Maintaining a Healthy Department Climate

Chair Leadership Academy

Wednesday, April 5, 2023
Valera Hall 277

Adam Kaplan, Computer Science
AJ Kim, Theatre

"A healthy workplace is one where workers and managers collaborate to continually improve the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and by doing this, sustain the productivity of the business (World Health Organization, 2009)

Informal Survey

Back in Aug 2022, I began to seek dept folks' input on this subject.

No helpful tips so far, but the process revealed a few findings.

Findings from Informal Survey

1. Most ignored physical health and wellbeing aspect and found issues in communication and interpersonal conflict. (*Intra-personal)

2. Initiating conversation about the notion of a healthy environment seemed enough to ease the conflict in a given situation.

3. No magic wand. Maintaining a healthy department climate is a continual and communal process.

Tip

Policies & Protocols protect!

Maintaining a Healthy Department Environment

➢ **Communication - Proactive, Open, Flexible**
➢ **Commitment to Collaboration**
➢ **Shared Vision**
➢ **Equity & Inclusion**

Tip

Policies & Protocols protect!

Maintaining a Healthy Department Climate

➢ **Open Communication –Listening!**
➢ **Empathy**
➢ **Mutual Respect**
➢ **Humanity**

Tip

Reward and belonging to a worthy community are important. Reward, here, means more than paycheck.
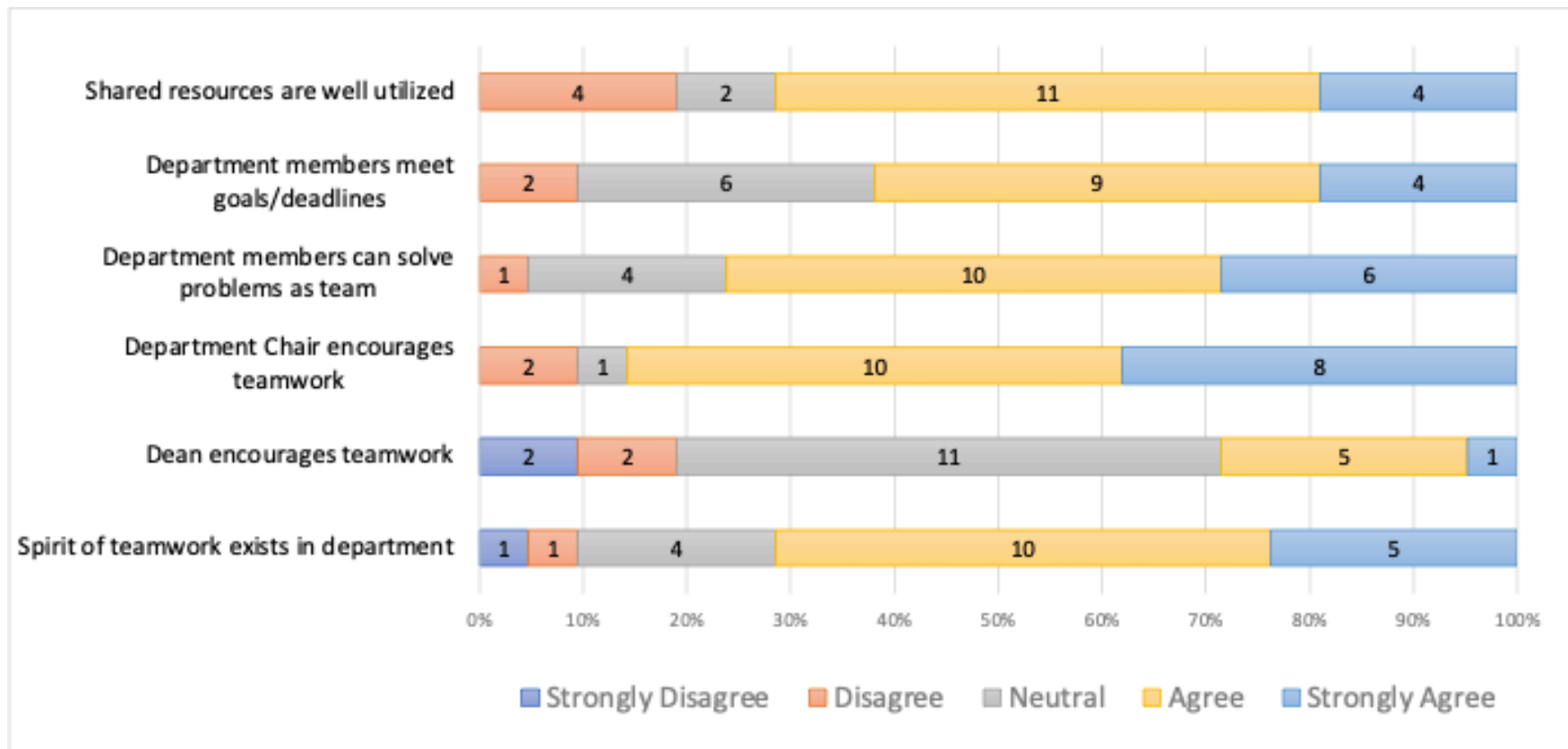
Measuring the Department Climate

- Survey both faculty and staff
    - Can use **CSUN Qualtrics**
    - Allows anonymous feedback
    - Shows that Chair is listening

- Ask high-impact questions
    - How meetings are going
    - Resources for research and teaching
    - Feeling of teamwork and mutual respect
    - Clarity of communication
    - *Allow open comments*

Example Result

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Shared resources are well utilized		4	2	11	4
Department members meet goals/deadlines		2	6	9	4
Department members can solve problems as team		1	4	10	6
Department Chair encourages teamwork		2	1	10	8
Dean encourages teamwork	2	2	11	5	1
Spirit of teamwork exists in department	1	1	4	10	5

From a separate survey on dept meetings…

Maximum meeting duration…?

No maximum duration is needed, and we should meet as long as there is remaining business — **No max; finish all business**

No maximum duration is needed, provided we end at a time-certain (don't run overtime) — **No max, but time certain**

Yes, with a maximum duration of 2 hrs — **Maximum: 2 hours**

Yes, with a maximum duration of 2.5 hrs — **2.5 hrs**

Yes, with a maximum duration of 3 hrs

Yes, with a maximum duration of 3.5 hrs

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A Department is Made of People

"Act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, at all times also as an end, and not only as a means."

- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
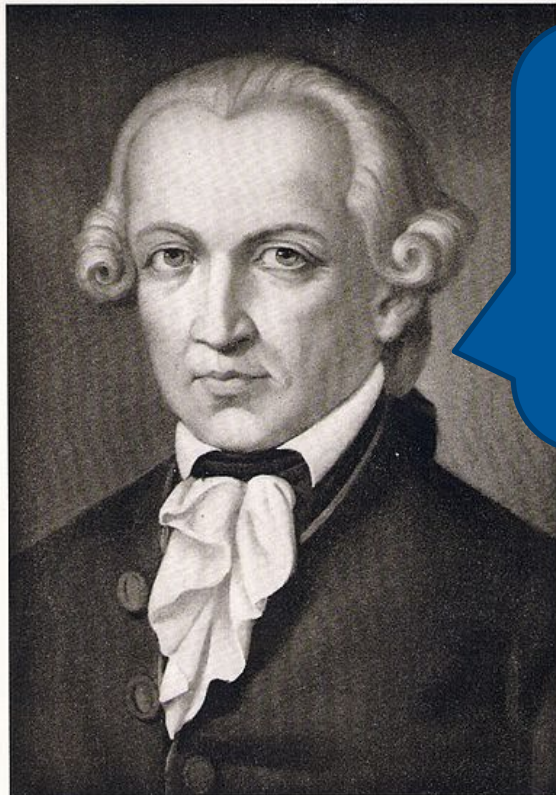
IMMANUEL KANT
From a painting

- Supporting a Person
  - What do they value?
  - What do they need, from a resource perspective?
  - How happy are they?
  - How are they perceived/treated by colleagues?

Ethical speech in the workplace

- Impersonal
- **Non-divisive**
- Upbeat *(as best able 😉)*

- *But…*
  - Be **clear**
  - Be **firm**
  - Admonish carefully: only if/when necessary and appropriate

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On Admonishment

- Is this the right time?

- Am I the right messenger?

- Have I organized the facts?

- Am I using gentle words and tone?

- Are my comments constructive?

- Am I inwardly angry?

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Keep in Mind…

- Emails can usually wait at least 24 hours

- Reach out to Dean's office for support when needed

Running the Meetings

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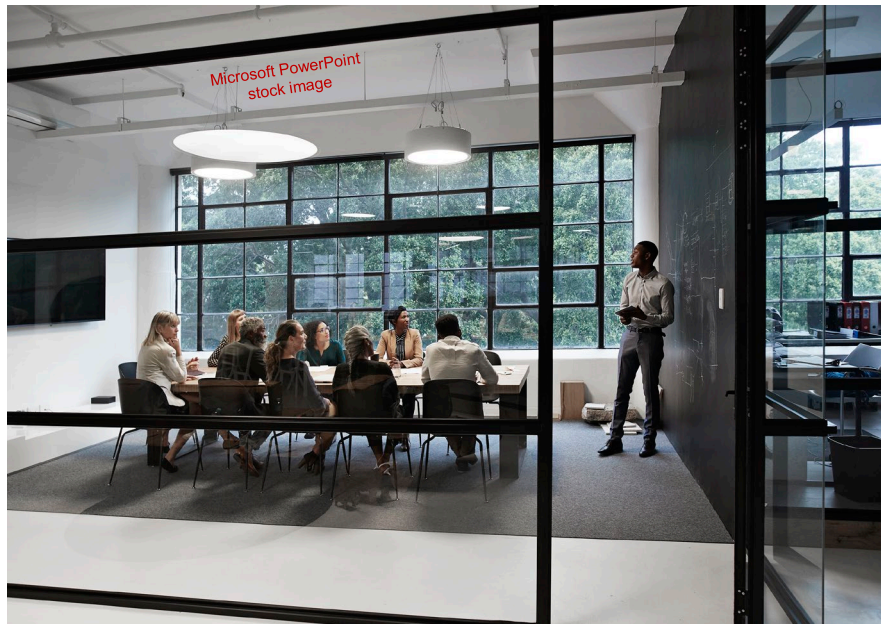
- Encourage junior faculty participation

- Ensure that every voice is heard

- Ensure that every person is respected (incl. those not present)

- Respect faculty time

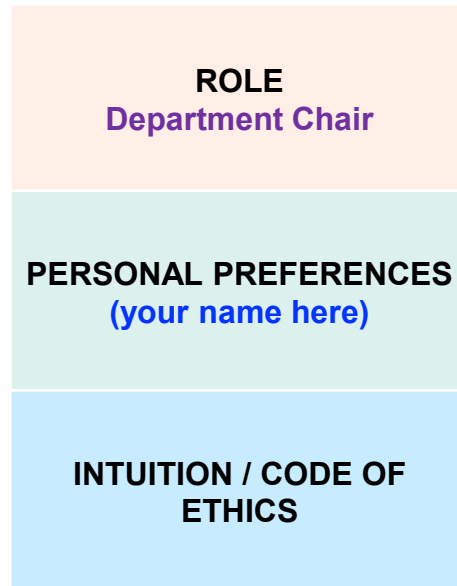# **Bullies and Critics**

Public domain

- Personal comments are "out of order" in meetings

- Consequences of staying silent on bullying

- Campus resources to support Section 604

- Accepting criticism in a leadership role

Self-Reflection: Is the Chair helping?

- Which "level" made the decision?

- What would I do differently next time?

- Have I received criticism about this before?

Keep in Mind…

- Making mistakes in daily work

- Getting lost in the role

ROLE
ROLE **Department Chair**
PERSONAL PREFERENCES **(your name here)**
INTUITION / CODE OF ETHICS

Challenging Scenarios

- Faculty member clearly violates Section 604 (bullying/abusive language/personal comments) during department meeting

- Office staff morale diminishes to the point that they become unresponsive to requests

- Part-time faculty unhappy with their offered schedule threatens a grievance, or asks how to escalate their displeasure

- Staff complains about disengaged faculty and tries to exclude the faculty on issues that pertain to the faculty's area of specialty

- Faculty complains about a staff to another staff in public at an outreach event

Breakout Session (10-15 minutes)

Good luck!