

# Faculty Retention & Department Climate

The following recommendations are taken from the University of Washington NSF ADVANCE program's Faculty Retention Toolkit, which was written to assist department chairs in retaining their faculty across all ranks. These best practices should be applied to all faculty, not just the stars of a department. Retention efforts, when applied equitably to all faculty, can improve the general climate for everyone and can lead to better productivity and greater satisfaction for all faculty. Faculty retention is critical to the health of a University department both for morale reasons and also for economic reasons, as faculty replacement costs tend to be much higher than retention costs.

The following nine key areas impact faculty retention. These practices help all faculty and are particularly important to women and underrepresented minorities.

1. Systematically monitor decisions to eliminate unintentional bias and create opportunities for all faculty.
2. Encourage transparency in operations, sharing information equitably with all faculty.
3. Foster a supportive environment. While this support is critical for pre-tenure and underrepresented faculty, all faculty benefit from a supportive environment.
4. Recognize important faculty contributions in all areas including teaching, research, service, and creative activities.
5. Utilize a variety of resources (salary adjustments, chaired professorships, reduced loads, leaves, bridge money, research support, mentors, etc.) to recruit and retain faculty. Resource decisions should be made on a case by case basis.
6. Recruit and support diverse faculty, recognizing that excellence can be achieved in many areas. Work with department and college Promotion and Tenure committees to value diverse career paths.
7. Offer opportunities for faculty professional development, collaboration, and networking.
8. Advocate flexible and accommodating policies and practices that can improve the experience of faculty and help with retention.
9. Gather information from faculty through individual conversations, faculty focus groups, other department chairs and deans, and exit interviews with faculty who are leaving to identify factors in retention. Identify solutions to remove these barriers.

**For the complete Faculty Retention Toolkit go to [www.engr.washington.edu/advance/resources/Retention](http://www.engr.washington.edu/advance/resources/Retention).**

# Creating a Positive Departmental Climate: Principles for Best Practices

*Excerpts from a document prepared for NSF ADVANCE at the University of Michigan by Jean Waltman and Carol Hollenshead The Center for the Education of Women - Revised January 2005. For the complete document go to <http://www.umich.edu/~advproj/principles.pdf>*

Well-conceived policies and procedures help create a supportive climate for faculty. Over the past few years – primarily through interviews, focus groups, and direct e-mail requests – University of Michigan researchers have been asking women and men faculty members to describe specific programs or general behaviors that contribute to a climate that supports their academic career success and satisfaction. The following summary describes (often using their own words) what the faculty members have said. The examples represent three important general principles of effective leadership:

**Transparency:** Making all kinds of information available and easy to find

**Uniformity:** Leveling the field and dealing equitably with all faculty

**Assistance:** Attending to the needs of faculty; offering mentoring and other types of help

The overall message is a strong one: While no single practice is likely to change the atmosphere in a department or unit, administrators who apply the touchstones of transparency, uniformity and assistance when developing or reviewing policies and procedures can create environments within which all faculty members flourish. Of course, because each academic unit is unique, administrators may either find that some of the following practices are not appropriate or decide that they need to tailor the practices to their particular situations.

The UM report is organized according to the problems women faculty in particular most

often speak about – (1) unsatisfactory hiring and initial negotiating experiences, (2) inadequate explanation of and access to relevant university and department information, (3) a lack of mentoring and other forms of support, (4) unclear or poorly managed review and tenure processes, (5) feelings of isolation and lack of collegiality, and (6) an unwillingness to accommodate whole-life needs, especially family and childcare responsibilities.

The sections of the report on collegiality and implementing work/life policies have been included here. For the full report, go to <http://www.umich.edu/~advproj/principles.pdf>. Also review the UC Faculty Family Friendly Edge: <http://ucfamilyedge.berkeley.edu/>

**Issues related to Collegiality** A sense of community within a department is a key component of job satisfaction. In addition to the mentoring luncheons, speaker programs, and other events already described in this report, faculty members told us about other departmental best practices that support collegiality and community.

- One faculty member praised the weekly lunches that administrators in his department host. *“Because we are a large department, you normally don’t know everybody. But the lunches are a way for you to get to know your colleagues and talk with them on a regular basis.”*  
(Uniformity, Assistance)

- Many departments hold picnics as a way to foster community. Accordingly a faculty member in one such department said,

*"We have an active undergraduate group that has a picnic twice a year, which everyone comes to and even brings their dogs! It's nice because it makes for a more congenial atmosphere to interact with your peers and the [graduate and undergraduate] students and to feel more like a community of people, of learners."* (Assistance)

**Issues related to Departmental/College/University Policies.**

At various institutional levels, administrators have created and adapted policies and practices in order to ease the stress of academic life and increase research productivity. Women faculty members particularly value these efforts, both large and small, as ways to balance the many aspects of their lives: research, teaching, service, and family responsibilities. For example, University administrators – recognizing that women faculty members are a scarce commodity in some areas of the institution and thus are often called upon for extra committee service, advising and teaching – award competitive \$5,000 Career Development funds for faculty members who are doing greater-than-average amounts of non-teaching service that draws them away from their scholarly agenda. Other helpful programs for both men and women include these:

- A nurturing leave for faculty members in their fourth year. This leave is an entitlement for everyone, consistent across the college and not dependent upon individual negotiation. It gives all tenure-track faculty members one semester off from university responsibilities, in order to concentrate on their research. (Uniformity, Assistance)

- Some departments tailor the official UM modified duties policy to make it more beneficial. They may very substantially decrease a faculty member's committee work for the semester of modified duties: One woman described her experience as follows:

*"The way the policy reads in the books is good to begin with, but I think its implementation in my particular unit was excellent. For example, the policy states that you still have to keep up with committee work and things of that sort. My committee work assignment for that term that I reduced my duties was minimal. And that was something that the department chair has to be credited with, I guess. I did do more committee work in the preceding and following terms to make up for it, but I think that was well worth not having to do much of it during the term that I was trying to reduce my duties."* (Assistance)

- They may also make sure to provide adequate coverage for faculty members on modified duties:
 

*"We believe that it's important that women are able to take the time necessary (as well as new fathers) and not be under pressure from their colleagues who are asked to provide coverage. Our incentive program provides generous financial remuneration for coverage."* (Assistance)
- Administrators in some departments schedule no meetings before 9 a.m. or after 5 p.m., in order that parents can better manage their lives to coincide with their children's lives. (Assistance)
- Department administrators set a reasonable time limit for service on time-consuming committees, while – at the same time – insure that women get a chance to serve on important committees. (Assistance)

- Department administrators give junior faculty members some priority in teaching assignments. As one faculty member explained,

*“The teaching assignments [in my UM department] were seniority based. So, if you once taught a course, you tended to keep it. Here [at current institution] teaching assignments give priority to the most junior people, to find out what they want to teach. And in fact some schools actually explicitly have a form that the junior faculty fill out for what they want to teach... Of course, that [may] make for ‘icky’ teaching loads for senior faculty, but I think it’s a lot healthier for junior faculty development.” (Assistance)*

- A faculty member explained a “one-person committee” concept occasionally employed in his department.

*“There are typically three people on these committees, and one person does all the work. The other two people are there, but we don’t really have any meetings. For instance, if I’m on the admission committee, I run things and do all the work. If I have any questions, I run them by the other two people. So basically everyone chooses the committee they think is important; you don’t have meetings, so you really are empowered to have an influence on things that you care about. [The other members offer advice and support], but you’re not inundated with meetings where people just want to talk.” (Assistance)*

- A faculty member in one department described an unofficial agreement among the faculty to accept teaching duties; to work together to share the responsibility for getting courses taught – with the understanding that, if someone is willing to cooperate and compromise, s/he will receive some future concession in return. As he explained,

*“For example, I can see that there’s a really hard class to teach this year and, based upon the schedule, not many ways to do it. So I agree to take the hard class, because we told the junior faculty member that he didn’t have to teach this first year so that he could get his research started.” (Uniformity, Assistance)*

At least one science department has established a “swing space” policy. Under this agreement, the department sets aside some community-owned lab space that rotates to different faculty members for a period of time, based upon their current research needs. (Uniformity, Assistance)

The examples in this report range from fairly obvious, frequently used practices to unusual ones that have limited application in other settings. These “best practices” have in common the fact that – because they embody the principles of **transparency**, **uniformity**, and/or **assistance** – they have made the faculty members who described them feel supported by their departments. We hope administrators, committee members, and faculty members can use these examples in discussions and plans to enhance their own departmental climates.

# Actions for Enhancing Department Climate

Developed by Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison: <http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/initiatives/climate/Recommendations.rtf>

*This article was taken from materials developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison to address common concerns from various groups across their campus. These concerns are typical of most campuses, and the following recommendations should be considered in your own efforts to develop a welcoming and supportive climate in your department for faculty, staff and students.*

## To Enhance Basic Manners – Respect/Consideration/ Politeness:

- Issue a policy statement that makes it clear that all individuals in the department – faculty, staff, and students – are to be treated with dignity and respect; that differential treatment of women and men, and minorities and non-minorities is not appropriate and will not be tolerated.
- Include showing respectful and considerate behavior to other departmental members and visitors in performance evaluations for both faculty and staff.
- Include, as an important element of showing respect and consideration, the need to address individuals by their appropriate titles. Administrative Assistants, for example, may prefer not to be called secretaries.
- Promote these policies by example.

## To Improve Communication:

- Clearly and honestly communicate departmental values, intentions, expectations – and act in accordance with them.
- Clearly communicate departmental policies and procedures.
- Provide written clarification of conditions of employment, including information on vacation time, sick time, and grievance procedures to all faculty members, academic and classified staff members, post-graduate students, and other student employees.
- Provide informational documents to graduate students that include informa-

tion about requirements, expectations, policies, procedures, and qualifications for applying for fellowships, project assistantships, teaching assistantships, rewards, etc.

- Clearly define qualifications and application processes for all faculty and academic staff position openings and promotions.
- Provide open and honest communication about the allocation of departmental resources.
- In communicating, be sure to include all people/voices in your department – see **“Building a Sense of Community”** (next page). Be sure to solicit perspectives from diverse groups of people.
- Promote collaboration and sharing of information.
- Become aware of cultural and gendered differences in styles of communication, and about expectations regarding styles of communication. For example, many women tend to have a different communication style than men and are subject to cultural expectations regarding their communication. If women speak in softer tones, seem more hesitant, or make hedging statements they risk not being respected, but if they speak authoritatively, they may be seen as “aggressive” and also risk not being respected. Colleagues often unwittingly overlook or downgrade women’s thoughts and ideas for both of these reasons.

## Building a Sense of Community:

- Give governance to all groups in your department.
  - For example, make sure you have representation from the academic and classified staff, and from post-doctoral and graduate students at all departmental meetings.
  - Consider giving these non-faculty representatives voting rights on departmental matters other than tenure decisions.
- Examine departmental committee membership and ensure that membership is diverse with respect to age, gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, etc.
- Examine departmental teaching assignments and ensure that teaching requirements are appropriately and equitably distributed.
- Examine departmental events such as seminar series and sponsored conferences and ensure that presenters of various ages, genders, nationalities, races and ethnicities are included.
- Time departmental meetings so as not to exclude participation of specific groups. Parents, for example, are often unable to attend late afternoon meetings and events.
- As chair of departmental meetings, make sure that everyone has a chance to voice opinions or concerns.
  - Be sure to acknowledge and attribute ideas, suggestions, and comments accurately.
- Publicly recognize and praise faculty, staff, and students who perform work on behalf of the department:
  - For example, publicly thank individual faculty members who have contributed to efforts to recruit new graduate students into the department, staff members who have

played an important role in organizing a departmental event, custodial staff who clean up after a departmental event, students who have served on special committees, etc.

- Promote inclusive behaviors:
  - Promote inclusive language by example, i.e., avoid using only male pronouns when referring to a group composed of males and females; avoid using language that makes assumptions about marital status and/or sexual orientation, i.e., use “partner” rather than “spouse.”
  - Whenever appropriate include academic and classified staff in departmental social events.
- Host regular social events. Though some events may be appropriate for faculty only, or for faculty and graduate students, ensure that other events are open to all departmental members.
- Create a communal space – coffee room/ lunch room.
- Engage everyone in the life of the department. Balance the need to include new faculty in department activities, with the time commitment required to establish their research and teaching activities.
- Women in traditionally male departments and people of color are often in high demand for campus committees and efforts because of the diverse perspectives they bring. Ask to be made aware of these campus activities and wherever possible help those involved bring what they are doing at the campus level back to the department.

## Promoting Professional Development:

- Consider giving faculty, academic staff, and classified staff time off to attend courses/workshops/national meetings.

- Consider providing financial support for faculty, staff, post-graduate students, and graduate students to attend workshops/courses/present at national meetings.
- When appropriate, consider sending staff and/or students to give presentations, rather than faculty.
- Encourage faculty to invite staff/ students to present lectures in their areas of expertise.

### **Recognizing and Valuing the Work of Departmental Members:**

- Publicly thank departmental members for their contributions to the department being sure to attribute credit accurately – see “**Building a Sense of Community.**”
- Make public announcements regarding awards/recognition departmental members (faculty, staff, or students) have received.
- Develop and enforce departmental standards regarding authorship, or enforce standards established by your academic discipline.
- Encourage all faculty and students to become aware of the academic contributions of their colleagues in the department and the university and to provide citations to these contributions in their academic writing and presentations.

### **Building Sensitivity:**

- When/if a representative of one particular group (e.g. graduate student/ minority faculty) approaches you with concerns about treatment or policies in the department, meet with him or her and listen respectfully to his or her concerns. Hold a separate meeting with the group against whom the complaint was lodged and raise the concerns presented to you. Be sure not to identify

any individuals who complained, but rather refer to them as a group. Likewise be sure not to identify individuals complained against, but rather focus on the group as wholly responsible. Instead of focusing on blame and ill treatment, focus the discussion on solutions and means of improving the situation.

- If the complaint regards illegal behavior, your response will have to differ – refer to section on “**Countering Illegal Behavior**” below.

### **Balancing Work and Family/ Personal Responsibilities:**

- Foster inclusiveness in scheduling departmental meetings and events.
  - Develop creative and flexible solutions to accommodate family and personal developments. See: Creating a Family Friendly Department: Chairs and Deans Toolkit (<http://ucfamilyedge.berkeley.edu/>)
- Budget for hiring lecturers and other staff members when needed for family and/or medical leave absences.

### **Countering Illegal Behaviors and Complaints about Demeaning, Sexualizing, or Condescending Language and Behavior:**

*“The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which all persons who participate in University programs and activities can work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation, including sexual. Specifically, every member of the University community should be aware that the University is strongly opposed to sexual harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by law and by University policy. It is the intention of the University to take whatever action may be needed to prevent, correct, and, if necessary, discipline behavior which violates this policy.” (APM-035)*

- Develop and clearly state a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and unreported instances of conflict of interest in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship. If approached with a complaint of such behavior do not dismiss the complaint. Rather, immediately recognize the complaint, express concern, and quickly determine what the individual approaching you wants. Ask, "What would you like me to do?" or, "How would you like me to help you?" This will help you avoid misunderstandings and clarify the person's objective in approaching you. Respect his or her decisions and avoid imposing what you think you would do under the same circumstances.
- If a faculty member wants to proceed with a formal complaint, consult with your campus Academic Personnel Office or the appropriate campus resource (for staff or students). Some campuses have a special office to handle complaints of sexual harassment. Follow the counsel of the appropriate campus resource regarding next steps, referral of the complaint and what you should or shouldn't do as chair.

See Section on **Legal Issues for Chairs** for more information.

# Balancing Work & Life as Department Chair

<http://www.engr.washington.edu/lead/2007BinderMaterials.htm#worklife>  
*Stress Management Strategies for Academic Leaders by Walter H. Gmelch from Effective Practices for Academic Leaders January 2006*

## Strategies

- Plan some personal time each day so as not to operate from a crisis mode.
- Compartmentalize chair and non-chair activities.
- Do one task at a time, selecting the most important task to do first.
- Strive to enrich yourself physically, socially, mentally and emotionally. Meaningful relationships and activities outside of work are important in relieving job stress.
- Have a retreat away from the office.
- Live by your calendar, not your watch. Let your weekly plan set your pace rather than the minute hand on your watch.
- Engage your social support systems
  - Discuss problems with former chairs in the department and current chairs in other departments
  - Consult with the dean
  - Develop friendships outside the department
  - Confide in office staff when appropriate
  - Have a few key confidantes
- Engage in intellectual stimulation: set time aside in your week for research, attend conferences, get out of the office for field work or trips to the library, teach at least once a year and enjoy cultural events.
- Self-management: seek help from others, delegate authority to faculty and staff, use committees to share the workload, plan strategically and prioritize work, schedule time-off and reserve blocks of time for family and research, set realistic goals for yourself and the department, hibernate to work on activities that require intense focus, and clear your desk everyday.
- Develop coping techniques, such as: optimism, a sense of humor, resistance to others' anxieties, patience, minimal self-importance, emotional distance from the job, depersonalization of department issues and knowledge of one's limits.