

**Climate Change at Western: A Summary of Current Actions**  
**Notes for the Western Caucus on Women's Issues, General Meeting, October 11, 2007**

The April 1, 2007 issue of Gazette caused the Western community to reflect on the current environment for women on campus and how it has evolved since the early 1990s when the Chilly Climate video was made.

Over the spring and summer, the Provost and other members of the University's administration have sought advice concerning the environment for women on campus. This advice has been sought from a variety of quarters, including:

- The general community through participation in the public forum organized by the Western Caucus on Women's Issues in April 2007
- The President's Standing Committee on Employment Equity (PSCEE) (at three meetings, to date)
- Department Chairs and Directors of Schools (at a two-day retreat held in June 2007)
- Deans and the Vice-Presidents (at a two-day retreat in August 2007)

The advice received to date suggests that Western should focus on actions to encourage an environment of greater respect for all individuals and groups on campus including those in unequal power relationships. Particularly, we need to do more to discourage general harassment (bullying) and continue to discourage specific harassment based on identity with a particular group – and we need to do more to identify and deal with systemic (and often unconscious) gender discrimination.

Recent and future actions of the University's administration in support of these conclusions include the following:

- Continued solicitation of ideas and initiatives for improving the climate at Western, such as this meeting of the Western Caucus on Women's Issues. Likewise, the Vice-President (Resources and Operations) hosts five luncheon meetings each academic year for all of Western's leaders. Department Chairs, School Directors, Deans and non-academic staff in supervisory or leadership positions are invited to these meetings. The President and the Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty) attend these meetings. Past meetings have included dialogue and brainstorming about our workplace culture, and the coming November meeting will focus on the topic of respect in our workplace.
- In June, the Provost allocated funds (\$40,000) to support the making of a video on issues of safety, inclusivity and respect. Further funding has been allocated by the Vice-President (Research) and by other groups at Western.
- The Vice-President (Resources and Operations) has worked with the University Students Council to ensure that it accepts its responsibilities as the publisher of the Gazette. This has led to (i) development of a journalistic code of ethics, (ii) sensitivity training for the

paper's editors, and (iii) establishment of a faculty advisor position to provide the paper's editors with guidance in journalistic ethics. Provisions are also now in place to suspend distribution of the Gazette on campus, should there be breaches of acceptable journalistic behaviour. In addition, the Vice-Provosts have worked with Deans and student leaders over the summer to ensure that student-organized September orientation events and publications are welcoming and inclusive.

- Once per term, the Provost holds a two-hour forum with Department Chairs and Directors of Schools. At the September 2007 forum, the Chilly Climate video was shown, followed by a facilitated discussion of Western's climate and the role of Chairs and Directors in enabling the academic careers of women faculty.
- The President's Standing Committee on Employment Equity (PSCEE) (co-chaired by the Vice-President (Resources and Operations) and the Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)) has been charged with considering how it might assist in facilitating and advising on issues of climate and environment within the university.
- Equity and Human Rights Services has just completed a Workforce Analysis Report, which is required annually as part of our obligations under the Federal Contractors Program. That report identifies gaps between representation of designated groups at Western and their representation at large. For example, when the proportion of faculty at Western who are women is compared with the proportion of faculty who are women at other Canadian Universities, we find that women are relatively less well represented (28.6% compared with 36.2%).
- Further to the recommendations made by PSCEE last year, Western will be undertaking an Employment Systems Review in the near future. This is a process whereby our hiring and retention practices are analyzed by a third party to determine if there are systemic or unconscious barriers or biases in our employment practices that inhibit participation by designated groups.
- The annual planning guidelines have just been sent to the Deans. These guidelines project Faculty revenues and ask the Deans to provide their spending plans for the next three fiscal years. In large measure, these spending plans enable continued support of current faculty and identify where future faculty hiring will be occurring. They will be considered for approval by the Provost. In addition to showing how these spending plans will further the academic priorities of the Faculties, the Deans have also been asked to provide the following:
  - “A description of their efforts focused on the appointment and support of women in those disciplines where they are under-represented, as well as efforts to increase the representation of designated groups other than women. The description of these efforts should be placed in the context of the findings of the Workforce Analysis Report recently completed by Equity and Human Rights

Services.”

- A “ report on how they are encouraging an environment of respect in their Faculty. This might include Faculty practices, policies, or guidelines that:
  - (i) speak to the behaviours that are expected and identify those that are not tolerated,
  - (ii) provide an orientation for new staff, faculty and students that is welcoming to all and which celebrates diversity,
  - (iii) provide for environmental audits enabling faculty, staff and students to express concerns in a manner comfortable to them without fear of reprisal, and
  - (iv) create opportunities for faculty staff and students to become sensitive to unconscious biases or exclusionary behaviours.”

The request for this report underlines the message from the Provost to the Deans, as well as to Chairs of Departments and Directors of Schools, that inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour should not be tolerated at Western, and that incidents or patterns of behaviour must be addressed through mediation-oriented intervention through Equity and Human Rights Services, through the complaints process overseen by that Office, or via the investigation and disciplinary processes of the relevant employee agreement.

- The 2007-08 annual planning guidelines also affirm the Provost’s intention to continue the program whereby the Deans of academic units hiring individuals into probationary or tenured faculty positions will receive an incremental payment of 50% of the first year’s salary of the hired individual if that individual is a woman. The purpose of this program is to provide hiring units with funds they can use to recruit their first-ranked candidate if that candidate is a woman. In the first year of this program, the proportion of women among new faculty hired rose from 30% to 45%, and that increased proportion has been sustained in each of the four years the program has been in operation. The cost of this program is between \$1M and \$1.5M annually. The planning guidelines ask each Dean to report on the use of the central funds that have been provided in cases where the candidate recruited is a woman. The program is also being extended this year to include individuals of aboriginal origin.
- A number of specific actions are also being undertaken to improve the assistance provided to those who have been affected by incidents of harassment. These include:
  - A review of Western’s website to ensure that persons who may experience violence, harassment or other forms of abuse can easily and readily identify where to obtain immediate assistance. This may include identification of an emergency and non-emergency telephone number whereby representatives of the University who have knowledge of the role of the Campus Police, Information Technology

Services, and Equity and Human Rights Services can provide assistance, direction and support to individuals who may experience violence, abuse or harassment in connection with the University.

- A strengthening of the linkages among the equity and human rights services available at the Constituent University and its Affiliated University Colleges.
- Development of a list of services, to be posted on the University's website, that are available at Western or elsewhere in London for persons who have experienced violence, harassment or other types of abuse.

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