Dean Leadership on Climate Matters

Virginia Commonwealth University

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Part I

- What is culture?
- What is climate?
- Why do they matter?

Culture

"The way we do things around here"

Schein, E.H. (1992). *Organizational Policy and Leadership* (2nd edition). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein 1992, p. 12).

- Artifacts: the overt and obvious elements of an organization

- Espoused values: the declared set of values and norms

- Underlying assumptions: the source of values in a culture and what causes actions. Organizational **assumptions** are usually "known," but are not discussed, nor are they written or easily found. They are comprised of unconscious thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings

For departments at VCU, organizational culture pertains to a unit's shared basic assumptions; beliefs; behavioral norms; perspectives; routines; sense-making; and values.

VCU seeks to understand how these things evolve in the context of a unit's adaptation and implementation around diversity, inclusion, and engagement initiatives.

Distinct Cultures for Faculty

Keep in mind that faculty experience four distinct cultures

~~ Academic ~~

~~ Institutional ~~

~~ Disciplinary ~~

~~ Departmental ~~

Why culture matters

➡ Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions.

➡ Thinking we can attract and retain students, and see them through to completion, without addressing faculty issues is foolhardy.

➡ When faculty feel misaligned with culture, they:

  ➡ Have higher levels of job-related stress

  ➡ Have less overall satisfaction

  ➡ Spend less time teaching

  ➡ Produce less scholarship

➡ When faculty feel a sense of "fit" they:

  ➡ Stay longer at their job

  ➡ Are more satisfied with their position

  ➡ Are more committed to the institution

NOTE: Much of this pertains to all staff, not just faculty.

Climate is a…

➡️ "surface manifestation of culture" (Schein 1990, p. 109).

> Schein, E.H. (1990). "Organizational culture," *American Psychologist* 45(2): 109-19.

➡️ "ubiquitous cultural force that can make a group member experience an array of feelings from welcomed, included, and respected to tense, excluded, and singled out" (Trower 2012, pp. 123-4).

> Trower, C. (2012). *Success on the Tenure Track: Five Keys to Faculty Job Satisfaction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

➡️ "the atmosphere or ambiance of an organization as perceived by its members. It is reflected in its structures, policies, and practices; the demographics of its membership; the attitude and values of its members and leaders; and the quality of personal interactions."

> https://fas.columbia.edu/improving-department-climate-tools-and-resources-departments-and-department-chairs

Climate at the departmental level

Climate pertains to day-to-day attitudes or perceptions about a unit's cultural norms and value systems.

Climate:

- is particularly pronounced in the department, where faculty spend most of their time

- can influence decisions a new faculty member makes about taking advantage of certain "sensitive" institutional policies and practices (e.g., family leave, stop-the-clock)

- can be a positive force and motivate high performance

- can turn negative when faculty disagree on departmental goals and priorities or when factions pit faculty against one another or when some faculty feel like "outsiders"

- is most shaped by the chair and senior faculty

What makes a climate hostile?

Common climate problems that faculty often cite are:

1. Lack of respect and/or politeness

2. Faculty's lack of influence on department matters

3. Lack of support for work-life balance and unwillingness to support family and childcare responsibilities

4. Low sense of community and insufficient communication

5. Lack of mentoring

6. Insufficient access to important university and department information

7. Unclear tenure and review processes

8. Excessive service/mentoring/committee duty assigned to underrepresented faculty

9. Illegal behaviors and use of problematic language and behaviors

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Primary components of departmental culture and climate

More constant (culture)

1. A sense of intellectual community and engagement (about research, teaching and service / shared governance) (norms)

2. Formal (written) policies (artifacts)

3. Support for work-life integration (values)

More fluid (climate)

1. Fair and transparent evaluation processes

2. Informal (unspoken) practices

3. Ongoing open and supportive communication

4. Open and collaborative opportunities for development and support

Why intellectual community and engagement matter

- Maintains and protects academic traditions and advances knowledge

- Encourages a willingness to share with colleagues and students without concern for competitive advantage (or win-lose)

- Expands the academic dialogue and reveals possibilities for scholarship, creative work, and enhanced teaching

- Opens opportunities for collaboration

- Fosters collegiality which in turn increases productivity

- Improves faculty sense of agency (something that gives one a sense of power over their work)

- Provides positive model for students

Why effective formal (written) policies matter

➡ Written policies are a physical manifestation of culture (artifacts).

➡ Help guide a shared sense of purpose among department members.

➡ Well documented policies and decisions ensure and illustrate equity and fairness in the treatment of all faculty.

➡ Transparency through written policies is especially valued by women, faculty of color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Why support for work-life integration matters

- The ability to balance work and personal life has a strong affect on faculty job satisfaction throughout an academic career.

- The ability to balance work and personal life increases a faculty member's sense of agency and self-efficacy (an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments).

- Faculty feel more focused and motivated toward their professional goals when the perceive their department as more accepting of work-life balance.

- The ability of an institution to attract and retain the best faculty depends on a culture that values and supports work-life integration.

- Helps students visualize work-life integration for themselves.

Why fair and transparent evaluation matters

➡ Assures improvement of the academic planning process and the performance of faculty members and research teams.

➡ Provides a basis for salary adjustments, retention, and promotion and tenure decisions.

➡ Junior faculty say performance evaluation is essential to their career progress.

➡ Transparency helps with equity.

Why informal (unwritten) practices matter

- How people are treated in practice according to unwritten and unspoken norms affects climate and performance dramatically.

- Informal relationships lead to mentoring and networking.

- One person's autonomy is another's isolation.

- Those in the minority often feel excluded and isolated.

- The norm too often is that women and minorities bear the brunt of extra mentoring, advising, and service (that does unrewarded).

- Sexist, racist and/or homophobic language and behaviors – microaggressions – add up (death by a thousand papercuts).

- These informal practices lead directly to the revolving door for faculty and students.

Why ongoing open and supportive communication matters

- Critical in retaining and promoting faculty.

- Fosters the generation of knowledge by introducing new ideas for research, teaching, outreach and service.

- Supportive conversations strengthen bonds between faculty and administrators and remind faculty of their importance to the institution.

- Importance of mentoring as a vehicle for communication (mentored junior faculty tend to have higher job satisfaction).

- Models supportive environment for students.

Why open and collaborative opportunities for development and support matters

➡ Not all faculty need the same things at the same stage in their academic careers, so they need an open environment to seek development opportunities as needed and in ongoing fashion.

➡ Fosters *mosaic mentoring* where faculty can look to peers, to the chair, or to others for what they need when they need it.

A mentoring mosaic brings together a wide range of individuals in a non-hierarchical relationship, where each member is expected to bring something of value to the network from which others can continuously learn and grow. Mosaics allow for a diverse range of opinions, experiences, and culture, and place an equal value on each individual contributing to the mosaic.

https://diversity.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/mentoring3_mosaics.pdf

Part II

- VCU 2019 Culture & Climate Ratings

DIVERSITY	INCLUSION	ENGAGEMENT
• Compositional diversity (fac & staff reflect overall student population) • Representational equity (leadership is representative of gender/gender identity diversity) • Systems diversity (policies, practices, reflect commitment to diversity & inclusion)	• Fair (fac & staff treated equitably & fairly) • Open (leadership supports diversity in all ways) • Cooperative (leadership encourages communication & collaboration) • Empowering (fac & staff have resources to excel)	• Leaders lead (fac & staff perceive integrity among leaders) • Supervisor's support (fac & staff's interpersonal relationships w/ supervisor includes trust, respect, & support) • Intrinsic work experience (fac & staff share feelings of motivation & competency re: roles)

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VCU Indexes

2019 Campus & Climate Ratings

5-point scale

Weighted average across indexes

Academic ranking	Diversity index	Inclusion index	Engagement index
School of Pharmacy	3.05	4.04	4.20
School of Nursing	3.55	3.77	3.93
Wilder	3.25	3.80	4.03
University College	2.25	3.99	4.08
School of Education	2.15	3.81	3.98
School of Engineering	2.40	3.72	3.90
Humanities & Sciences	2.75	3.59	3.70
Health Professions	1.80	3.57	3.90
Life Sciences	1.90	3.57	3.82
School of Social Work	2.10	3.34	3.72
School of Medicine	1.45	3.60	3.76
School of the Arts	1.85	3.48	3.54
School of Business	1.25	3.85	4.03
School of Dentistry	1.25	3.59	3.87

Part III

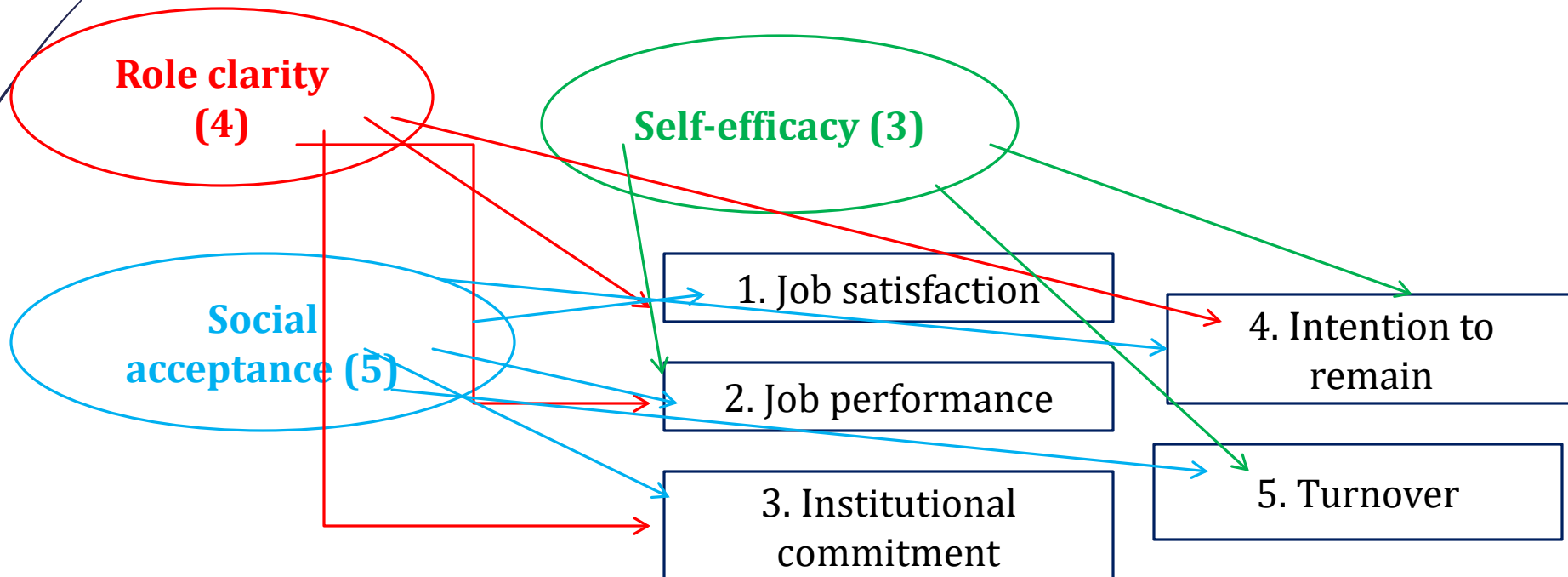Socialization, life in an academic department, the importance of chairs and deans

Socialization

▶ "A process over time that enables a new faculty member to understand the norms, attitudes, and beliefs of a group" (Trower 2012, p. 125).

▶ For newcomers, socialization facilitates an understanding of departmental expectations and customary behavior within the department.

▶ Begins to occur in graduate school, but mostly socialized to research, not teaching or service.

Trower, C. (2012). *Success on the Tenure Track: Five Keys to Faculty Job Satisfaction*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Socialization: the process by which newcomers transition from being outsiders to being insiders.
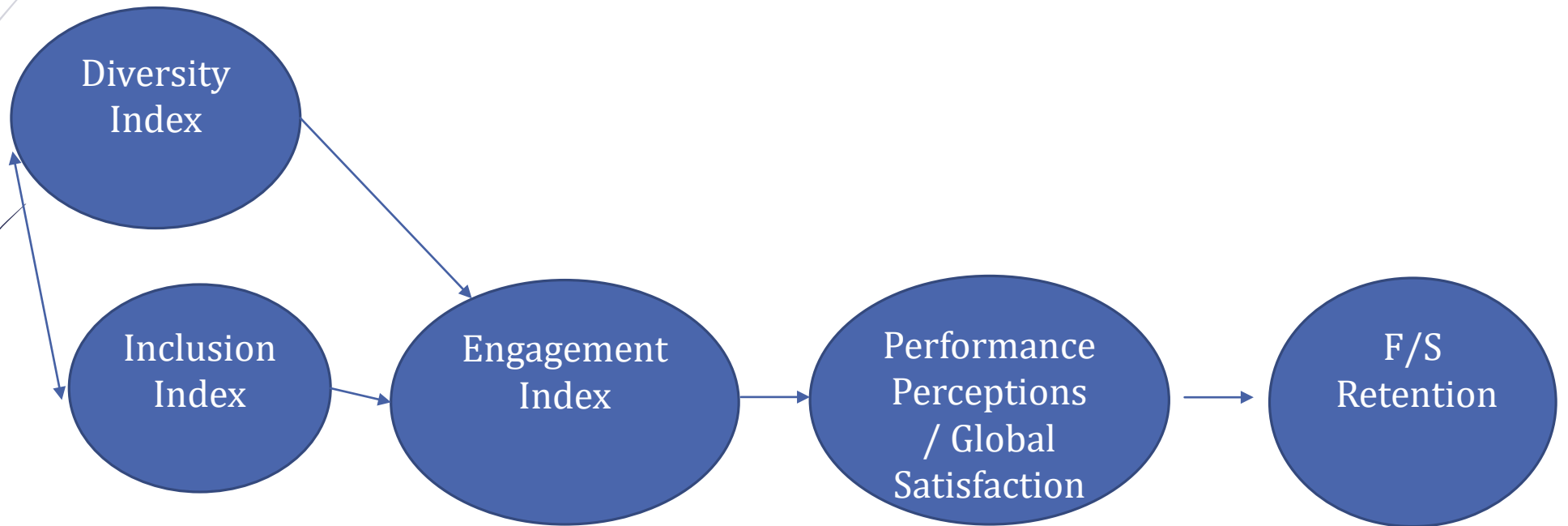
Newcomers must learn to adapt through uncertainty reduction.

Bauer, T.N. and Green, S.G. (1994). "Effect of newcomer involvement in work-related activities: A longitudinal study of socialization," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(2): 211-223.

Role clarity (4)

Self-efficacy (3)

Social acceptance (5)

1. Job satisfaction

2. Job performance

3. Institutional commitment

4. Intention to remain

5. Turnover

VCU's Predictive Model

Importance of Chair Leadership

- "The chair's job is to make sure their faculty are as productive as possible. Productive faculty are satisfied faculty." (Trower, 2005)

- Sound leadership is the key to effective and successful socialization.

- Leaders must be intentional in their efforts to understand and improve the experience of newcomers.

- The department chair plays the most pivotal role in setting the tone and determining departmental climate.

Trower, C. (2005). "Gen x meets theory y," *The Department Chair*, 16(2), Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company.

Importance of Chair Leadership

- The department chair bridges the two spheres that influence department climate: organizational policies and practices, and individual conduct.

- In this way, the department chair plays an important role in shaping the department climate. While a department's climate is not created by any one individual, the tone and boundaries of interpersonal interaction within the department are maintained by the chair.

- As a symbolic figure, the way a chair treats members of the department is often modeled by other members of the community. As the head of the department, the chair is responsible for communicating and enacting policies and practices and maintaining academic ethics and boundaries for collegial interpersonal behavior among department members.

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The Department Chair

==**Climate is the chair's responsibility.**==

The chair...
- Is a model of departmental expectations
- Serves the faculty and the students
- Should work transparently

It's a big job and not easy

The chair should be:
- Objective
- Equitable
- Respectful
- Humble
- Open
- Positive/upbeat
- Inclusive
- Credible/trustworthy
- Knowledgeable

Importance of Dean Leadership

- Deans influence departmental climate and culture in countless ways.

- Deans set the tone for the college and other areas under their purview.

- Deans hire and support chairs, associate and assistant deans, and other staff members.

- Deans are involved in issues including strategic planning, budget, curriculum, facilities and research. They are key participants in external relations of the university, including fundraising, alumni relations, economic development, political priorities (federal and state) and public relations.

- Deans support and promote high quality educational programs, research, public service and economic development activities of their respective colleges and schools.

- Each dean must be an effective advocate for their college, both within the university and externally.

- Deans have ultimate accountability for their colleges' sound management of resources: fiscal, facilities and human. They are responsible for collegiate planning, including alignment of plans for educational, research and other activities in their colleges.

What Deans Can Do about Climate/ DE&I

- Focus attention

- Gather and disseminate data

- Engage colleagues up, down, and across campus

- Don't accept the status quo

- Ask questions

- Clarify

- Use carrots and sticks

- Hold departments accountable

- Involve department heads/ chairs

- Garner resources

file:///C:/Users/wrtro/Documents/Z%20-%20Harvard/1%20-%20Documents/PDFs/COACHE/COACHE%20Playbook.pdf

Part IV

Discussion

Discussion

1. What did you learn?

2. What can we takeaway from the data from colleges that rated high on the culture & climate survey?

3. What would you like to focus on/try?

4. What do you need to make progress?

5. Accountability is essential! What will you do to be accountable? Who will you hold accountable?