



November 10, 2009

To: Provost Paul DeLuca

From: Heather Daniels, ASEC Chair 

**RE: ASEC's Perspectives on Campus Climate Issues**

Thank you for the invitation, issued at our late August meeting, to provide you with information regarding campus climate issues and the ways they affect academic staff. Our understanding of campus climate is guided by the definition developed by the Campus Climate Network Group in 2002: "Behaviors within a workplace or learning environment, ranging from subtle to cumulative to dramatic, that can influence whether an individual feels personally safe, listened to, valued, and treated fairly and with respect."  
(<http://www.provost.wisc.edu/climate/what.html>)

We especially appreciate your interest in climate issues because it aligns with the campus strategic goals outlined by Chancellor Martin. The following strategic goals, listed within the larger goal of recruiting and retaining the best faculty and staff, address campus climate issues:

- Enhance department cultures and hiring practices to ensure diversity
- Continue to foster a vibrant intellectual community
- Develop the skills and creativity of our faculty and staff
- Build an open, dynamic, and respectful learning and working environment for all members of our community
- Align our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across our different campus units

The leadership that you and Chancellor Martin are providing on climate issues is demonstrated through these strategic goals, Vice Provost Damon Williams' inclusive excellence initiative, and Vice Provost Steve Stern's understanding of academic staff concerns. However, some recent actions and ongoing concerns have diverted attention from these positive steps and have inadvertently created a sense that academic staff are often not "listened to, valued, and treated fairly and with respect."

A recent example arose from the announcement of the new policy to double the salary increases for faculty at the time of promotion. While campus administration communicated the policy change and its rationale to faculty, academic staff were not provided with the background and reasoning for this change, an omission that created concern and resentment. ASEC would like to work with you to make certain that, in the future, academic staff are included in communications regarding changes in pay and promotion policies. Improved communication

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Academic Staff Executive Committee

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will foster a greater understanding of the administration's decision-making process and will create a climate of inclusion.

Our concern arising from the lack of communication about a salary change that benefits faculty is compounded by the delay in instituting an instructional leave policy that will enable instructional academic staff to have the time to develop and enhance courses they teach. By supporting this leave policy, the administration could demonstrate its commitment to addressing the needs of academic staff as well as those of faculty.

The opportunity to participate in shared governance is also a climate issue. In some units, academic staff are discouraged from exercising their right to participate in governance by their managers, who do not understand that participation in academic staff governance represents an important professional development opportunity and that it benefits the entire campus. Their understanding could be increased by greater promotion of the role of academic staff governance by campus leadership. Additional training for department chairs, PIs, and administrators could also increase this understanding.

ASEC continues to be concerned about the decline in the granting of increased job security to long-term academic staff, that is, those with five or more years of service. The annual analysis of job security data by the Personnel Policies and Procedures Committee shows that the percentage of long-term academic staff with rolling-horizon, multiple-year, and indefinite appointments has been decreasing since 2001. While the percentage of faculty who have the job security provided by tenure has remained steady at 79%, the percentage of long-term academic staff with rolling-horizon and multiple-year appointments has declined from 59% to 55.6% and the percentage of those with indefinite appointments has shrunk by almost half, from 10% to 5.3%. This erosion in job security is a significant morale issue.

Finally, ASEC sees a need to develop a common understanding among academic staff and their supervisors of policies and procedures regarding benefits, professional development, salary, and promotion, as well as job security. Currently, campus practices in these areas vary widely due to a lack of specific, campus-wide expectations, and their inconsistent application is perceived as arbitrary.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our perspectives. We look forward to discussing issues of campus climate with you so that we can work together to meet our common strategic goals.

cc: Chancellor Bidy Martin  
Associate Vice Chancellor Steve Stern  
HR Director Steve Lund  
Special Assistant to the Provost Eden Inoway-Ronnie  
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