



# Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

---

University of Wisconsin ADVANCE-IT

Slides courtesy of Eve Fine and Jennifer Sheridan,  
Women in Science and Engineering Leadership  
Institute (WISELI)



## Why focus on departmental climate?

---

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



## Why focus on department chairs?

- Initial individual interviews (26 women faculty in STEM in 2002) suggested department chairs have prominent role:

*Before I got here, when [X] was chair, two other people had babies ... and [his reaction] was fine! 'Oh! Congratulations! Good. Take the semester off. You have a grad student to fill in. ... that's no problem ... do what you need to do.' Versus [the new] chair [who] has never had kids [and] does not think the idea of parental leave is meritorious.*



# Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

---

## Session #1

- Discussion of climate – what it is, why it matters
- Initial perspective on climate in own dept
- Discussion of findings from campus-wide surveys
  - 2003, 2006, 2009: ~50% response rate
- Introduction to **Departmental Climate Survey**



## Why do assessment?

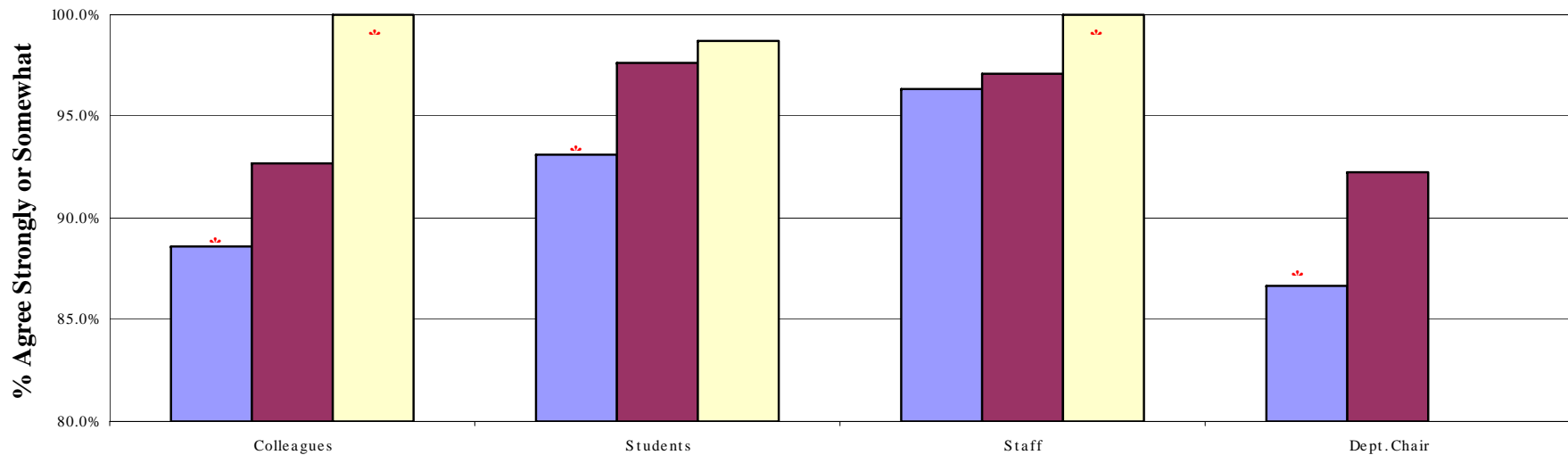
---

- Assessment is essential for targeting strategies for initiating change
- In a research environment, data (quantitative and qualitative) get respect
- Data are necessary for evaluating change (and detecting lack of it)
- Pitfalls – confidentiality and anonymity



# Study of Faculty Worklife, 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

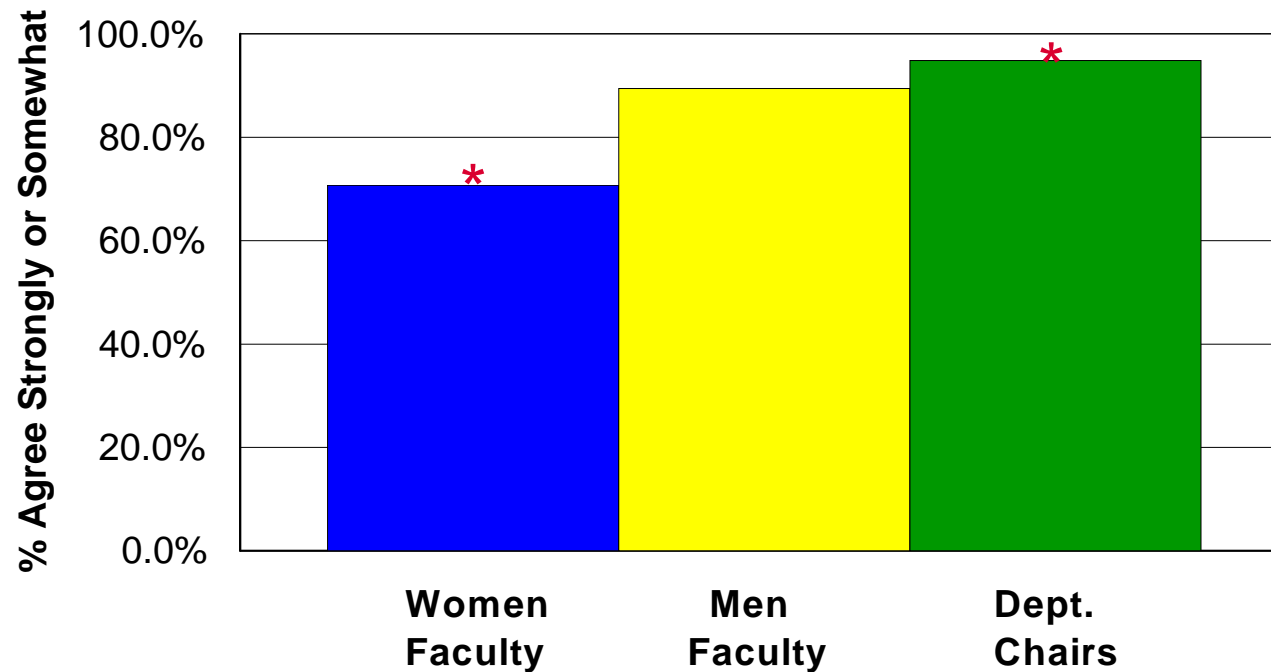
51. With respect to the recruitment of, climate for, and leadership of women faculty, how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements about your primary department/unit?

<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  $p < .05$





# Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

## Between Sessions 1 and 2

- Homework: Others' perspectives of climate
- Implementation of Departmental Survey

## Session 2

- Receive Survey Results
- Share Selected Results
- Obtain advice, resources, consider possible actions



# Climate Workshops for Department Chairs

---

## Session 3

- Report on Sharing Results with Department
- Report on Action Taken or Changes Made
- Continued Discussion of advice, resources, and possible actions



## Results from Departmental Surveys

---

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



## Departmental Climate Survey: Results

---

### Some positive results for faculty:

- 73% feel their department is a welcoming place to work
- 86% understand their roles & responsibilities in the dept
- 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.
- 21% feel under-appreciated for their work
- 20% report a lack of agency in decisions made in the department
- 24% feel isolated in their departments.
- 10% report experiencing subtle or overt harassment or discrimination due to gender, race, or other personal attributes.



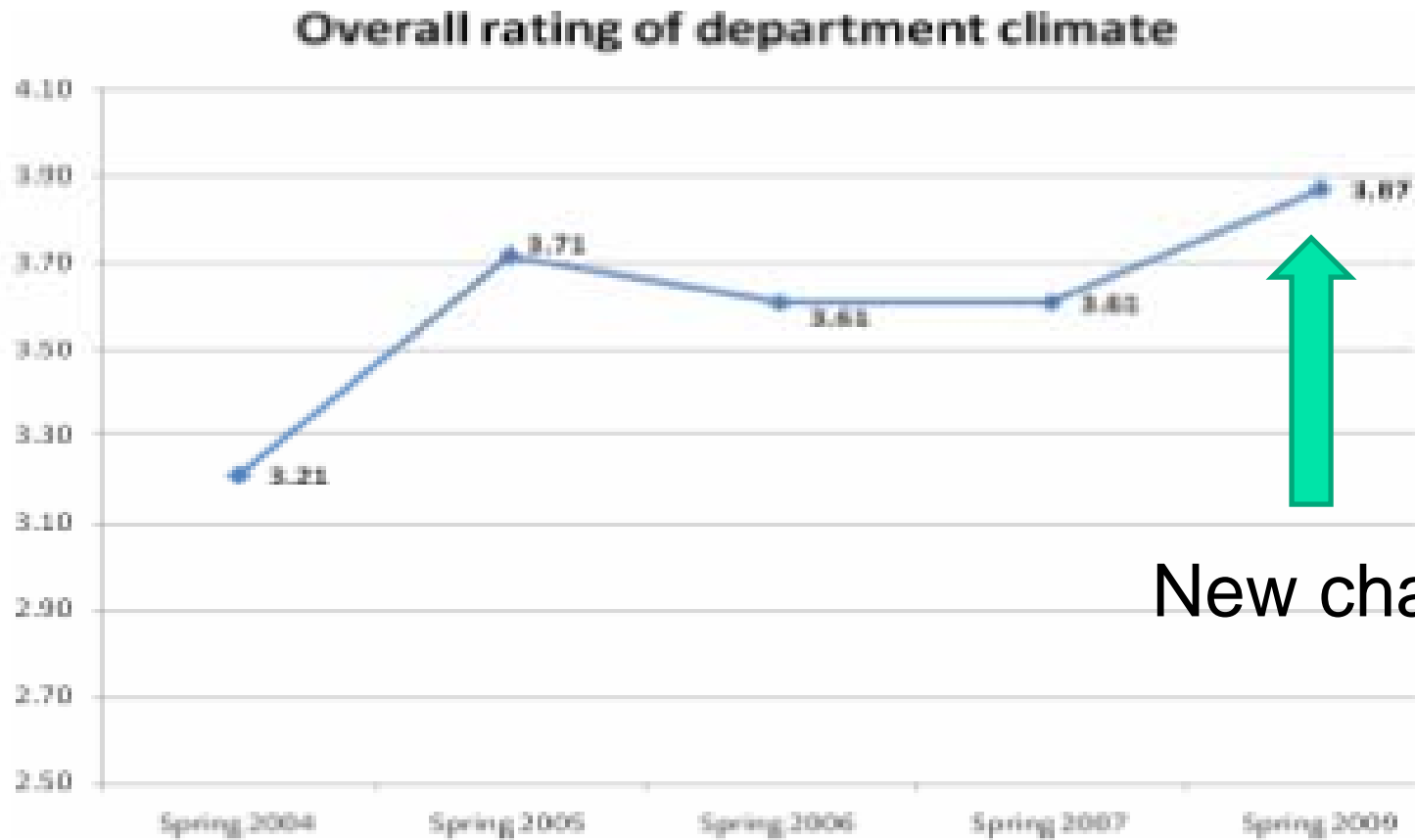
## Examples of Changes Made

---

- 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



## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

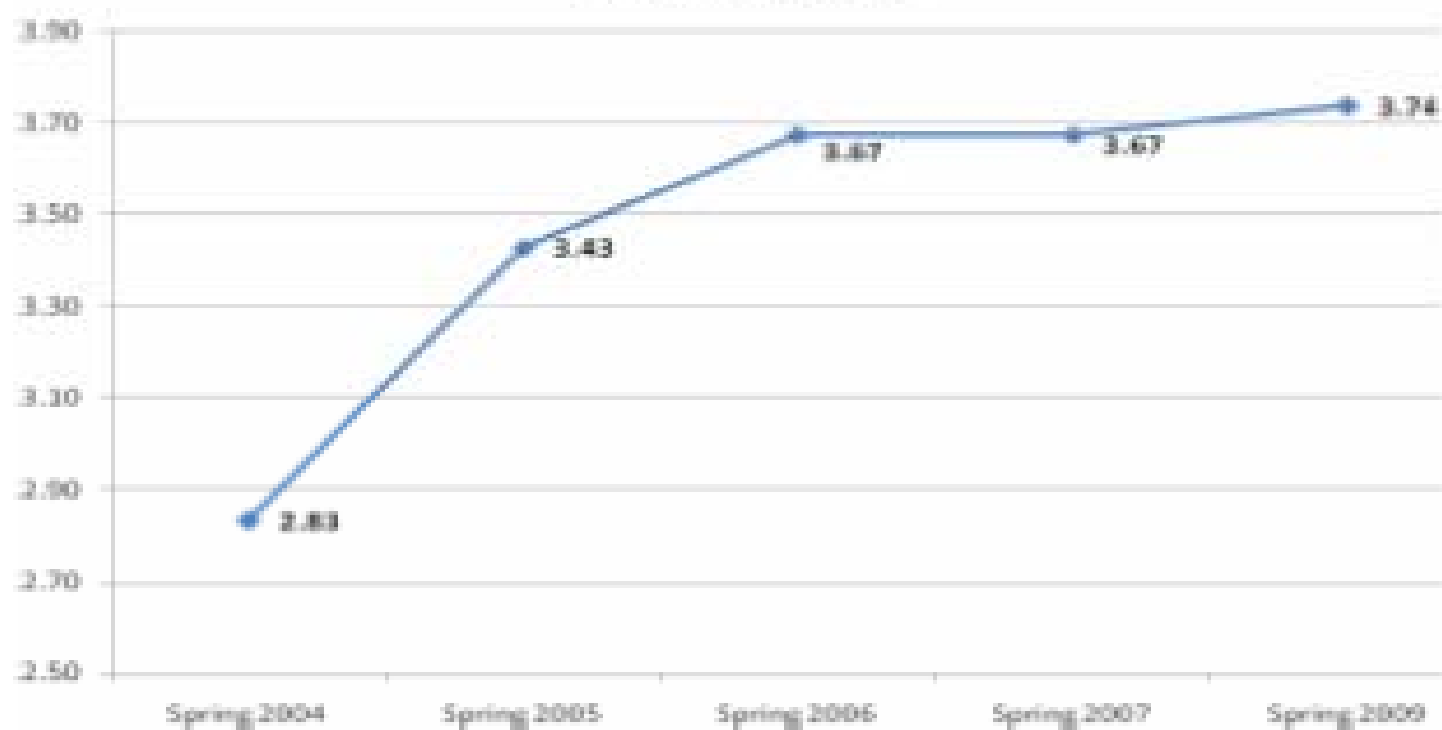


New chair



## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

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







## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

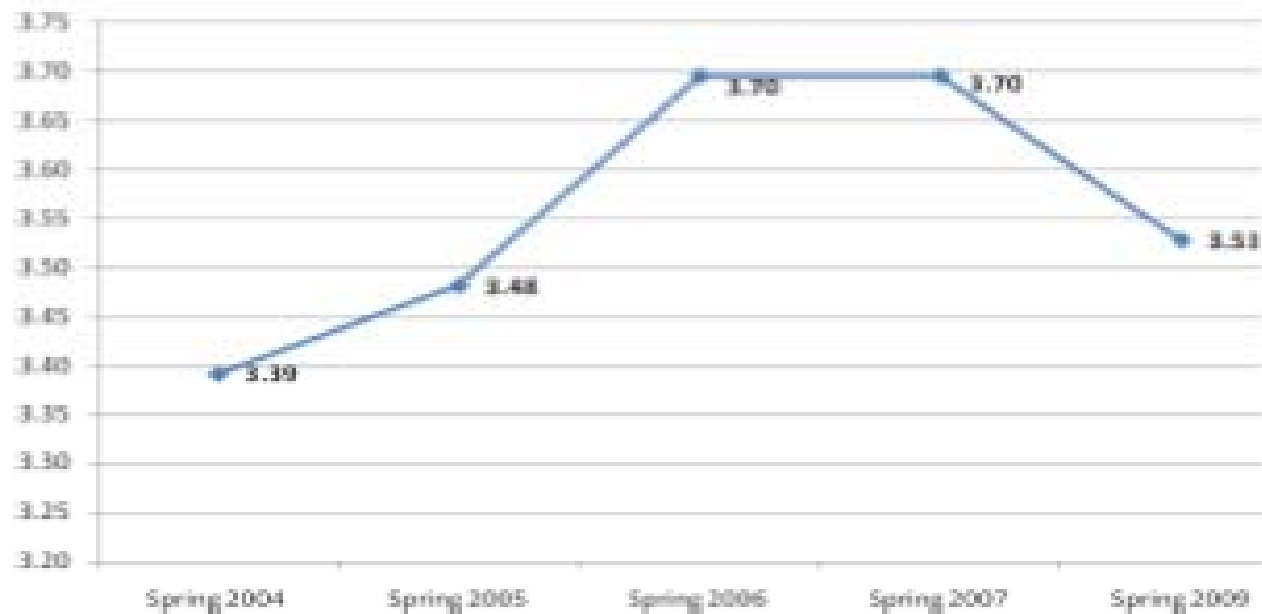
**I feel appreciated for the work I do in the department.**





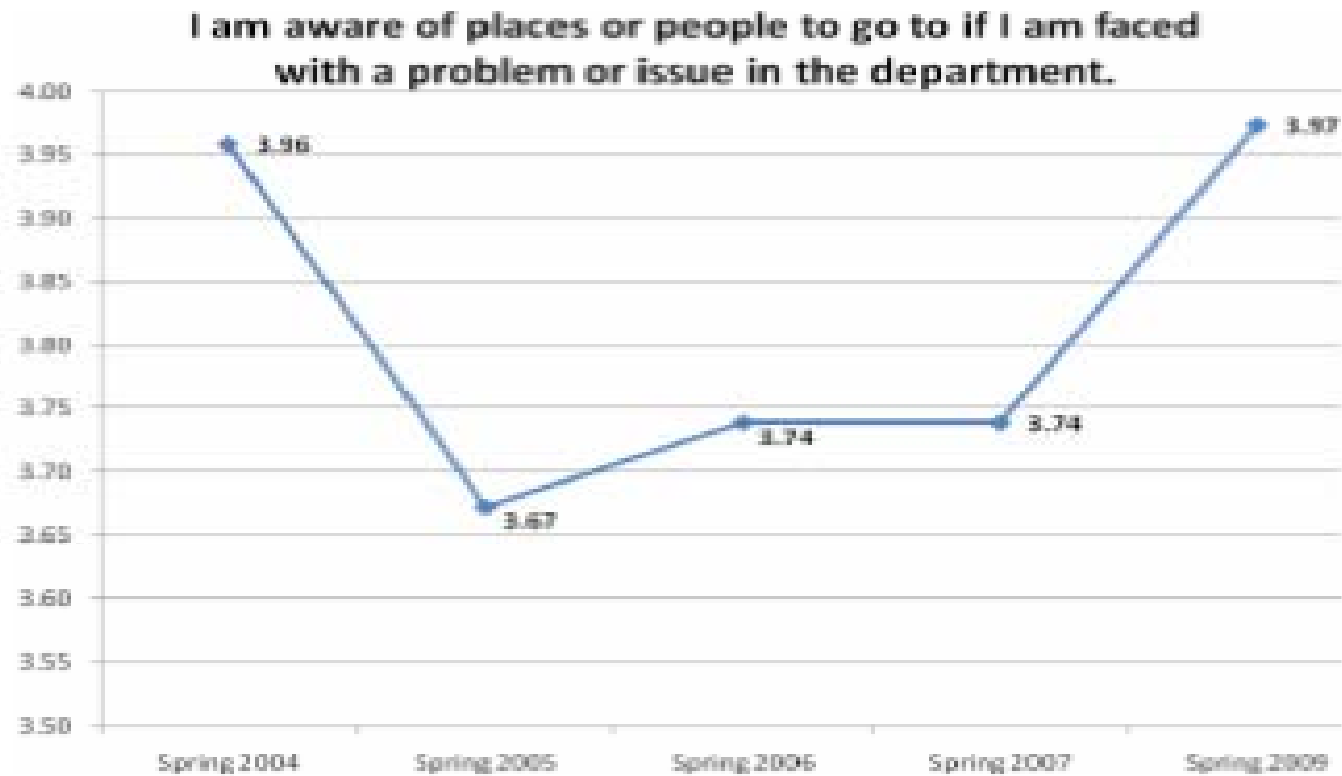
## Results – One department resurveyed 5x

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





## Results – One department resurveyed 5x





## Factors fostering success

---

- 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

---

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



# Resources

- 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>

