Lessons Learned from In-Depth Interviews to Assess Workplace Climate

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UC Davis ADVANCE Paid Program
Workplace Climate: Assessments and Interventions to Improve Diversity among STEM Faculty
UTPA ADVANCE Program

Five Year ADVANCE institutional transformation grant from the National Science Foundation (started Fall 2012)

Goal: to increase the representation and advancement of female faculty in STEM fields (with special focus on Hispanic women)

Focus Areas: Faculty Recruitment, Advancement Education and Empowerment, as well as Policy and Climate
Policy and Climate

Objective: Promote a positive workplace climate along with family-friendly policies

A. Family-Friendly: Dual Career, Modified Ins. Leave, Sick Leave

B. Climate Assessment: Climate Survey, In-depth Interviews (with current employees), In-depth “Exit” Interviews

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PHW: The Psychologically Healthy Workplace framework by the American Psychological Association

PHW 5 Areas of Focus:
- Growth and Development
- Involvement
- Recognition
- Health & Well-Being
- Work-Life Balance
In-Depth Interviews

Process and content

- Invited all STEM women (and Hispanic STEM men) via email
- Response rate: 57%, (for a total of 50 interviews)
- Pre-interview survey (basic socio-demographic data)
- 2 Faculty members (from ADVANCE) conducted the interviews
- Place: campus offices or locations as selected by interviewees
- Consent form (48 of the 50 interviews were recorded)
- Length: between 45 minutes and 3 hours
- 15 questions (personal experiences in terms of relationships and the 5 focus areas in the PHW framework, and an open-ended question)

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In-Depth Interviews (cont.)

**Pros**

- Flexible scheduling
- Inexpensive
- Captures personal and professional experiences, perceptions and insights (and allows for understanding the dept. climate)

**Cons**

- Time consuming
- Internal interviewers

  ➢ Potential for reduced candidness due to fear of being identified (Museus, 2007)
  ➢ Potential for confirmation bias: interviewers may inadvertently prompt for certain responses based on certain knowledge or biases (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007)
Exit Interviews

Process

- All tenured/tenure-track faculty leaving the university are invited
- Invitations sent via email, with pre-interview questionnaires/survey
- Response rate has been 60-70%
- Conducted by Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
- Interviews last for one hour

Pros

- More candid feedback (compared to the interviews of current faculty)
- Allows for better understanding of departmental climates and faculty retention issues

Cons

- Time consuming
Recommendations

- Use a framework to formulate the questions and assess the climate
- Assure and reassure confidentiality and anonymity to mitigate fear of being identified (Museus, 2007; Gardner, 2013)
- Record and transcribe interviews: essential to effective data interpretation (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006)
- Use external interviewers as opposed to internal ones to assure confidentiality and limit confirmation bias (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007)
Recommendations (cont.)

- Supplement with exit interviews (Rosser, 2004)
- Triangulate the data (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Guion, Diehl, and McDonald, 2011; Maxwell, 1996, Bodgan and Biklen, 2003)
- Use the interviews as a positive intervention in and of itself (Amelink and Hyer, 2006; Vallancourt, 2011)
- Act on climate assessment and develop systematic interventions at the various levels (Gardner, 2013)
Sources Cited


Gardner, Susan K. “Women Faculty Departures from a Striving Institution: Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” The Review of Higher Education 36, no. 3 (Spring 2013).


Rosser, Vicki J. “Faculty Members' Intentions to Leave: A National Study on Their Worklife and Satisfaction,” Research in Higher Education 45, no. 3 (May 2004).

Thank You