Bullying in Academia: Reactive and Proactive Strategies

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ABOUT ACADEMIA

RECOGNIZING BULLYING

- Ombuds Perspective
- Defining Incivility and Bullying
- Impacts of Bullying
- Bullying in Academia

OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING

- What Targets Can Do
- What Institutions Can Do

PROACTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES
Ombuds Perspective

Shaped by our role and principles . . .

- Role: help students, faculty, and staff manage and, if possible, resolve interpersonal, academic, or administrative conflicts

- Ethics and Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association: Confidential, Informal, Neutral/Impartial, and Independent
About “Academia”

- Culture of Critique
- Dept. Chair Role
- Academic Freedom
- Tenure
- Academic Hazing
- Physical Separation
- “Rainmakers”
- Differential Rights
RECOGNIZING BULLYING
Bullying in the News . . .
August 2010 . . .

UVa Will Review Allegations of Workplace Bullying at Literary Journal


http://www.youtube.com/bullyinginstitute#p/a/u/0/5MjPT84rx20 (NBC “Today Show”)

October 2010 . . .

Rutgers’ Student’s Death Sparks Shock, Outrage


The Daily Collegian
October 12, 2010
Accused teenager at Groton School committed suicide


Boston Globe
November 29, 2010
NOT Bullying

- One-time aggressive outbursts
- People “just not getting along”
- High performance standards
- Expression of conflicting opinions
- “Direct” communication
- Corrective feedback
Also NOT Bullying

- Being overlooked
- Having requests or comments ignored
- Exclusion from meetings or communication
- Condescension
- Having one’s credibility questioned or undermined publically
What is Workplace Bullying?

“… repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators that takes one or more of the following forms:

- Verbal abuse
- Offensive conduct/behaviors (including nonverbal) which are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating
- Work interference — sabotage — which prevents work from getting done”

Gary and Ruth Namie of the Workplace Bullying Institute
www.workplacebullying.org
Without a common definition there is room for miscommunication and confusion

Naming it (clearly) gives it power (e.g., “sexual harassment”)

Laws require a clear definition and a high threshold
How Does US Law Define Bullying?

Hint: It doesn’t!
Key Findings of a 2010 Study

- 35% of workers have experienced bullying firsthand
- 62% of bullies are men; 58% of targets are women
- Women bullies target women in 80% of cases
- Bullying is 4X more prevalent than illegal harassment (2007)
- The majority (68%) of bullying is same-gender harassment

Zogby Interactive-Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010
Impacts of Bullying on Individuals

- **Psychological**: anxiety, depression, rage

- **Interpersonal**: e.g., anxious because not sure when bully is coming at them next. Trying to find validation by talking with others. Obsessiveness can be taxing to family, friends, and colleagues.

- **Physical**: e.g., Cardiovascular Problems: Hypertension to Strokes, Heart Attacks, Skin Disorders, Immunological Impairment
Impact on Organizations

- Loss of productivity
- Increase in use of vacation and sick leave
- Turnover
- Increase in workers compensation or disability claims
- Increased chance of retaliation or sabotage
- Increased chance of violence
Before we discuss options for responding to bullying, please write any questions you have so far related to the definition, legal status, findings, or impacts of bullying.
RESPONDING TO BULLYING
(Reactive Options for Individuals and Organizations)
Options for Targets

- Do nothing directly/do not engage
- Keep a journal with details of specific dates, places, witnesses, and behaviors
- Hold onto copies of documents that contradict the bully’s accusations against you (e.g., time sheets, audit reports, etc.)
- Go with a group of concerned colleagues to speak with the alleged bully
Options for Targets (continued)

- Ask colleagues to speak up if they observe alleged bully engage in bullying behaviors
- Complain to the alleged bully’s supervisor
- Confidential Hotline (if available)
- Grievance (individual or group)
- Formally complain to Administrative Agencies (e.g., EEOC / Courts)
Group Activity:

**Part 1**: Talk in your group about **other** options for individuals who feel they are targets of bullying.

**Part 2**: Ask a scribe to send in as many you can identify.
Can Bullying be Mediated?


“Workplace Bullying Institute Blog”
December 10, 2010
An Additional Option


Ombuds Office Website
University of Colorado at Boulder
RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

Tools for Administrators and Supervisors
Administrators/Supervisors Often Fail to Act on Complaints

Ombuds often hear two complaints…

1) bullying and

2) the response (or non-response) the alleged target received when s/he asked for assistance
What Happens to Complaints?

- 42% of the cases - perpetrator’s immediate bosses directly helped the Bully or punished the complaining Target
- 40% of the cases - Bullies’ managers did nothing to intervene (tacit support)
- 32% of the cases - HR supported the Bully or did nothing
- 11% of the cases - the Target’s co-workers sided with the Bully
- 7% of the cases - negative sanctions against the bully (censure, transfer, or termination)

2000 US Hostile Workplace Survey
Workplace Bullying Institute
Group Activity:

Why might an administrator or supervisor NOT act on complaints about bullying?

Discuss this question with your group for about 5 minutes and send in your best guesses…
When Fielding Complaints…

- LISTEN

- ask about specific behaviors and their impacts

- ask the complainant what the ideal outcome would look like

- summarize what you will each do next

- ask for help if you need it
When Fielding Complaints… (continued)

- maintain confidentiality to the extent you can

- remember the complaint might be entirely true, partially true, or untrue

- remember there may be facts the parties perceive differently

- that “both/and” is possible when you hear seemingly conflicting accounts (e.g., hostile feedback was given about poor performance)
Upon Hearing Complaints Try NOT to…

- convey skepticism or agreement
- interrupt
- make promises you may not be able to keep
- minimize the complaint
- defend, explain, or interpret the actions of the alleged bully
Upon Hearing Complaints Try NOT to…

- talk about previous complaints
- accuse or blame the complainant
- procrastinate doing what you said you’d do
- ignore subsequent attempts by complainant to contact you
If Someone Accuses YOU of Bullying… the DO List

- Listen as non-defensively as you can.
- Assure her/him you did not intend for him/her to feel bullied (if you didn’t!).
- Tell the person you are sorry she/he feels the way she/he does as a result of your behavior.
If Someone Accuses YOU of Bullying…the DO List (continued)

- Assuming the person’s request would not prevent you from doing your job, agree to do what she/he asks to avoid the problem in the future.

- Acknowledge that it may have been difficult for the person to approach you, given how she/he felt, and thank her/him for telling you directly about her/his concerns.
If Someone Accuses YOU of Bullying… the DO List (continued)

- Assure the person that you want her/him to feel comfortable in your presence and ask what you could do differently in the future so she/he would not feel that way.

- Ask her/him to please let you know in the future if she/he ever feels uncomfortable again.
If Someone Accuses YOU of Bullying... the DO List (continued)

- Let her/him know she/he may speak with your supervisor if she/he would like to (and who your supervisor is – unless you know she/he knows) about her/his concerns.
If Someone Accuses YOU of Bullying… the DON’T List

- Say she/he “is being too sensitive,”

- Say she/he “has no sense of humor, can’t take a joke,” etc.

- Say he/she “is wrong,”
Say she/he “has mental/emotional problems,”

Threaten her/him,

Retaliate against her/him for complaining, or

Engage any further in the specific behaviors about which she/he is complaining!
Investigate

- Talk to alleged bully
- Convey your expectations
- Gather information
- Reflect on all the information and
- Make a decision
PROACTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES
STATEMENT ON CIVILITY - Claremont McKenna College
http://www.cmc.edu/president/docs/civility.php

STATEMENT ON CIVILITY - Indiana University
http://www.ipfw.edu/about/civility.shtml

RESPECT AND CIVILITY IN THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY - UC, Berkeley
http://students.berkeley.edu/uga/respect.stm
Assess the Climate

- Climate Surveys
- Exit Interviews
- 360 Degree (or Upward) Evaluations
- HR Monitoring of Leave Time
Training

- Specific Seminars or Workshops on Bullying
- Include Topic of “Bullying” in Existing Training for Supervisors, Faculty, and Staff
- Bystander Training
Campus Civility Initiatives

- Gather Data
- Identify Stakeholders (especially faculty)
- Identify Vision Statement
- Strategy Mapping
- Evaluate
One Example: University of Minnesota Academic Civility Initiative

- Gather Data
- Identify Stakeholders (including respected faculty)
- Identify Vision Statement
- Strategy Mapping
- Evaluate
In Fall 2007, the Student Conflict Resolution Center conducted a survey of nearly 10,000 graduate students regarding the prevalence, manifestations, and effects of academic incivility. The survey also explored barriers to seeking assistance and satisfaction with interventions when the behavior was reported.
Nearly 1,800 graduate students responded

19.2 percent reported being harassed

78.2 percent of those harassed did not report the situation to anyone at the University due to:

- fear of impact on future career;
- fear of retaliation; and
- the belief that no one would help them.
Gather Data (Survey Results) (continued)

- 83.0 percent of the students who encountered harassment reported that it somewhat or completely interfered with their ability to work or study
- 43.7 percent who experienced harassment reported they considered leaving the U as a result
- 29.9 percent of students who observed another graduate student being harassed considered leaving as a result
Identify Stakeholders

- 15 faculty members, administrators, and graduate students
- Well-known and respected professors, deans, and program chairs
- Director of Student Conflict Resolution Office
- Directors of offices working with international students, GLBT students, and
- Staff from the EEO/AA office
Vision Statement

“We envision a university culture that fosters academic excellence and promotes civil and respectful relationships through effective prevention of, and response to hostile, offensive or intimidating behavior.”
Strategy Mapping

Group Brainstorms options (5 min.):

1. What ideas do I have to make this vision a reality?
2. What ideas am I willing to work on to make this happen?
3. Group chooses Top Ten

Develop a plan (i.e., who will do what by when)

Make it happen (check in w/ email, meetings)
The Plan

- Send a letter to Directors of Graduate Study and DGS assistants with a Quick Reference Guide, the Graduate Student Advising Guide, and a draft of the letter to graduate students.

- Send a letter to faculty apprising them of the work of the group, asking for their help and support.

- Present information at the new faculty orientation.

- Develop and present an orientation session to all incoming graduate students.
The Plan (continued)

- Send letter to all graduate students the 3rd week of classes.
- Develop a workshop on civility for departments.
- Present to new faculty department chairs.
- Presentations will be made at the Center for Teaching and Learning’s (CTL) teaching enrichment series entitled “Incivilities in the Learning Environment.”
The Plan (continued)

- Prepare two podcasts — one for students and one for faculty — that will be added to the Student Conflict Resolution Center (SCRC) website.

- Post the survey data on the SCRC website.

- Set up meetings with the university’s Educational Policy and Equity, Access, and Diversity senate committees.

- Develop a document to assist departmental chairs in handling reports of incivility.
For More Information about the UM Academic Civility Initiative

http://www.sos.umn.edu/stafffaculty/academic_civility.php

http://www.sos.umn.edu/stafffaculty/WORST.pdf
If you decided to pursue a Campus Civility Initiative:

1. On which group would the effort focus (e.g., staff, graduate students, instructors, etc.)?

2. Who should be included (stakeholders) in such an effort on your campus?

3. After identifying stakeholders, what would be your first step?
Appreciative Inquiry

http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/
Please ask your scribe to write any remaining questions now.
Resources...

- Workplace Bullying Institute
  (Gary and Ruth Namie)
  http://www.workplacebullying.org/

- New Workplace Institute (David Yamada)
  http://www.newworkplaceinstitute.org/bullying.php
More Resources

- Conflict Climate Inventory: http://www.conflictclimate.com/
Thank you for your participation!