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INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

The School Bully is a Scholar? Addressing Bullying among Faculty

Eric Lyerly

We often think of bullying as a K–12 problem, primarily as an issue between students. However, school bullies are not exclusive to playgrounds and lunchrooms; bullying also takes place in the workplace, including among faculty at colleges and universities.

According to a 2021 Workplace Bullying Institute survey, 30 percent of US workers are bullied at work, and 43 percent of remote workers are bullied in virtual meetings, through email, and by other means. Such bullying generally stops only when the target quits or faces termination, transfer, or constructive discharge.

Negative effects of workplace bullying

We know that K–12 bullying has negative effects on children, including reduced self-esteem, anxiety, and other medical and emotional issues. Bullying in the workplace is associated with similar consequences.

In "Workplace Bullying: A Tale of Adverse Consequences" (2015) Randy A. Sansone and Lori A. Sansone analyzed dozens of articles and research studies on workplace bullying to identify the emotional, medical, and socioeconomic consequences of such conduct on targets. The authors found that victims of workplace bullying experience the following negative effects from bullying:

- **Emotional and psychological effects**
  - Increased stress and mental distress, which can persist for up to two years
  - Sleep disturbances
  - Depression and anxiety
  - Gender-specific impacts, such as fatigue in women and lack of vigor in men
  - Major depressive episodes
  - Mood, anxiety, and adjustment disorders
  - Increased use of psychotropic medications
  - Severe events, such as work-related suicide
- Medical impacts
  - Higher rates of general health complaints
  - Chronic neck pain and musculoskeletal issues
  - Acute pain and fibromyalgia
  - Elevated risk of cardiovascular disease, with bullied individuals 2.3 times more likely to develop heart-related conditions

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Supporting Faculty and Staff Mental Health and Well-Being:

Mattering and Growing at Work

Rebecca Pope-Ruark

So far in this series, I have explored the first three "essentials" for workplace mental health and well-being—protection from harm, connection and community, and work-life harmony—in the *U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being*. The authors of the framework argue that "organizational efforts to invest in workplace well-being . . . can in turn support the development of a happier, healthier, more productive workforce" and, furthermore, "organizations can use this Framework to support their workplaces as engines of mental health and wellbeing" (p. 9). I think higher education can use this framework as a jumping-off point to do the hard work of looking in the mirror to make some strategic and systemic changes to how the sector treats people and accomplishes its mission. In this article, we look at the final two essentials of the framework, mattering at work and opportunity for growth, and how they pertain to higher education.

Essential 4: Mattering at work with dignity and meaning

The fourth essential in the framework addresses the human need for mattering and making a difference at work, which connects to the desire for dignity, or feeling "respected and valued" and a sense of meaning, which "can refer to the sense of broader purpose and significance of one's work" (p. 24). When we think of higher education as a public good, of course we would think that everyone working in higher education should feel like they matter at work, but that is not always the case as the sector morphs in today's neoliberal climate. The framework authors suggest four areas for attention:

1. Provide a living wage.

As any good social scientist knows, "work and income are critical social determinants of health and well-being" (p. 25). And while higher education was for decades a reliable employer for livable and middle-class wages, the neoliberal turn has changed this, especially (but not solely) in red states. In a recent article in the *Chronicle*, Kevin McClure writes about the problem with current higher ed pay structures, and the reader responses are disheartening to say the least. At many public institutions, pay is stagnant, not even keeping up with inflation, leaving faculty seriously underpaid and salary compression a chronic problem. And the framework authors report that "workers who worried about their compensation not keeping pace with inflation were more likely to report work as having negative impacts on their mental health" (p. 25). They also note, in another strike against higher education, that "performing uncompensated work, unpaid overtime, or routinely making self-sacrifices for organizations may affect worker health and well-being" (p. 25). We need leaders who can advocate in state and federal houses as well as with boards for fair wages that keep up with not only inflation but also the volume of work faculty

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are expected to do compared to even 20 years ago.

2. **Engage workers in workplace decisions.**

Authors of the framework speak about including workers in the development of organizational missions, values statements, and more. They suggest that "employers must ensure that they are equitably engaging all workers to improve workplaces" (p. 25). Traditionally in higher education, we might simply point to faculty governance as the mode of accomplishing this suggestion, but faculty governance is changing as institutions become more and more corporate. There seems to be an ever-wider divide growing between faculty and administration at many institutions. We need faculty leaders to step up and fight for the voice of faculty governance in institutional decision-making and faculty to back them up. Same for staff leaders and staff councils. And we need administrations to value the voice of faculty and staff as the people without whom institutions could not accomplish their mission: the education of students and the creation of new knowledge.

3. **Build a culture of gratitude and recognition.**

Many might argue that higher ed is a culture of competition and overwork rather than gratitude and recognition, but we know from research that environments in which workers feel "seen, respected, needed, and valued" are more productive and satisfying overall (p. 26). Gratitude and recognition can mean awards and external accolades, but often a simple personal comment or note of thanks is more meaningful: "staff who received frequent appreciation at work from colleagues and supervisors were more likely to recognize and appreciate others" (p. 26). Leaders can practice gratitude in a variety of simple ways such as those suggested in this article.

4. **Connect individual work with organizational mission.**

Of the four suggestions in this essential, this one seems like it should be the easiest for higher education as many, if not most, of us are driven by the twin missions of educating students and creating new knowledge to improve the world. And our institutions are each uniquely mission-driven as well. The framework authors note that "shared purpose, or a collective sense of working toward a common goal, assigns further meaning to work, generates pride, and fuels motivation, all while reducing stress" (p. 26). I somewhat pessimistically wonder whether this applies to higher ed in this present moment; I certainly don't interact with many people who say that their stress levels are reduced in any way by their sense of mission. What I do hear are people trying to live up to their institutions' nonstop marketing of them as "world-class faculty" or feeling intense workplace stress to do all the teaching, research, and service expected of them under the umbrella of that mission. We need a mass reckoning about faculty and staff workload expectations, actual salary and benefits, and institutional mission. How and where do we have the conversation?

Essential 5: Opportunity for growth with learning and accomplishment

If there is one essential higher ed should have in the bag, so to speak, it's this one. Our campuses are homes to growth, learning, and accomplishment, with opportunities for each in every nook and corner. Interestingly, the framework states that accomplishment is important because it "confers a sense of competence that reduces stress, anxiety, and self-doubt" (p. 28), which again, I've not heard any academic I know or have coached report, but perhaps we are simply a lot who are regularly stressed out. The framework offers three suggestions to achieve this essential:

1. **Offer quality training, education, and mentoring.**

While most faculty will balk at the word "training" (as in the dreaded yearly compliance training), framework authors further note that, "employers can informally promote growth opportunities by showing genuine interest in workers through personal encouragement, coaching, and mentorship" (p. 29). Mentoring is certainly something we encourage early in one's career and beyond as we eventually become mentors ourselves. Leaders can support the development of strong mentoring programs within departments and across institutions so faculty gain multiple perspectives and meet others around campus. We can be sure to have strong centers for teaching and learning and for faculty professional development to support the growth of faculty, as well as have strong programs to support staff professional development. And we might figure out ways to make the dreaded compliance training more bearable.

2. **Foster clear, equitable pathways for career advancement.**

People deserve to understand the path forward in their career at an institution. For most faculty, that path used to look like assistant professor to associate professor to professor—but no longer. The faculty has been adjunctified, as the majority of faculty are now on one-year contracts with limited (if any) benefits. Offering multiyear contracts and benefits packages are easy ways to provide some career paths forward, as are promotion tracks that are not tied to tenure. The authors of the framework suggest pathways that might be most applicable for staff, but these could be relevant for faculty and their families as well, including "resources and tools that can better support workers over time and address systematic barriers in the workplace. Opportunities might include accessible professional training programs, career navigation

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- **Socioeconomic consequences**
  - Increased absenteeism and sick leave
  - Higher rates of long-term absence due to health issues
  - Greater likelihood of unemployment, whether through termination or voluntary resignation

Considering these negative effects, bullying can hardly be considered "harmless." It can cause severe emotional, psychological, medical, and professional issues for the person targeted. It can also create challenges for faculty leaders when it causes turnover or reduced productivity within a department.

Workplace bullying and legal challenges in academia

Although there has been a large cultural push to address bullying, it remains difficult to address among faculty for two main reasons: (1) the nebulous definition of workplace bullying and (2) free speech protections for those committing it.

Workplace bullying is a complex concept without a clear legal definition. Throughout the last few decades, there have been attempts by legislators and policy organizations to define the term. For example, the Workplace Bullying Institute defines workplace bullying as "repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more employees of an employee: abusive conduct that takes the form of verbal abuse; or behaviors perceived as threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; work sabotage; or in some combination of the above."

Unfortunately, neither federal nor state workplace laws address bullying behaviors unless they overlap with harassment based on protected characteristics. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, national origin, and sex, among other traits. Likewise, Title IX prohibits workplace harassment based on sex.

For faculty and staff at colleges and universities, actionable legal claims typically require harassment or a hostile work environment based on a protected category. Behavior that is abusive but unrelated to these characteristics, such as an associate professor's verbal abuse of an assistant professor, often falls outside the scope of legal harassment or discrimination.

Institutional free speech policies

Many educational institutions have created internal anti-bullying policies to address bullying conduct. These policies attempt to define bullying and establish complaint and resolution procedures, often using a "reasonable person" standard similar to that in tort law (see Colorado State University's Bullying in the Workplace policy). This means the determination of bullying depends on whether a reasonable person (i.e., a hypothetical individual with an ordinary degree of caution, care, and prudence) would find the conduct intimidating or hurtful.

Colleges and universities (and faculty leaders) must also balance anti-bullying policies against faculty's First Amendment protections of free speech and academic freedom. Academic freedom grants colleges and universities the right to determine who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study. (See *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* [1957]) Academic freedom is an extension of free speech and enables professors to teach and research a wide range of ideas, even controversial ones.

Overly broad antibullying policies that restrict "unpleasant" speech or behavior could infringe on faculty's First Amendment rights. Courts are wary of regulations that limit future speech (prior restraints) or impose penalties that discourage open discourse. Consequently, institutions must carefully craft policies to prevent bullying without stifling academic expression.

Examples of bullying among faculty

One challenge for faculty leaders in addressing bullying is identifying when harsh or unpleasant conduct among colleagues has transformed into bullying.

In her article "Herding Cats and Other Strategies to Address Faculty Bullying" (2019), workplace bullying expert Leah P. Hollis identifies various bullying behaviors involving faculty, graduate students, and administrators, including

- undermining faculty's academic freedom;
- using meetings or departmental emails to publicly criticize or subtly undermine others;
- spreading criticism or rumors about colleagues through informal channels;
- withholding essential information to hinder productivity;
- refusing to respond or engage when asked for necessary support;
- tampering with or obstructing access to equipment like computers and lab tools; and
- claiming others' intellectual work without proper acknowledgment.

Hollis's research identifies additional bullying behaviors targeted at graduate students, including

- delivering excessively harsh feedback that goes beyond constructive critique;
- unreasonably delaying responses on drafts, papers, or theses;
- requiring excessive work hours beyond the scope of the assistantship agreement;
- publishing student research without properly crediting their contributions;
- postponing hearings or defenses unnecessarily, causing extra tuition or fees; and
- making disparaging comments about students in front of peers or faculty.

Having a frame of reference for what

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types of behaviors may constitute bullying can help deans and department chairs adequately identify bullying and respond promptly to bullying complaints.

How faculty leaders can avoid bullying

Unfortunately, bullying continues to be a top-down problem, heavily influenced by power dynamics in the workplace. The 2021 Workplace Bullying Institute survey found that 65 percent of bullies are bosses or supervisors.

Faculty leaders can, even unintentionally, engage in bullying that negatively affects their colleagues. But it's important that deans and department chairs reasonably avoid all appearances of bullying so they can properly and credibly address complaints of faculty-on-faculty or faculty-on-graduate-student bullying in their departments.

Deans and department chairs should take the following actions to avoid intentional or inadvertent bullying of other faculty:

- **Don't blame the victim.** Blaming targets for being bullied is common. Such a response can reduce faculty trust in faculty leaders and encourage continued bullying.
- **Avoid favoritism.** Favoritism can prevent a faculty leader from offering a fair response if the bully is a favored colleague.
- **Be fair with faculty time and workloads.** Requiring faculty to attend unnecessary meetings or take on imbalanced course or advising loads can make faculty feel bullied.
- **Use restraint when offering correction.** Deans and department chairs should avoid public criticism of a colleague, preferring private correction that doesn't embarrass faculty or cultivate a culture of negativity in the department.

Helping your institution eliminate workplace bullying

Institutional bullying policies can empower faculty leaders to eliminate workplace bullying in their departments—and create a collegial atmosphere among faculty.

Faculty leaders can push their institutions to create or strengthen a workplace bullying policy by encouraging administrators to

- develop a standalone workplace bullying policy separate from harassment and discrimination policies;
- collaborate with legal counsel to ensure the policy recognizes faculty and staff's First Amendment protections;
- establish a well-defined reporting structure for addressing workplace bullying complaints;
- include informal resolution options alongside formal procedures for resolving internal bullying issues; and
- provide specialized training for supervisory staff on recognizing and managing bullying behaviors in the workplace.

For their part, faculty leaders should promptly respond to complaints of bullying. First, deans and department chairs should investigate the reported incident(s) to determine whether the conduct occurred and whether such behavior was persistent or abusive or both. This investigation should include conversations with the individual who reported the conduct, the faculty member accused of bullying, and any witnesses to the incident.

Faculty leaders should consult with human resources as they investigate reports of bullying. Human resources staff can help deans and department chairs understand applicable anti-bullying policies and identify whether the faculty member accused of bullying has been the subject of prior complaints of bullying. Deans and department chairs should also consider working with their institution's general or outside counsel to identify applicable policies and potential violations of the same. This step will also put the college or university on notice of possible legal action from the faculty who reported the conduct (or the faculty sanctioned for bullying).

The bottom line on bullying

Faculty leaders have the responsibility and privilege to ensure a safe, collegial, and productive departmental environment for faculty. Addressing and eliminating bullying is a large part of this task—one that will ultimately make the role of faculty leader easier by reducing bullying-related turnover and other negative departmental outcomes.

Speed Mentoring

Kami Batchelder and Jeffrey L. Buller

Mentoring is a common yet powerful way for people to learn a variety of personal and professional skills. Most adults can identify a person who, at some time in their lives, had a significant, positive influence on them. While some mentoring relationships are formal, with clear goals and regular meetings, most such arrangements are informal, arising spontaneously with friends, relatives, coworkers, or teachers.

At its core, mentoring consists of advice and guidance that a person with experience, skills, and knowledge (the mentor) provides to someone who may be less experienced, unfamiliar with how to approach certain professional situations, and in need of guidance (the protégé or "mentee"). Their interactions often consist of counseling, training, supporting, discussing, and/or instructing over time and in varying contexts. Informal mentoring occurs when a veteran in some field meets someone relatively new to the endeavor and they discover that they have a rapport that would make ongoing communication useful. Formal mentoring occurs when someone new to a profession is assigned to a person who is more experienced, as a way of learning local culture and effective practices.

The problem with many formal mentoring relationships is that they are artificial and often lack the natural growth of relationships that arise on their own. That is where speed mentoring can be beneficial: a method for pairing individuals modeled on speed dating and focused on time-efficient networking, a quick exchange of ideas, and a better match of mentor with mentee.

How it works

Speed mentoring works by setting up a meeting of a number of people who are interested in becoming mentors and a number of people who could benefit from the advice and guidance of these seasoned professionals. Then, rather than just having them mingle at random, potential mentors and potential mentees are assigned to one another in pairs. In order to avoid awkward silences, they may also be provided with a few suggested questions, just to get the conversation started. Then after a set period, usually five or 10 minutes, a signal is given and each potential mentee rotates to the next potential mentor.

Simply by knowing that they have only a limited time available, those involved in the process tend to focus on the most critical issues immediately. In addition, speed mentoring avoids those difficult situations where mentors are formally assigned and it quickly becomes apparent that the two individuals have little in common and practically no chance of developing a meaningful relationship.

One field where speed mentoring has an immediate application is higher education. According to Colvin and Ashman (2010), "Universities are increasingly seeking alternative approaches to education that supplement traditional classroom learning" (p. 121). Mentoring, and more specifically speed mentoring, can be used in programs from the administrative level to the classroom. For instance, it could be included as part of an orientation program for new department chairs, with more senior and established chairs offering their services to those new to the position.

In addition, it provides a good opportunity for institutions to keep valuable administrators who have recently retired actively involved with the college or university and applying their skills where they are needed most. For students, speed mentoring can help them find a better "fit" with someone who can provide professional advice, make contacts that could lead to internships or job offers, and relate concepts learned in courses to real-world situations.

By providing an organized process for participants to pursue a mentoring relationship during a rapid-paced event, speed mentoring also eliminates other problems that often arise in formal mentoring programs. It is both time and cost effective, more likely to lead to successful matches between individuals and even during the very first series of rapid interviews introduces people to how varied their options for advice and encouragement really are. Like speed dating, it promotes social interactions and can be fun, beneficial, and intellectually stimulating.

Also like speed dating, its effects can be life changing. It may lead to unexpected friendships, professional networks, and lasting relationships that would never otherwise have been possible. Moreover, younger protégés often meet people who were trailblazers in their fields, leaders who can be demanding but supportive, assist them with professional (and sometimes personal) problems, and offer them insights they cannot attain in any other way.

Nevertheless, speed mentoring, like anything done at great speed, only grazes the surface of the possibilities. It does not delve into the complex and detailed issues that sometimes create a barrier for personal progress. For this reason, it is important that one speed mentoring session progresses to a regular series of meetings where the two people solidify their relationship and continue to provide mutual benefits. Daloz (1999) notes that "as teachers, we have a lot to say about the conditions under which our students may find power, but we must remember

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that the power itself is theirs" (p. 182).

Mentees discover that their goals are being taken seriously and that their doubts, dilemmas, and conflicts arising in work and life have potential solutions or at least do not have to be faced alone. Mentors receive satisfaction from being able to use their experience for something extremely useful. They often become more invigorated by their contact with younger people who need the benefits of their insights in order to succeed. In other words, it is not only the mentee who comes away from these sessions with valuable resources and support.

"Being able to support students, reapplying concepts in their own lives and developing connections themselves" (p. 127) are three main themes that mentors expressed in a study conducted by Colvin and Ashman (2010). For all these reasons, the office organizing speed mentoring should not assume that its responsibilities are over once the initial "match meeting" has concluded. It will be necessary to follow up with everyone involved, inquiring how matters are progressing and whether continued contact is actually taking place. Speed mentoring should be seen as a stepping-stone into a more extended process. Again like speed dating, speed mentoring is not the relationship itself but, rather, the process that makes the ongoing relationship possible.

Finally, speed mentoring can become part of an institution's retention strategy, both for students and employees alike. It helps bring new members more fully "into the family" and gives them an important contact whenever they have questions and do not know where to turn. Students are more likely to persist at an institution where they gain a sense that someone sincerely cares about them and with whom they can solve minor problems before the problems grow into major disasters. Employees can be cautioned against making the sort of mistakes that are all too common when someone is new to an institution and does not yet fully understand local policies and traditions. Moreover, it helps people who are serving as chair or dean for the first time to "hit the ground running" and tap into the wealth of experience that a suitable mentor can provide.

Administrators and faculty members can experiment with speed mentoring at very low cost and only a small commitment of their own time. It is a process that makes a great deal of sense in times of continued limitations to academic budgets and environments where there is concern about rates of student and employee attrition. Most important, speed mentoring simply works better than traditional approaches to matching a mentor with a mentee. For academic leaders who are constantly challenged with the need to do more with less, it is an initiative for which the benefits far outweigh the limited cost.

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Pitfalls of Using Student Comments in the Evaluation of Faculty

Melissa J. Himelein

The use—or misuse—of student ratings of instruction (SRIs) in faculty evaluation is a frequent topic in higher education news. Unfortunately, popular press articles on the topic often garner more attention than the vast empirical literature. A review of the research by Linse (2017) pointed to common misperceptions about SRIs, offering administrators evidence-based advice on appropriate SRI interpretation.

Linse's work and most SRI studies have focused largely on the numerical ratings portion of student feedback forms; much less research has addressed student comments. Provided in response to open-ended questions usually placed at the end of SRI instruments, such items elicit students' general viewpoints (e.g., "Please provide any additional comments or feedback") or request more targeted feedback (e.g., course strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for improvement). Student comments typically become part of faculty records available to chairs, administrators, and tenure committees, where they may play a significant role in evaluation. Is this a fair practice?

Research on student comments

What do studies of student comments reveal about their utility? First, comment response rates are likely to be low. As has been widely reported, online SRI administration, now adopted by a majority of higher education institutions, results in lower overall participation rates than traditional, in-class paper collection. Among the 55–60 percent of students who complete online SRIs (e.g., Benton et al., 2010), only one-half to two-thirds are likely to provide comments, despite the fact that students appear more willing to comment electronically than on paper (e.g., Morrison, 2011; Stowell et al., 2012). Online comments tend to be lengthier than paper comments, although this may not be a benefit if the comments come from a smaller and thus less representative sample of students.

Second, when general feedback is requested, comments are more often positive than negative, whether collected from online or paper methods (e.g., Alhija & Fresko, 2009). When viewed broadly, opinions expressed in comments tend to correlate with numerical ratings. Nonetheless, outlier comments are not uncommon and often contain strongly expressed sentiments, potentially enhancing their impact.

With student incivility on the rise (e.g., Knepp, 2012), embedded in a climate in which Internet trolls and cyberbullying are rampant, it seems likely that inappropriate or mean-spirited feedback may leak into SRI comments. Although data on the frequency of problematic comments is lacking, Lindahl and Unger (2010) were able to collect a surprising number of comments described as "cruel" from an informal poll of just 50 colleagues. Although Tucker (2014) found a very low rate of comments to be abusive or unprofessional (fewer than 1 percent), students at her Australian university were explicitly instructed in how to provide professional and helpful feedback prior to completing SRIs, a possible strategy for administrators seeking to ameliorate the propensity of some students to lash out.

Strategies for managing response rate problems

Before giving weight to student comments, administrators must first ask how representative they are. If your SRI system doesn't automatically calculate participation rates for comments, do it yourself: For each qualitative item, count the number of responses, divide by the total number of students in the class, and use this number to gauge how characteristic of class members they are likely to be.

Participation rates are especially important when examining open-ended questions that explicitly poll for negative feedback such as "What are weaknesses of this class?" Satisfied students may omit such items, which will then artificially inflate the impact of the students who do respond—particularly if they tend to be long or vehement. Before attempting to draw any conclusions from responses of this type, it's essential to know whether they come from 5 percent or 50 percent of the class.

Another strategy that can help judge representativeness of comments is to organize them by relevant variables prior to reading. For SRI systems with multiple open-ended questions, categorize by student rather than by item, allowing you to determine whether four critical comments come from one or four unhappy students. You might also sort comments by variables potentially associated with SRIs, such as whether students are majors or non-majors, what students expect their grades to be, and what type of effort students report making in the class.

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Negative outliers and cognitive biases

Most administrators probably consider themselves adept at sifting through the occasional outlier comments. Social science research suggests otherwise.

Among the many cognitive biases that cloud human decision making, negativity bias—the tendency to attend to, remember, and be influenced by negative information more than positive information—is likely to be one of the most damaging factors in your efforts to fairly assess student comments. In short, unpleasant emotions, feedback, events, memories, and people have greater impact than their pleasant counterparts. In an exhaustive review of negativity bias research, Baumeister and colleagues (2001) described the phenomenon as "disappointingly relentless" (p. 361).

Negativity bias is especially strong in forming impressions of others, which is, in a sense, what occurs during a review of student comments. Unfavorable reviews of faculty are likely to command greater attention, be better remembered, and carry more weight in decision making than neutral or complimentary opinions. In fact, Hilbig (2009) found that negative information is also believed to be more accurate than positive information, an effect he summarized in the title of his paper as "sad, thus true."

Reviewers of faculty files are frequently confident that they are capable of ignoring outliers. Although theoretically such self-control is possible, a second type of cognitive bias, the novelty effect, suggests that to disregard an unusual response is especially challenging. Humans generally attend to the unexpected or uncommon experience in any landscape, and they remember it more keenly than the normative one.

Finally, if you aren't convinced of your own potential for unwitting bias, consider research on the bias blind spot. Scopelliti and colleagues (2015) showed that most people believe that cognitive bias affects the others' decision making—but not their own. Such overconfidence ironically impedes the ability to benefit from advice or training designed to minimize bias.

Strategies for managing cognitive biases

Evaluators may be unable to ignore outliers, but computers can. If you are committed to using student comments in personnel decision making, you might enlist the assistance of a qualitative data analytic tool to sort and organize them into modal categories. This is, after all, the approach of qualitative researchers, who generally seek to find common themes in data.

Wongsurawat (2011) recommends a different tack: Assess the degree to which individual comments correlate with class averages on quantitative items, and then disregard comments identified as nonrepresentative or unreliable. For example, if Professor A receives a high rating on the organization item, and a single student comment claims that Professor A was disorganized, omitting the item from consideration seems warranted. Omitting outliers is a common practice in quantitative research; perhaps personnel decisions should use the same standard.

Of course, if administrators' reviews of student comments attempt to focus on overall patterns in the data, and these patterns most often align with numerical ratings, then it's reasonable to ask what is gained from the time-consuming task of examining comments at all? Is their potential for bias and misuse, which may be heightened in the case of non-majority faculty (Linse, 2017), worth their potential value in decisions about annual review, reappointment, or tenure? Although comments may provide useful formative feedback to faculty, the appropriateness of their presence in personnel decision making must be carefully considered.

In summary, administrators who place undue value on student comments, and undue confidence in their ability to dodge the minefield of cognitive bias, are doing so at their own peril. Unfortunately, they may also be doing so at the peril of the faculty member in question.

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support, tuition reimbursement . . . , English language courses, and promotion opportunities" (p. 29).

3. **Ensure relevant, reciprocal feedback.**

Finally, the framework argues that leaders should "create more opportunities for genuinely engaging with their workers, especially in a way that is positive, collaborative, and outcome-oriented. This should include equipping all leaders, especially new or mid-level supervisors or managers, with the supportive training, tools, and resources they need to engage, manage, lead, and coach others" (p. 30). Leaders, especially department chairs, would benefit from training in coaching methods to work with faculty in their units on everything from career development to crises. Mentoring and coaching are two different skill sets, and both are important for leaders to develop as they move up the ranks. With a coaching mindset, leaders can engage their faculty and staff regularly in encouraging, developmental conversations that are motivating, goals-oriented, and collaborative rather than just with the annual review report.

Wrapping up the framework

In the conclusion to the framework report, the authors write, "We can build workplaces that are engines of well-being—showing workers that they matter, that their work matters, and that they have the support necessary to flourish. In doing so, we foster more resilient, productive, and successful organizations and communities" (p. 31). As I've shared elsewhere, I spend a great deal of time talking with institutions about faculty burnout, and I have been greatly encouraged recently by the number of institutions creating well-being initiatives and task forces to do the important work of faculty and staff flourishing. This framework can be an excellent source of support and guide for these efforts. I encourage institutions about to embark on this work to review the framework and borrow its structure in ways that make sense for you.

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How to Document and Disseminate Unconventional Scholarship

Scott Greenberger

Faculty scholarly engagement is necessary for accreditation, rank and tenure, and recognition of achievement. The importance and value of faculty scholarship are clear, yet defining what to accept and how to document it can be problematic. Most rank and tenure committees use the triad of teaching, research, and service to evaluate faculty scholarly engagement for promotion purposes. But in promotion decisions, publications often overshadow exemplary teaching, interdisciplinary creative activities, and public service. As Boyer wrote in Scholarship Reconsidered (1990), "According to the dominant view, to be a scholar is to be a researcher—and publication is the primary yardstick by which scholarly productivity is measured" (p. 2). Although Boyer was criticizing the standard publication yardstick for measuring faculty contribution, his statement is as relevant now as it was 30 years ago.

A central theme of Boyer's book is the need for institutions to support a broader range of scholarly engagement for promotion purposes. Boyer's model of scholarship expanded the triad of teaching, research, and service to four domains: *discovery, application, integration,* and *teaching*. The expanded model provides an opportunity to highlight and value what faculty actually do. Over the past 30 years, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has blossomed, and discovery scholarship continues to be synonymous with standard research—inquiry conducted to advance theory and obtain generalizable knowledge. Missing from accepted standards of scholarship in the scholarly literature is a focused, systematic approach for documenting (i.e., publishing or making public, peer reviewing, and making accessible for scholarly critique) application and integration scholarship that not only produces practical knowledge but also rigorously demonstrates scholarly engagement that most rank and tenure committees would consider equivalent to discovery and SoTL scholarship.

In application scholarship, faculty apply their disciplinary knowledge to investigate and provide solutions to practical community or societal problems. This type of scholarship aligns with traditional notions of public service unless the institution does not consider traditional conceptions of public service as scholarship (Greenberger & Mandernach, 2018). Further, when rank and tenure committees view professional engagement with the public as less important than research, faculty engaged in service work are at a disadvantage in promotion decisions. The concept of scholarship of application places applied scholarly engagement on the same level as standard research—as long as applied scholarship is rigorously documented for promotion decisions.

By contrast, in scholarship of integration, faculty connect ideas across disciplinary boundaries. Completing a literature review is one form of integration activity, but scholarship of integration entails more than just reviewing literature. It involves "placing the specialties in larger context, [or] illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists, too" (Boyer, 1990, p. 18). The traditional model of scholarship values interdisciplinary study but does not necessarily prize it as the most important form of scholarly engagement. The Boyer model of scholarship, however, values it as equal to discovery, application, and teaching scholarship. Even if the institution accepts the scholarship of application and integration as scholarship, the challenge for faculty and administrators is to determine how to document and disseminate these products of scholarship.

As Shulman (1998) stated, for scholars to consider a scholarly activity as scholarship it must exhibit certain characteristics, including being publicly disseminated, in a form amenable to review and critique, and accessible for use by members of the scholarly community. A peer-reviewed journal article fits these criteria. But in response to Boyer's (1990) criticism of "research and publication" as the only basis for scholarship, Braxton, Luckey, and Helland (2002) added the orientation of professorial behaviors into one of three categories: scholarly activities, unpublished scholarly outcomes, and publications. Braxton et al. suggested that unpublished scholarly outcomes could be considered scholarship if they were publicly observable. "To be publicly observable, unpublished scholarly outcomes need to be in the form of a paper, a taped (audio or video) presentation, written report, or Web site" (Braxton et al., 2002, p. 141). As such, Braxton et al. provided a clear path for documenting unconventional scholarship. Yet, disseminating this type of scholarship has proven more challenging.

To provide a solution to documenting and disseminating unconventional scholarship, we created the *Journal of Scholarly Engagement (JSE)*. The journal "has four primary goals: (a) promoting schol-

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arship of application and integration; (b) fostering dialogue concerning faculty involvement in scholarly activities; (c) enhancing understanding of all of Boyer's four domains: application, integration, discovery, and teaching; and (d) promoting practical knowledge" (Greenberger & Mandernach, 2018, p. 3). To accomplish these goals, we invite three manuscript types to capture unpublished scholarly outcomes: reflective practice manuscripts, professional profiles, and community engagement portfolios. Although these manuscript types are integral to *JSE*, they also provide tools for higher education administrators, rank and tenure committee members, and faculty leaders to acknowledge, document, and disseminate unconventional scholarship.

- **Reflective practice manuscripts.** Reflective practice manuscripts synthesize seminal thinking on reflective practice (see Dewey, 1933/1989; Schön, 1983). In *JSE*, rigorous reflective practice involves identifying a problem (unexpected or unknown outcome) within the scope of a practical activity or project; exploring a deeper understanding of the context and participants in the activity or project; proposing reasons to explain the problem; evaluating the reasons with evidence (such as from models, theories, scholarly literature, and/or analyzed data); choosing the most plausible explanation of the problem based on practical experience and the evaluated evidence; and engaging in a reflective critique of the activity of reflection. There are two general audiences for reflective practice manuscripts: (a) other practitioners, who could benefit from learning about the tacit assumptions involved in practical decision-making within a given professional field, and (b) the broader scholarly community, which could benefit from the "exploratory" nature of such manuscripts as they could provide viable starting points for empirical research. For rank and tenure committees, especially at community colleges, four-year colleges, and non-research intensive universities, reflective practice manuscripts can be promoted to document scholarly engagement that augments practical insights with scholarly literature. For higher education administrators, reflective practice manuscripts can replace white papers as a way of documenting internal institutional activities and offering actionable solutions to pressing operational problems.
- **Professional profiles**. Inspired by the suggestions of Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997), professional profiles contextualize an individual's scholarly engagement to provide a holistic understanding of a body of work. In *JSE*, a professional profile includes a statement of responsibilities, a biographical sketch, a sample scholarly activity or unpublished scholarly outcome, and a reflective critique. There are two general audiences for professional profiles: (a) other faculty, who could benefit from learning about how scholarly outcomes fit within a broader research agenda; and (b) the broader scholarly community, which could benefit from the public dissemination of the previously unpublished scholarly outcome. Examples of unpublished scholarly outcomes include "seminars conducted for laypersons on current disciplinary topics . . . development of a new process for dealing with a problem of practice . . . [and a] study conducted for a local organization" (Braxton et al., 2002, p. 142). For rank and tenure committees at both research intensive and non–research intensive higher education institutions, professional profiles can be promoted to organize and document sustained faculty scholarly engagement.
- **Community engagement portfolios**. Aligned with Driscoll and Lynton's (1999) professional service portfolio concept, the purpose of a community engagement portfolio is "to contextualize community engagement, organize community engagement according to a standard schema (i.e., purpose, process, and outcomes), and document community engagement in written form" (Greenberger & Mandernach, 2018, p. 3). In *JSE*, a professional profile includes a discussion of project purpose, an outline of the process taken in the community engagement, and presentation of project outcomes (Greenberger & McNaughton, 2019). In addition, authors should provide supporting evidence to document the outcomes. Examples of supporting evidence include diagrams or charts of collaboration, memos documenting process or communication, testimonials from community partners, and visual displays of project achievements (Driscoll & Lynton, 1999). There are two general audiences for community engagement portfolios: (a) community partners, who can benefit from learning about how such engagement produced solutions to problems of practice; and (b) the broader scholarly community, which could benefit from the public dissemination of practical knowledge gained from project outcomes as the basis for future research. For rank and tenure committees, especially at higher education institutions where applied research is prominent, community engagement portfolios can be promoted to organize and document off-campus service activities, such as those that involve applying disciplinary knowledge to address community problems. For higher education administrators interested in increased university engagement in the local community, community engagement portfolios can

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Building a Learning Community for Faculty and Staff Engagement

Tom Glynn, Dee Magnoni, Susan Oldenburg, and Ralph A. Gigliotti

A September 6, 2023, *New York Times* column by Nicholas Kristof highlighted our global loneliness crisis. Kristof states, "Loneliness crushes the soul, but researchers are finding it does far more damage than that. It is linked to strokes, heart disease, dementia, inflammation and suicide; it breaks the heart literally as well as figuratively." Kristof discusses the impact of loneliness across nations, organizations, and families. Drawing upon the solutions put forward by surgeon general of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy, Kristof highlights the critical importance of social connection and the cultivation of community. As we describe in this article, a learning community can be an effective means of heightening engagement and sense of belonging in the workplace.

Evolution of a faculty and staff learning community

Rutgers University Libraries span four chancellor-led units—including Camden, New Brunswick, Newark, and Rutgers Biomedical and Health Science—across three campuses. Of the nearly 200 faculty and staff who work across Rutgers Libraries, approximately 75 total faculty and staff work directly in New Brunswick Libraries (NBL).

The NBL 2020–2023 Strategic Plan was published in the summer of 2019 following a year of community feedback, outreach, and synthesis. To implement the plan, NBL leadership recognized that a more organized and intentional approach to personnel learning and growth would be needed.

In support of this initiative and in collaboration with partners across NBL and the broader institution, the associate university librarian (AUL) for NBL announced the launch of a learning community during a fall 2019 meeting of all NBL faculty and staff. The AUL formed a seven-member advisory group to oversee and guide the work of the learning community, with a focus on enhancing faculty and staff engagement across the organization.

As the learning community launched, the libraries entered a challenging period as a result of ongoing organizational change and the widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the pandemic caused a complete realignment of work as well as a significant reduction in the workforce. The uncertain climate damaged morale and frayed an increasingly fragile workplace culture.

The learning community, with its focus on personnel growth and workplace engagement, was uniquely poised to help staff and faculty adapt to fully remote and then hybrid work. The learning community became an internal mechanism to provide practical training on videoconferencing tools as well as learning opportunities to address such topics as supporting our remote students and self-care.

A virtual learning day was offered in spring 2021 to build upon the initial interest in the work of the community. Learning streams associated with the community have continued to evolve as the organization and professional needs of faculty and staff evolved. Current learning streams associated with the learning community include a focus on wellness and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Findings and implications for academic professional development

Building a sense of belonging in disruptive times is critical for leaders at all levels. A small study group formed to research the impact of the learning community on the perceptions of belonging, engagement, and morale.

A Qualtrics survey to assess the impact of the community was distributed to all NBL faculty and staff. Focus groups were conducted with interested members of the community. The survey received 27 responses, including approximately 20 percent of the NBL staff, 85 percent of the tenured or tenure-track faculty, and all the non-tenure-track faculty. The overall response rate was 42 percent. The focus groups, conducted in January 2023, consisted of five staff members in the first group and one staff member, one non-tenure-track faculty member, and two tenured librarians in the second group.

The results of the survey highlight a number of interesting findings for those seeking to engage in academic professional development.

- Overall, respondents indicated the primary value of the community in fostering personal development and building a sense of community across the organization. Roughly 48 percent of the respondents found the community to be very useful or extremely useful for personal development, compared to 37 percent who indicated its value for professional development. Respondents indicated a desire for greater connections and

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"scaffolding" across the professional development series.

- Approximately half of the respondents indicated that the learning community was very or extremely constructive in building a strong sense of community throughout NBL. Thirty-seven percent of respondents felt was very or extremely useful in improving morale, and 30 percent found it very or extremely useful in motivating workplace engagement.
- The results of the survey underscore some of the stresses and challenges faced by employees during this period, particularly during the pandemic lockdown and the first months after returning to campus. When asked to describe barriers to participating in the learning community, approximately 60 percent of those who responded referred to a lack of time. In response to an open-ended question, others highlighted the "crisis" facing the organization and a general sense of being overwhelmed.

The two focus groups provided somewhat different yet equally valuable perspectives on the perceived value of the learning community. The groups met as librarians and staff were adjusting to the return to in-person work, addressing the challenges of the "new normal" following the pandemic lockdown. The conversations presented an opportunity to more closely examine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program and to provide the advisory group with advice regarding future directions of the community. In the survey, some of the comments criticized those events that did not promote professional development. In both focus groups, there was a greater emphasis on individual development and how the learning community fosters personal connections between colleagues. Significantly, participants stressed that personal development and community building ultimately promote professional development and effective service to our patrons. For example, simply by participating in events offered online and in person, one has an opportunity to meet colleagues from across the organization, learn what they do, and better understand "who I can ask for help from on different things." Additionally, the focus groups revealed the value of the community in helping to address some concerns about staff morale. One participant noted that it serves as "a bridge for staff who are often voiceless," while another in the other group expressed gratitude that "we are heard." Finally, the focus groups provided concrete suggestions for improving learning community events. These included, for example, soliciting ideas from librarians and staff on a regular basis and the need to "formalize, normalize" expectations regarding staff participation.

The survey and focus groups, together with a review of the literature conducted during the study, offer valuable data for future internal planning and may also be instructive for those seeking to develop similar initiatives at their institutions. The NBL learning community was first formed to provide a framework of learning and growth for personnel to successfully implement the goals of the strategic plan. The advisory group quickly understood that a strong sense of community and belonging, together with engagement, was fundamental to organizational and community growth. One question guided the effort: How can leaders understand the strengths of their own organizations and advance engagement and learning? Tools such as the CliftonStrengths assessment were used to help identify areas of individual and team strengths and to explore potential opportunities for increased partnership and collaboration. The use of group learning events, together with individual learning paths, provided opportunities for both skill development and the cultivation of community and understanding. An organization relies on trust to thrive, and trust is often the result of deep listening, mutual respect, and the ongoing support of individuals and teams throughout an organization. The hope is that future efforts put forward by the learning community advisory group will continue to build trust throughout the organization by focusing on the personal and professional development of members. In turn, by building trust and helping to develop members of the organization, such an effort can improve workplace engagement and satisfaction.

As colleges and universities across the country continue to wrestle with issues of community, engagement, and morale in a post-pandemic workplace, the learning community model may be one of interest for academic leaders. As indicated by the findings from this exploratory research study, learning communities have the potential to strengthen connections and promote interactions across a siloed workplace, create meaningful opportunities for learning acquisition and application that can benefit both the individual and the organization, and ultimately build deeper trust among members of the community.

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> be used to document faculty involvement in community problem-solving.

Highlighting and valuing what faculty actually do comes at a cost. It requires academic leaders to take a wider view of scholarly engagement and to discover ways to assess and document such activities. The manuscript types I have discussed above offer innovative pathways to meet this challenge.

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