



**SUMMATIVE EVALUATION REPORT OF THE
WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
(WISELI)**

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WISELI Initiative: Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

In fall 2003, WISELI began offering a workshop series *Climate Workshops for Department Chairs*. The workshops aimed to improve departmental climate through an intervention with department chairs. As an important part of this intervention, WISELI administers an electronic climate survey to faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers in a participating department. Responses to this survey are presented to participating department chairs in the course of the workshop. Chairs then use the information gathered in this survey to identify strengths and weaknesses and to structure further actions to improve their department's climate.

To date, WISELI has administered the department climate survey to 26 UW-Madison departments. Not all department chairs choose to survey their entire department population. Some, for instance, choose to survey only faculty and staff. The different populations surveyed as well response rates for each department are reported in Table III-8. This data suggests a notable conclusion:

- There appears to be an inverse relationship between a department's size and survey response rate: smaller departments tended to have higher rates of response to the climate survey while larger departments tended to have lower rates of response.

Table III-8: Detailed summary of survey populations and response rates for participating departments

Dept	Division	Survey Groups	Survey Population	Survey Responses	Response Rate
1	Physical Sciences	Faculty & Staff	17	12	71%
2	Biological Sciences	Faculty, Staff & Graduate students	59	29	49%
3		All	n/a	39	n/a
4	Biological Sciences	Faculty, Staff & Graduate students	60*	41	68%
5	Social Studies	Faculty, Staff & Graduate students	45	24	53%
6	Physical Sciences	All	414	124	30%
7		Faculty & Staff	88	61	69%
8	Biological Sciences	Faculty & Staff	16	9	56%
9	Biological Sciences	Faculty & Staff	85	27	32%
10	Physical Sciences	Faculty & Staff	45	34	76%
11	Biological Sciences	All	~650	204	31%
12		All	188	92	49%
13		All	171	104	61%
14		Faculty & Staff	25	15	60%
15		All	n/a	59	n/a
16	Physical Sciences	Faculty & Staff	62	35	56%
17		Faculty & Staff	19	13	68%

* Estimated survey population; response rate is approximate.

18		Faculty & Instructors/Adjuncts	42	24	57%
19	Biological Sciences	All	92	56	61%
20		Faculty & Staff	240	111	46%
21		Faculty & Instructors/Adjuncts	25	12	48%
22	Biological Sciences	All	89	52	58%
23	Physical Sciences	All	290	112	39%
24	Humanities	All	n/a	78	n/a
25	Physical Sciences	Faculty & Staff	49	22	45%
26		Faculty & Staff	22	12	55%

Comparing overall climate ratings across the different surveyed groups (Table III-9), one can note that a majority of all groups reported positive perceptions of their department’s climate. Faculty, academic staff, and classified staff tended to report similar average ratings of department climate. This is in contrast to graduate students and post-docs/fellows, who reported similar ratings that were somewhat more positive than those reported by faculty and staff. Despite the overall positive picture, a significant minority (10-15%) of faculty and staff rated their department’s overall climate as *very negative* or *negative*. This suggests the following conclusions:

- Faculty and staff tend to report more negative perceptions of department climate than graduate students and post-docs/fellows.
- While a majority of faculty and staff report a positive overall department climate, a significant minority reports a negative overall department climate.

Table III-9: Comparison of respondents’ overall ratings of department climate for all participating departments

Overall climate rating	N	Very Negative	Negative	Mediocre	Positive	Very Positive
Faculty	435	3.2%	10.7%	22.0%	44.9%	19.2%
Academic staff	330	1.8%	8.6%	23.6%	49.9%	16.2%
Classified staff	202	4.5%	10.1%	21.6%	47.7%	16.1%
Graduate students	362	0.8%	5.3%	18.5%	58.5%	16.8%
Postdoctoral Researchers	56	0.0%	1.8%	23.6%	49.1%	25.5%

Examining the distribution of faculty and staff responses to individual items from the department climate survey highlights particular issues that may contribute to the negative department climate some faculty and staff report. In particular, the following issues emerge as common to faculty and staff:

- A significant minority, about 20%, of faculty and staff report feeling under-appreciated for their work in the department.
- A proportion of faculty and staff report that they do not have the resources they need to be productive in their jobs. More faculty (about 20%) than staff (about 10%) reported this issue.
- Only about half of faculty and staff indicate that they trust the individuals who make decisions that will affect them.

- Some faculty and staff report that they do not have any agency in departmental decision-making. Such perceptions appear to be more widespread among staff (about one-third) than faculty (less than one-quarter).
- A large minority of faculty and staff report a lack of feedback on their job performance and a lack of support for professional development. This issue appears to be a larger problem for academic staff than for faculty or classified staff.
- Some faculty and staff feel isolated in their departments. Between 15 and 25% of faculty and staff report feeling isolated despite others being around.
- A non-trivial fraction of faculty and staff indicate that differences among people are not valued in their departments.

Table III-10: Distribution of faculty responses to departmental climate statements for faculty (n=435) in participating departments.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My department is a welcoming place to work.	2.5%	8.1%	17.1%	43.0%	29.3%
I understand my role and responsibilities as a member of the department.	0.2%	4.9%	9.7%	44.1%	41.1%
I have the resources I need to be productive in my job.	5.1%	14.4%	22.0%	41.1%	17.4%
I feel appreciated for the work I do in the department.	9.1%	12.3%	21.8%	36.7%	20.2%
The Chair of the department or my supervisor respects my opinions and contributions.	5.1%	6.5%	11.4%	34.1%	42.9%
Others in the department respect my opinions.	2.3%	8.1%	22.8%	45.4%	21.4%
I trust the people who make decisions that affect me.	8.0%	17.2%	24.0%	35.5%	15.3%
I am able to influence the decisions that are made in the department.	7.0%	15.8%	31.1%	30.4%	15.8%
The Chair of the department appropriately consults or delegates decisions to a group or committee.	4.9%	9.1%	19.5%	37.7%	28.8%
I feel safe voicing my feelings in front of others.	6.7%	11.6%	19.1%	38.6%	24.0%
My work contributes to the mission or purpose of my department.	1.2%	1.2%	7.0%	45.2%	45.5%
Others recognize how my work contributes to the mission or purpose of my department.	5.0%	12.3%	18.5%	45.3%	19.0%
I am happy with the professional relationships I've formed with others in the department.	2.6%	9.1%	16.5%	45.0%	26.9%
I have had a thorough performance review in the last year.	13.3%	16.6%	21.4%	28.5%	20.2%
There is somebody in the department who promotes my professional development.	14.6%	17.2%	22.2%	28.1%	17.9%
Resources and other benefits are allocated fairly within the department.	11.1%	13.7%	30.9%	31.8%	12.5%
Even though other people are around, I feel isolated.	29.8%	30.3%	16.6%	16.8%	6.6%
My work is commensurate with my training and experience.	0.5%	2.1%	9.2%	44.0%	44.2%
I have the same level of responsibility and recognition as those whom I consider my peers.	3.3%	10.4%	15.5%	45.7%	25.2%
I experience subtle or overt forms of harassment or discrimination due to my gender, race or other personal attributes	62.6%	19.5%	9.5%	5.8%	2.6%

I feel reasonably accommodated when personal and professional responsibilities are in conflict.	1.4%	8.0%	26.1%	39.0%	25.6%
I am aware of places or people to go to if I am faced with a problem or issue in the department.	4.7%	11.4%	20.0%	40.7%	23.3%
Differences among people are valued in the department.	6.5%	16.4%	25.7%	36.7%	14.7%

Turning to the responses of graduate students and postdocs similar trends can be observed though to a lesser degree. Like faculty and staff, some graduate students and post/docs fellows report feeling unappreciated for their work and unable to affect decision-making in the department. Likewise, minorities report a lack of feedback on their job performance and attention to their professional development. The fraction of graduate students and post-docs/fellows reporting such issues is smaller than among faculty and staff. This might indicate either more positive perceptions or greater reluctance to report negative experiences among graduate students and post-docs/fellows.

WISELI Evaluation: Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

The data gathered from past department climate surveys highlights some common issues that department chairs may seek to address in an effort to build a more positive department climate. These may be indicative of the types of issues *Workshop* facilitators are likely to encounter in future sessions. It also suggests general trends among different groups within departments and response rates, either of which may be useful in considering the deployment of future department climate surveys.

Perceptions of Climate Workshops

Participants were asked if, according to their knowledge, their department chairs had participated in the WISELI climate workshops. In some cases, a brief description of the climate workshop was provided to interviewees for clarification. Only two answered affirmatively. One noted that her department chair had recently participated in the workshop, and that, as a faculty member, she had completed a survey on departmental climate. However, the interviewee had not yet received further information on the survey or the chair’s involvement in the climate workshop, and could not report any observed changes in climate yet:

Well the [department chair] did alert the department that we were going to have a survey that WISELI was giving, another survey which was part of a workshop she had attended... for chairs to look at ways to improve climate in the department. So she did alert us to that and I did subsequently answer one of those questionnaires...Now I’m motivated to go back and ask her what the outcome of that was. Because she didn’t come back with an analysis or report afterwards. So maybe she found that there are no issues to address or I’m not sure what.

The second interviewee reported that, as a department chair and affiliate of WISELI, she had helped participate in a “trial” climate workshop, and had found the experience to be quite valuable, overall:

And the other thing is I helped with the climate workshops. I was in a trial one...I thought I had something to offer because we’d had a lot of climate issues here that I’d actually

worked on. And that was rewarding. I thought it was a good experience. And they surveyed our department afterwards so I thought that was a positive experience... They asked if I would and I enjoyed it. I thought it was well structured and a useful activity while I was chair.

A member of the Provost's staff provides his perceptions of the workshops and department climate surveys:

The number of chairs, for example, that go ahead and have done their evaluation, the climate evaluations in their departments. And almost all of the ones I've talked to after they've done that, there were one to many surprises. Most, I would say, had many surprises. And to me that's a good illustration, where these were typically well-meaning people who probably had a sense that they, they themselves were working hard to create a positive climate for their faculty and were then surprised to find that that's not what particularly their women faculty and minority faculty too, that's not the experience that these faculty in their own departments were having. So I think that was an eye-opening experience for a lot of chairs. And those that shared it with the rest of the department, if they were paying attention, it was probably sort of eye-opening for the rest of the department as well. To appreciate that it isn't the matter, climate is not an objective thing. And it does matter how people all feel about the climate they find themselves in.

Evaluation by Workshop Participants

In 2005, we conducted a study²¹ with the twenty-one department chairs who had participated at that point in time. These chairs were invited to participate in the "climate workshops" by the Deans of their respective Colleges and Schools at UW-Madison. They also received email announcements and publicity about the upcoming workshops directly from WISELI staff. In the follow-up survey of the chairs, 58% indicated that they participated due to WISELI's promotional material and 42% said they heard about it from their respective Deans. Two respondents attended the Academic Leadership Series and continued with the workshop after that event. One respondent said they heard about it from someone who previously participated.

Including the pilot group, 21 faculty members, who were department chairs at the time, began the workshops. Of these, one withdrew after the initial meeting, leaving twenty who attended the full workshop series of three, and occasionally four, meetings.

Nineteen of the participants are men and one is a woman. Most of the participants indicated that their position as chair is an "elected" position (79%). On average, the participants have been chair of their departments for seven years. The length of time that a chair serves in the department is typically eight years.

Workshop Sessions and Goals

According to the WISELI website, the following are listed as goals of the workshops:

²¹ Pribbenow, C.M. (2005). *WISELI's climate workshops for department chairs: Evaluation report*. Madison, WI: The Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute.

- To increase awareness of climate and its influence on the research and teaching missions of a department;
- To identify various issues that can influence climate in a department;
- To present research on how unconscious assumptions and biases may influence climate;
- To enable chairs to assess climate in their own departments;
- To provide chairs with opportunities to enhance climate in their departments by learning from each others' experiences and ideas; and
- To provide chairs with advice and resources they can use to enhance climate in their departments.

The following description is provided about each session of the series:

- Session 1:
 - Department chairs will engage in a general discussion of climate and the importance of fostering positive climates.
 - Introduction to web-based departmental climate survey.
 - Presentation of resources to assist chairs in their efforts to enhance departmental climate.
- Session 2:
 - Chairs will receive survey results for their individual departments, spend some time reviewing these results and have the opportunity to discuss survey findings. The main objective of this session will be to share experiences and expertise with other chairs and to learn from each other. Chairs will discuss and develop an action plan to address issues revealed by the survey. Chairs will also learn about resources and people on campus who can help them in their efforts to enhance climate.
- Session 3:
 - Chairs will meet to discuss how they shared survey findings with their departments, what activities they engaged in to enhance the climate in their departments, and how successful they were.
 - Chairs will address specific topics such as the influence of leadership styles, organizational structure, and decision-making styles on departmental climate.

When asked to identify the value of each of the workshop components, the participants indicated that the facilitator (Jo Handelsman), interaction with other chairs, and the department surveys and results/report of the department survey were the most valuable components.

<i>How valuable was each of the components of the workshop series?</i>	Extremely valuable	Somewhat valuable	Not at all valuable
The facilitator (Jo Handelsman)	17 (89%)	2 (11%)	0
Interaction with other chairs	15 (79%)	4 (21%)	0
Campus resources	3 (17%)	12 (67%)	3 (17%)
Reading resources and bibliography	3 (17%)	13 (72%)	2 (11%)
The department survey	16 (84%)	2 (11%)	1 (5%)
The results and report of responses from the survey	15 (79%)	4 (21%)	0
Meeting in a series of three sessions	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	0

When the workshop participants were asked to identify the level to which each of the workshop goals was met, most identified them as *definitely* or *somewhat* met:

Please indicate the level to which each of the following goals was met:	This goal was definitely met	This goal was somewhat met	This goal was not at all met
Increased awareness of climate and its influence on the research and teaching missions	14 (74%)	5 (26%)	0
Identification of various issues that can influence climate in a department	15 (79%)	3 (16%)	1 (5%)
Understanding of research on how unconscious biases and assumptions may influence climate	8 (42%)	10 (53%)	1 (5%)
Assessing climate in your department	16 (84%)	3 (16%)	0
Enhanced climate in your department	7 (37%)	9 (47%)	3 (16%)
Learning from the other participants and the facilitator	16 (84%)	3 (16%)	0
Access to advice and resources to improve climate	7 (39%)	10 (56%)	1 (6%)

Clearly, identifying climate issues, assessing their department’s climate and learning from the other participants and the facilitator were goals that were achieved, as indicated by most chairs.

Almost all of the respondents (95%) said that they would recommend others to attend the workshops. When asked *if* and *how* their expectations of the workshop were met, a sampling of the responses they provided included:

- I expected to (and did) obtain better understanding of climate-related issues and how to deal with them constructively.
- To be confident I was not missing something in my attempts to provide a good work climate.
- I had no expectations going in. I have had so much exposure to this area from various sources that I did not expect to learn much that I didn't already know.
- Basic ways to identify problems and formulate solutions.
- Better understanding of climate issues and departmental climate
- Understanding of how departments in other schools were organized and did or did not work.
- I simply felt this was an important activity and the workshops made the survey doable.
- I really wanted to know whether the climate in my dept was as positive and supportive as I perceived it to be. The workshop reinforced this idea but also pointed out a couple of problem areas that we are addressing.
- No pre-existing goals or expectations other than a general interest in fostering a nurturing climate.
- I hoped to gain input from other units on campus and this was achieved.
- I didn't have expectations but was pleased with what I learned.
- I hoped to get a validation of my assessment of our climate. This expectation was met.

- Information on experiences in other departments regarding issues affecting work environment climate, and means to improve it.

They were asked to respond to the following, “Since attending the workshops and doing the survey, how has the climate in your department changed?”

<i>The climate is:</i>	
Significantly more positive	2 (11%)
Somewhat more positive	12 (63%)
The same as it was before	5 (26%)
Somewhat more negative	0
Significantly more negative	0

Most of the chairs indicated that after participating in the workshops, the climate in their department has improved positively. When asked what the WISELI staff could do to improve the workshops, the following responses from some of the participants included:

- The coordinators of the workshop should not require department chairs to do the survey. They should first discuss literature showing that surveys without follow up can do damage. I learned this AFTER the survey was distributed. I felt pressured to respond to the survey in ways that did not feel right. In the end I ignored the workshop coordinators and did what felt right for me.
- Better insight into interpreting survey results. Better advice on including or excluding academic and classified (or separate surveys from survey professors).
- Learn the environment of medical school department, understand the culture, interview chairs and directors, plan a process that looks at the complex issues of clinical work/education/scholarship.
- More information about what other departments at UW or elsewhere have done to enhance work climate.
- One thing that would help chairs of large departments would be to provide as additional service of summarizing the individual comments using social science analysis tools. I would even pay for it.
- It might be useful to add a follow-up session 6-9 months after the workshop.
- Get them to make time to attend. Suggest strong support from Dean.
- Possibly have department chairs present case studies of how units have improved climate. Examples are very powerful to illustrate the impact of relatively small changes. Sharing is very important as departments vary so much across campus.
- Greater structure to portions for sharing of experience between departments.

When the workshop participants were asked if they would like their departments resurveyed, 10 (56%) said “yes,” while eight (44%) indicated “no.” Open-ended responses included:

- This would depend on timing. To date, I haven't taken any action as a result of the meetings and survey, primarily because I only completed this recently.
- It is likely that my tenure as chair will be up in 3-6 months. It is too soon to see major change. The new chair will need time to “get on her/his feet” before another survey.

- The results of the survey were very positive. It would be useful to survey again after more time has elapsed.
- Overall, I did not find it to be a useful exercise. The response rate especially for faculty and staff was terrible (<30%). The big climate issue right now is that grant funding is down and people are losing their funding and people are going to be laid off. I don't need a survey to tell me how they feel about this issue.
- Always helps to use the yardstick from time to time to see how things measure up.
- After some time has passed, perhaps 2-3 years, it would be interesting and re-energizing.
- Same problems would exist as did in the initial survey - the SURVEY problems, not the climate problems.
- I think these should be done about every three years.
- I would like to do this at a longer interval, say 3 years, to assess systematic, long-term changes in climate. Right now, I am aware of communication issues among a few faculty, which for now have made the dept a less pleasant place to be, but am working toward resolution. I am hopeful that this is a very temporary situation.
- This would need to be discussed with our new Dept Chair, [NAME]. I would be in favor or another survey but [NAME] needs to be consulted first.
- This would be welcome. I believe that departmental climate is somewhat improved, but only a survey could determine this objectively.
- Not sure - I've thought about it. Do not like to impose upon people's time with the survey, although information is useful.
- Our climate is quite good and I expect it to continue to improve based on what we are already doing.
- Good benchmark for new chair incoming.
- Next year would be the appropriate time.
-

One chair requested that we re-survey his department. The first climate survey for this department was sent out on April 30, 2004 and 23 people responded. The second survey was sent on May 9, 2005 and 55 people responded. For this department, the average climate score increased in a positive direction—from 3.21 to 3.71. We have to be cautious when attributing this change to the workshop itself, as the Chair was new in 2004 and some of the respondents may have been evaluating the former chair. The change may also be due to an increase in respondents overall, and who the respondents were for each survey.

The department chair re-surveyed his department in subsequent years. The average score to the question, *On a scale from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive), please indicate the current climate in your department*, increases in each year, as found under the MEAN column:

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Y2004	24	1	5	3.21	1.179
Y2005	56	1	5	3.71	.929
Y2006	46	1	5	3.61	.930
Y2007	46	2	5	3.78	.867
Valid N (listwise)	24				

Summary: Departmental Climate

The home department of faculty is often the most immediate, important and influential aspect of a faculty member's working environment. Thus, in accordance with the WISELI evaluation goals of understanding and improving the climate and environment for female faculty at UW-Madison, we asked interview participants several questions about the climate in their department. These questions were aimed at revealing some of the departmental-level, climate-related factors, barriers, attitudes, and experiences of women in science, and also understanding how WISELI interventions might be affecting these factors.

When interviewed in 2006, more participants reported an improving departmental climate than a declining departmental climate. Interviewees attributed improving climates to a number of factors, many of which were specific and individualized to the department and the female faculty whom we interviewed. Common themes included new or improved leadership (generally, departmental chairs), and new faculty hires, particularly women. Although none of the interviews cited WISELI as a source of departmental climate change, the themes raised in the interviews directly relate to the mission and work of WISELI. For example, they offered additional affirmation about the essential role of chairs in setting the tone for departments, and therefore the importance of WISELI's workshops with chairs. Second, the interviewees offered some evidence about the effects of more women and more women leaders on the perceived climate of the department. The majority of interviewees reported that more women in their department make a positive difference for them and their working environments. In this way, the data again affirms the importance of WISELI's varied efforts, including the search committee workshops, to ensure that more women are hired into departments across the UW campus.

To address departmental climate in science and engineering departments, WISELI began offering a workshop series *Climate Workshops for Department Chairs*. The workshops aimed to improve departmental climate through an intervention with department chairs. As an important part of this intervention, WISELI evaluators administer an electronic climate survey to faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers in a participating department. Responses to this survey are presented to participating department chairs in the course of the workshop. Chairs then use the information gathered in this survey to identify strengths and weaknesses and to structure further actions to improve their department's climate.

Comparing overall climate ratings across the different surveyed groups, one notes that a majority of all groups reported positive perceptions of their department's climate. Faculty, academic staff, and classified staff tended to report similar average ratings of department climate (average of 3.65, on a scale from 1-5 with "5" indicating a positive climate). This is in contrast to graduate students and post-docs, who reported similar ratings that were somewhat more positive than those reported by faculty and staff, with average climate ratings of 3.88 and 4.07 respectively. Despite the overall positive picture, a significant minority (10-15%) of faculty and staff rated their department's overall climate as *very negative* or *negative*. Follow-up surveys with some participating departments show an increase in climate scores. Using one department as an example, the overall climate score increased significantly from a 3.21 to a 3.78 after four consecutive years of re-surveying this department.