

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Hello, welcome to Advancing Faculty Excellence, a podcast where we at the U of M ADVANCE Program talk about issues facing faculty and what we can do about it. I'm your host, Mike Liemohn, an Associate Director of University of Michigan ADVANCE program, an office focused on faculty excellence.

**Kelsey Arras:**

And I'm Kelsey Arras, podcast producer and Communications and Project Specialist at the ADVANCE Program. I also oversee the RISE Committee.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Our guest today is PEAR Director Sophie Walters. PEAR, which stands for Prevention Education Assistance & Resources, is an office at U of M that focuses on training and consultation regarding sexual and gender-based misconduct, helping others holistically respond to sexual misconduct in their communities. And our topic today touches on this issue of gender misconduct. It is "When Women's Ideas are Co-opted", specifically the climate case study we will focus on today centers on this scenario: How to foster respect and inclusion in your unit when a faculty member offers an idea at a meeting which is ignored by her colleagues. Later another faculty member offers a variant of the same idea and he is praised for his innovative idea. Kelsey, what do you think about this conversation with Sophie?

**Kelsey Arras:**

I thought this case study was great to talk about. This is something that happens quite often. Sophie brought a lot of great expertise and what I found interesting is that the tools she provided are applicable to many individual interactions, not just this gender-based scenario.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Yeah, I have some strong feelings on this topic. I'm one that has been inching towards a better interaction in groups, listening more, and amplifying voices of others. But I'm caught on this issue sometimes. I learned a lot from this discussion. How about you?

**Kelsey Arras:**

I found myself experience these types of situations and I've also found that I've been on the other side of this when I'm somebody in meetings that's very invested in contributing and I have to make a conscious effort to pass the mic and make sure to highlight other contributors in the conversation.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

I hope that you enjoy this episode of Advancing Faculty Excellence.

Hello, welcome to the show today, and we have with us our guest, Sophie Walters.

**Sophie Walters:**

Hi!

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Welcome to the show.

**Sophie Walters:**

Thank you so much for having me. I'm very excited to be with you all.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Yes, please introduce yourself to our audience.

**Sophie Walters:**

Sure. So my name is Sophie Walters. I use the pronoun she/her and I serve as the Director at PEAR, Prevention Education, Assistance & Resources. Been at the university for three years when PEAR was created, and I have a background in law, criminal justice, and counter-terrorism.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

So you're from PEAR. Could you tell us a little more about this office and what it does for the U-M community?

**Sophie Walters:**

So PEAR is Prevention, Education, Assistance and Resources. We're an office located within the Equity Civil Right and Title IX Office. And we provide sexual and gender-based misconduct prevention education for our U-M employees. So U-M employees means faculty, staff, student employees, and we serve Ann Arbor campus, Flint, Dearborn campuses, but also Michigan Medicine. We also, in addition of training, we offer consultations with faculty and staff leaders where we assist them in holistically responding to sexual misconduct in their community. We base all of our skill building workshop training on supporting, empowering our community and making sure that we are evidence-based, we are focused on public health model, social ecological model, and really offering a set of specific services to our community based on their need.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

We love that evidence-based background.

**Kelsey Arras:**

So in addition to your role as the Director of PEAR, you also serve on the RISE committee. How has your time been on the RISE committee so far?

**Sophie Walters:**

Oh it's been awesome. I love connecting with faculty members and colleagues across campus, learning about their disciplines and really sharing kind of our passion about wanting to create spaces that are respectful and inclusive.

**Kelsey Arras:**

We've really loved having your expertise on the committee.

**Sophie Walters:**

Oh, thank you.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Today our RISE Climate case study that we're discussing today is "When Women's Ideas are Co-opted". As is usual on these case studies, we have a particular scenario that was developed to help us offer concrete advice and suggestions towards that broader issue. Our specific situation that we are addressing today is this: How to foster respect and inclusion in your unit when a faculty member offers an idea at a meeting, which is then ignored by her colleagues. Later, another faculty member offers a variant of the same idea and he is praised for this innovative idea.

**Sophie Walters:**

I think this is an issue that often goes unnoticed, but deeply felt by many women in academia really feeling like ideas are co-opt or credited to somebody else and sometimes to a male colleague. And so while this behavior seems pretty subtle compared to other forms of misconduct that we see in academia, it reflects deeper power dynamics and systemic inequities that we see at the university. I wanted to point it out that the 2018 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), a report that we often use at PEAR to really base some of our trainings, really highlights a critical truth. The most common form of sexual harassment that we see in academia is not sexual in nature. It's mostly gender harassment.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Mmmm.

**Sophie Walters:**

And gender harassment really includes demeaning, excluding, marginalizing women. And when women's contributions are ignored or taking credit by somebody else creates really this gender dynamic at work and creates microaggressions. And so this is very important to highlight the work of the NASEM report because it really gives us some research, some evidence where we can in the future base our research on and our work on.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

At the bottom of the case studies are usually readings that helped inform the RISE committee and one of those is an article from the Harvard Business Review, Roberts et al, talking about an antidote to microaggressions.

**Sophie Walters:**

The article's called "An Antidote to Microaggressions? Microvalidations." So let's talk about microvalidations. In the article, the authors explore how microvalidations, which are small, intentional, positive acts, can help undo the ongoing harm that we see in some of the spaces that are caused by microaggressions. And so microvalidation could be used as a proactive strategies to counter the harm. So what does it look like? The authors in the article talk about often trainings that we facilitate in workplaces are about preventing microaggression, talking about microaggression. However they think that avoidance alone is insufficient. We need to think about the other side. What can we do to advocate and make sure that we are intentionally recognizing and affirming identities and contributions to our colleagues? And so they really take this different approach instead of really talking about and how to prevent microaggressions, what can we do on the other side proactively, something positive.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

And just for clarification there, the microaggression or microvalidation, the "micro" there is not referring to something tiny or insignificant, but referring to personal connection rather than macro being a more systemic large scale policy issue or norm.

**Sophie Walters:**

Yes, one to one, yup.

And then at the end, really our authors emphasize that microvalidations are not a cure for all really we need to think about both: how to prevent microaggressions and then how to uplift microvalidations. And organizational leaders in particular have big responsibilities to model these behaviors and their actions carry weight and really can influence broader all culture change. And so it is very powerful for us to take all of this into consideration to foster inclusive, respectful, and equitable workplaces where everybody can feel like they can thrive.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

So the RISE committee has adopted the approach of the Eight Levers of Action for thinking about how to address challenging situations and the Eight Levers concept from Ron Ritchhart who developed this for transforming schools and the classroom environment, so it is highly applicable to the topic of addressing challenges in faculty life too. So these levers help us view from many different facets. So how can we use these levers?

**Sophie Walters:**

So at PEAR, we use the NASEM report from 2018, which really emphasized that organizational climate is the strongest predictor of whether harassment will occur and it means that our institution has the power and responsibility to shape environments where women's contributions are not just heard but recognized and valued. And so the eight levers really help us discuss how we do this in our spaces and I'm really excited to go through them.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Alright, so I think the levers somewhat naturally group themselves into a few that are more in the moment actions that you can do and then another group that are more proactive or timeless levers that should be done at other times in order to set up the right stage. And so we'll go through those "in the moment" levers first. The first one is interactions. What do we mean by interactions as a lever?

**Sophie Walters:**

Our first lever is interactions and they really focus on relational dynamics between people. So how faculty engage with each other, whether they collaborate, disagree, ignore each other, all of those things. So that's really,

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

And they do all of those.

**Sophie Walters:**

Right. And so in this case study, we really want to think about developing effective strategies for noting the oversight and making sure that all of our ideas are acknowledged and heard, especially in this case study: women.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

And do you have a few examples of how interactions works for this particular example?

**Sophie Walters:**

Example would be, first of all, you can acknowledge the first faculty member who's coming up with this idea and you can say, "Oh, like Mike has shared previously, this is a great idea and we should move forward". So really highlighting what that faculty member said and really pointing it out in your response to their idea. The second one could be really following up with that faculty member and letting them know that their input was heard and they're valued. So really like, oh, I really appreciate what you shared earlier, Mike, that was a great idea, thank you for that. And then kind of building on this. So really, again, microvalidation, showing up, making sure that people feel like they're seen, they're heard, and pointing out the great contribution that they're making in the meeting.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Yeah, I really liked that first one, that callback, the person didn't get recognition when they made essentially the same thing and you're like, "You know what? That reminds me of something I heard five minutes ago."

**Kelsey Arras:**

And this sounds like it's a good habit that you could apply to everybody in your meeting and it might be a good habit as well to do for your fellow colleagues and not just the person in the leadership role.

**Sophie Walters:**

Agreed that could be done by anybody. This is the beauty of interaction is another colleague could definitely say "Yes, like my colleague has said...". So we don't have to only think about power dynamics in those spaces. Anybody can use those interventions. I would really encourage people to think about the different interactions they have throughout the day with their colleague and not only in that staff meeting, not only when there is an idea that is co-opted, really thinking broader.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

I like that. A lever that we have in our list is language.

**Sophie Walters:**

Yes.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Can you tell us about language as a lever?

**Sophie Walters:**

So language refers to the system of communication used by a community here or faculty and really it's here to negotiate shared meaning and build group coherence. So we need to think about how language can be a positive tool to promote equity in our unit.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

So it sounds like language, you set it up as systems of communications as opposed to the interactions which are the specific one-on-one dialogue. One is more the larger scale way in which we talk and the other is the more specific way in this situation. Another one that we have on our list is modeling. Modeling is a lever for addressing co-opting of ideas.

**Sophie Walters:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Why is that?

**Sophie Walters:**

Modeling is displaying oneself as an example to imitate or inspire. And so what people often observe about ourselves that might be setting expectation for others. So we have to think about how we show up in this space and I think I'm specifically talking to leaders, but also it could be done by anybody. How we show up in spaces really set up the stage of the interactions, the environments, and how all of this is going to play out.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Alright, so how about that for a specific scenario of the woman's idea being co-opted.

**Sophie Walters:**

Yeah, so actively really listening to each other's faculty members' contributions rather than being preoccupied by other tasks. Sometimes we have a computer open and we look at emails, we're on our phone. It's really paying attention, being an active listener, really modeling that what you want people to do, you do the same for them. So really listening actively to our colleagues. It also could be recognizing and apologizing when you overtalk or cut someone off. It happens sometimes when you get too excited and you just want to jump in. Sometimes we end up cutting people off and then some colleagues are suddenly not able to finish their thoughts or their sentences. Recognizing and apologizing when you are doing this. And then again apologizing if you ignore someone's ideas or if you missed their ideas earlier. Really focusing on the harm repair. I always try to show up this way also at work. If I made a mistake, this is okay, we all make mistakes and we just have to learn with it, but I'm vulnerable enough, I have humility where I can say, "Hey, this was wrong for me, my apologies, that was your idea, tell me more about it."

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Yeah I really like that, that vulnerability, and the simple apology.

**Kelsey Arras:**

So our specific scenario today is about a female faculty member, but how might this apply to other marginalized identities in the academic workplace?

**Sophie Walters:**

I love this question because I think you're right. The scenario we're talking about right now is about men and women's dynamic, but this dynamic, it can happen anywhere between different populations, different marginalized communities. And so we want to highlight that those levers are also available for anybody else to use throughout. It could be any folks like our LGBTQ colleagues, any of the folks of different colors or different races or ethnicity or different identities. All of those folks might feel that sometimes their ideas are co-opted. And so this scenario, yes, is about gender, but it also can apply to all of different identities.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

The Co-opting part of this is the important one.

**Sophie Walters:**

Mhm, yeah.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Before moving on to the proactive levers, now is a good time to discuss one of the additional resources listed at the bottom of this particular climate case study. So here at the University of Michigan, we have a program called the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, CRLT. And within this we have the CRLT theater program, offering more dynamic and interactive workshops. One of the perennial offerings from them is the series on facilitation. And the facilitation workshops that they offer is this two part series about how to foster a constructive group discussion. And then the second is really a series of case studies about how difficult interactions during group discussions should be navigated.

**Sophie Walters:**

I really like this workshop and we invited CRLT to facilitate it with our office knowing that we do facilitation every day. And I really encourage anybody who does facilitation to reach out to CRLT. It is a great workshop. I loved it.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

A lever that we have on our list is time.

**Sophie Walters:**

Time refers to the way people in an organization use their time. In this instance, allocate time to address what's happening. In identifying measures to prevent it is something that is very important. An example is providing opportunities or mechanisms to promote ways for people to engage to share their different ideas.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

A lever on the list is opportunities. What does that mean in the context of implementing change?

**Sophie Walters:**

Opportunities are a set of conditions or circumstances that makes it possible to achieve something. What are our unit's values and how can we increase our unit's engagement in building a climate of equity? What can we do or something we could do to repair power dynamic in some spaces? One opportunity, and it's a plug for our office, is contacting PEAR. PEAR has different specialists and different representatives, and we are here to host professional development training workshop around this topic: How to create healthy, respectful, inclusive, equitable work environments that promote civility.

**Kelsey Arras:**

How might somebody, maybe they're observing the interaction and they're a fellow colleague, what could be an opportunity for that person?

**Sophie Walters:**

I love this question because it makes me think of bystander intervention. So like we facilitate trainings around bystander intervention around sexual and gender-based misconduct. But the framework of bystander intervention can be applied anywhere and in those spaces can be applied. And so we have the four D's, so it's delegate, distract, direct or delay. Directing: So you could say for example, "Hey Kelsey, you had a great idea, let's piggyback on that. Can you share a little bit more?" Delegate: you could also as a colleague, connect with another colleague and say, "Hey, have you noticed what's going on? What can we do?" and just kind of get support from them and hopefully intervene together. The other one is delay. In some situations things go so fast that you don't really have time to go like wait, what happened? And you can't intervene. But you can always go back to your colleague, for example, that person whose idea was co-opted and say, "Hey, I witnessed this or I heard this during the meeting and I just want to highlight that I think this is a great idea. Let's go back and highlight your input". And the last one is distract. Distract is really right now making sure that you draw the attention to something else and hopefully not cause more harm. But again, when I think about distract, I think it's a great way for some people who don't feel comfortable intervening. I always want to say when we think about distracting, I want to also provide support to the person who was harmed.

**Kelsey Arras:**

I like that. Thank you Sophie.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Another lever we have is routines and structures. So I have a routine of brushing my teeth twice a day and I parked in a structure, but I don't think that's how we're using those two words here today.

**Sophie Walters:**

No.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Can you tell us how we're using those words?

**Sophie Walters:**

I love your example, but no, in those levers it's a little different. So routine for us here, we talk about practice that constitute a group way of doing things, often not really codified. And structures are formalized procedures and policies that are codified, that are transparent, that are accessible to all of our community members. So we use both of those like this, routines and structures.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Okay. So do you have examples that go along with those scenarios?

**Sophie Walters:**

Yes, and I love routine and structures because I think it helps us understand the long lasting changes that we can make. One example is designate a faculty who's responsible for running the meeting. Someone who can really set the expectation.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

And who feels empowered.

**Sophie Walters:**

Yeah, and that's very important. Feeling empowered, has the capacity to step in, to intervene, to act as a bystander if needed. Another one could be pausing regularly during meeting. I know it sounds like it goes against the time lever, but it's also important everybody process things differently and we need to give space for people to hear ideas to process it. So during the meeting, pause, summarize maybe the ideas that are shared, the points that are pressed throughout, and allow faculty to acknowledge what is said in the room.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Pause can be awkward.

**Sophie Walters:**

Yes it can.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

How do we get around that awkwardness of silence?

**Sophie Walters:**

I think we just have to get used to it and it will take some time. And I would say I am the first person sometimes who's feeling a little awkward around pause and I just need to jump in and say something. I think it's something that it's a self-work we have to do on ourselves. And sometimes, and I know in faculty meetings there's so much on the agenda we cannot pause. But when we think about different ways of learning how people interact with each other, how they process information, it's helpful to pause a little bit.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Just acknowledging that we're going to have a pause can be enough for people to feel comfortable in that space, maybe. A lever on our list is environment. What is meant by the lever environment?

**Sophie Walters:**

Environments refers to faculty, their physical and virtual workspaces. For the physical space, we can think of the layout of the office, the floor plan, maybe how people are positioned, sitting arrangement during faculty meeting, what furniture are in the room. And then virtual spaces, we're thinking how we run zoom meetings, how we utilize the chat function. All of those tools that we have on Zoom, how do we do this during faculty meetings? And so in this case study, we want to consider ways we can use our environment to send signals about the culture we're trying to create.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Well, what would those look like?

**Sophie Walters:**

It could look like maybe adjusting room layout, wanting to maybe make sure that our layout highlights and emphasizes where people can feel seen, can feel heard. What's the container that we are having those conversations? And even if we think physical spaces are not important, it is. It signals something, it shows what we value. Another thing that I want all of us to be mindful of is disability. So when we think about the lever of environment and physical spaces, we also want to make sure that we are inclusive towards other folks with disabilities. When we think about environment, we need to think in a broader way. Also, people might have to join virtually for a little bit while other folks are meeting in person. So really making sure that we're accommodating. So I think it takes a lot of proactive thinking and I think that's kind of the big word that I want to say for all of those levers is when we think about the eight levers, we want to be proactively thinking of how to be inclusive.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Our last lever on the list is expectations. Can you tell us about expectations as a lever?

**Sophie Walters:**

Expectation refers to words or actions or environment cues used to groups to explicitly or implicitly signal who and what is valued. And we have to think and consider how our expectations are communicated explicitly in our workplaces, how new folks are learning about those expectations.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

For this one of co-opting ideas, having an expectation around this type of behavior could be very helpful as a process. So do you have some examples?

**Sophie Walters:**

So an example is at the beginning of each meeting, we can ask faculty members to share unit's values or norms or maybe remind them of the values outlining the range of concrete ways we're working together towards a goal. For example, at PEAR we start our staff meeting doing a round of values. Everybody brings a value that they want to share and we kind of do it one by one. So really highlighting what is important to us and how are we going to ground our work and we're going to ground it in our values. Another thing is we can outline the expectation related to positive behavior. So again, microvalidations, highlighting all of those things throughout the meeting we can additionally send agendas, reminding colleagues of meeting expectations in faculty meeting. What are our expectations? Let's be transparent, let's write them down. So again, linking other levers like structure and routine. We can input all of those values, all those expectations in our structure, in our routines.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

Well, we made it through our list. This has been a very nice discussion. Thank you for the so many tips and suggestions about how to handle the situation of when a woman's idea is co-opted. So Sophie, do you have any more for us on this topic?

**Sophie Walters:**

No, I just want to say thank you so much for inviting me today. It was a pleasure to talk to you all about it and I'm hoping that people can connect with PEAR, with their specialists if they need additional support resources. I'm happy to be a rDsource for all of them. So thank you.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

That was Sophie Walters, the Director of the University of Michigan's Office of Prevention Education Assistance & Resources. Thank you for being on the show today.

**Sophie Walters:**

Thank you.

**Dr. Mike Liemohn:**

This has been an episode of the Advancing Faculty Excellence podcast, a product of U of M's advanced program. The views expressed in this episode are those of the guests and hosts and do not reflect official positions of the University of Michigan. I'm Mike Liemohn, the host of this episode. This podcast was produced and edited by Kelsey Arras of U of M ADVANCE. Please join me extending to her a huge thank you. This podcast would not exist without her. We want to give a special thanks to our musical crew composition by WP Norton and performed by So Say We All! with WP Norton on lead guitar and University of Michigan, professors Elena Lemon on Rhythm Guitar and Denise Sekaquaptewa on bass guitar. We also thank the Shapiro Library Design Lab team for production support, including usage of their sound studios. Please rate review and subscribe to this podcast. Thank you all for listening.