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Culture Eats Policy For Breakfast: Fostering a Positive and Collegial Climate

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Culture Eats Policy for Breakfast: Fostering a collegial climate in your college

Robin Cass
Interim Dean, College of Art and Design
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)

Everyone in an academic leadership position has felt the impact of employee morale and workplace culture, positive or negative, on their ability to get things done. How do you begin improving a dysfunctional culture? How do you maintain faculty and staff morale during difficult times? This discussion will focus on the intricate and delicate ecosystem of relationships, norms, and behaviors that constitute a college’s workplace culture. In particular, we will discuss tools and best practices for fostering a collegial climate of transparency and mutual respect within the tangled worlds of academia.
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The Consequences of War
Peter Paul Rubens
1637-38
Introductions

Overview of this session:

• What

• Why

• How
I. Introductions
II. What is an organization’s culture?
III. Why is workplace culture important in a college?
IV. What are your stories?
V. How can we improve the culture of our colleges?
VI. Resources
Introductions and Context

My role and institution

• Interim dean of a large, diverse college
• 20 years experience as a faculty member within same college
• History of dysfunction and unrest
• Time of flux and new senior leadership
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) College of Art and Design

Degrees

- Bachelor of Fine Arts: 14
- Bachelor of Science: 2
- Master of Fine Arts: 9
- Master of Science: 2
- Master of Science in Teaching: 1

Over 1900 Students
135 Faculty
75 Staff
Introductions

Participant introductions

• Name, Role, and Institution?
I. Introductions

II. What is an organization’s culture?
What is an organization’s culture?

Common ways of defining:

- Shared Beliefs/Attitudes and Behaviors
- Shared, Pervasive, Enduring, Implicit
What is an organization’s culture?

Ways to frame:

• based on how people relate to one another and react to change (HBR study)
• Likely related to industry/field and context
• Possible diverse from one part (or layer) of an organization to another
I. Introductions

II. What is an organization’s culture?

III. Why is workplace culture important in a college?
Why is workplace culture important in a college?

**Impact**

- Individual (faculty, staff, students)
  - Positive
  - Negative
Why is workplace culture important in a college?

Impact

- Collective
  - Positive
  - Negative
I. Introductions

II. What is an organization’s culture?

III. Why is workplace culture important in a college?

IV. What are your stories?
What are your stories?

How would you describe your organization’s dominant culture?

Examples of...

• Interpersonal interactions?

• Responses to change?
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FROM “THE LEADER’S GUIDE TO CORPORATE CULTURE,” BY BORIS GROYSBERG, JEREMIAH LEE, JESSE PRICE, AND J. YO-JUD CHENG, JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2018

© HBR.ORG
What are your stories?

What is your target/ideal workplace culture?
I. Introductions

II. What is an organization’s culture?

III. Why is workplace culture important in a college?

IV. What are your stories?

V. How can we improve the culture of our colleges?
How can we improve the culture of our colleges?

Best practices

• Assess your current situation (listening, mapping, consulting)
• Formulate and Communicate your “Target Culture”
• Gather and support allies from within
• Incorporate culture change into community conversations
• Support and reinforce culture change through change in organizational structure, language, process, and policy
How can we improve the culture of our colleges?

What I’ve found effective:

• Focused expansion of inclusive “listening” events and mechanisms
• Real opportunities for comprehensive upward performance evaluations
• Increased availability and presence
• College restructuring (financial approvals and layers of management)
• Clarification of policies and processes
How can we improve the culture of our colleges?

• Find patience – persevere

• Call attention to and celebrate incremental progress

• Reward those that help make positive changes (kudos, attention, …)
Recommended Resources:

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Recommended Resources:

HBR Guide to Managing Up and Across

Build relationships Herd cats Gain influence
Recommended Resources:

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START WITH WHY

SIMON SINEK

HOW GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE EVERYONE TO TAKE ACTION

MORE THAN ONE MILLION COPIES SOLD
Thank you!

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(Peter Drucker quote)