Resources on the Effect of Department Climate on Faculty Satisfaction


This study is based upon the author’s interviews with 36 full-time, tenure-track faculty (12 women and 24 men) at a public research university (UCLA). The author states that the faculty she interviewed had “a commonly expressed need to establish a sense of space within the university that is distinctively their own—neither too distant from nor too connected with their departmental and institutional colleagues and where they feel comfortable, respected, and appreciated for genuinely being themselves” (p. 143). The author found that “needs for autonomy, independence, and interdependence revealed themselves as deeply embedded tensions within study participants” (p. 143).


The authors found that the most significant predictors of career satisfaction for all women faculty in their study included measures of problematic departmental climate, a supportive relationship with the unit chairperson, and the level of influence within the department or unit.


Analyses of Cornell University climate survey data show that faculty members’ perceptions relating to integration or sense of belonging are strongly associated with career satisfaction.


This study found evidence that gender discrimination and sexual harassment had a negative impact upon women faculty’s career satisfaction.


The author found that department climate has a major impact on job satisfaction and intention to quit of women faculty in science and engineering. This work was funded by an NSF ADVANCE IT grant to Utah State University.


This article is based upon survey data collected from 135 tenure-track women faculty in the natural sciences at a large Midwestern university. Multiple regression analyses indicated that negative departmental climates were related to lower job satisfaction. However, voice interacted with climate.

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Women faculty who perceived that they had more voice in departmental matters showed a higher level of job satisfaction than women faculty who perceived that they had less voice in departmental matters.


See Figure 4 on p. 19. “Good climate/collegiality” is reported as one of the factors that contributes most to faculty satisfaction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.


Using survey data of tenure-track faculty at a private Midwestern U.S. university (Marquette University), the authors found that women faculty perceived more exclusion from academic departments with a low representation of women. They found that perceptions of procedural fairness and gender equity fostered inclusion and warmed the climate for both men and women faculty.


The authors found that pre-tenure female faculty members were significantly less satisfied than males with their relationships with their senior colleagues.


By the end of the NSF ADVANCE IT grant period at UIC, female faculty reported feeling that the climate had warmed and that they were more satisfied with their careers.


This study conducted a mixed methods analysis of women faculty departure at one research institution (University of Maine), using Hagedorn’s model of faculty job satisfaction. The study, which analyzed findings of an institution-wide survey and interviews with women faculty who had left the institution, identified overall negative departmental environments as a theme. See Table 3 on p. 83 for a list of items in which there were significant differences in survey responses by gender.