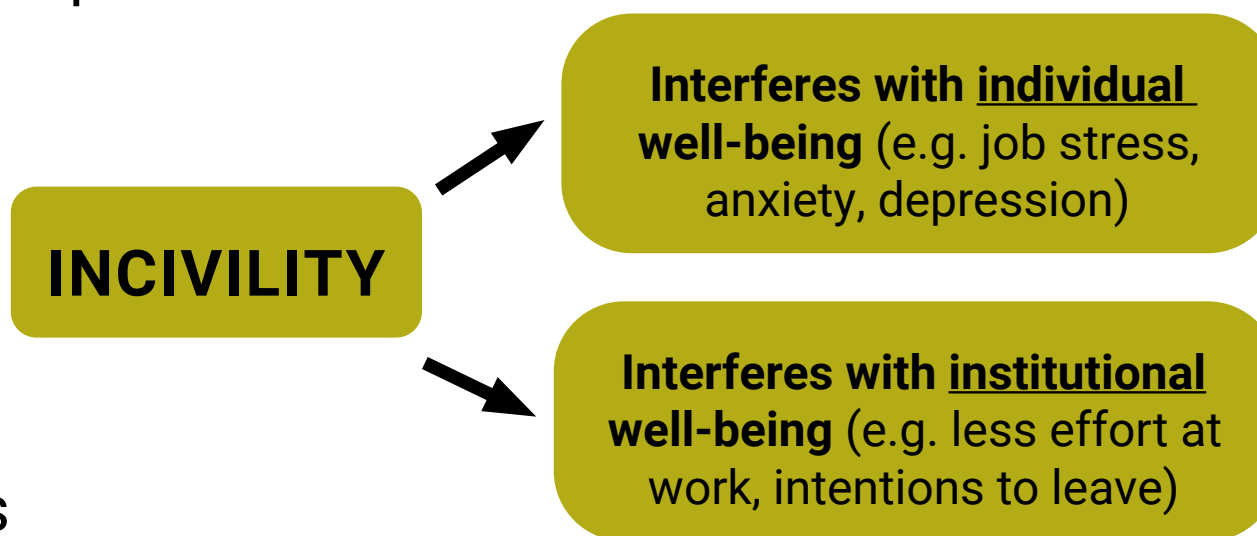

Who was the institution originally created to serve?

What traces of exclusion remain?

Historical Legacy

Compositional Diversity

What is the presence of previously underrepresented groups?

How many women faculty are in the department, or first-generation faculty, or faculty of color, or faculty with dis/abilities, or...?

How do people treat each other negatively? Acts of bias, bullying, competition?

How do people treat each other positively? Acts of inclusion, kindness, and respect?

Behavioral

Organizational/ Structural

Psychological

What are the structures and processes that guide day-to-day academic life?

Do hiring and/or promotion processes tend to favor faculty with particular identities, either explicitly or implicitly?

What activities do the budgets support?

Do people feel isolated? Valued? Like they belong?

How do actions impact the feelings of others in the organization?

Note: Model depicts internal factors that affect climate. External factors (e.g. politics, gov't policies, state funding) and interactions between internal/external factors also influence climate.

Adapted from Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005

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
- Intent to discriminate is ambiguous
- Some groups experience more incivility than others

INCIVILITY

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

Interferes with institutional well-being (e.g. less effort at work, intentions to leave)

Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Magley & Nelson, 2017; DiMarco, Hoel, Arenas & Munduate, 2018; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2012; Porath & Pearson, 2013; Schilpzand, DePater & Erez, 2016

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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.

Environment The Environment is the physical and virtual workspace and includes furniture, computers, design, and accomodations that exemplify group norms.

Modeling Modeling is displaying oneself as an example to imitate. Leaders are typically understood as models of expected and acceptable behavior in their environments.

Expectations Expectations are words, actions, and cues used in a group to explicitly and implicitly define how group members will contribute to group goals.

Opportunities Opportunities are the sets of conditions or circumstances that make it possible to do or achieve something.

Interactions Interactions are about the relational dynamics that emerge when two or more people are working together either in-person or electronically.

Routines & Structures Routines are practices that constitute a group's way of doing things. Structures are the formalized procedures and policies that are transparent and accessible to all community members.

Language Language is the system of communication used by a community to negotiate shared meaning and build group understanding around ideas, behaviors, and actions.

Time Time reflects an organization's values by how team members are asked and rewarded for using their time.

LESSONS 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

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

READ OUR CLIMATE CASE STUDIES

By the Numbers

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

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

738 Subscribers to the *RISE's Climate Case Study* series

15 RISE workshops delivered to the university community