



Shaping Campus Culture Through Service

The Problem

While open inquiry sits as the cornerstone of colleges and universities, students, faculty, and others often lament that classrooms and campuses are littered with proverbial eggshells, undermining community members' ability to ask and explore questions.

The Solution

As the keepers of the curriculum and the least transient stakeholders on campus, faculty members bear a special burden for ensuring their campus remains a vibrant place for diverse people with diverse ideas to ask questions, share perspectives, and explore claims.

Faculty members looking to improve the culture of open inquiry on their campuses can look to institutional service as a particularly robust and under-utilized lever for effecting change. Whether you see service as a necessary evil of your appointment or enjoy contributing your time and talents in ways that improve the lives of your colleagues and students, service affords a direct opportunity to nudge campus culture toward open hearts and open minds.

Remember, as centers of policy making and activators of ideas, faculty committees wield a good deal of influence on many campuses. Be an engaged and informed committee member, ready to ask questions, share ideas, and — when necessary — challenge decisions. As always: be measured, summon evidence, invite other perspectives.

Advice, Recommendations, & Examples

Curriculum Committee: Propose a set of student learning outcomes that focus on critical thinking, intellectual humility, curiosity, perspective taking, or conflict resolution.

Teaching and Learning Committee: Program faculty development workshops about facilitating difficult dialogues or designing assignments that motivate epistemological self-reflection.

Faculty Search Committee: Craft the position description signal explicitly the committee's interest in viewpoint-diverse candidates; advocate for evaluation criteria that explicitly value non-dominant perspectives, intellectual risk taking, and curiosity.

Institutional Review Board: Redirect the committee to its stated role if members begin to critique protocols on ideological or positional grounds; key questions to ask include "What's the evidence? Are these critiques within the scope of our charge? How might our own biases and assumptions be feeding into this position? Would rejecting this proposal amount

to a constraint on our colleague's academic freedom?"

Public Programs Committee: Recommend complicated themes and topics, and then invite speakers to engage big questions from a range of theoretical, disciplinary, and ideological perspectives; propose a policy that requires speakers to answer questions from the audience.

Faculty Senate: Elect to use private ballots when the faculty votes on the contentious motion, ensuring all individuals are equally able to vote their conscience without fear of social censure.

Qualifying Examinations Committee: Invite candidates to integrate across theoretical perspectives.

Dissertation Committee: Challenge candidates — and other committee members — when you notice ideological assumptions creeping into their research questions, methods, analysis, and conclusions.

Undergraduate Curricular Advising: Encourage an eager sampling of disciplines, teachers, and formats.

Advising Student Political Clubs: Encourage the group to co-host a constructive event with another student group organized around a different ideology.