

This document includes the report ideas and information submitted to the College of Education Staff Council, from the Working at Iowa (WAI) Ad Hoc Committee. The Council approved to send information within the report to Dean Crocco.

Submitted to Dean Crocco via email: January 23, 2012

The COE Staff Council will follow up on this report and civility initiatives with Dean Crocco within the next two weeks.

During the Fall of 2010, the WAI Ad hoc committee began by looking into the following issues, drawn from the WAI COE Focus Group Executive Summary:

- a. Bullying / incivility / disrespectful conduct / hostile work environment
- b. Effective communication (specifics: delineation of responsibilities; management of conflict)
- c. Role of committees for employees in the COE
- d. Supervisory accountability (supervisor evaluation)?

The WAI Adhoc Committee determined to focus on the first as the most critical, believing that other important areas would follow.

These points capture the recommendations by the committee:

- Recommending training for all supervisors, so they know the scope of their roles and how to provide both effective evaluations and effective recommendations for improved performance;
- Recommending some form of evaluation for all supervisors—at least every three to five years;
- Recommending that all employees in the COE have a regular opportunity (e.g. every seven years in the Operations Manual for academic units) to participate in the evaluation of their unit;
- Recommending an explicit policy statement that inspires, encourages, and mandates civil behavior. Professional behavior always needs to be both responsible and civil toward co-workers, supervisors, students, visitors, etc. This explicit policy could become a key part of a series of anti-bullying recommendations or an anti-bullying policy. This type of policy statement would include steps to take when any employee feels they are not being treated civilly by anyone within the university community. Perhaps this could include a flowchart. Once an employee had sought resolution from an office outside his/her immediate office (e.g. going to the Ombudsperson's office), no supervisor in the COE could arbitrarily bring an end to that process until all parties were in agreement that satisfactory resolution had been reached. The goal of such a policy would be to create a more effective and positive workplace environment for any person—it really would do the same thing that the anti-harassment policy does for identified groups, but it expands that “coverage” to those who are being harassed without being members of a protected group.

- Consideration of a standing committee made up of faculty, P & S, and merit staff (if allowed by their organized status). Who, for example, would all receive training and serve for three years (on a rotating basis) to hear civility/bullying concerns in the COE. This committee would serve to ensure that members of the COE felt their concerns were heard and were informed, to the extent possible, about efforts to resolve their conflicts. Because the Ombudsperson made it clear that her office was completely neutral, it seemed legitimate to propose a group who could listen to concerns and make recommendations to minimize conflicts—or recommend that the issue be considered by another office on campus, if the severity of the concerns warranted that.

COE Staff Council had asked the Committee to determine if CLAS had once had some form of civility agreement or policy. Following several contacts with individuals in CLAS, no one could actually provide content of any such policy or effort.

As was reflected in the *Iowa City Press Citizen*, 5 December, 2011, bullying has been reported among employees—not just students—and dissatisfaction with current remedies (e.g. the Ombudsperson’s Office) is endemic. The committee interviewed both HR and the Ombudsperson, and was left with the feeling that the University as a whole had little effective policy in place to help employees with their concerns (although some useful resources are available). This is consistent with the WAI focus group members who had no idea how to deal with or to whom to report incidences of incivility and bullying—especially when the perpetrator was in a supervisory position. Retaliation has occurred when COE employees have sought assistance from HR and/or the Ombudsperson. As well, frustration exists with non-responsiveness in general when inappropriate incidences are reported. The committee reviewed civility / anti-bullying policies at other Big 10 institutions. The University of Minnesota, as an institution, has been working for several years on developing a policy. Much of their work can be reviewed here: http://www.sos.umn.edu/staffaculty/academic_civility.html Specific strategies, for academic incivility are stated here: <http://www.sos.umn.edu/staffaculty/StrategiesAcadIncivility.pdf>). Although the phrasing reflects that the original intent was designed to address student concerns, it can be adapted to all levels.

The COE Staff Council thanks the WAI Ad Hoc Committee for the submission of the information provided in this document. We are grateful for the time allowed by departments and the time each member allocated to bring forth such great ideas and research on the issues specified within the Focus Groups and WAI Executive Summary.

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