

Bullying Basics: Where to Begin?

Barbara L. Roberts, Ph.D.

Executive Director and Senior Advisor to the Provost

WorkLife Office

March, 2020

Why should we tackle workplace bullying and incivility? - Isn't it just part of the landscape of life?

- *“The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.”* Mahatma Gandhi

At some point, we are all vulnerable, in various ways.

Perhaps the true measure of our MSU society is in how we treat one another.

MSU context

- Value statements
- Expectations in place
 - ❖ Policy statements
 - ❖ Faculty statement on inclusion
 - ❖ Staff handbook
 - ❖ Union agreements
- Deans commitment
- ADR policy
- Other universities' definitions

The MSU Context -

What do we already know?

MSU Values

- Quality
- Inclusiveness
- Connectivity
 - All are based on a fundamental respect for the dignity of others

MSU Expectations - Tolerance and Civility

University Wide

- MSU strives to build an academic community ...that **expects tolerance of viewpoints and civility toward others...**
- We call upon all who participate in university events to **promote tolerance and civil behavior ... by respecting individuals with diverse perspectives and ideas** can we build an environment of civility that is conducive to advancing knowledge and transforming lives. [emphases added]

https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/university-wide/tolerance_civility.html

April 20, 2010

MSU Expectations

- Faculty Senate statement
 - “...We the faculty place the highest value on the free exchange of scholarly ideas and points of view, with the understanding that those are open to challenge. We take pride in the strength of our diversity and our ability to **work together with respect and equality.**” [emphasis added]

Faculty Senate Statement on Climate, Diversity and Inclusion, January 17

<https://acadgov.msu.edu/faculty-statement-campus-climate-diversity-and-inclusion>

MSU Expectations

- Faculty Ad Hoc Committee Statement
 - **“We strive for a supportive environment that is free from hate, racism, sexism, misogyny, ableism, religious subversion and bullying of any kind.”**

MSU Expectations

- Faculty Rights and Responsibilities
 - “...a fundamental commitment to academic freedom and maintained through reasoned discourse, intellectual honesty, mutual respect and openness to constructive criticism and change.”
 - “The responsibility to carry out assigned ... duties in a professional manner.. ”
 - “The responsibility to pursue excellence and intellectual honesty..”
 - “The responsibility to work in a collegial manner ...”

https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/faculty_rights.html 20-03-05

MSU Expectations

- Support staff handbook
 - “...Unwelcome conduct that is **objectively and subjectively severe, persistent or pervasive** and creates an **unreasonable interference** with the individual's work or education experience is considered harassment...”
 - “Behavior that is based on a protected category, but does not rise to the level of prohibited harassment under the ADP, may nonetheless be **unprofessional** in the workplace, **disruptive** in the classroom, or violate other University policies and... could warrant discipline.” [emphasis added]

<https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/support-staff/support-staff-handbook/ss-handbook/employee-rights/index.html>

MSU Expectations

- Union contracts (APA, APSA, CTU)
 - “The parties are mutually committed to promoting **respect, civility, teamwork, and empowerment in the workplace.**” [emphasis added]

Deans Commitment

- To create a *culture* that is **transparent, open, trusting, and safe**
- To cultivate **caring** and **accountable leadership**
- To empower everyone to be engaged in a *community* that is **inclusive** and **equitable** [emphases added]

<https://deans.msu.edu/>

March 2, 2020

Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP)

“...the University community holds itself to certain standards of conduct more stringent than those mandated by law. Thus, even if not illegal, acts are prohibited under this policy if they ² :

- Discriminate against [or harass] any University community member(s) through inappropriate limitation³ of employment opportunity⁴ ,... or participation in education, athletic, social, cultural, or other University activities
- on the basis of age, color, gender, gender identity⁵ , disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or weight;”

Sample University definitions

- “...has no legitimate purpose, ought to be known to be unwelcome, and creates a hostile, intimidating, humiliating or toxic environment.
(University of New Brunswick, Canada)
- “...repeated mistreatment by words or actions that are intended to shame, embarrass, humiliate, degrade, demean, intimidate, and/or threaten an individual or group.” (Colorado State University)
- “...unwelcome behavior pervasive or severe to the extent that it makes the conditions for work inhospitable and impairs another person’s ability to carry out his/her responsibilities to the university...”
(University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Next steps...

- Where can we go from here?
 - To a conceptually-based, simply worded, tangible definition
 - Informs behavior at every level
 - Widely shared, taught and known by the community
 - To a clear policy and
 - A scaffolded, defined and well-known procedure
 - To educate and hold accountable
 - To address concerns pro-actively
 - To provide a credible, transparent and consistent procedure that supports all parties equitably