

# Improving Faculty Morale

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**Q.** How can chairs improve faculty morale?

**A.** The following are some steps that you can take to improve morale in your department.

- *Communicate, communicate, communicate.* Faculty want to know what's going on; they want to feel they are a part of things.
- *Let faculty know they are appreciated.* You must be alert for the accomplishments of faculty so that you can congratulate them and tell them how much their efforts are appreciated.
- *Involve faculty in departmental governance.* All major policy decisions made at the department level should have faculty input. The more ways in which you can involve faculty in the major affairs of the department, the better off both you—and faculty morale—will be.
- *Establish a positive tone of cooperation.* If all faculty work to cooperate with each other, department morale will be enhanced. As chair, you should let faculty know that cooperation is expected.
- *Establish clear policies and distribute them widely.* Faculty have every right to be upset and dissatisfied with their professional status when policies are unclear and shifting. Whether these policies have to do with promotion and tenure or travel funds, faculty need to know the ground rules. It is especially important that you are consistent with policy application and interpretation.
- *Look for opportunities to provide faculty with consulting.* As chair, you are often asked to recommend faculty for consulting. By recommending faculty on the basis of their competence—rather than on how you feel about them personally—and by spreading these opportunities around, you can help boost faculty morale.
- *Work to develop positive relations with community members.* If you can develop a special tie to the local community, this relationship will enrich the lives of individual faculty members.
- *Treat all faculty as professionals and with respect.* You will have a positive influence on faculty morale if you treat all faculty with respect and as professionals. Faculty need to be told precisely what is expected of them and then left alone to do their jobs so long as they are fulfilling expectations.
- *Spread the work around.* While it is tempting to assign work to those you know will do the job well and on time, doing so penalizes the good workers and rewards the slackers. Ensure that all faculty know that you expect them to do their fair share of departmental work.
- *Avoid the unilateral contract.* We must ensure that faculty do those things that will increase their chances of getting promotions and tenure and that they do not spend an inordinate amount of time on other assignments.
- *Work to create a supportive culture.* A chair who listens to faculty and discusses their concerns without judging goes far to create a supportive culture. Other supportive actions include finding funds for faculty travel, covering for faculty when they are ill, or taking an interest in their research projects.
- *Tolerate differences.* Faculty should be encouraged to voice their disagreement with ideas advanced by other department members. However, they should be reminded that debate is invigorating and healthy, and that while professional differences of opinion are to be expected, the differences should not be carried over into their personal lives.

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