



2009 ADVANCE  
Program Meeting

**AWIS**  
Association for Women in Science

▶ October 29-30 | The Westin Alexandria Hotel

# “Managing Department Climate Change”

# Presenters

- **Ronda Callister**  
Professor, Department of Management and Human Resources, Utah State University  
P.I. Utah State's NSF ADVANCE IT program, 2003-2006
- **Joan Williams**  
Distinguished Prof., University of California's Hastings College of Law  
Director, Center for Worklife Law
- **Eve Fine**  
Researcher, WISELI – Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison

# Plan for this Panel

- Brief Introduction
  - Why focus on department climate
- Each panelist will describe an intervention designed to improve department climate
  - Ronda Callister
  - Eve Fine
  - Joan Williams
- Conclusion
  - Results of interventions
- Q & A/Discussion

# Why focus on Department Climate?

- Individuals experience climate in their immediate workplace – the department
- Perceptions about department climate are key determinants for faculty satisfaction and retention
- Numerous campus surveys show that women faculty experience a more negative climate than do male faculty
- Improving department climate is critical for the retention and advancement of women faculty

# Why Assess Department Climate?

- Assessment is essential for determining strategies for initiating change
- In a research environment, data (quantitative and qualitative) is a powerful inducement for change
- Data is necessary for evaluating change/improvement (or lack of it)
- Pitfalls – issues of confidentiality

# Options for Assessing Department Climate

- Listening
- Observation
- Interviews (and other conversations)
- Surveys
- Consultants

Austin, Ann E. "Understanding and assessing faculty cultures and climates." In M. K. Kinnick (Ed.), *Providing useful information for deans and department chairs* [Special issue]. *New Directions for Institutional Research* 84 (1994): 47-63.

Ronda Callister

Utah State

Eve Fine

WISELI

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Enhancing Department Climate:  
A Workshop Series for Department Chairs





# What is Climate?

Ethnicity *celebration* Age *respect*  
Ideas *advocacy* Gender *participation*  
Income *inclusion* Language *support*  
Race *engagement* Religion *tolerance*  
Physical Ability *understanding*  
Sexual orientation *recognition*

- 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.
- The atmosphere or ambience of an organization as perceived by its members. An organization's climate is reflected in its structures, policies, and practices; the demographics of its membership; the attitudes and values of its members and leaders; and the quality of personal interactions



## Selected Methods for Assessing Climate:

- Individual interviews
  - With 26 women faculty in the sciences & engineering(2002)
  - With representatives of various campus groups -- Climate Workshop Design Team
- Campus-wide Survey
- Department Climate Survey



# Common Climate Themes

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- Lack of respect/consideration/politeness
- Insufficient sense of community or belonging
- Lack of recognition/visibility/value
- Ineffective communication
- Lack of support/inequitable access to professional development opportunities
- Difficulties achieving balance between work and family or personal life
- Illegal behaviors and demeaning, sexualizing, or condescending language and behaviors
- Retention/tenure of women and minority faculty, staff, and students
- Chair plays a power role in influencing climate



# Intervention to Improve Department Climate

## Enhancing Department Climate: A Workshop Series for Department Chairs

- Session 1
  - Departmental Climate Survey
- Session 2
- Session 3



# Description of Climate Workshops

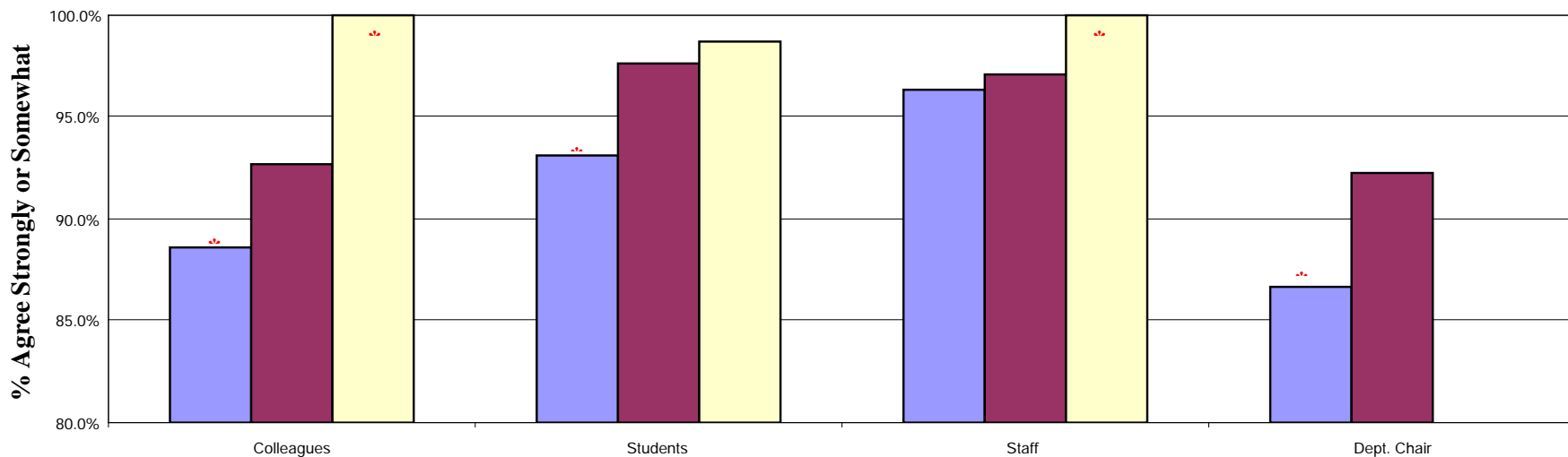
## Session #1

- General Discussion of Climate – what it is, why it matters.
- Chairs initial assessments about climate issues in their departments
- Discussion of findings from campus-wide surveys
  - 2003: 59.1% response rate
  - 2006: 54.4% response rate
- Introduction to Departmental Climate Survey



# Study of Faculty Worklife at UW-Madison, 2003 -- Findings

**Faculty Perceptions of Respectful Treatment in the Workplace,  
by Gender and Department Chair**  
*I am treated with respect by ...*



■ Women (n=375)   ■ Men (n=864)   ■ Dept. Chair (n=76)

\* indicates difference significant at  $p < 0.05$



# Study of Faculty Worklife at UW-Madison

## Sample Climate Questions

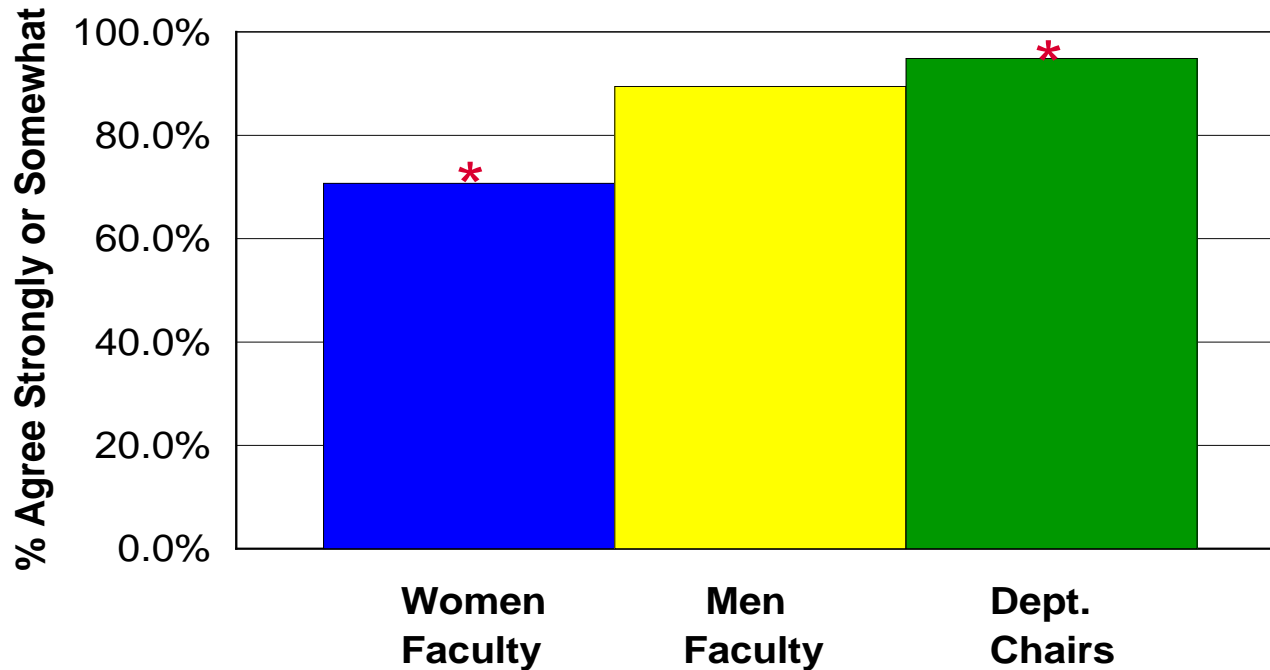
51. With respect to the recruitment of, climate for, and leadership of women faculty, how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements about your primary department/unit?

<i>Circle one number on a scale of 1 to 4 for each statement.</i>		Agree Strongly 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Disagree Somewhat 3	Disagree Strongly 4	Don't Know
a.	There are too few women faculty in my department.	1	2	3	4	DK
b.	My department has identified ways to recruit women faculty.	1	2	3	4	DK
c.	My department has actively recruited women faculty.	1	2	3	4	DK
d.	The climate for women in my department is good.	1	2	3	4	DK
e.	My department has identified ways to enhance the climate for women.	1	2	3	4	DK
f.	My department has taken steps to enhance the climate for	.	-	-	.	...



# Findings – Campus-wide survey, 2003

**Figure 1. The climate for women in my department is good**



\* Statistically significant at  $p < .05$





# Description of workshop

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Between Sess 1 and Sess 2

- Homework
  - Climate from others perspectives
- Implementation of Survey



# Description of workshop

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## Session 2

- Receive Survey Results
- Share selected results
- Obtain advice, resources and consider possible actions



## Results from departmental surveys

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- Since Fall 2003, 38 departments participated and completed the survey
  - Physical Sciences: 13 departments
  - Biological Sciences: 17 departments
  - Social Sciences: 3 departments
  - Humanities: 5 departments
- Total # respondents: 1,836



# Departmental Climate Survey: Results

- A majority of all groups surveyed report positive perceptions of their departmental climate.
- A significant minority (12-15%) of faculty and staff rated their department's climate as very negative or negative.

<i>Overall Climate Rating*</i>				
	<i>N</i>	Very negative/Negative	Mediocre	Positive/Very positive
Faculty	574	12.9%	21.4%	65.6%
Academic staff	383	12.1%	22.2%	65.8%
Classified staff	236	15.2%	22.0%	61.7%
Graduate students	489	4.9%	17.6%	77.5%
Post-docs/fellows	61	1.6%	21.3%	77.1%
All[1]	1804	10.7%	20.6%	68.8%

\* Response to the question: *On a scale from one (very negative) to five (very positive), please rate the climate in your department.*

[1] Includes some respondents who were not classified as faculty, academic staff, classified staff, grad. student, or post-doc/fellow.



# Departmental Climate Survey: Results

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## Some positive results for faculty:

- Approximately 73% feel their department is a welcoming place to work
- 86% understand their roles and responsibilities in the department
- 71% are happy with the professional relationships they have formed with others in the department.
- 90% feel their work contributes to the mission or purpose of the department.



# Departmental Climate Survey: Faculty results

## Some negative results for faculty:

- While 90% feel their work contributes to the mission of the department –only 64% report that others recognize how their work contributes to the department’s mission/purpose.
- A significant minority, 21%, feel under-appreciated for their work
- Approx. 20% report a lack of agency in decisions made in the department
- 24% feel isolated in their departments.
- About 10% report experiencing subtle or overt harassment or discrimination due to gender, race, or other personal attributes.



# Departmental Climate Survey: Chairs' Responses

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- The dissmisser
- The knower
- The statistician
- The victim
- The traditionalist



# Description of Climate Workshops

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## Session #3

- Report on sharing results with departmental members
- Report on actions taken/changes implemented
- Continue discussion of advice, resources, possible actions





# Examples of Changes made/enacted

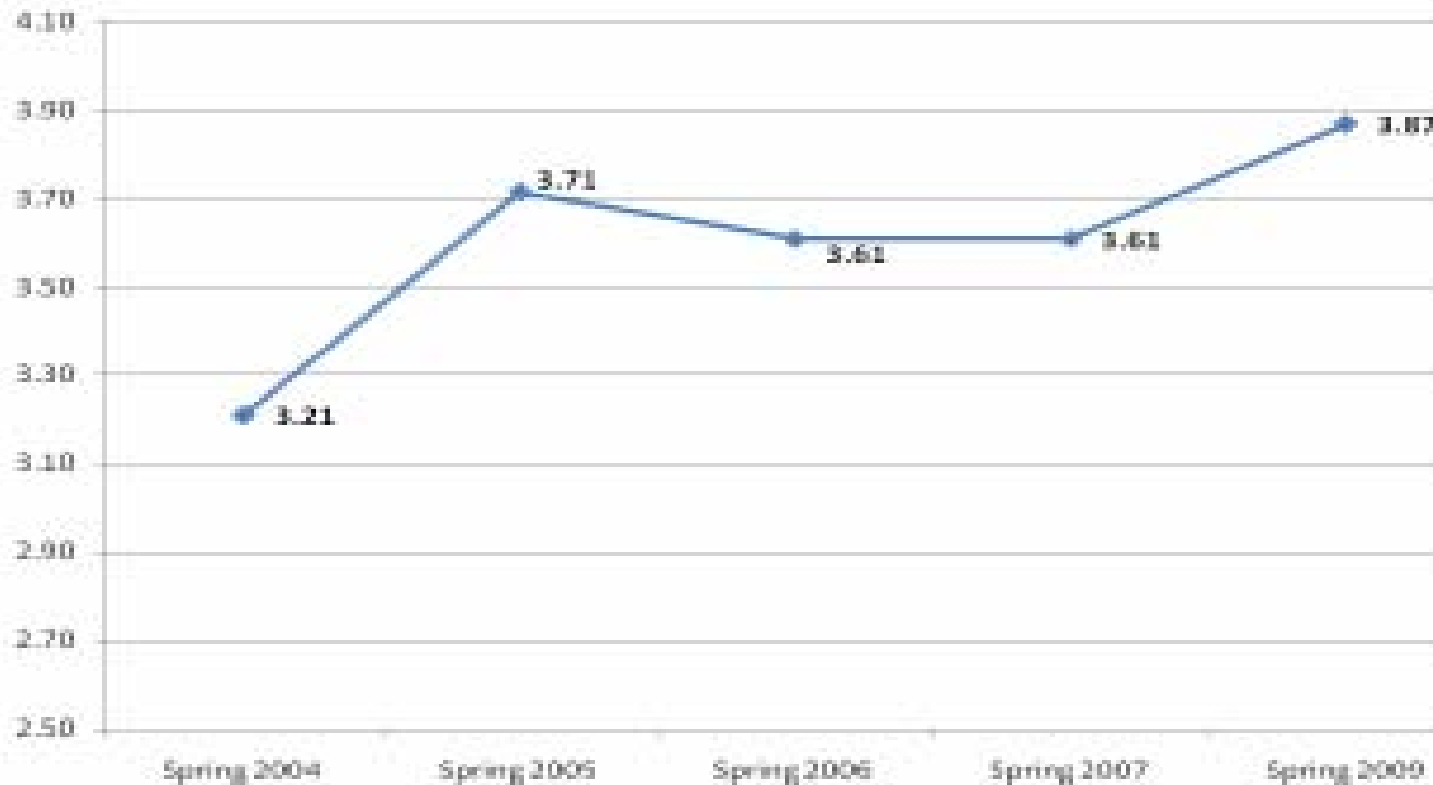
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- Removing toxic faculty members/staff from the department
- Improving communication – especially in the area of decision-making
- Creation of departmental committees to further examine issues of climate for women and make recommendations
- Creating opportunities for social and/or professional engagement – weekly lunch, academic seminar series, community service projects, social events
- Changing traditions & practices
  - Mentoring – committees/individuals
  - Creating more inclusive departmental traditions/practices
    - Inviting students/student representative to dept mtgs & other events
    - Including staff/staff representatives in dept. mtgs & oether events



## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

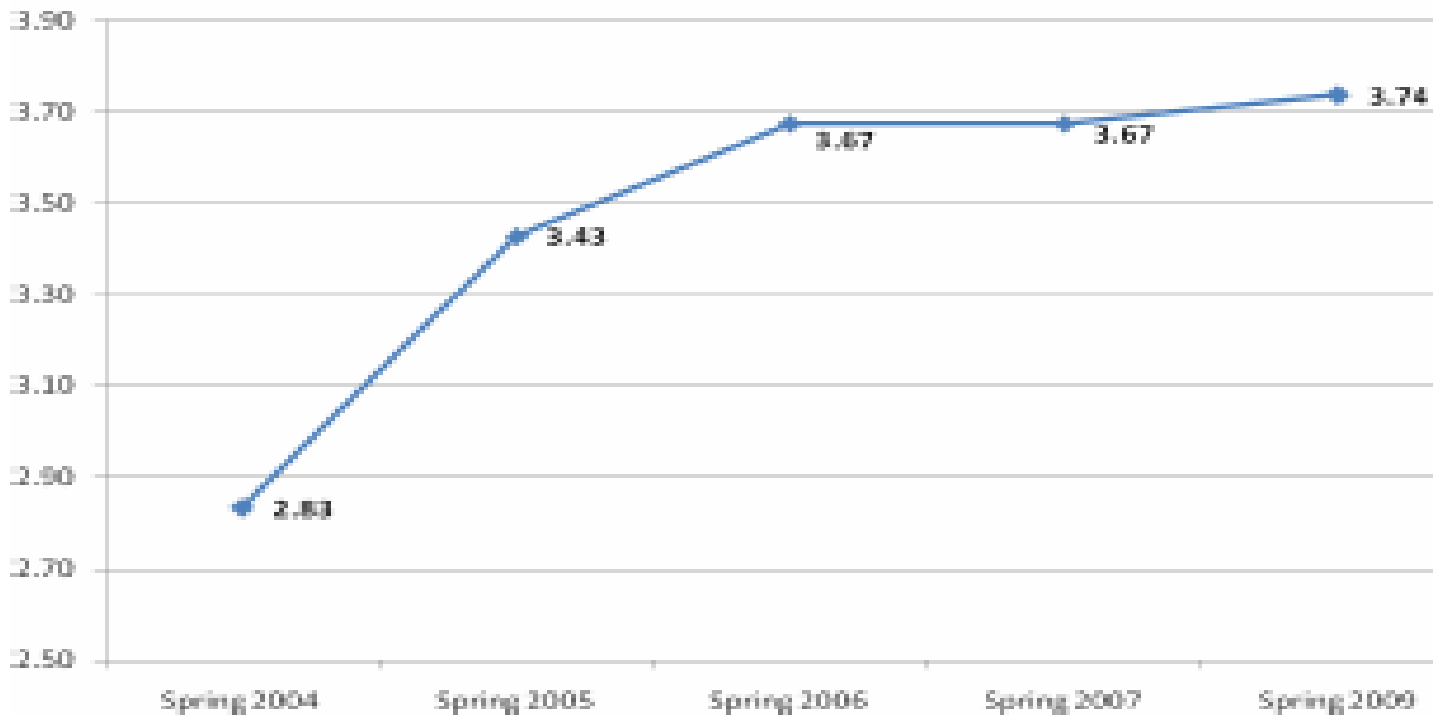
**Overall rating of department climate**





## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

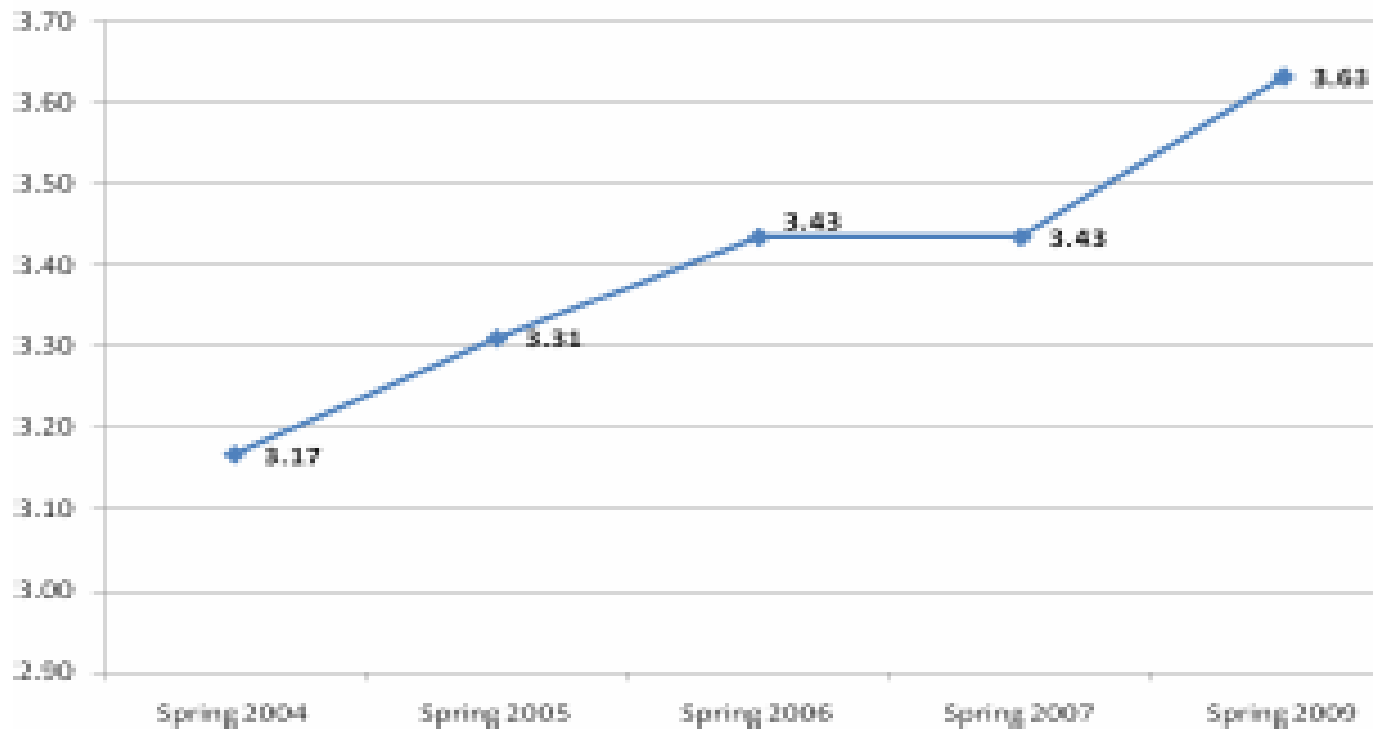
**Differences among people are valued in the department.**





## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

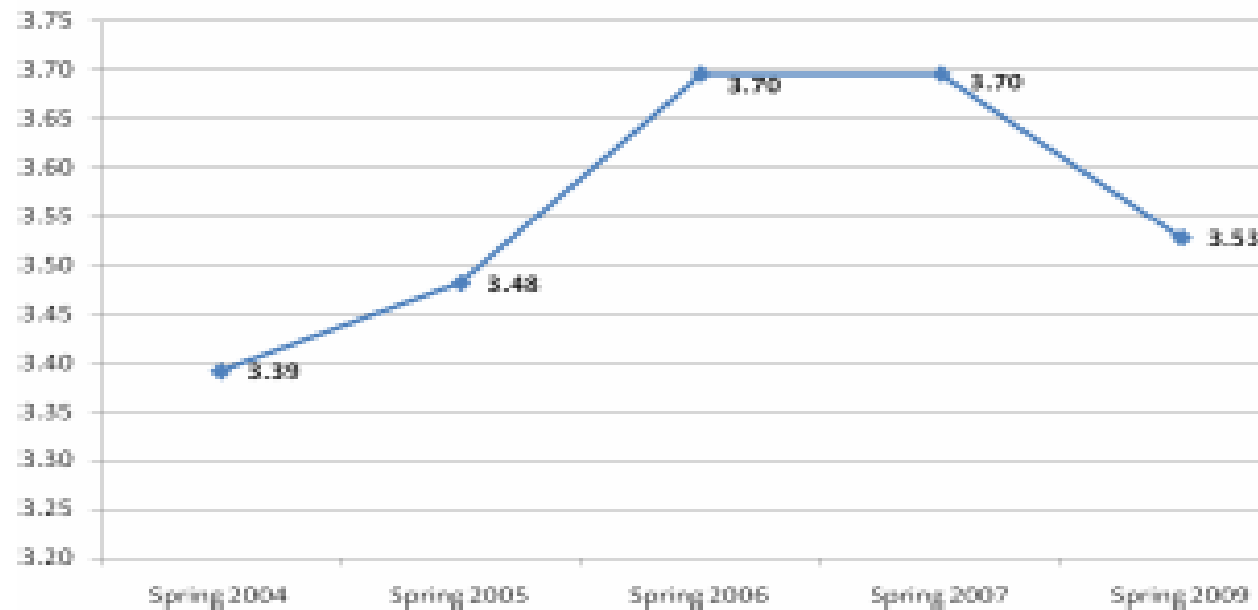
**I feel appreciated for the work I do in the department.**





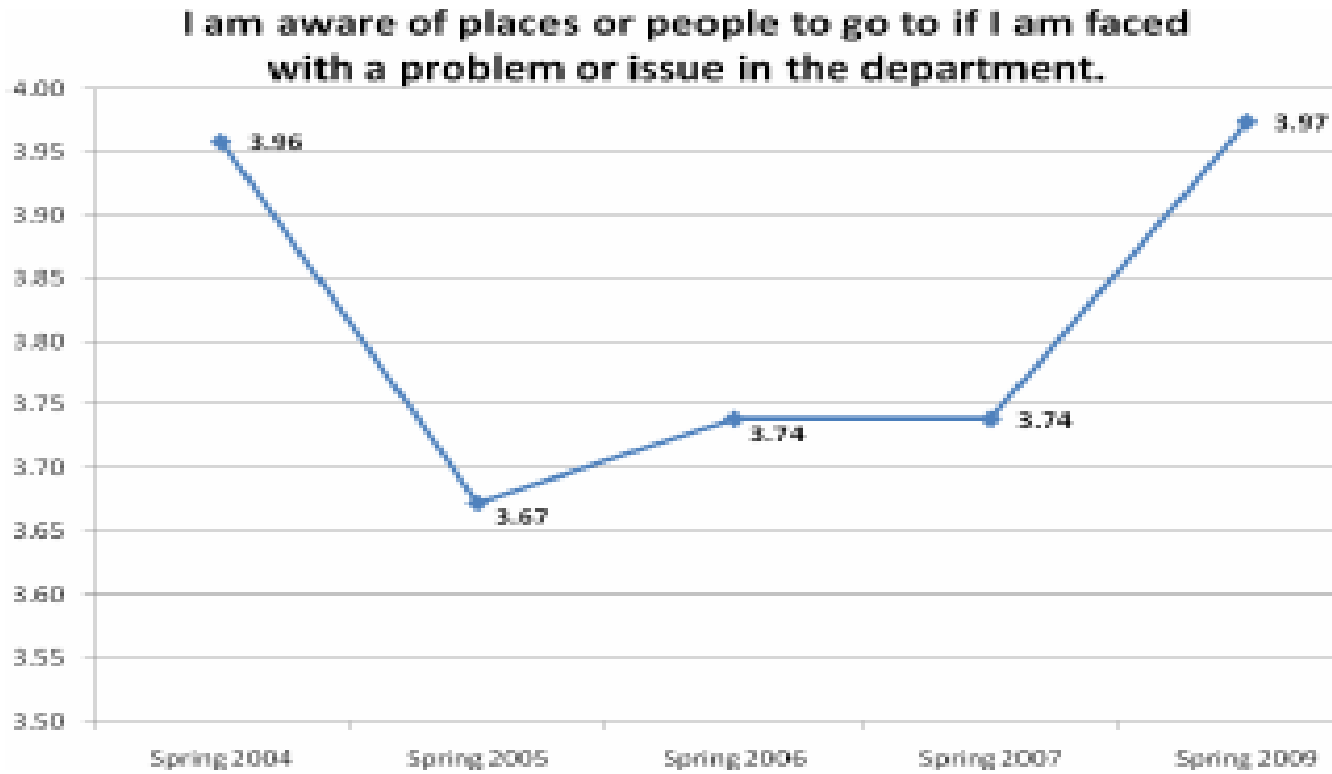
## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

**The Chair of the department appropriately consults or delegates decisions to a group or committee.**





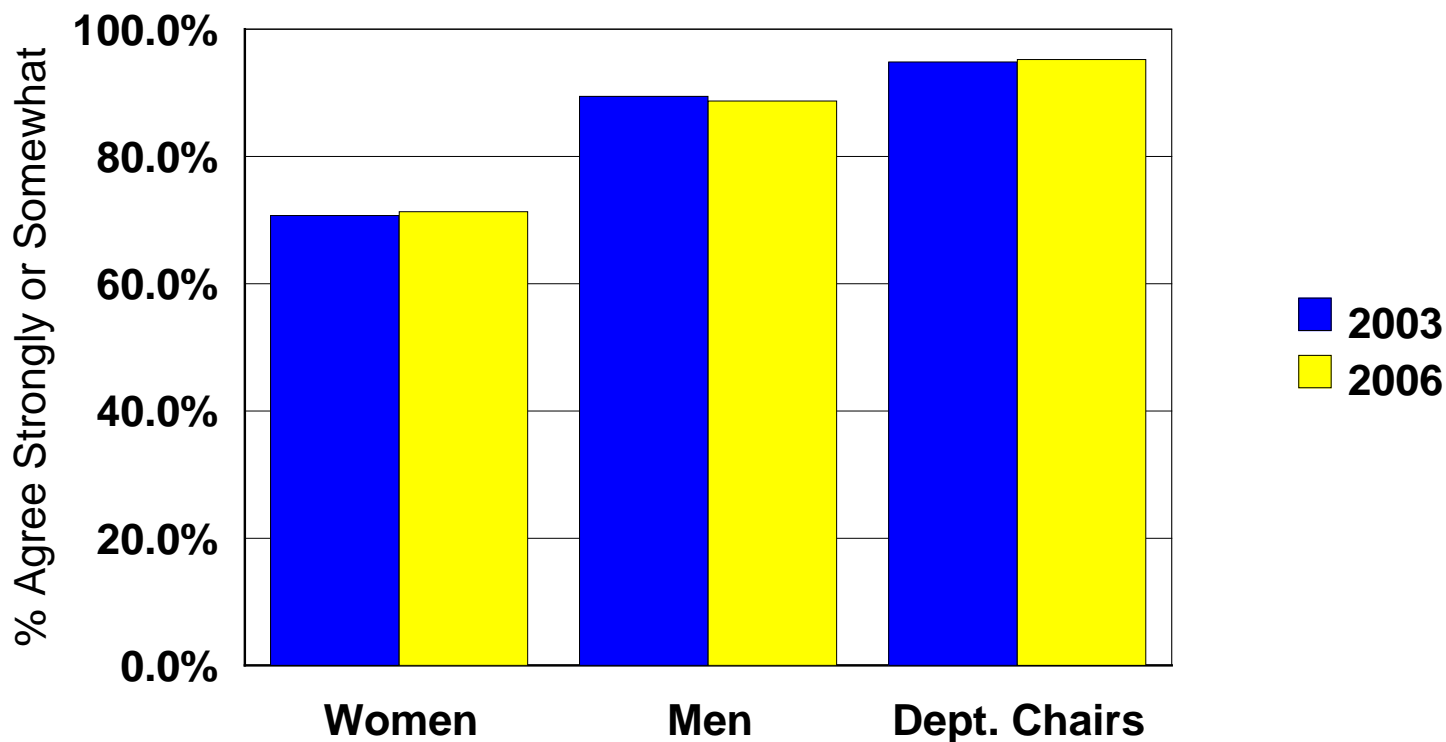
## Results – One department resurveyed 5x





## Findings – Campus-wide surveys: 2003,2006

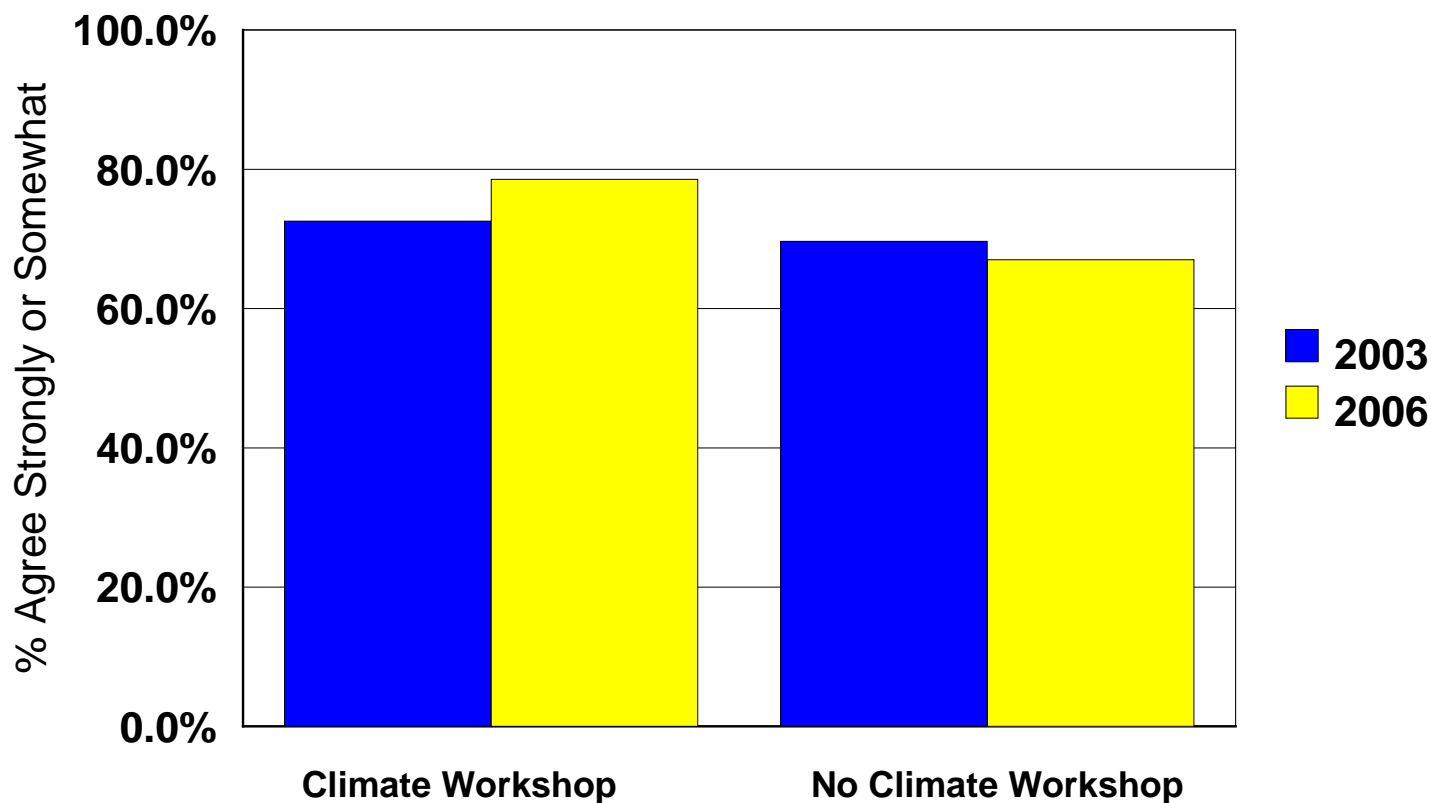
**Figure 2. The Climate for Women in My Department is Good**





## Findings – Campus-wide surveys: 2003,2006

**Figure 3. Climate for Women is Good  
Responses of Women Faculty**

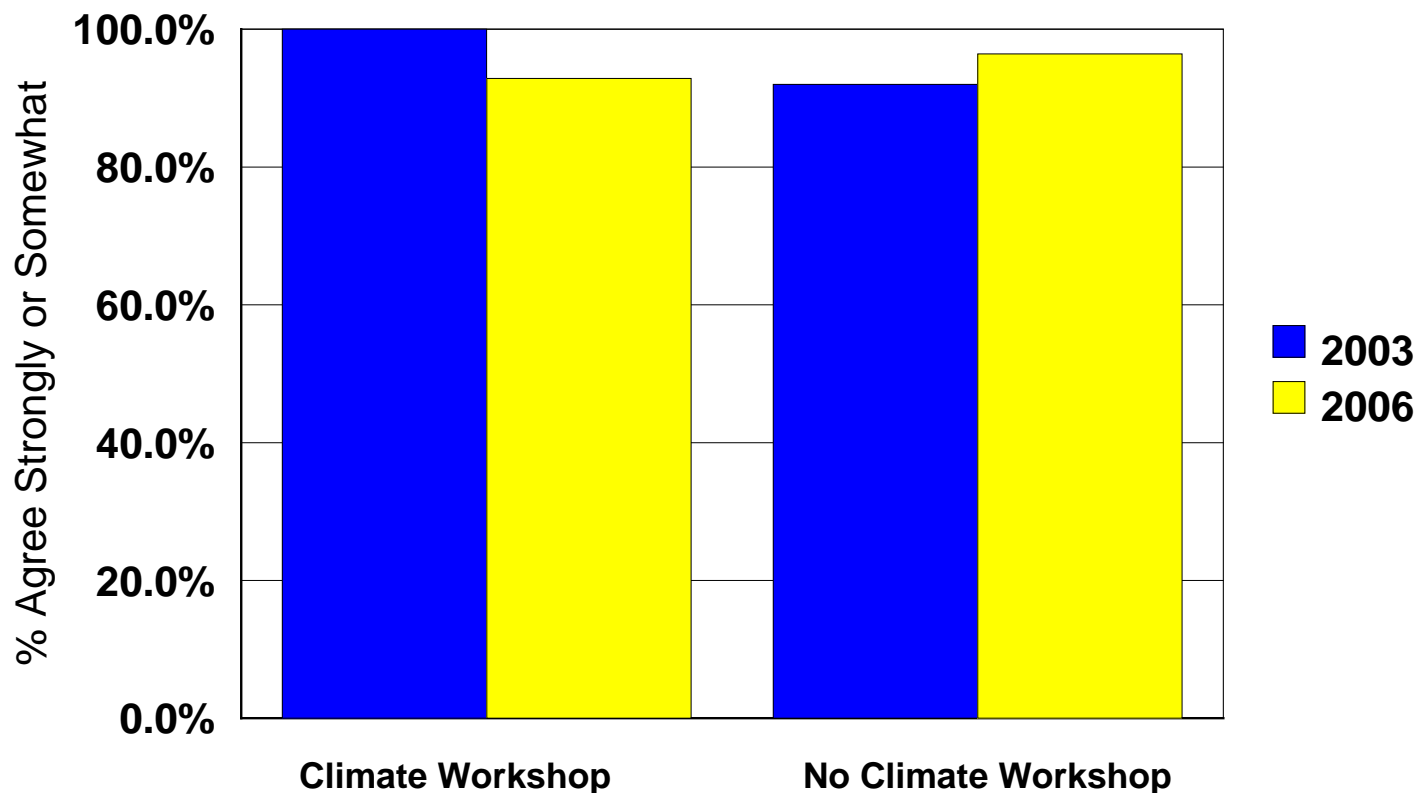






## Findings – Campus-wide surveys: 2003,2006

**Figure 5. Climate for Women is Good  
Responses of Department Chairs**





# Resources

## Session #1

- Departmental Survey  
[http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/climate/deptsurvey\\_zoomerang.pdf](http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/climate/deptsurvey_zoomerang.pdf)
- Benefits & Challenges of Diversity (booklet)  
[http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits\\_Challenges.pdf](http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits_Challenges.pdf)
- Enhancing Department Climate: A Guide for Department Chairs (brochure)  
<http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/ClimateBrochure.pdf>





## Factors fostering success

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- Interactive discussion and sharing of ideas and practices between chairs
- Skilled facilitators with broad knowledge of campus issues and resources and strong commitment to equity
- Commitment of chairs to the process of improving climate



## Challenges limiting success

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- Scheduling
- Chair responses to survey Results
- Commitment of chairs

# Joan Williams

Hastings College of Law  
Center for Worklife Law  
University of California



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**Conclusion:  
Q&A  
Discussion**