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Dora E. Saavedra

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Jennifer Lemanski

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Kristine M. Wirts

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Shawn P. Saladin

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Joanne Rampersad

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, joanne.rampersadammons@utrgv.edu

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Perceptions of Collegial and Uncollegial Behaviors After a University Consolidation: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of How Faculty Viewed Members of Their New Academic Units

Dora E. Saavedra
Jennifer Lemanski
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Joanne Rampersad

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Much has been written about collegiality in academe, most notably by Cipriano (2011), Buller (2006, 2012), and Cipriano and Buller (2012, 2017), Flaherty (2013). Concomitantly, awareness has increased about instances of abusive supervision (Gere, 2020), incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), microaggressions (Sue & Rivera, 2011) bullying and mobbing (i.e., group bullying) in the workplace and in higher education (Cowan, 2009), Duffy (2009), Lutgen-Sandvik (2006), Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012), Heeman (2007), Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott (2011), and Taylor (2012). Instances of incivilities have continued to be a concern as evident in the journal article in *Nature* titled: “Astronomers victimized colleagues—and put historic Swedish department in turmoil,” in which Witze (2021) reported that two high ranking faculty members (one male, one female) were investigated and found responsible for bullying at Lund University. Bullying in the academy is not confined to one country, one discipline, or one gender.

Based on a review of the literature on university consolidations and on collegiality in academic settings, the research team found that there was a gap in the literature regarding how participants of a university consolidation (sometimes called mergers) perceive their environment in a departmental (or equivalent unit level), especially a “new” unit that has been formed because of the consolidation of two or more units from previously existing (legacy) institutions. Cipriano and Buller (2012) have used the CAM (Collegiality Assessment Matrix) and/or the Self-Assessment Matrix of Collegiality (SAM), proprietary instruments, to measure the “collegiality” of individuals in academic departments. However, there has not been an assessment of collegiality from a “departmental or equivalent unit” level perspective. This study, therefore, addresses this “gap” in the research. Moreover, this study expands the discussion of collegiality to include the identification of perceived uncollegial (conflict) behaviors of incivility, microaggressions (such as misogynistic statements), bullying, and mobbing.

Review of the Literature

Consolidations and Mergers in Higher Education in the US. A January 31, 2018, article in the *Academe Blog: The blog of Academe magazine*, noted that “The higher education community is noticing with increasing interest and some alarm, the growing number of mergers and acquisitions that occurred in American higher education in 2018” (Mitchell, 2019). In a *Commentary* in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Spinelli (2018) noted “...there is little doubt that higher education is

in a state of disruption, and most likely approaching consolidation.” Why? The answer is usually “mounting fiscal pressures on higher education institutions (Seltzer, 2017). More recently, in a July 14, 2021, article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Kelderman (2021) described how “Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education’s Board of Governors unanimously voted to “consolidate six of the system’s 14 universities into two institutions” to address financial and enrollment concerns.

Although research studies on “mergers” are often associated with corporations, there is a need to examine academic mergers and how they impact the faculty who are “transitioned” to a newly merged or consolidated academic institution. This is especially important given that Skogstad et al., (2007) identified four antecedents that give rise to uncollegial behaviors, namely bullying, in the workplace—including situational variables such as “organizational change/restructuring”. In a *Chronicle* article (2021), the author states that “the two institutions that result from the merger will be led by a single president and leadership team...and a unified faculty with academic programs shared across all of the three combined campuses in each college.” Unifying a faculty and staff is a daunting task unless it is done with great care. In Pennsylvania, “60 percent of the faculty members who responded to a public posting of the plan were opposed” to the plan to consolidate. Given the upheaval produced by consolidating two academic universities and their faculties and professional librarians: How do faculty members and librarians in their respective legacy units respond to new colleagues? This was one of the questions that led the research team to examine how these professionals would rate the overall collegiality of their respective units approximately 8.5 months after they were first “consolidated” into one “new university,” and how they would describe their experiences or interactions within their units.

Collegiality. Much of the work in creating an operational definition of collegiality and in debating the need to assess collegiality in the academic workplace has been conducted by a handful of researchers. In his book, *Facilitating a Collegial Department in Higher Education*, Cipriano (2011) spent his first chapter defining and giving examples of what collegiality is and is not (pp. 15-17) as well as pointing out why collegiality is important to healthy departmental functioning. In addition, Cipriano (2011) described what collegiality is not in the following way: “Collegial behavior does not imply mindless conformity or absence of dissent. Rather, operationalizing collegiality as either a noun or an adjective enhances productive dissent, a basic tenet of the academy” (p. 15). Later, Cipriano and Buller (2017) argued that to prevent collegiality from becoming weaponized, behavioral expectations of what collegial behavior involves should be clearly described (p. 54).

Additional work on collegiality has also been supported by Buller (2013) and Riccardi (2013). Cipriano and Buller (2012) created the CAM (Collegiality Assessment Matrix) to measure a colleague’s collegiality and the S-AM (Self-Assessment Matrix) to measure one’s own collegiality. Although it is generally agreed that collegiality is an important dimension of higher education workplace functioning (Miles et al., 2015), there has been much debate about whether collegiality should be used as a criterion to assess faculty performance in the academic setting. In other words, should “collegiality” be added as a discrete dimension to assess in formal evaluations of a faculty member’s teaching, research/creative activity, and service (Buller, 2013). These debates have led the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to issue its statement “On Collegiality as a Criterion for Faculty Evaluation,” a statement that was approved by the AAUP’s Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure and subsequently, in November 1989, adopted by the AAUP’s

Council (2006). That statement, in no uncertain terms, decries the use of collegiality in evaluating a faculty member, and it warns that the use of this criterion as a discrete element of the total evaluation process could lead to a serious threat to academic freedom (AAUP, 2006). The statement, however, does not exclude the possibility of using collegiality *as part of* (emphasis added) a well-integrated, thoughtful evaluation on the faculty member's teaching, research/creative activity, and service (2006).

Uncollegial Communication Behaviors: Incivilities, Microaggressions, Bullying, and Mobbing in Higher Education. In this section, it is important to briefly define and describe the diverse types of uncollegial behaviors that have been discussed in higher education literature. These behaviors have been labelled in the literature as: incivility, bullying, mobbing, and microaggressions. Fox and Keashly (cited in Andersson & Pearson, 1999) defined "incivility" as "Low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others."

Sue & Rivera (2011) have discussed microaggressions as "covert bullying." Microaggressions are defined as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership." These groups are not limited to racial, ethnic, and religious minorities but can include women, individuals with disabilities or any other social identity (Sue & Rivera, 2011).

According to Samnani and Singh (2012) bullying has been a research topic since 1990 when Leymann published his seminal article entitled "Mobbing and psychological terrorism at workplaces" in the journal of *Violence and Victims*. The term mobbing has come to mean a group of workplace bullies (Farmer, 2011; Hillard, 2009). Numerous researchers have adopted the definition of workplace bullying developed by Einarsen (1999) and refined by Einarsen, et al. (2003, p. 15):

Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone, or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. For the label bullying or mobbing to be applied to a particular activity, interaction, or process, it must occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over an extended period (e.g., about six months). Bullying is an escalated process during which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic social acts.

Escartin et al. (2011) explored whether perceptions of workplace bullying were "gendered" or not. In other words, they hypothesized differences between how men and women perceived bullying. They found that "Women are more likely to include person-related forms of bullying (emotional abuse and social isolation) in their definitions of bullying;" and "Men are more likely to include work-related forms of bullying (the other categories) in their definitions of bullying" (p. 61). It is interesting to note that women were more likely to mention being professionally discredited compared to men (p. 61). In addition, Escartin et al. (2011) found that women rated the severity of bullying as more severe than men even when the bullying took different forms. Fox and Keashly (personal communication, April 27, 2011) cited Ontario's Brock University's web statement that explains what behaviors do not constitute bullying:

[Bullying] does not include legitimate, constructive, and fair criticism of a faculty member, staff member or student's performance/behaviors or the legitimate (i.e., not discriminatory, arbitrary, or abusive) exercise of academic freedom, freedom of thought and inquiry, and expression in teaching and research. The University will not condone bullying under the guise of 'strong management' but, conversely, regards an assertive management style as acceptable if faculty, staff, and students are treated with respect and dignity.

Several researchers (Buller, 2006; Cipriano, 2009; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2010; Higgerson, 1996; Higgerson & Joyce, 2007) have identified the critical role that department chairs play in creating a healthy workplace environment. Cipriano (2011) and Higgerson, & Joyce, (2007) spend much time in their respective books discussing the critical skills (communication skills, conflict management skills, and leadership skills) necessary to foster a collegial department and giving suggestions on how to deal with difficult situations and difficult faculty members such as "pot stirrers" (Higgerson & Joyce, 2007, pp. 183-195), "prima donnas" (Higgerson & Joyce, 2007, pp. 196-212), and "confrontation junkies" (Higgerson & Joyce, 2007, pp. 213-224).

According to Matthiesen and Einarsen (1999), bullying involves deliberate or unconscious "repeated actions" that target a group or an individual and that cause "humiliation, offense, and distress" to that group or individual. However, the role of the department chair is only one factor in promoting departmental and campus climate change. Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy (2012) have argued that solutions or interventions may need to be directed at three levels: the macro-level, the meso-level, and the micro-level.

At the macro-level, Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) pointed out that the researchers must examine "the intersections of health and organizational communication" to address "workplace bullying..." They advocate public health campaigns to achieve the goal of bringing this topic to the consciousness of the academy.

In addition, at the meso-level, there is a need for improving policies on campuses so that they address workplace behaviors from a wellness standpoint. In other words, what are the acceptable behaviors in this workplace? What are the characteristics of a healthy workplace? As Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) stated, there is also a need for more research on how policies are interpreted by diverse groups of employees. The need for policies is also addressed by Duffy (2009), who stated that "The development of anti-mobbing/antibullying organizational policy that is based on current research and scholarship and that takes into account the complexities of the phenomenon of workplace mobbing/bullying holds promise as one means of preventing workplace bullying/mobbing and fostering a positive or high care work environment" (p. 260). Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) have also concluded that micro-level solutions to workplace bullying have remained understudied, i.e., How have individuals handled workplace incidents of incivility, bullying and/or mobbing?

Recently, a *Journal of Applied Communication* forum made up of scholars who study bullying, weighed in on various aspects of workplace bullying and on approaches to ameliorate or respond to the problem of bullying in the workplace (Tye-Williams, et al., 2020). Their conclusion was that much more work needs to be done in examining the problem of bullying from multiple

perspectives. Therefore, the current study sought to explore the perceptions of faculty and professional librarians about collegial and uncollegial behaviors in their academic units at a recently consolidated university with multiple campuses spread out over a large region in the southwestern US.

Hypotheses

The current study was primarily designed to quantitatively address the following hypotheses (H1-4) about perceptions of collegiality from a department or equivalent unit level perspective.

H1: There will be differences between male and female participants' perceptions of collegial behavior in their units.

H2: There will be differences between & among the various faculty ranks/classifications (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, full professors).

H3. There will be differences between and among the participants based on different lengths of service (0-6 years; 7-12 years; 13-18 years; 19 years and longer).

H4. There will be differences among participants based on which, if any, "legacy institution" (LI) with which they were previously affiliated.

Research Questions

In addition to the above hypotheses, there were three research questions (RQ1-3) that the researchers wanted to explore as subsidiary issues related to collegial and noncollegial behaviors. These questions were explored by constructing open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas about a variety of issues.

RQ 1. Will the qualitative comments describe instances and/or incidents of uncollegial behaviors that can be classified as incivility, bullying, mobbing, and/or microaggressions at the unit level?

RQ 2. Will the proposed solutions/interventions generated by participants align with the three levels (the macro-level, the meso-level, and the micro-level) identified by Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012)?

RQ 3. What themes will emerge in the types of recommendations the participants made regarding ways to improve the workplace environment and interactions with colleagues?

Methods

Participants. The total sample size for this study consisted of 164 males (48.5%) and 167 females (49.4%) females and 7 participants (2.1%) who did not report their gender/sex.

Demographics of Sample. Of the participants, 201 (59.5%) reported being from Legacy Institution “A” (LI-A) while 100 participants identified Legacy Institution “B” as their Legacy Institution (LI-B). Eight (8) participants identified Legacy Institution “C” (a health sciences center) as their Legacy Institution (LI-C)

Rank. When asked to identify their faculty rank, 150 (38.9%) of the participants reported holding tenured positions; 64 (16.6%) reported being tenure track; 42 (10.9%) reported holding 3-year instructor positions; 39 (10.1%) reported holding a One Year Appointment (OYA); 25 (6.5%) identified themselves as clinical or “professors in practice” faculty. Finally, 24 respondents (10.9%) did not report their rank. Professional librarians do not have faculty status since this designation was phased out.

Years of Service. When asked the number of years in service, 139 participants (41.1%) had between 1 and 7 years of service. Ninety-four participants (27.8%) indicated they had between 8-14 years of service, and 37 participants (10.9%) indicated they had 15-22 years of service. Thirty-eight respondents (11.2%) reported having over 22 years of service at a legacy institution; and finally, three respondents did not report their years of service.

Affiliation with a Legacy Institution. 201 (59.5%) participants reported their previous affiliation with Legacy Institution A (LI-A). 100 participants reported their previous affiliation with Legacy Institution B (LI-B). 8 (2.4%) reported an affiliation with Legacy Institution C (LI-C); and 25 (7.4%) reported no affiliation with any legacy institution.

Instrument. In 2014, the researchers received a \$5000 Faculty Development Grant from one of the legacy institutions to purchase the Collegiality Assessment Matrix (hereafter, CAM). The CAM, a proprietary instrument, uses a Likert response scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The researchers first obtained permission from Robert Cipriano to adapt the Collegiality Assessment Matrix instrument to one that examined collegiality at the Department/Program level. A copy of the proposed revisions was sent to him, and he gave his approval to use the revised instrument. For this study, the instrument will be called the Unit Analysis Matrix (UAM). However, since it is adapted from a proprietary instrument, the form will not be provided.

In addition to the UAM, Likert scale items were added to rate the participants’ overall perception of their departmental and college climates. Open-ended questions were added after each UAM item and to the additional Likert scale items to provide participants an opportunity to add their own comments and recommendations. The instrument concluded with an open-ended question asking participants to contribute ideas for addressing the instances of lack of collegiality that they have observed. Questions were framed in positive terms to encourage participants to consider how a healthy workplace can be supported, enhanced, or promoted throughout the university community.

Collegiality Scale Reliability. Two reliability analyses were conducted on the 14 items from the UAM (Unit Analysis Matrix) scale. A Cronbach’s *alpha* of .958 was found across 325 participants (some were not included due to missing data). Another reliability analysis was conducted on

participants who answered “neutral” to at least one of the scale items. For those 164 participants, the Cronbach’s *alpha* was .910, indicating that their answers tended to be closer to neutral for all 14 scale items; however, the reliability was not as strong as that which considered participants who had not responded “neutral” to at least one item.

Procedures. After receiving IRB approval, the UAM was sent to a listserv of about 1500 full-time faculty and professional librarians. The list was compiled by going through the University’s Directory of full-time employees. Only faculty, regardless of rank, who had full-time appointments were selected to receive the study. Full-time professional librarians were also included since they are also represented by the Faculty Senate, the University’s elected governing body. However, due to the small number of librarians in the sample, their comments were not specifically identified in the analysis.

Results

Sex/Gender – H1: There will be differences between male and female participants’ perceptions of collegial behavior.

Fourteen separate t-tests were performed on the data related to the UAM (items numbered 7-20) to determine if males and females differed in their perceptions of the climate in their units. Several significant differences were found for seven questions wherein females reported lower agreement (Mean $M > 2.5$) with each of the UAM items, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17 and 18. See Table 1.

Hypothesis 1 was, therefore, supported by data for seven out of the fourteen items (or 50%) of the items.

Faculty Rank/Classification – H2: There will be differences between & among the various faculty ranks/classifications (lecturers, assistant professors, etc.).

Fourteen separate analysis of variance tests were performed on each statement to determine if participants of different ranks (1-year lecturer, 3-year lecturer, tenure track, or tenured faculty) perceived the climate of their unit differently. For item 9, (Colleagues in my unit actively contribute to the work of the unit by “stepping up” when needed by agreeing to serve on committees, task forces and other work groups.), there was a significant difference among the ranks, $F(5,321) = 3.28, p < .01$. A Tukey HSD *post-hoc* analysis indicated a significant difference between the perceptions of the three-year lecturers and the one-year lecturers, with the 3-year lecturers reporting less agreement with the statement ($M=2.95, SD=1.37$) than the 1-year lecturers ($M=1.94, SD=1.03$), $p < .05$. The tenure track and tenured ranks did not differ significantly from each other, or from the other groups, but had average agreement levels that fell in between the 3-year lecturers and the 1-year lecturers.

For item 10, (On committees, task forces, and other groups where you have observed colleagues from your unit, they are collaborative and make valuable

contributions.), a *post hoc* analysis revealed a significant difference among ranks, $F(5,317) = 2.48, p < .05$. A *post hoc* analysis determined the difference existed between the 3-year lecturers and the 1-year lecturers. The 3-year lecturers ($M=2.61, SD=1.31$) reported less agreement than did 1-year lecturers ($M=1.76, SD=.86$), $p < .05$. The tenure track and tenured ranks did not differ significantly from each other, or the other groups, but had average agreement levels that fell in between those of the 3-year lecturers and those of the 1-year lecturers.

Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Table 1
T-test Results for Unit Analysis Matrix Items

Item #	Females	Males	t values, p values
Item 7: Colleagues in my unit speak to one another in a professional manner.	M=2.68 SD=1.38	M=2.34 SD=1.35	t= - 2.233, p=.026
Item 8: Colleagues in my unit behave in a professional manner.	M=2.69 SD=1.38	M= 2.27 SD=1.32	t=2.840, p=.005
Item 11: Colleagues in my unit follow through on professional tasks and deadlines so as not to inconvenience others.	M=2.63 SD=1.21	M=2.29 SD=1.61	t=2.59, p=.01
Item 12: Colleagues in my unit respect the decision-making processes of my unit.	M=2.77 SD=1.29	M=2.38 SD=1.29	t=2.74, p=.007
Item 14: In general, colleagues' relationships with others in my unit may be described as constructive.	M=2.57 SD=1.31	M= 2.22 SD=1.29	t=2.39, p=.017
Item 17: The climate in my unit is collegial, and I feel comfortable speaking up in meetings.	M=2.79 SD=1.40	M= 2.38 SD=1.44	t=-2.58, p=.01
Item 18: My unit climate is collegial, and I feel comfortable speaking to colleagues if there is a disagreement.	M=2.77 SD=1.30	M=2.41 SD=1.31	t=-2.47, p=.014
Item 20: My unit climate supports addressing problems in a transparent, equitable manner.	M=2.97 SD=1.43	M=2.54 SD=1.37	t=2.67, p=.008

Years of Service – H3. There will be differences between and among the participants based on different lengths of service (0-6 years; 7-12 years; 13-18 years; 19 years and longer).

Separate analysis of variance tests were performed on each question to uncover whether participants with varying levels of service at their legacy institution differed in their perceptions of unit climate.

For item 9, (Colleagues in my unit actively contribute to the unit by “stepping up...”), a significant ANOVA result was found/yielded, $F(4, 326) = 5.02, p .01$. Tukey HSD *post hoc* analysis found that there was a significant difference between those who had served between 8-14 years ($M=2.72, SD =1.42$) and those who had served over 22 years ($M=1.97, SD =.97$). The Tukey HSD *post hoc* analysis also revealed that those who had served less than one year ($M=1.68, SD=.94$) agreed more with this item than those who had served 8-14 years ($M=2.72, SD=1.42$), $p<.05$.

For item 10, (On committees and taskforces...), a significant ANOVA result was found, $F(4,323) = 4.57, p<.01$. A Tukey HSD *post hoc* analysis identified a significant difference between those who had served 8-14 years ($M=2.60, SD=1.29$) and those who had served over 22 years ($M=1.95, SD=.73, p<.05$). The analysis also found that those who had served less than one year ($M=1.72, SD=.98$) reported more agreement with the question than did those who had served 8-14 years ($M=2.6-, SD=1.29$), $p<.05$.

For item 12, (Colleagues in my unit respect the decision-making processes of my unit), an ANOVA yielded a significant result, ($F(4,328) = 4.69, p<.01$). Tukey HSD *post hoc* analysis found a significantly higher level of agreement with this statement from those who had served 0 years ($M=1.84, SD=.99$) than from those who had served 1-7 years ($M=2.64, SD=1.33$), $p<.05$. There was also a significant Tukey HSD result when comparing those who had served 0 years, ($M=1.84, SD=.99$), with those who had served 8-14 years ($M=2.95, SD=1.40$), $p<.01$. A third significant difference was identified between those who had served 8-14 years ($M=2.95, SD=1.40$) and those who had served over 22 years ($M=2.24, SD=1.05$), $p<.05$.

For item 20, (My unit climate supports addressing problems in a transparent, equitable manner.), a significant ANOVA result was yielded, $F(4, 313) = 2.81, p<.05$. A Tukey HSD *post hoc* analysis revealed a significant difference between those who had served 0 years ($M=2.20, SD=1.50$) and those who had served 8-14 years ($M=3.11, SD=1.47$), $p<.05$. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Affiliation with Legacy Institution – H4. There will be differences among participants based on which, if any, “legacy institution” (LI) with which they were previously affiliated.

Separate ANOVAs were conducted on each UAM item to determine if participants from different legacy institutions perceived the collegiality climate in their units differently.

For Question 9, (Colleagues in my unit actively contribute to the work of the unit by “stepping up.”), a significant ANOVA was found, $F(3,326) = 4.00, p<.01$. Tukey HSD *post hoc* analysis determined that the statistically significant difference was

between LI-A participants and participants who did not have a legacy institution. That is, LI-A participants ($M=2.57$, $SD=1.32$) showed less agreement with the statement than did participants who had not belonged to one of the three legacy institutions ($M=1.65$, $SD=.94$), $p<.05$. The other groups did not differ significantly from each other. LI-B and LI-C respondents reported more agreement with the statement than LI-A respondents, but less agreement than participants who had not served at a legacy institution, although these differences were not statistically significant.

Statistical significance was also found for Item 12, (Colleagues in my unit respect the decision-making processes of my unit, $F(5, 328) = 2.73$, $p<.05$). A Tukey HSD post hoc analysis indicated that LI-A participants ($M=2.69$, $SE=1.36$) agreed less with the statement than did participants who did not belong to a legacy institution ($M=1.87$, $SD=1.01$), $p<.05$. The other groups did not differ from one another in a significant manner; LI-B and LI-C participants reported less agreement than participants who did not belong to a legacy institution, but more agreement than the LI-A participants.

Qualitative Theme Analysis – This study posed three research questions. Open ended questions solicited comments at the end of each UAM item. There were also open-ended questions to address each of the three research questions. Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) coding protocol was used as a guide for the analysis.

Research Question 1: A theme analysis of the narratives/comments revealed that the participants used terms such as: incivility, bullying, mobbing, microaggressions and misogyny to describe instances of the “toxic” environment in their units.

1) Overwhelmingly, most participants seemed to acknowledge that their units were collegial except for one or more individuals (sometimes referred to as “bad apples”) who contributed to the “toxicity” or hostile environment of the unit.

2) The non-collegial behaviors were described in many of the comments. These included the following observations:

a. the (faculty member’s) absence or lack of engagement or an unwillingness to volunteer/contribute meaningfully on committees and the work of the department;

b. uncivil verbal and nonverbal behaviors included, but were not limited to dismissive comments, contemptuous remarks, disparaging remarks, inappropriate sexual comments; “routine” displays of anger; disrespectful behavior toward staff and faculty colleagues.

3) Much of the feedback also contained references to administrators not only at the unit level (chairs and program directors) but also to deans and senior administration.

The following negative behaviors of chairs (or their equivalent positions) were described in most comments with only a few saying they worked in a unit with a chair who did a “good” job. These negative unit leader behaviors were described as:

- 1) exhibiting favoritism; building cliques;
- 2) favoring “sycophants” while marginalizing or ignoring respectful dissenters;
- 3) issuing “chain of command” directives instead of fostering open discussions;
- 4) being disrespectful to faculty by not valuing their input and time;
- 5) turning a “blind eye,” i.e., not confronting inappropriate behavior when it happened in the unit; in other words, using avoidance tactics in conflict situations;
- 6) making “*ad hominem attacks*” rather than engaging in civil disagreement;
- 7) engaging in underhanded, sneaky, or potentially unethical behavior;
- 8) engaging in passive-aggressive behaviors such as ignoring emails, refusing to meet with faculty; not acknowledging or greeting colleagues unless a supervisor was within earshot;
- 9) failing to assign tasks to colleagues who were “known to not follow through thereby creating an undue burden on those who are known to follow through with assigned tasks;
- 10) favoring faculty from one campus instead of unifying the unit under a shared goal or purpose.

In addition to chairs, senior leadership were the other large group criticized by participants for the following perceived commissions and omissions:

- 1) perceived abuse of power and lack of transparency in communicating why decisions were made;
- 2) perceived control/gatekeeping over resources, e.g., one faculty member stated s/he was told not to bother applying for...” (a position).
- 3) perceived concern with relationships with politicians to the absence of concern with the campus community (students, staff, and faculty) “We put on a nice face for the outside.”
- 4) perceived lack of leadership on the issue of how to unify campuses;

5) perceived lack of leadership to ameliorate and improve hostile environments in departments and between and among different campus constituencies;

6) perceived administrative actions that foster a culture of “Leadership by Intimidation” instead of “Leadership by Inspiration.” In other words, although the administration has been aware of problems at the department levels and above, there have been no proactive steps to address these.

7) perceived lack of judgment due to selecting unskilled chairs for positions and not providing them with timely and appropriate training for them. The perception was that chairs were selected for their ability to perform administrative tasks without question (of the administration). The participants expressed a need for chairs/program directors who were skilled in conflict management, leadership, and effective, transparent communication.

8) perceived administrative inaction by top leadership to address issues that had been raised and administrative statements that placed the blame on faculty and placed the responsibility for the campus climate on faculty while eschewing their own responsibilities for the climate.

9) perceived administrative attitude that views staff and faculty members as disposable and replaceable; therefore, communication messages do not mention valuing them, their contributions, and their time.

10) perceived lack of trustworthy administrative structures or offices where faculty and staff can get assistance with issues of perceived hostile environments, bullying, unfair treatment. This was also connected to the lack of perceived options for redress which therefore led to comments about seeking other employment or just making themselves “invisible” so as not to attract attention.

RQ 2. Will the proposed solutions /interventions generated by participants align with the three levels (the macro-level, the meso-level, and the micro-level) identified by Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012)?

An analysis of the comments revealed that, not surprisingly, no comments aligned with the Macro-level of Solutions (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012). Approximately 73 comments referenced Meso-level Solutions in direct and indirect ways. The comments suggested mediation, an ombudsperson, interventions from Chairs or Deans, better leadership, punitive measures toward “bullies” such as negative annual evaluations and terminations, team building for departments, and the acknowledgement of a problem by Administration. Thirty comments alluded to the need for colleagues to “act professionally” and be respectful, for chairs to step up and “confront” bad behavior, for “email etiquette” standards to be developed, for colleagues to be “grownups,” and for

administration to provide training on how to assertively respond to others instead of avoiding or ignoring their remarks. When the comments classified as “Meso-level” solutions were analyzed further, 9 comments specifically indicated the need for leadership at the Chair’s level with more than one commenting that the Chair or the Senior Administration were the problem. The suggestion in some cases was new searches for chairs who were uncollegial or who did not provide appropriate leadership. Here are some sample comments:

“Most of the non-collegiality comes from the mid and upper administration. They are disparaging of faculty, disregard their viewpoints, and are easily angered. They seek to suppress our voices.”

“I think they (instances of non-collegiality) have to be addressed by chairs, who should confront non-collegial behavior immediately and directly and provide models for alternative ways of handling ourselves professionally.”

RQ 3: What themes can be identified in the comments about the workplace environment and interactions with colleagues?

Considering the results in RQ1 and RQ2, it is not surprising the themes of RQ3 were described as disappointment with perceived administrative inaction, distrust of the administration, and disappointment with the lack of training provided to unit leaders (e.g., chairs), who were described as conflict avoidant, unprepared, and untrained to address conflict. One participant bluntly blamed the administration for creating a hostile working environment based on low pay and the merit system that had been implemented. This person said: “A merit system which pits faculty against faculty, as ours does, for a few meager dollars does not enhance collegiality.” Other participants believed that the merger between the two main campuses was not well thought through, and transition processes were “inefficient” or “chaotic.”

Discussion

Discussion of Quantitative Findings. Using the Unit Assessment Matrix (UAM) adapted from the Collegiality Assessment Matrix (CAM), this study explored faculty and librarians’ perceptions of collegial behaviors among members of their respective units at a newly “consolidated” university. Significant differences in perceptions of collegiality within the unit were found based on gender, rank, years of service, and previous affiliation with a legacy institution. Overall, 50% (7 items) of the items in H1 received support. Females were more likely to express less agreement (in other words, more dissatisfaction) with items related to how respectful colleagues speak to one another, how professional the behaviors of colleagues appear to them, and whether their colleagues contribute to the timely completion of tasks. In addition, they expressed dissatisfaction with how colleagues relate to one another during disagreements and decision-making processes, and they expressed less agreement with feeling comfortable expressing their opinions in meetings (Items 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17 and 18).

Females in the academy, have in general, described the academic environment as more favorable to males. In fact, they have also described the environment as hostile and as presenting them obstacles that are not presented to their male colleagues. Salary studies have also noted there have been gender equity issues in the academy (AAUP, 1997 cited in Hearn, 1999, p. 395), and this type of inequity may contribute to noncollegial working environments within units. The researchers need to take the current quantitative and qualitative data, re-code it for male and female comments, and conduct more in-depth quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data to provide greater insight as to what the perceptions may be based on. The current limitation of not being able to separate the qualitative data by gender and link it to the quantitative data will need to be resolved to enable this more in-depth analysis.

It was interesting to note that there were no statistically significant differences between and among ranks, except for the 1-year and 3-year lecturers. One-year lecturers, by virtue of being in a “temporary” and usually “new” position, may not have had extended opportunities to experience the unit dynamics as fully as the 3-year lecturers. Since many “one-year” lecturers are subsequently reappointed without benefit of a 3-year appointment, it would be interesting to gauge their perceptions after multiple One-Year Appointments (OYAs).

The most agreement to the items were expressed by those participants who had less than 7 years of service and more than 22 years of service. The participants who had between 8 and 14 years of service expressed the least agreement with the items. Part of this lack of agreement may also be attributed to the fact that many of these individuals could be in the “middle” of their careers at Legacy Institution A and had only received one salary raise in a 9- year period. Therefore, for the variable years of service, H3 was supported in that significant differences were found between and among participants depending on their years of service.

In the area of affiliation with a legacy institution, LI-A participants (the largest institution) expressed the least agreement with Items 9 and 12. The fact that the previous President of LI-A, a much beloved person who enacted shared governance processes, may account for the comments where participants expressed a return to the openness, transparency, and shared governance of that previous administration. The LI-B participants expressed less agreement with items that had to do with current processes of “respecting decision-making” of the unit. Those participants had come from a culture of top-down decision making under the previous senior administrator in charge of Academic Affairs. The perceived and actual differences in campus cultures may have contributed to the lack of agreement.

Discussion of Theme Analysis Findings. Collegiality. Overall, the data indicated that the participants had mixed feelings about the collegiality of their colleagues. The general perception was that “most” colleagues were professional and contributed to the functioning of the department by stepping up and assuming appropriate responsibilities. However, the comments about toxic colleagues, colleagues who did not follow through on responsibilities or who chose to disengage from the department (sometimes physically and sometimes by not engaging in departmental duties) were far more common. Some participants were also wary of the possible “weaponization” of using the term “collegiality.” They expressed reservations about the validity of using the criterion, a subject that has also been addressed by the AAUP (American Association of University Professors, 2016).

Leadership. Two issues emerged that were related to leadership and administration. These were the dissatisfaction with “senior leadership,” i.e., deans and above, and the participants’ perceptions of department chairs who lacked training and who lacked skills in leadership, conflict management, and who did not have the skills to unite faculty and staff from different campuses. There was also dissatisfaction expressed, albeit not as frequently, about faculty salary issues, faculty workload, and perceived administrative bloat.

As the literature about campus consolidations has stated, there are many pitfalls that await institutions that, for whatever reason, decide to undertake a consolidation. The road is fraught with potholes and the leadership needs to be prepared to guide the “new” institution through these rough patches. This study bore out those warnings. Dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of leadership and with the lack of clear, transparent processes was most evident. Additional analyses of these qualitative data suggest that Chair training in conflict management skills is critical to improving the department/unit climate and reducing the cases of uncollegial behaviors by addressing them as they happen rather than being perceived as ignored. In addition, a strategic plan to promote checks and balances of communication regarding the processes and step-by-step results may alleviate some of the perceived lack of transparency, feelings of isolation and improve overall performance.

Implications for Policy. The need for collegiality within departments/units will continue to be a source of both concern and conversation in the years ahead. This exploratory study has supported previous research in collegiality, and it has explored how behaviors ranging from mild incivilities, perceived microaggressions and perceived incidents of bullying and mobbing are uncollegial behaviors that have unfortunately found a home in the academic setting. As resources for higher education become scarcer, the need for consolidating educational institutions of higher learning to leverage resources and survive will continue. “Can’t we all just get along?” This question must be addressed in direct ways by all stakeholders (faculty, chairs, and senior administration). Open, honest communication, and addressing the issues as they happen may contribute to developing a more collegial environment. All levels of administration can play a role in mapping strategies to assure open, transparent communication while ensuring all levels not only receive the information but are encouraged to participate in the solutions.

To assist in developing a more collegial working academic environment, the authors recommend using a micro, meso and macro approach to ensure that policies are in place that address the desired prosocial and professional behaviors of all members of the academy at the macro level (Lutgen-Sandvik, et.al., 2012). At the meso level, department chairs, deans, and other administrative personnel should receive training in conflict management and assertive communication. At the micro-level, all faculty and staff should also receive similar training when being onboarded. Additionally, there should be online training available in a video format with skills training assessment to gauge the skills development of participants in the training. Sadly, most “training” at universities involves information sharing and not actual skills development. Providing this training will aid in retention efforts. As Pifer, et al, (2021, citing O’Meara et al, 2014) found: “The majority of respondents who had left their institutions indicated having done so due to problems located with work units, such as uncollegial behavior, lack of department leadership, and academic bullying (p.542).

Another recommendation is that the faculty and administration engage in parallel training to gauge perceived collegiality on campuses. To maintain validity, this should be advertised to all ranks of faculty with assured anonymity. A group of volunteer faculty would be selected to represent each unit keeping in mind the various forms of diversity of gender, race, national origin, religion, age, years of service, rank, sexual orientation, and other categories as appropriate to the campus community.

This group would report back to their units the findings at the micro level. They would open discussions on their individual unit situations and develop departmental policies and procedures to ensure appropriate and collegial behavior is included in the various faculty reviews. They would also report back to the group on the thoughts and concerns of the faculty of their individual units for the meso level. This group would compare the various recommended policies and procedures and arrive at the verbiage that would be supported by the institution. After vetting these policies and procedures through the various faculty organizations and processes of shared governance, the resulting policies and procedures would be recommended to upper administration for further vetting, approval, and adoption. It is important to remember to include all levels and types of faculty and administration to make the changes identified in the survey.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations can be identified in this study.

- 1) The listserv list of faculty and librarians may have contained at least some part-time staff since we had one participant identify him/herself as a part-time adjunct faculty member. That response was eliminated. However, we do not know if any other adjuncts or part-time faculty may have inadvertently been included.
- 2) We asked for self-reported perceptions, and we need to ask ourselves if those who responded were those who were most highly dissatisfied with the consolidation and with their units.
- 3) A few participants mentioned fearing that their responses could be traced back to them due to the demographic data that were requested. In fact, several participants declined to complete sections of the demographic data.
- 4) In the analysis of themes, there was an abundance of negative comments that may have “drowned out” or obscured the message that units were often described as containing collegial colleagues and a few “bad apples.”
- 5) The survey instrument itself contained 2-3 items that were “double-barreled” items, as pointed out by some of the participants. The participants were correct to point out that two issues were not related, and any subsequent surveys need to have those items correctly worded to avoid that weakness.
- 6) Finally, all authors were members of the newly consolidated university. They did not participate in the study, but they were all involved in the transition.

Suggestions for Future Research

Most universities and university systems have codes of conduct and/or role expectations in their Regents Rules. However, how many universities include those expectations in their “onboarding” processes for faculty and staff? If they include them, how are they included? Also, there is a need to move past collegiality as it has been conceptualized and debated. It is time for the operationalized behaviors to be communicated as expectations for faculty, administrators, and staff. When acquiring a new job, there is usually a hopeful expectation of entering an enjoyable work environment. However, when the workplace becomes hostile or toxic, those same employees have had their expectations violated by those who exhibit uncollegial and sometimes abusive behaviors. More research should be done on effective ways to educate members of the academy about professional courtesies, behaviors, and expectations. The benefits of retaining promising faculty outweigh the cost of losing many faculty who flee their hostile workplaces. Their exit interviews may say they are seeking “better opportunities.” However, they are seeking peace and a collegial space where they can thrive.

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