



UCI ADVANCE **Program** *Equity and Diversity*

**Neither an Ivory Tower Nor Leafy Paradise:
the Challenge of Institutional Climate and Inclusive
Excellence**

IWin Spring 2012 Workshop

April, 2012

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Public Images about the University

Enduring images of the modern university is based on its distinction the from wider society:

- Ivory Tower
- Leafy Oasis

Underlying these images is the assumption that faculty membership and reward is based on a system of meritocracy that recognizes individual performance or productivity.

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The University as an Organization: Not an Ivory Tower

Laws and policies underscore that universities are similar to other organizations:

- Power and authority unevenly distributed
- Tension between discretion and compliance
- Persistence of discrimination and harassment
- Codes of Conduct and Rights of Employees

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Disparities, Differences, and Inequity in the University

A range of indicators complicate the images and assumption about the university as distinctive from other institutions in society:

- Disparities between availabilities of phd recipients and faculty appointments
- Differential rates of advancement through the professorial ranks
- Salary inequity

These disparities accumulate. They simultaneously naturalize differences between privileged and less privileged populations within the university while masking hurdles and barriers that they face.

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Climate; a Definition

Climate is a useful description of the multifaceted nature of organizational culture and power that is experienced by individuals.

“The atmosphere or ambience of an organization as perceived by its members. An organization’s climate is reflected in its structures, policies and values its members and leaders, and the quality of personal interaction.”
(committee on Women in the University Work Group on climate, University of Washington, 2002).

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The Departmental Climate Dilemma

Addressing faculty climate is challenging for a number of reasons:

- confidentiality
- individualized relationship of faculty to institution
- structure of incentives and accountability based on productivity
- broad faculty protections from infringement on their rights within the university

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Critical Role of Chair in Shaping Climate

Role of the chair is critical because the department is the basic organizational unit in the university where faculty manage their individual careers. It is not a formally powerful position, but one that may exert considerable influence on the climate.

- Recruitment and promotion
- Workload and compensation
- Recognition and rewards

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Chairing without Superhero Powers

It is both a complicated and complex position almost by design.

- Remaining a member of the faculty while serving as a representative of the administration
- Reconciling your leadership style to the expectations and experience of colleagues
- Being equitable in an incentive driven and performance oriented culture
- Promoting an inclusive climate without the power to hold faculty accountable

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Setting Expectations for an Inclusive Climate

Establish practices that raise expectations for an inclusive climate through transparency, uniformity, and assistance:

- Stress the importance of a culture of respect and dignity
- Incorporate equity and diversity programming for departmental meetings and other occasions
- Understand the processes that you are responsible for rather than relying on oral tradition or custom (i.e., recruitment, promotion, work-life balance, and compensation)
- Emphasize equity in faculty workload assignments, i.e. teaching and service
- Acknowledge faculty contributions to the department, school and university and recommend faculty for rewards

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