

# ADVANCE

University of Rhode Island

**Strengthening the Academic Work Environment  
to Attract and Retain Excellent & Diverse Faculty**

Graduate School of Oceanography

October 22, 2004

## Purpose of Initial Session

Increase awareness of the importance of creating and maintaining an excellent academic work environment for everyone and women scientists in particular.

- Identify key elements of a great academic work environment.
- Recognize the current situation for underrepresented groups
- Build on the best of relevant experiences to begin planning for productive change

2

## Paired Interviews

- As the interviewer:
  - Ask open-ended questions to encourage further inquiry
  - Take a few notes – capture great quotes
  - Summarize the core ideas/thoughts and feelings you are hearing
- As the person being interviewed:
  - Recreate your experience for yourself and your interviewer – include detail
  - Be curious

*2 Interviews – 15 Minutes Each*

4

## Agenda

- Welcome & Introduction
- Overview of Session & Approach
- Paired Interviews – Inquiry
- Identify Themes
- Reality Check
  - Information from other Universities
  - What's working and what could be better in the Department?
- Moving Forward – Quick Ideas for Action & Next Steps

3

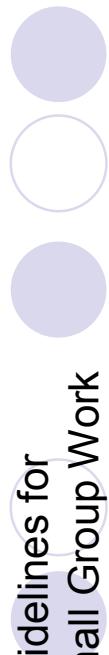
## Interview Guide



- 1. A. High point experience** supported by your academic work environment
- B. Your own best contributions** to the learning and achievements of others
- 2. Core value or element now** in your academic work environment
- 3. Two wishes** for the **college itself**, to create/sustain optimal work environment, particularly for women

5

## Guidelines for Small Group Work



- Choose roles:
  - Facilitator
  - Scribe
  - Time Keeper
  - Reporter
- Hear from all group members
- During the conversation, listen for the themes and key elements of excellence in a great academic work environment, particularly as they may help to shape the future for the college.

6

## Identifying Themes

Two pairs of interview partners

- 1.** Share your favorite stories about a high point experience in your academic work environment. (Tell your partner's story if they agree).
- 2.** Listen for and note themes and key elements on a flip chart about how you were supported in your work environment. What made this experience memorable? What made it possible?

7

## Identifying Themes (continued)

- Share your responses to the remaining questions, adding to the key elements of a great working environment.
- Choose the most important 3-4 ideas and write them on a flip chart.
- Choose a story to share with the whole group
- Choose a spokesperson & be prepared to tell the story and present your 3-4 favorite themes/key elements with the other groups..

8

## From glass ceiling to crystal ball

-- Rita Colwell, Director NSF

Academic institutions, especially in the SET departments, continue to be a male milieu in which men share traditions and women are more likely to be outsiders.

In addition to salary, faculty rank and tenure, **working conditions** contribute a great deal to the degree of satisfaction a worker feels about his or her employment. In turn, satisfaction with working conditions contributes significantly to women faculty's decision to remain at an institution or in academe. Conflicting demands of work and family affect women's ability to function as a professional and as a family member. Is it any wonder that without a sea change in the way women are supported in their SET careers, they will continue to drop out to the diminishment of the nation's knowledge base?

- Land of Plenty, CAWMSET

9

## Women are . . .

- less than 20% of full-time SET faculty at 4-year institutions (2% if minority)
- 10.7% of engineering faculty at 4-year institutions
- 18% of Environmental Sciences PhDs
- 29% (vs. 58% men) SET faculty at 4-yr. institutions are tenured
- 14.2% (N=36) of full-time, ranked STEM faculty at URI

10

## Research finds . . .

- Fewer interactions with faculty
- Lower salaries
- Fewer resources
- Heavier teaching loads
- Less mentoring
- Less job satisfaction
- More work/life conflicts

11

## Women in academic science report . . .

- Sense of isolation & alienation & invisibility
  - Lack of connection to department
  - Lack of inside knowledge - exclusion
  - Lack of professional and social networks
  - Being unable to find collaborators
  - Lack of mentoring
  - Being overworked trying to "measure up"
  - Being overburdened as the "token" female
- Work/Life Conflicts
- 21.3% (vs. 2.8%) report family as a career obstacle
  - 66% (vs. 33%) report being overwhelmed meeting work/family demands
  - Lack of resources for balancing work and family
  - Unwillingness to discuss impact personal life has on career

12

## Women at URI

- My department doesn't do much together. I feel intimidated about asking what is going on, there's no communication; feel like I'm not in the loop; I don't feel like I know what opportunities are available to me; I feel held back from going to the male faculty and sometimes wonder if I am just clueless.

I feel a sense of automatic isolation, a weird thing – hard to pinpoint but the men distance themselves.

Isolation is the key word – not being invited in to key conversations

There is a perception that if you are female, you are not really interested in research; there is less support for research for women

I only found 3 other women to connect with socially – all were single, all were unhappy and felt isolated, and they all left.

13



- There was tremendous social isolation. I felt cut-off from the department. Everyone was wonderful and had good intentions, but nobody took the time – everyone is so busy. They tried, but it never happened

I think it's just that they don't know what to do – don't know how to treat a single woman in a working environment. I never felt deliberately excluded – they tried to include me, just didn't know what to do.

There needs to be an opportunity to gather socially – something built in, so it happens.

I don't fault any one person – it's a question of leadership – recognizing a problem and doing something about it

14

## Create opportunities for collaboration

- Introduce to other faculty on/off campus
- Invite to collaborate
- Facilitate students to work with them  
your ideas ?  
your ideas ?

15

## Beginning awareness

- Identify any invisible issues
- Uncover hidden assumptions
- Identify the college "personality"
- Recognize unwillingness to divulge discomfort

16

**Enhance competency through mentoring**

- Teach about funding mechanisms & publication strategies
- Strategies for getting things done on campus
- Advocating for resources
- Support, guidance, cheerlead, safe sounding board
- Encourage faculty development program participation  
*your ideas?*  
*your ideas?*

17

**Providing resources for doing research**

- Sharing data sets
- Sharing equipment, facilities
- Writing in on proposals
- Direct to funding opportunities  
*your ideas?*  
*your ideas?*

18

**Generating support through community**

- Include in social opportunities
- Invite to participate in organized events
- Encourage college social events
- Be available to help, listen
- Introduce to people in and outside area  
*your ideas?*  
*your ideas?*

19

**Regularly monitor health and welfare of department**

Conduct regular, state-of-the-department reviews

- What are the department's goals for itself?
- Are the goals being met?
- What adjustments need to be made?
- Are those goals shared by all?
- Are the goals inclusive of all faculty?
- What is the "mental health" of the college?

20

## Workload & Success

- is the workload appropriately balanced across the department faculty?
- Use of systematic rather than ad-hoc decision-making
- Demonstrate active appreciation - recognize excellence with award nominations and other means
  - *your ideas?*
  - *your ideas?*

21

## Faculty Evaluation

- Process Transparency
  - Access to evaluation process
  - Early & honest feedback on progress toward and expectations for tenure
- Wider Criteria to gauge excellence
  - Balance in traditional and nontraditional work
- *your ideas?*
- *your ideas?*

22

## Institute Flexible and Accommodating Policies and Practices

- Be supportive of dual career partners
- Family leave best practices
- Transitional support
- Value nontraditional types of work
  - *your ideas?*
  - *your ideas?*

23

## Leading Change Key Principles & Basic Elements

- Build on the best of your experience
- Check for relevant perspectives that you may be missing
  - Create a compelling idea of the future you want to create
  - Look for areas of natural agreement
  - Be curious and courageous
  - Only “dig up the past” if necessary to create a clear and compelling image of your desired future

24

## Crafting a Desired Outcome Statement

- State the **result** you want to achieve
- Use the **present tense**
- State **what you do want** (not what you want to avoid)
- Use **inspiring & evocative language**
- Use **full sentences**

25

## Moving Forward Ideas For Action

- Design & commit to actions to achieve goals
- Choose “low hanging fruit” action ideas (good results with relatively little effort)
- Go for quick wins
- Also plan for actions that may be more difficult but are also important in ultimately achieving your goals

26

## Moving Forward Ideas For Action (continued)

- SMART - specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and timely/targeted
- Build in support for actions
- Begin “doing it” within 5-7 days
- Build in plans for follow-up, reassessment, adapting and recommitting

27

## Moving Forward Ideas for Action & Next Steps

1. To **form groups**, choose a priority theme or key element from the lists developed earlier (lots of dots).
2. Develop a **vision statement** for the theme – what you want the desired future to look like.
3. **Brainstorm possible actions** that will start the department moving in the desired direction.
4. **Choose one first step** to recommend.
5. **Prepare a chart** noting your theme, desired outcome statement and suggestion for action. Also **identify a presenter** from your group.

28

## Next Steps

Consider how to

- Bring any missing people into the loop
- Keep energy and focus on what you achieved today & your ideas for action

