

Creating a Culture of Belonging in Your Department | June 2023 | Q&A

Marcia Edwards 2:04 PM

Hello all.

Ethlyn Williams 2:04 PM

Getting faculty involved in serving. It is difficult to get volunteers.

Mark Marten 2:04 PM

How to include freshman/sophomores in our department's community as most of our departmental classes are in the junior/senior year.

Caroline Maun 2:05 PM

I'm interested in strategies for overcoming disciplinary factionalism/divides.

MaryAnn Holbein-Jenny 2:05 PM

How ideas may differ for graduate programs compared to undergraduate ones.

Susan Castro 2:05 PM

How to help faculty who have been or feel they've been excluded to feel like an essential part of the department.

Soizik Laguette 2:05 PM

How to engage faculty that are self-centered more than team players.

Susan Castro 2:05 PM

We have both "old school" and transgender faculty in a small department.

Cassandra Atkin-Plunk 2:05 PM

How to promote DEI efforts when you work in a state that is actively working to block these efforts.

Matthew Gilmore 2:06 PM

What are some small things we can do to make sure everyone feels included/wanted (in particular, with new faculty members). Day-to-day things? A team-building workshop? Survey to find out what their values are?

Mark Marten 2:06 PM

Ditto... I'm interested in strategies for overcoming disciplinary factionalism/divides.

Thomas Gillespie 2:07 PM

How do we engage post-docs and help them to feel departmental belonging?

Heidi Schneider 2:07 PM

How to step into the chair position and create an inclusive culture after previous chair resigned after 2 of 5 year term due to "inefficient" leadership?

NABILA KHALID 2:07 PM

What can be offer our Teams to feel belonged

Yolande Cole 2:07 PM

How do you keep everyone together when the chair is at a different location from the rest of the team?

Joel Karty 2:07 PM

I'm really interested to hear about what I'd call a generational divide among faculty. Do younger faculty have a tendency to be less team-oriented, less willing to make sacrifices for the good of the department? If that's the case, then the older faculty are left pulling more weight. Is this a national trend? And if so, what are some strategies to help tackle this?

Shah Khan 2:09 PM

Even if we have DEI offices on campus, underrepresented and marginalized students often do not reach out to seek advice to meet their challenges. What strategies should the faculty and program chair adopt in such cases.

Soizik Laguette 2:09 PM

How do you build a sense of belongiing in a multidisciplinary deparment?

Robert VonAchen 2:10 PM

@Yolande, Yes, I deal with that as well. My department members are spread out over 10+ campuses many miles apart...

Yu Kay-Law 2:11 PM

Joel ... it really is person to person

Yu Kay-Law 2:11 PM

and department by department

Sarah Skinner 2:12 PM

Joel...I find the opposite in my department.

Shah Khan 2:13 PM

We can make rules and procedures to achieve DEI functionally. The real belongingness may come from sincere empathy.

Alka Sapat 2:13 PM

How can service loads be distributed equally to avoid the hidden tax for women and POC and get faculty buy-in to take on service to ensure equitable loads?

Joe'l Ludovich 2:13 PM

there is a sense in my program that the chair is responsible to do everything which is impossible.. There are about 2-3 faculty that participate in program business. We also have a generational divide.

Yu Kay-Law 2:14 PM

We can make rules and procedures to achieve DEI functionally. The real belongingness may come from sincere empathy. <— this!!

David Gardner 2:16 PM

What was the H in the mnemonic "EACH"?

Kathy Swango 2:16 PM

My longer-term faculty are sometimes resentful of the leadership of the newer faculty, yet those same faculty don't want the leadership roles. Keeping those tenured faculty engaged is sometimes very difficult.

Nielan Barnes 2:17 PM

Can you recommend specific resources and/or tools (e.g. books, websites, prof dev opportunities, techniques, etc.) that chairs can use to help build a more cohesive departmental culture among faculty who are divided due to a range of reasons?

Eva Cleveland 2:17 PM

How do you make your adjuncts feel a vital part of the department?

Yu Kay-Law 2:17 PM

(worse when the person people feel slighted by is the chair)

Sarah Skinner 2:17 PM

What is the H in EACH?

Allison Burton-Chase 2:18 PM

@ david H=Humility

Kathy Roulston 2:18 PM

Is EACH Empowerment, Accountability, Courage, Humility?

Alan Strathman 2:18 PM

I want to second Nielan's note. Specific resources and tools would be really helpful.

Joel Karty 2:19 PM

Thanks Sarah and Yu. Then I guess the bigger question is, how can a chair better facilitate a team-oriented mentality among all faculty, rather than continue with some faculty (regardless of who they are) approaching their work with a me-first mentality?

Joe'l Ludovich 2:19 PM

I just went through this as a chair with the behavior directed towards me by several faculty.

Youn Jung-Huh 2:19 PM

How can you, as a chair, support faculty and help them develop a sense of belonging when there is a strained relationship between the faculty and upper-level administrators?

Yu Kay-Law 2:21 PM

My first thing is to consider the strengths, weaknesses, and interests of faculty and try and align what people do with those. I would also try and even things out and make sure nontenured folks understand they aren't being told to do X.

Alesia Ferguson 2:21 PM

I see the opposite in my department, my younger faculty really put their weight and want to please.

David Jordan 2:21 PM

refocus on student success vs admin frustrations — all in it together for students

MaryAnn Holbein-Jenny 2:21 PM

Are we able to address belonging of students, staff, everyone in the department (not just faculty)?

Gwendoline Ayuninjam 2:22 PM

How does mentorship work within this divide where senior faculty have new faculty have different values?

Yu Kay-Law 2:22 PM

@Eva - it might depend on your campus policies.

Yu Kay-Law 2:22 PM

It's often most important to prevent newer faculty from overoffering.

Kathleen Battles 2:22 PM

I feel like younger faculty are more oriented to their personal career goals - but at the same time, I'm not sure insitutions (including my own) offer enough to make faculty inclined to invest their efforts into institutional work.

David Jordan 2:23 PM

everyone has overlap in values regarding student success

Ekundayo Shittu 2:23 PM

How do we navigate disparities in teaching assignments that are induced because some faculty members have received significant funding (insttute level awards) to the displeaure of those that have to pick up the tabs of teaching more? How do we navigate this potentially treacherous path of "inequity."

Cassandra Atkin-Plunk 2:24 PM

I see it less with the generational divide but instead with the divide in who comes to campus and is present vs. who does not.

Yu Kay-Law 2:24 PM

It's like student engagement @Cassandra

Guia Calicdan-Apostle 2:24 PM

Cultural competence and cultural humility are almost unheard of as positive attributes in higher education. How do you teach these concepts to a society where positionality, intersectionalities and anti-racist perepsctives are not fully discussed.

Tina Mankey 2:25 PM

We see students who want to prioritize work life balance much more than previously. Less willing to put forth the extra work or dedication needed to be succesful at times.

David Jordan 2:25 PM

I give faculty who are more absent - more committee work ;-) gotta contribute some way if I cannot make to show up

Krista Minnotte 2:26 PM

Why and in what ways would we encroach on people's non-work hours?

Gwendoline Ayuninjam 2:26 PM

What about departments with completely online programs where meetings are online?

Krista Minnotte 2:27 PM

There are happy mediums here. Working remotely sometimes can be a great tool for efficiency.

Yolande Cole 2:27 PM

@Robert I am actually on a different island from the rest of the department.

Yu Kay-Law 2:27 PM

>>Why and in what ways would we encroach on people's non-work hours?<< events where it is important for direct student recruitment and engagement imo

David Jordan 2:27 PM

remote work is certainly different vs faculty who just dont come to campus more than an absolute min

Guia Calicdan-Apostle 2:28 PM

There are also hierarchies of power in the academia e.g. the higher rank, the more privilege and power.

Kevin Bennington 2:28 PM

We have some faculty that are on campus all the time but on the other hand some faculty are all online and those faculty only come in for office hours. How do we get the online faculty on campus more?

Carolyn Dever 2:28 PM

EACH: Empowerment; Accountability; Courage; Humility.

Kristina Olson 2:28 PM

How can the chair help restore a sense of community in the wake of a Title IX report and investigation?

Yolande Cole 2:29 PM

Butter is a good video conferencing tool as well

Krista Minnotte 2:29 PM

@Yu Kay-Law-- these are good reasons-- thank you! I just don't want to encourage a culture of overwork.

Yu Kay-Law 2:30 PM

I would argue also community engagement that is important for the department. For example, advisory council meetings. Getting online faculty on campus more is hard. The real question is: WHY do you need them on campus?

Yu Kay-Law 2:31 PM

And for departments that are mixed online-in person, should all full time faculty be required to teach an in person class?

NABILA KHALID 2:31 PM

How can we be effective listeners despite the hierarchal divide. Because if we miss the opportunity they will not trust or care to share

Alex Ufelle 2:31 PM

How does a chair navigate a unionized faculty?

David Jordan 2:33 PM

as chair, I am a peer - not a manager, but my job is to advocate for my faculty peers and to administrate policy and procedures of admin

David Jordan 2:34 PM

we are union

Merlyn Griffiths 2:34 PM

We have a department retreat annually in August. What are some good approaches to break the ice, get them engaged, contribute etc. Is that the right time to do/start process for a strategic plan?

David Jordan 2:35 PM

sometimes a chair can become a helpful interface with union leadership - guard off admin overreach or educate faculty of CBA

Merlyn Griffiths 2:36 PM

yes with past chair, and it was "crickets" not very open - he was far too serious to make it fun

Susan Castro 2:38 PM

I've been sending "newsletters" with the FYI and reminder stuff. When we need to discuss or make a decision, I send out full information with the agenda so that everyone can think about it before they arrive at the meeting. This is working well, partly because the previous chair would spring important decisions on everyone and railroad them into what he wanted to do. That practice is a central reason why he's no longer chair. Transparency is generally important to academics.

Joel Karty 2:38 PM

Related to the summer retreat question, how do you actually get faculty to actually agree to DOING one? Summer is off-contract, so faculty in my department are very resistant to having a summer retreat, because they see summer as their time they feel they need to protect. But the department suffers as a result.

Jessica Salo 2:39 PM

@Joel, our contracts start the week before classes start, so I schedule our retreat that week, rather than when faculty is off contract.

David Jordan 2:40 PM

amen to transparency

Terry Stentz 2:40 PM

Suppose the department is pediatrics and thoracic surgery and the department chair appointed time after time is always a thoracic surgeon?

Susan Castro 2:40 PM

@Joel: We had a Friday half-day retreat during the semester. (We generally don't teach on Fridays.) That might work for you.

Donna Pawlowski 2:41 PM

We have 5 programs (2 new to the department) and I hosted a first-time retreat last year - had 1/2 new faculty. I asked them to outline their values of their programs - a few goals for the year - key outcomes - and some key words/phrases to describe their programs. It helped new folks and helped each other understand the programs.

Kevin Jacobs 2:44 PM

Great idea about a newsletter @Susan. Thanks.

Alan Strathman 2:44 PM

It would help me if we could talk about cultivating a sense of belonging among students. What are 3 (or 5) specific things a Chair can do to work toward student belonging?

Merlyn Griffiths 2:44 PM

Great ideas for the retreat - thank you...

Susan Castro 2:44 PM

Our university has service awards. If you have, or can have, something like that, it's pretty easy to recognize the people who are really contributing. Even being nominated is a recognition, and that may spur others to step up.

Laurie McCubbin 2:44 PM

Thank you Susan for sharing your ideas with the newsletters and full information with the agenda. Very helpful!

NABILA KHALID 2:45 PM

I started a talent post, found an artist and entrepreneur, a marriage minister, a professional gift wrapper, a connoisseur and an owner of take out Food service, it was interesting to know about these side-hustles and hobbies

Joel Karty 2:45 PM

@Jessica, our contract begins the week before classes start, too, but that entire week is filled with required meetings (including a department meeting for a few hours); our university affectionately calls it 'boot camp.' But even if we didn't have those required meetings, I feel that the week before classes is much too late to have a retreat, because any big ideas that come out of the retreat would probably require a lot of thinking and a lot of work, and wouldn't be able to be tackled in a meaningful way until the following summer. Alas.

Victoria Thompson 2:47 PM

What was the book you mentioned?

Rabia Rahman 2:47 PM

I missed the name of the book, did anyone else catch it

Christopher Bailey 2:47 PM

What was the name of that book & author?

Fay Mitchell-Brown 2:47 PM

Wht is the name of the book?

Jessica Salo 2:47 PM

We've added a service list at the end of our faculty meeting agendas. There is an agenda item for any updates for faculty service items. The updates are helpful in including all faculty in the meeting and the list helps me decide who to ask first to do the next service item. Disclaimer: our department has 8 faculty.

Jennifer Withington 2:47 PM

Well, in NY we start teaching in August before our contracts "technically" start Sept1! Crazy. And it is hard to keep people around in May after graduation, when they are "technically" still on contract.

Kevin Jacobs 2:47 PM

The Sum of Us.

Yu Kay-Law 2:48 PM

Jennifer - OSU did that too for TAs. And sometimes cookie cutter replacements are not feasible.

Jessica Salo 2:48 PM

I'm constantly pushing back on the associate dean to stop them from schedule more required meetings the week before classes.

Yu Kay-Law 2:48 PM

The more flexible the better honestly, to increase the pool.

Soizik Laguette 2:49 PM

How to manage service in a small department (we are 5 faculty) where faculty are very involved in teaching, must do research, but still we need do produce the same reports thatn every other departments on campus? Should chair do a lot of those "services" task?

Guia Calicdan-Apostle 2:49 PM

Jennifer- do you have a union?

indiran Pather 2:52 PM

David- H is for humility

Krista Minnotte 2:52 PM

I echo Soizik's question. My department is also small and almost all committee work ends up being a committee of the whole. This can be taxing. Any different ideas to handle this?

Yu Kay-Law 2:53 PM

Question zero: why is the committee _needed_?

Yu Kay-Law 2:53 PM

You can't do everything at once.

David Jordan 2:53 PM

we also have a new faculty mentoring committee to help

Laurie McCubbin 2:54 PM

The book mentioned was the Sum of Us by Heather McGhee-excellent read.

Kathleen Battles 2:54 PM

Krista - Maybe allow different faculty to be in charge of a specific "committee" - so they organize discussions, keep people on task, engage with follow through tasks.

Krista Minnotte 2:55 PM

@Kathleen Battles-- love this idea! Thank you!

David Jordan 2:58 PM

#1 question - what is best for the students and #2 how can I support my faculty to do this

David Jordan 2:59 PM

every issue I ask those two questions

Susan Castro 3:01 PM

@Nabila - I love the talent post idea. Not only might it help faculty bond, it can also humanize faculty to the students and connect us with staff. I'm going to ask our dept Tweeter to try that out. :)

Kathy Smith 3:01 PM

@JenniferWithington, we have the same issue. We begin mid-August, even if the 9 month contract doesn't start until September 1. As soon as grades are due Mid May, faculty are out the door. They are then grumpy about having to come back to campus for their evals.

Susan Castro 3:04 PM

Thanks for following up on the cultural literacy/humility question. I'm in philosophy, and that's part of what we do. Unfortunately, not all of our faculty get it, much less teach it.

Kathy Smith 3:05 PM

WE did a departmental book study on Diversity issues in Mathematics. It opened us up as a department to understand where our students are coming from and some of the issues they may be having. It also made us think about how we teach our classes.

Matthias Eggertsson 3:07 PM

How to handle, when we have the good faculty that does everything well, and then the other that do things late and even sometimes not well. Will you only ask the good faculty to take on new tasks and committees.