

Committee on Climate Change: Fall 2018 Progress Report (December 2018)

The Committee on Climate Change was created in March 2018 and given a mandate to work through the 2018-2019 academic year, with the goal of delivering a final report and recommendations in spring 2019. The committee is composed of 15 regular members: 6 ladder faculty, one non-ladder faculty, two staff, three graduate students, and three undergraduates.¹

Danielle Allen (faculty)
Fernando Bizzarro (graduate student)
Melani Cammett (faculty)
Ryan Enos (ex officio)
Claire Sukumar (undergraduate)
Jennifer Hochschild (ex officio)
Torben Iversen (faculty)
Leslie Finger (non-ladder faculty)
Katrina Forrester (faculty)
Jeffry Frieden (faculty)
Sarah James (graduate student)
Kaneesha Johnson (graduate student)
Karen Kaletka (staff)
Steven Levitsky (faculty, committee chair)
Danielle Roybal (undergraduate)
Adip Vora (undergraduate)
Thom Wall (staff)
Cheryl Welch (through December 2018)/Nara Dillon (beginning January 2019)

In April 2018, the CCC drew up an initial agenda and created seven subcommittees to pursue that agenda. Most of our work, summarized below, has taken place within those subcommittees.

(1) External Review (Levitsky, Hochschild, Allen, Bizzarro, Enos)

Agenda: Explore feasibility of an external review of Harvard's collective failure to respond to problems of alleged sexual harassment. Review would examine why mechanisms oversight broke down and how department/university culture and institutional practices may have permitted harassment to take place and inhibited communication about instances of harassment.

Progress: Faculty members drafted a letter calling on the administration to sponsor an external review. The memo was endorsed by the faculty in October 23 departmental meeting. Jennifer, Melani, Ryan, and Steve met with administration officials and received a positive response to the memo, although no public steps will be taken until the Dominguez investigation is complete.

(2) Response to Harassment (Levitsky, Kaletka, Iversen, Raffler, Meredith Dost, Allison Myren).

Agenda: Explore steps that the department could take to improve information dissemination, advising, and reporting around issues of harassment.

Progress

- Developing proposal for creation of Ombudsman or Harassment Officer

¹ The department Chair and directors of graduate and undergraduate studies serve as *ex officio* members.

- Exploring options for creating an anonymous tip line, to be managed by the Ombudsman.
- Developing proposal for annual voluntary in-person training sessions

(3) Recruitment and Retention (Iversen, Cammett, Johnson, Roybal, Vora, Wall, Jon Rogowski)

Agenda Develop a “best practice” document for recruiting new faculty, especially at the junior level, to be used by future hiring committees. A main goal is to remove the scope for tacit bias.

Progress

- Collecting data comparing our hiring outcomes to those of peer institutions, and examining hiring decisions of peer departments to see if we missed strong female candidates
- Exploring factors underlying the department’s low retention rate for women, including spousal careers/appointments, time to tenure, low expectations of tenure, and parental leave
- Developing proposal for improved faculty mentorship system

(4) Inclusive Climate (Enos, Cammett, Forrester, James, Kaletka, Roybal)

Agenda Develop recommendations aimed at supporting the flourishing of all members of the Department regardless of background.

Progress

- Inclusive events: held new events with the explicit goal of creating an inclusive environment, including a welcome back barbecue that included all members of the department (including undergraduates) and a chili cook off.
- Creation of the Sidney Verba lecture series, a department-wide series designed to create a common intellectual space. The initial Verba lecture, by Molly Roberts, was widely attended.
- Added an expanded diversity session to the graduate teaching fellow (TF) training course.
- Fielded a survey on climate (including questions on harassment, discrimination, and sense of belonging) to all members of the department. A report on the results of the survey was released to the full Government Department community in February 2019.

(5) Departmental Democratization (Frieden, Bizzarro, Enos, Wall, Pia Raffler, Reva Dhingra)

Agenda. Explore steps to make the department less hierarchical. Evaluate the culture and practices in graduate workshops; consider ways to enhance graduate student participation in departmental governance; consider steps to increase social interaction in the department; and re-evaluate our use of physical space.

Progress

- Wrote and distributed two memos on appropriate management of and behavior in the research workshops, one for those running the workshops and one a guide for students.
- Developing procedures for including graduate students on departmental committees and began sitting students on those committees.
- Developing recommendations for improving the experience of first-year students.
- Launched a pilot graduate-student version of FAS “Classroom-to-Table” program to encourage more informal interaction between faculty and graduate students.
- Discussing ways of re-allocating under-utilized space and the acquiring material (e.g, coffee machines) to encourage use of common spaces.

- Developing recommendations to improve flow of communication about goings-on in the department, including regular meetings with the Chair and regular town hall meetings.

(6) Mentoring (Allen, Bizzarro, Forrester, Frieden, Johnson, Sukumar, Wall)

Agenda. Explore ways in which our mentoring systems could be expanded and improved. Examine existing practices in other Harvard departments and at peer institutions, including peer mentoring, more formalized faculty mentoring, faculty “pastoral” (outside subfield) advisors, and Michigan-style system of “check in” with two faculty.

Progress

- Developed and implemented proposal to bring in UW-Madison-based Center for Improved Mentoring Experiences (CIMER) to run a retreat based the Government Department. The retreat was held on January 16 and was well attended
- Planning February meeting to begin documenting current practice for undergraduate mentoring.

(7) Teaching and Training (Welch, Dillon, Allen, Finger, James, Vora, Jessie Bullock)

Agenda. Consider ways in which instruction and curricula can be revised to improve the department climate, with focus on the department’s supply of courses and advising on issues of race and gender in politics.

Progress.

- Taking steps to strengthen department’s relationships with undergraduate alums to use them as mentoring resources, Created “Alumni Voices” resource on the new undergraduate website and plan an alumni panel in spring 2019.
- Working with director of graduate studies to revise TF training course, including making session on running inclusive sections (how to make diversity in identities and ideologies productive rather than polarizing) mandatory.
- Discussed strategies to diversify non-ladder faculty and expand the courses on offer, including cross-listing, joint searches with other departments, and purposeful recruitment of postdocs, lecturers, and advanced graduate students to teach in areas where faculty are lacking.
- Researching how peer institutions integrate courses on gender and ethnic and racial difference into their curriculums.
- Held focus group with undergraduates on the content of curriculum offered by the department, as well as on quality of teaching. Began regular meetings among faculty who teach “core” undergraduate courses (Gov 97 and 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50), with goal of developing proposal for re-designing some courses that the Office of Undergraduate Education will support through its innovation funds.
- Created and obtained funding for workshops aimed at training graduate and undergraduate students for fieldwork, particularly focusing on gendered issues of access, safety, and funding. These will began in Spring 2019.