









Climate Case Study #3 - Proactive New Leader

How to foster respect and inclusion in your unit when...

...you are a new chair in a department where there is room for improvement in the culture for respect and inclusion?

The Climate Case Studies are organized around RISE's *Eight Levers to Shift Climate for Respect and Inclusion* framework. RISE uses the eight levers above to think about the ways in which more inclusive, respectful, and civil climates might be intentionally cultivated in the higher education workplace context.

LEVER	APPROACH	WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE
 ENVIRONMENT	Consider ways you can use your environment to send signals about the culture you are trying to nurture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure your conference room has enough chairs for everyone to sit at the table for meetings• Take down historical pictures that are not inclusive
 EXPECTATIONS	Evaluate how your current norms and expectations may exclude some members of your community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have explicit conversations about norms at regular times of the year, and invite opportunities for them to be updated• Be deliberate about service expectations, including accounting for invisible labor
 INTERACTIONS	Foster positive interactions between members of your community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk around the building to increase chance connections• Create opportunities for members of your community to interact informally• Invite your department to identify ideas for improvement (e.g., scheduled discussion or anonymous suggestion box)
 LANGUAGE	Use language that communicates that everyone is a valued member of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use inclusive language (e.g., include pronouns in your screen and email signature)• Communicate how small changes are connected to values and how they contribute to larger-scale climate shifts• Articulate your vision for the unit and how to work together to take actions to achieve it
 MODELING	Model behaviors you expect from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model respectful meeting behavior (putting away your phone/computer in meetings; keep your camera on during virtual meetings whenever possible; not interrupting)• If exclusionary comments are made by others, intervene quickly (e.g., "I'm sure that wasn't what you meant to say...?")
 OPPORTUNITIES	Use your newness to the role as an opportunity to make changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show curiosity and explore why things are done the way they have always been done• Hold a "listening tour" in your first months to learn about what is working and what could be improved• Consider how difficult circumstances offer opportunities to do things differently
 ROUTINES & STRUCTURES	Examine the ways in which current processes may be opaque or exclusionary; increase transparency in processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broaden representation on committees while recognizing the high service loads common for individuals from marginalized groups• Examine each step of a process (e.g., annual reviews) for ways in which inequities may be introduced
 TIME	Consider how the way you allocate time in your unit communicates value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate whether time devoted to issues in faculty meetings (or other meetings) reflects your goals for inclusion• Have regular individual meetings with faculty where you explore their professional goals and needs• Create an open door policy, or consider having "office hours" on Zoom (with waiting room enabled)

Additional Resources:

- [Improving Department Climate: Tools and Resources for Departments and Department Chairs](#) (Columbia University, 2018)
- [10 Small Steps for Department Chairs to Foster Inclusion](#) (Mickey et al., Inside Higher Ed, 2020)
- [Enhancing Department Climate: A Guide for Department Chairs](#) (University of Wisconsin, 2015)

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