

2020-2021

CLIMATE HANDBOOK

Duke
UNIVERSITY

PSYCHOLOGY &
NEUROSCIENCE



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PURPOSE

This document intends to embrace the spirit of accountability and transparency. Enclosed, we have shared departmental and university-wide aspirations as a means to hold ourselves accountable as scientists, educators, and administrators to do our best work and to support others in achieving the same. We cannot completely fulfill our mission as a department without a respectful and professional climate. An essential component of excellent science and teaching is a firm commitment to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a department of Psychology & Neuroscience (P&N) community we agree to self-reflect, engage in discomfort, stretch as scientists and professionals, and seek opportunities for conversation and growth. We agree to create an environment that actively supports the humanity, dignity, and safety of our staff, students, and faculty.

To this end, our aspirations and current collective commitments regarding departmental climate are enclosed within. This is a working document that will be regularly updated based on feedback and guidance from community members and experts. This document is expressly intended to support members of our community in their navigation of situations that commonly arise in academic departments. Accordingly, it does not address many situations that might be covered by Faculty Handbook policies, Duke Human Resources regulations, or the legal system.

STATEMENT OF VALUES

P&N supports a climate that facilitates personal and career growth, welcomes and includes all backgrounds and viewpoints, and supports its community. We share Duke's values of respect, trust, diversity, discovery, and excellence. We also recognize that concrete steps are needed to implement those values within our community. Through this climate statement, we outline our shared commitments as P&N faculty, staff, and students to supporting one another professionally and with respect. We are collectively committed to fostering a community where all members can thrive by:

- Modeling positive behaviors
- Communicating concerns to others
- Taking steps to improve our practices
- Signaling respect for others through mindfulness of our language and behaviors

Our shared values guide our interactions with the members of our community, all activities within our laboratories and classrooms, and all times wherein we represent Duke and/or P&N in other settings.

Creating a supportive climate within our department and in our work with other departments and collaborators is critical to our mission. To be effective, we are collectively committed to creating an environment that is inclusive and diverse; space where individuals are encouraged to retain their uniqueness and can feel a sense of belonging no matter their background or identities, including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, or age. Our commitment to a positive climate requires a commitment to equity. As a department, equity means that our faculty, staff, and students can experience the same level of success, no matter their starting place.

As an institution, Duke University has pledged its commitment to diversity and inclusion, stating formally through the Office of Institutional Equity:

“Our collective success depends on the robust exchange of ideas—an exchange that is best when the rich diversity of our perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences flourishes. To achieve this exchange, it is essential that all members of the community feel secure and welcome, that the contributions of all individuals are respected, and that all voices are heard. All members of our community have a responsibility to uphold these values.”

It is our hope as a department that each member of our community recognizes that race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability status are strong predictors of inequitable outcomes, and we commit formally to using equity as a lens to examine disparities.

COMMUNICATION

We value respectful communication and support conversation. Effective, mindful, and respectful communication is essential. While recognizing that community members will differ in their preferences for modes and styles of communication, we adopt the following principles for effective communication:

- **Professionalism.** As a community, we value professional communication that treats others with dignity, recognizes the value of diversity, and seeks to understand others' perspectives. We navigate disagreements respectfully – avoiding language that undermines other members of our community. For example, we do not disparage other staff, students, or colleagues), and do not engage in personal attacks or accusations . Communication that is bullying, harassing, threatening, and/or intolerant of others' rights violates our departmental values.
- **Respect for privacy.** As community members we all have a right to personal privacy, such that we can decline communication and meetings outside official channels (e.g., Duke email accounts) and outside the workplace setting (e.g., on-campus/virtual interactions during working hours). Each of us have non-workplace responsibilities (e.g., family care) and/or a desire to maintain boundaries between our personal and professional lives.
- **Respect for settings.** Interactions that might be legitimate within work hours and the on-campus setting might be problematic at other times in other settings. For example, a team member might reasonably expect a response to a question posed during a typical workday, but we do not expect our colleagues at any level to immediately respond on a weekend or holiday. We expect an understanding and supportive rapport.

- **Consideration for others' time.** As members of this community we all have many responsibilities that pose demands on our time. Excessive meetings and persistent emails or phone calls can all introduce burdens upon each other – especially for staff, trainees and junior colleagues. A healthy climate includes respect for others' time by maintaining appropriate length and frequency of communications. There are different operational interpretations of "frequent" and "regular" and a discussion of the distinctions is encouraged within labs.
- **Constructive feedback.** Not all feedback is completely positive; in many cases, a mentor or supervisor will need to discuss problems with a work product (e.g., paper draft) or relay concerns about behavior/performance. We agree to share such feedback mindfully and constructively with a goal of supporting our colleagues in their own work. Likewise, we are committed to reducing traditional power dynamics by being open to feedback in any hierarchical direction. That is, trainees or staff may have constructive feedback to offer related to the management styles of supervisors or faculty. We agree as a community to be open to receiving this feedback with an open-mind and without retaliation.
- **Accessibility.** As community members we agree to be accessible to our colleagues and trainees through professional channels. In particular, access to a colleague or mentor should not require personal phone calls, social contact outside of work hours, and the like. Individuals may choose to offer these channels if all parties are mutually comfortable using them. At any point, any party may decide to discontinue use of a particular non-official channel due to a change of perspective. For example, a graduate student may initially enjoy being able to message their advisor through Slack or text messages at any hours but would not like to receive messages during any hours through that channel. As another example, staff should not be expected to read or respond to email requests during non-work hours. For mentor / trainee relationships, in particular, we know that what some people see as a supportive practice (e.g., frequent short texts) might be seen by others as an imposition. Mentors and trainees should discuss how they each prefer to communicate – and should work to find modes of communication that work for all parties. We all agree to be adaptive and respectful in our access to each other.
- **Timeliness.** We all agree to do our best to keep communications as timely as is feasible. Where possible, requests should be made with sufficient advance notice to allow others to decline the requests or to seek guidance from other community members. We will be open about notifying colleagues, trainees, staff, supervisors, or students if we expect lengthy delays for any particular communication or task. We will be reasonable with each other on timelines.

These principles should guide interactions at all levels and spaces, including one-on-one, lab spaces, meetings, our classrooms and other public settings. For example, we are committed to departmental colloquia/talks having an atmosphere that encourages an open exchange and promotes conversation. Single individuals won't dominate any discussion. Our questions and comments will show respect both for the speaker and for the others in the audience.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

We prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion. The [P&N Task Force](#) on Diversity, Inclusion, and Climate was created in June 2020 to mobilize Duke Psychology & Neuroscience toward constructive, accountable actions that create a diverse and inclusive department, and a climate supportive of our community members' personal and professional goals. The current [goals of the Task Force](#) are to assess, monitor, and implement actions that promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.

- **Respect.** As members of this community we recognize that we each join this community with distinct experiences, perspectives, cultural expectations, and viewpoints. With this recognition comes an acknowledgement that the social standards of our community have been largely set and dominated through the lens of the white majority, and that, intentional or not, this leads to the very real capacity to marginalize or disenfranchise our colleagues and trainees who are currently and have been historically under-represented in science. We collectively agree to recognize this reality and be mindful of our roles in perpetuating these systems as we all strive to respect each other no matter our unique backgrounds and identities. As a community we are mindful of cultural differences in expectations and behavior and will integrate and accommodate differences in perspective and style without forcing assimilation.
- **Responsibility.** Through our actions and expectations, all members of our community take responsibility for promoting the inclusion and equitable partnership of our fellow departmental citizens. Inherent in this responsibility is the recognition of power dynamics that may be built on majority viewpoints. As individuals in positions of power (e.g., instructors, advisors, supervisors) we agree to take this responsibility seriously and to use our privilege and access to empower others in an equitable and inclusive way.

- **Accountability.** Concerns may be communicated in good faith to the chair or to associate chair, without fear of retaliation. This includes, for example, concerns about power dynamics or a sense of inclusiveness. If a community member does not feel comfortable expressing a concern directly to the chair or associate chair, they should feel encouraged to contact the [Ombudsperson](#).
- **Support.** We agree to keep each other informed about institutional resources for supporting diversity initiatives for trainees, staff, and fellow faculty (e.g., department leadership, Duke Reach) and will connect individuals to those resources as needed.
- **Engagement.** To promote and support the diversity among our staff, students and faculty, the department will recognize contributions and engagement in efforts toward diversity, inclusion and equity in our community. We will adopt reinforcement models that harness and recognize the diversity within our department. Examples of a reinforcing and rewarding model may include fellowships for graduate students and post-doctoral fellow, including climate-promoting responsibilities in staff portfolios, and teaching credit for mentoring and committee service related to creating a community that values and believes in diversity, inclusiveness and equity.

MENTORING & SUPERVISION

Effective mentorship not only improves the quality of our research and teaching programs, but also promotes the career development of many members of our community. This section highlights our expectations for supportive mentorship of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and post-baccalaureate researchers (collectively called “trainees”). While most mentoring occurs within the research setting, mentoring can also occur in instructional settings, in graduate courses, or when faculty members supervise the teaching assistants (TAs) who contribute to their course. These same principles should apply when working with TAs, while serving as a committee member, or in any other interactions with trainees. Key principles of effective mentoring include:

- **Respect.** Mentors should consider their trainees to be colleagues within our community and partners in supporting our missions.
- **Responsibility.** Through their actions and expectations, mentors are responsible for promoting the trainee's career goals. Requests that are not directly related to the trainee's current projects may still be appropriate (e.g., a trainee may help set up equipment in a laboratory or may guest-lecture in a course). Both mentors and trainees must be willing to consider external guidance about the appropriateness of such requests.
- **Openness.** Mentors should maintain effective lines of communication with their trainees. Mentors should not only offer constructive feedback but also listen to trainee concerns.
- **Boundaries.** Mentors and trainees should recognize that the mentor/trainee relationship is primarily professional – and interests or life circumstances often set boundaries on that relationship. Trainees should be allowed to decline requests unrelated to their professional development without penalty.
- **Accountability.** Concerns about mentorship (or other issues) may be communicated in good faith to the mentor or to other community members, without fear of retaliation.
- **Support.** Mentors should know about institutional resources for supporting their trainees (e.g., department leadership, Duke Reach) and should connect trainees to those resources as needed.

We emphasize that a climate of collegiality does not request that all members of our community have the same sort of roles and responsibilities. Faculty members assume the overall responsibility for determining the research directions of their laboratory (e.g., topics to be studied) and the methods for pursuing that research (e.g., tools or software used) – and those responsibilities mean that they will become the final arbiter in many situations. More details about specific practices for graduate mentoring will be provided in a document being considered for adoption by the P&N faculty.

Engagement of trainees in departmental decision making. As colleagues who support the missions of P&N, our trainees should contribute their voices to departmental discussions. For example:

- Faculty searches should include opportunities for trainees to meet with candidates and to send comments to search committees.
- Faculty meetings should be open to a graduate student observer who can relay updates to other trainees. (Note that the faculty reserve the right to move to a closed session for discussions of personnel or other sensitive issues.)
- Trainee feedback should be solicited through regular town halls and other communication.
- Policy decisions that affect trainees should be accompanied by explanations and a solicitation of feedback about their impact upon different parts of our community.

PROFESSIONAL / PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Our community is primarily professional; it is governed not only by social norms and good practices (e.g., this document), but also by explicit policies set by [Duke Human Resources](#). Yet, we also recognize that our community members are connected via social relationships that may extend outside of their professional interactions and that may persist after they depart Duke. To balance those social relationships with professional responsibilities, we adopt the following principles:

- **Personal requests/relationships should not undermine professional goals/relationships.** Social interactions outside the workplace setting pose risks for our professional climate, especially when between mentor and trainee. Social interactions that are of a personal and transactional nature (e.g., babysitting, house sitting, watching pets) are particularly problematic, since such requests can be difficult to decline because of the power dynamics involved. These include, but are not limited to, babysitting, house sitting, watching pets, and intimate partnerships. Such interactions must be cleared with departmental leadership in advance. If there is uncertainty about a dynamic, request or relationship, consultation with departmental leadership is encouraged.

- **Community members must always be free to decline social requests.**

Purely social events (by definition) fall outside the scope of normal professional responsibilities. Accordingly, any community member should be able to decline participation without consequence (or even explanation). For example, someone may not wish to attend a party because of a health issue, a struggle with addiction, or another personal situation – and any pressure to attend could be seen as harassment. Setting up an expectation that members of a particular group (e.g., laboratory members) attend regular social events outside the workplace setting is a violation of our departmental values. Additionally, our department culture expects that alcohol should be consumed only in moderation (and illegal drugs should not be consumed at all) in any professional setting or in any social setting where there could be power differentials.

- **Openness helps maximize inclusion and minimize favoritism.** Social events that involve individuals at different career stages (e.g., a faculty member inviting graduate students to a party) can lead to impressions of favoritism or social pressure when some people are invited and others are not. Our climate benefits from a spirit of openness and inclusion that extends to our social interactions.

- **Conflicts of interest or deviations from best practices should be declared.** Regular interactions that are off-campus or at atypical hours should be communicated (in advance) to departmental leaders; the recommended practice would be to set up a virtual meeting via Duke Zoom. Other conflicts should be discussed with departmental or university leadership as appropriate.

These guidelines should not be interpreted to prevent any interactions outside of the Duke campus or outside of traditional working hours. On the contrary, there are many legitimate reasons for such interactions; as examples, data collection on a project might occur over a weekend (e.g., for child participants) or at a field site (e.g., for a community-based or global-health project). Expectations for those sorts of projects should be conveyed with sufficient advance warning to allow trainees or other project members to make arrangements for any personal conflicts (e.g., childcare responsibilities).

REPORTING CONCERNS

A healthy and supportive climate depends on effective communication, not only for reporting problems but for helping reinforce and model positive behaviors. Channels of communication need to be open and thus available to anyone in the community, flexible such that the same people can discuss a variety of topics, and parallel so that community members have different options for reporting their concerns and recommendations. Key channels for communication include:

Speaking directly with the target of concern. Many issues can be worked out via direct conversation; for example, someone may not be aware of how their actions are being perceived or of a harm they are causing. We recognize that this will not be possible in some circumstances, either because of the nature of a concern or because of a social/professional relationship. However, in other cases, respectful and frank discussions can improve situations without requiring external intervention.

Reaching out to other members of our community and university.

- Any member of our community can convey any concern to the [Chair](#) or [Associate Chair](#) at any time; all concerns will be heard and considered respectfully. Concerns that cannot be communicated to the departmental leadership may also be communicated directly to the [Dean of Natural Sciences](#) or the [Dean of Social Sciences](#).
- Graduate students may also reach out to the [Director of Graduate Studies](#) or [Associate Director of Graduate Studies](#), or to the [head of their graduate training area](#). If appropriate, graduate students are also encouraged to talk with their research advisor or a committee member for guidance. The [Associate Dean of the Graduate School](#) can also be a thoughtful resource for many concerns.
- Staff may also talk to their **immediate supervisor** or the [departmental business manager](#), as well as the [Duke Human Resources Policy Manual](#).
- Concerns about another community member's well-being may be discussed with [Blue Devils CARE: Anytime Telehealth for Students](#) (for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows) or with the [Personal Assistance Service](#) (for faculty and staff).

- Questions about scientific ethics or conflicts of interest may be discussed with [Duke's Office of Scientific Integrity](#).
- Concerns about institutional issues including but not limited to discrimination, harassment, and misconduct may be communicated with the [Office of Institutional Equity \(OIE\)](#), which can also provide confidential assistance for problems related to sexual harassment or misconduct.
- Finally, P&N will work with the **OIE** and the [Office of Faculty Advancement](#) to create a brief training program for supporting members of our community who raise concerns. Each year, those community members who participate in that program – whether faculty, staff, or students – will be identified on the departmental website as resources for communication.

Will my concerns be kept confidential?

For many conduct or climate issues, actions can be taken to improve a situation without compromising confidentiality – and our community members should strive to protect confidentiality whenever requested. However, confidentiality may not be possible to guarantee in some situations, whether because the concern would identify a complainant, because the issue would involve mandatory reporting, and/or because the situation requires immediate action by a department official. Regardless of whether confidentiality can be guaranteed, retaliation for reporting a concern or relaying someone else's concern is prohibited.