UNH**ADVANCE**

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

An NSF funded program to improve the climate for UNH faculty through fair and equitable policies, practices, and leadership development.

Improving Faculty Climate - An Introduction to the UNH ADVANCE Academic Leaders' Workshop

One of the goals of UNH ADVANCE is to improve the climate for all UNH faculty. Positive climate has been linked to job satisfaction, motivation, and performance in organizations (see Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey (2013) for a comprehensive review). Academic leaders have substantial influence on faculty climate. By increasing unit members' awareness of the importance of their work and its value in achieving unit goals, and inspiring and coaching them to succeed in their careers, transformational leaders have been found to have a direct, positive, and substantial impact on individual and organizational outcomes and climate (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Organizational climate is the atmosphere or ambience of an organization or unit as perceived by its members. It is reflected in the organization or unit's structure, policies, and practices, the demographics of its membership, the behaviors members observe getting rewarded, supported, and expected, and the quality of personal interactions. Climate is partly a function of an organization's culture, the shared beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that shape behavior and distinguish members of one group of people from another. While characteristics of organizational climate are relatively readily observable and changeable, organizational culture is often likened to an iceberg because, as depicted in Figure 1, it is deeply rooted with a substantial portion hidden under the surface.

Climate often feels more *chilly* for minority group members, especially if they represent less than 20% of total unit membership (Greene, Stockard, Lewis, & Richmond, 2010). For example, when women faculty are under-represented in a department, they are significantly more likely than men faculty to report negative experiences and unfair treatment, and to be less satisfied with their positions. Since women often make up less than 20% of the faculty in academic departments, and much less than 20% in the STEM disciplines, improving department climate necessitates addressing the conditions that make the climate for women and other minorities particularly chilly.
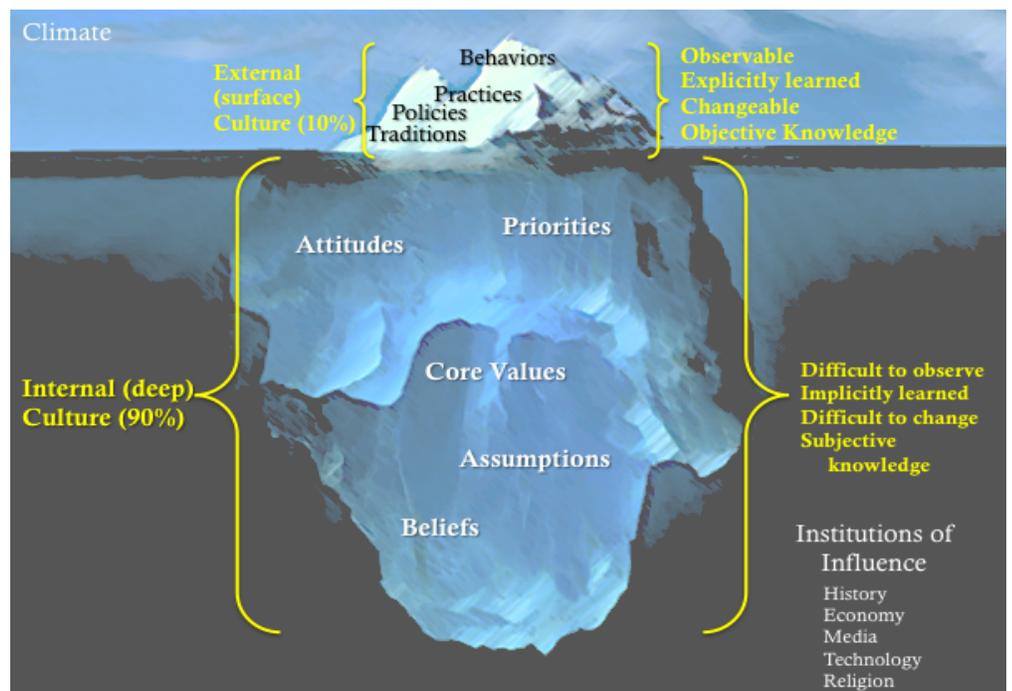

Figure 1. The Climate and Culture Iceberg

The ADVANCE team at the University of Michigan asked faculty to describe programs or behaviors that contribute to a climate that supports their academic career success and satisfaction. While they pointed to the importance of best practices in areas such as recruiting, mentoring, and promotion and tenure evaluation, they stressed that department leaders "who apply the touchstones of transparency, uniformity, and assistance when developing or reviewing policies and procedures can create environments within which all faculty members flourish" (Waltman & Hollenshead, 2007). The answers to the following questions may shed some light on whether or not there is room for improvement in the climate of your academic unit:

Do all members of your unit feel they have equal voice in department meetings and decisions?

Do your annual, third-year, and post-tenure review practices provide the timely, objective, and constructive feedback faculty need to succeed at all stages of their career?

Is your unit as supportive as it can be in helping members achieve work/family balance so that they are successful in both?

Are members of your unit encouraged to speak up when they see incidents of bias that might make the climate uncomfortable for underrepresented members?

Figure 2 shows how key UNH ADVANCE initiatives (and you!) can directly influence the climate of your unit through improved clarity, transparency, and equity in policies and practices concerning faculty recruiting, evaluation, compensation, career progression and career-life integration.
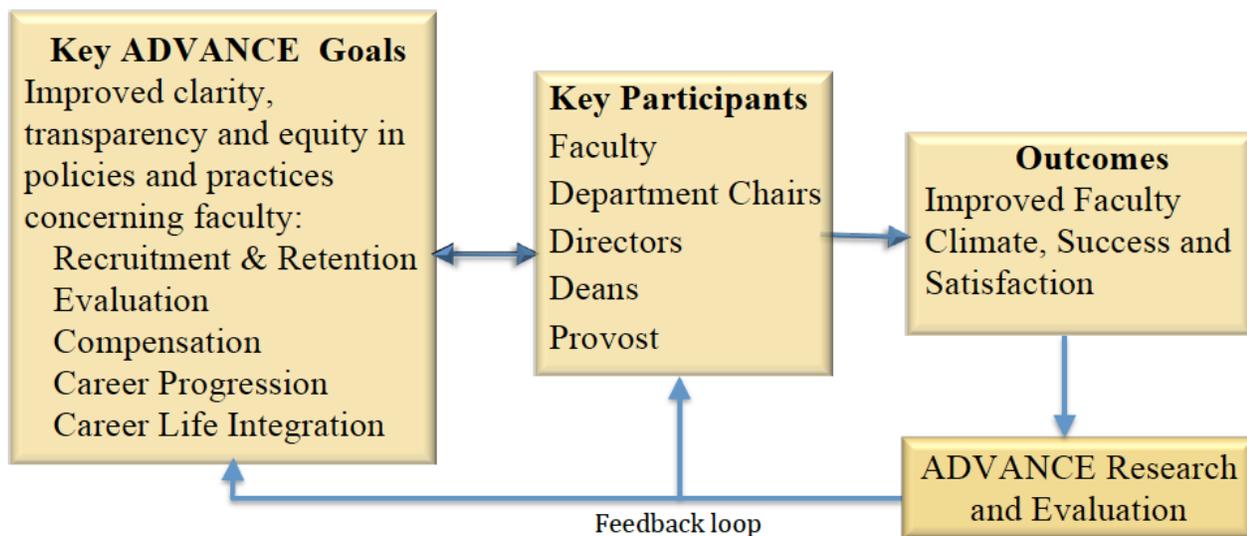

Figure 2. UNH ADVANCE Climate Improvement Model

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