

# Policies in Action Working Group Report

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*"You will be powerful. And when you are, do not abuse your power. Ever. [...] It is a gift. Use it with great care and with great intention. [...] Remember, always, that you are a human being first. It's a truth embedded in the very foundation of your liberal arts education. Practice your humanity daily. Practice that truth. Let it power your decisions, let it inspire your thoughts, and let it shape your ideals." (Yo-Yo Ma, 2019 Dartmouth Commencement Address)*

## I. Introduction

As Dartmouth moves forward in trying to create an environment free from the abuse of power, it must grapple with how power is formed and exerted within its organizational structure, in its many classroom and workplace environments, and in daily interactions between community members. While the existence of power structures is a natural and necessary part of any organization, we seek to identify and remedy abuses of such hierarchical relationships. To do so, Dartmouth must examine the formal and informal ways in which power is exercised within a diverse community that includes multiple constituencies. This includes taking seriously the very real effects that power has on others. It is evident that power dynamics cannot be analyzed in isolation: the effects of abuses of power on the community are strongly related to climate and in return, campus climate is strongly related to power dynamics. We need to evaluate, as an institution, how we want people to feel and to be treated in our community, and we must truly place value on those factors if we want to remove the harmful impact of abuse of power and generate a more welcoming and inclusive environment.

The Campus Climate and Culture Initiative (C3I) is charged with ensuring that our academic learning and research environments are free from sexual harassment and the abuse of power. C3I is the third pillar in a comprehensive set of initiatives designed to create a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for all Dartmouth students, staff, and faculty. Within this broader context the Provost tasked the Policies in Action Working Group to "identify any areas in which hierarchical power-differentiated relationships [...] could conflict with these goals of greater cooperation, respectful work behavior, and professionalism at all levels." Specifically, the working group's charge is to:

- Identify specific areas where conflicts could exist;
- Examine specific policies that help mitigate conflict in those areas, enlisting best practices from peer institutions and NASEM [National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine] as appropriate;
- Recommend policy changes and training needed to eliminate such potential conflicts;

- Recommend key performance indicators to be tracked to measure progress toward providing a healthy learning [and working] environment for all students, faculty, and staff.

The Policies in Action Working Group did not limit itself to looking only at policies. We also solicited input from a broad range of members of the Dartmouth community, taking seriously people's actual concerns as expressed by them in their own voices. Our report includes key suggestions and recommendations for improvement, distinguishing recommendations that may have higher impact and require lower effort. We trust that this groundwork can help to create an environment free from the abuse of power, one that is welcoming, inclusive and truly equitable for the entire Dartmouth community.

## II. Data Collection and Methods

### A. Identifying Themes

In order to identify themes of issues that (have) come up at Dartmouth as a potential result of abuses of power, we conducted an informal survey, interviewed stakeholders across campus, and analyzed the results of the 2016 Community Study.

#### 1. Informal Survey

Each member of our working group was asked to gather feedback from at least five Dartmouth community members with the option to collect responses in a survey instrument. We received a total of 50 responses. The survey questions were:

- What are your concerns on power dynamics at Dartmouth?
- Have you experienced / witnessed / heard of specific examples of conflicts arising from power-differentiated relationships at Dartmouth (someone misusing their power, for example)? Would you be able to give an example?
- Do you have suggestions or ideas about strategies to address / eliminate / prevent conflicts arising from power differentials at Dartmouth?

#### 2. Interviews with Stakeholders across Campus

Ten senior administrators / faculty from various areas (see list below) of the College were interviewed by members from our working group. The discussion was typically started with: "We'd like to gather information on themes of the issues that have come to you and parse out the category of individuals (staff-faculty, staff-staff, staff-student, etc.) involved as well as the relevant policy that governed the actions." The interviewees' areas ranged from:

- Academic Deans
- Human Resources
- Professional Schools
- Graduate School
- Provost Division

### 3. Community Study 2016

We analyzed the [final report](#) by Rankin & Associates on “Climate Assessment for Learning Living and Working” (2016). The survey was completed by 2,753 participants (26% of Dartmouth College community members). We note that generally the desired response rate for such a survey would be 30% or greater, and indeed Faculty and Staff participation rates exceeded this marker (35% and 37% respectively). Student participation rates were below 30% but the results from the survey were consistent with data from the many other surveys students completed recently (see [Dartmouth Community Study FAQs](#)).

## III. Research on Policies

We analyzed relevant existing policies at Dartmouth and researched policies and best practices at peer institutions.

### A. For Existing Policies at Dartmouth, see:

- Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities IDE and HR website:  
[https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/pdfs/accommodations\\_for\\_individuals\\_with\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/pdfs/accommodations_for_individuals_with_disabilities.pdf)  
<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~ide/disabilities/accomodations219.pdf>  
<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~ide/disabilities/disabilitygrievanceprocess2019.pdf>  
<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~ide/policies/studentgrievanceprocess2019.pdf>
- Dartmouth Compliance and Ethics Hotline <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~rmi/>
- Faculty Handbook (Governs Arts and Sciences and Thayer):  
[https://faculty.dartmouth.edu/dean/sites/faculty\\_dean.prod/files/dean\\_faculty/wysiwyg/facultyhandbook\\_apr\\_2019.pdf](https://faculty.dartmouth.edu/dean/sites/faculty_dean.prod/files/dean_faculty/wysiwyg/facultyhandbook_apr_2019.pdf)  
REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OF ASSISTANT PROFESSORS (Page 32)  
TENURE AND PROMOTION (Pages 35 -46)  
FACULTY MENTORING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Pages 51 -53)  
EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING RELATIVES/NEPOTISM (Page 90)
- Geisel Faculty Handbook: [https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/faculty/fac\\_info/](https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/faculty/fac_info/)
- Geisel Students Policy Handbook:  
[https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/faculty/pdf/geisel\\_student\\_policy\\_handbook\\_public.pdf](https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/faculty/pdf/geisel_student_policy_handbook_public.pdf)
- Guarini School of Graduate and Advanced Studies:  
<https://graduate.dartmouth.edu/policy/consensual-relationships-and-conflict-interest>  
<https://graduate.dartmouth.edu/policy/physical-and-learning-disabilities-policy>  
<https://graduate.dartmouth.edu/policy/code-conduct-nonacademic-regulations>
- Human Resources:  
<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/policy/>  
[https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/pdfs/corrective\\_action.pdf](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/pdfs/corrective_action.pdf)
- IDE: <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~ide/policies/>

- Sexual Respect:  
<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu/compliance/dartmouth-policies-procedures>  
<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu/policy/consensual-relationships-policy>
- Thayer School Graduate Student Handbook:  
<https://engineering.dartmouth.edu/images/uploads/student-handbook.pdf>
- Tuck Faculty Handbook:  
<https://www.tuck.dartmouth.edu/uploads/content/TuckFacultyHandbook18-19FINAL.pdf>
- Tuck Student Handbook:  
<https://tuckschool.sharepoint.com/Student%20Handbook/Student%20Handbook.pdf#search=tuck%20student%20handbook>
- Undergraduate Student Handbook: <https://www.dartmouth.edu/student-handbook/>

## B. Peer Institutions Considered:

- Brown University
- Columbia University
- Princeton University
- University of Michigan
- Yale University

## IV. Specific Areas Where Conflicts Exist

The main themes identified via our research (not in order of importance) are:

- (a) Mistreatment, such as exclusionary, offensive, intimidating, hostile behavior
- (b) Lack of accurate and responsible communication regarding decision-making
- (c) Fear of retaliation or lack of motivation to report
- (d) Negative impacts emanating from intimate relationships (ongoing or terminated) that affect the academic and working environment, including all constituencies in social or professional proximity
- (e) Perceived lack of consequences and inability for the institution to take action; perceived lack of efficient mechanisms for reporting incidents
- (f) Inequitable access to key services, for example parking, daycare

These themes were identified through review of the community study and qualitative information from our informal survey as well as our interviews with stakeholders across campus. Some supporting quantitative information includes:

- 47% of non-tenure track faculty and 50% of staff who completed the Community Survey have experienced exclusionary conduct as a result of position or status (Community Survey final report, Figure 31)
- Racial, ethnic and gender minority groups are more affected by issues relating to power dynamics according to the Community Survey
- Only 20% of Community Survey respondents who experienced exclusionary conduct reported it to a Dartmouth College resource (Community Survey final report, Table 30)

- 30% of Community Survey respondents observed someone else experience exclusionary conduct. Only 11% of these observers contacted a Dartmouth resource (Community Survey final report, Table 34)
- Of graduate student respondents who experienced exclusionary conduct, 32% experienced it from a faculty member (Community Survey final report, Figures 35-37)
- Only 34% of Community Survey staff respondents felt valued by faculty (Community Survey final report, pg 139)
- Only a small percentage (23%) of staff surveyed feel that their opinions are valued (Community Survey final report, pg 133)
- Of exempt staff respondents who experienced exclusionary conduct, 40% experienced it from a supervisor and 40% experienced it from a coworker. Of non-exempt staff respondents who experienced exclusionary conduct, 45% experienced it from a supervisor and 48% experienced it from a coworker. (Community Survey final report, Figures 35-37)
- Of undergraduate respondents who experienced exclusionary conduct, 80% experienced it from another student (Community Survey final report, Figures 35-37)

## V. Examples of Conflicts

Interview and survey analysis revealed various situations in which hierarchical power-differentiated relationships conflicted with the goals of greater cooperation, respectful work behavior, and professionalism. Examples of these relationships and related impacts follow. Note that not every type of appointment is fully represented due to the heterogeneity of appointments at Dartmouth.

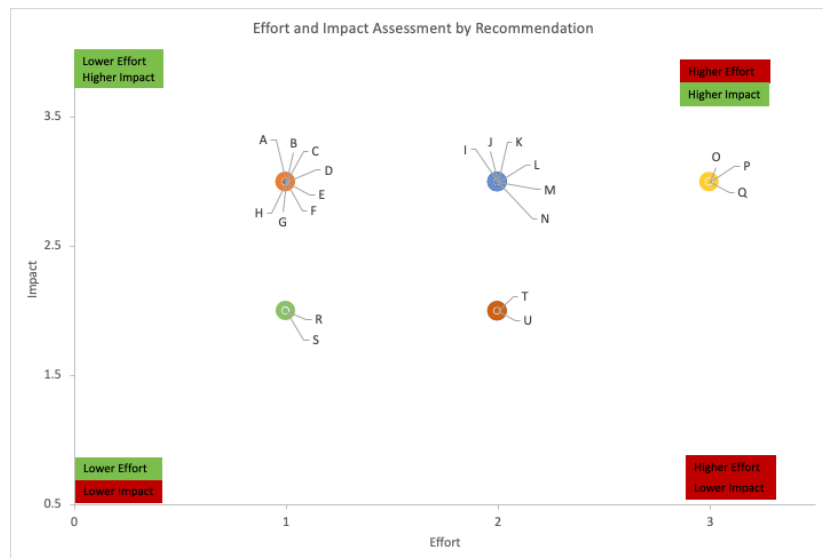
- **Staff - Faculty:**
  - Faculty asking staff to do personal “favors” (personal copying, travel arrangements etc). If the faculty are the direct supervisors this can be particularly bad; if the staff member could report to another staff member they would have an easier time with this
  - Faculty (or senior staff) who do not understand the authority they represent and behave in a confrontational manner to staff result in deeply impacting the staff through the use of verbal or email messages
  - Faculty being disrespectful and rude towards undergraduate dean for requesting that a student be granted the accommodations they require
  - Faculty members being intimidating and abusive to staff
  - Staff member taking family leave due to birth or adoption of a child not supported by faculty in terms of work-life balance
- **Graduate students - Faculty; Postdoctoral fellows - Faculty:**
  - Intimidated by faculty and afraid to ask questions of them (example: repeated discouragement via phrases such as "anyone with any speck of technical knowledge wouldn't think that")

- Communication issues with advisors, including unclear expectations/grading standards
  - Feeling of being treated unfairly, dependent, and powerless toward their advisors; advisors demand too much (workload, hours, vacation time)
  - Feeling pressured to take part in social activities with their advisors for fear of their advisors developing a negative opinion of them if they opt out
  - Experiencing sexual assault and sexual discrimination
  - Postdoctoral fellow / graduate student taking family leave due to birth or adoption of a child abused by faculty in terms of work-life balance
- **Undergraduates - Faculty:**
    - Professors denying accommodations to students with disabilities
    - Professors telling first-generation students they shouldn't major in a STEM field
    - International students experiencing difficulties in understanding the unspoken norms of US campuses and faculty-student interaction patterns; they might not speak up against inappropriate behavior because of uncertainty as to what is "normal" in a foreign context
    - Students uncomfortable asking questions of some professors for fear of getting yelled at ("you should know this")
    - Students going to the Undergraduate Deans Office for help with an issue with a faculty member but the UG Dean being unable to make the faculty shift their behavior
- **Junior faculty - Senior faculty:**
    - Senior faculty are the gatekeepers to success: promotions, appointments, etc. With that, they hold power: Ex: Senior faculty taking choice teaching assignments, junior faculty being taken off grant by senior faculty member without consultation
    - "Far too often, abuse of power (yelling, coercion to vote with another faculty member's preferences, degrading comments, dismissive interruptions, etc.) are a fact of life for women faculty and others without power in academic departments at Dartmouth."
    - Inclusivity of faculty meetings problematic in at least some departments, with junior faculty members hesitant to engage in discussion
    - Important decisions (e.g., regarding selection of department chairs) made without consulting junior faculty members
    - Concerns about tenure and promotion: transparency of the process, standards for tenure and promotion, expectations for success, fairness of procedures
    - Lack of formal and assigned mentor-mentee relationships, for incoming junior faculty members
    - Senior faculty members behaving in overbearing ways, even bullying junior faculty members
    - Senior faculty micromanaging the time, research or teaching of less senior faculty

- Annual evaluations/reviews/assessments of junior faculty members, by senior faculty: concerns about fairness, consistency, transparency and standardization for those evaluations
- Junior faculty member reluctant to take family leave for the birth or adoption of a child for fear of repercussions
- **Student - Student:**
  - “Haves and have-nots”—a student without a lot of discretionary cash feels pressured into spending money on going out to eat, etc. They go into debt (and an extreme case of this includes someone fraudulently getting funds) to not be excluded
  - Student "haves and have-nots" particularly impactful when between terms - especially the 6-week gap between fall and winter
  - Leaders of student organizations and fraternities/sororities exercise significant power over other students, contributing to an in-group/out-group culture and feelings of isolation among students who “don’t get in”
  - Housing and roommate issues. Examples: sublet students not on lease and therefore powerless when locked out; discrimination complaints in shared living situations

## VI. Recommendations

We recognize that our recommendations will require financial investment. We believe that our peers, Brown and Princeton were successful in their climate improvement efforts in part due to campaign initiatives and directed investments. We present our recommendations, categorized by the impact we feel the particular recommendation would impart on the community. We also attempt to gauge the effort required to put in place the suggested recommendation.



## High Impact, Low Effort

- A. Institute a college-wide code of ethics/conduct which is a mandatory part of onboarding and renewed every year; see, for example, [Brown's Code of Conduct](#) (high impact, low effort)
- B. Develop a system for reporting exclusionary conduct that is understood by all, and that encourages the reporting of exclusionary conduct, for example via an ombuds-like office that is enabled to share themes with relevant administrators (high impact, low effort)
- C. Create a Board of Trustees committee focused on Dartmouth climate, see for example [Princeton](#) (high impact, low effort)
- D. Develop a mentoring guide for faculty who mentor graduate students (see for example University of Michigan's [How to Mentor Graduate Students](#) or HHMI [Making the right moves](#)) (high impact, low effort)
- E. Create advisory committees for postdocs and graduate students outside of departments (perhaps within the Graduate School, not located in the department where students study) (high impact, low effort)
- F. Identify a mechanism to remove undue influence and bias in faculty voting (for example: requiring all voting by paper ballot) (high impact, low effort)
- G. Apply a consistent policy of staff being supervised by staff, rather than by faculty, to provide support to staff and remove power issues (high impact, low effort)
- H. Examine parental leave policies for all employees, see for example [Yale](#), [Brown](#) (high impact, low effort)

## High Impact, Medium Effort

- I. Repeat the Community Survey regularly, aim for broader participation, properly analyze results and take action; see, for example, [Brown's Campus Climate Survey](#) (high impact, medium effort)
- J. Develop an Allyship Certification Program as well as an Accomplice Program; see, for example, [Learn to be a LEAD Ally](#) at University of Delaware, [Social Justice Ally](#) at Florida State University, ["E.A.G.L.E. Certificate Program"](#) at American University (high impact, medium effort)
- K. Improve the current DartSmart training for supervisors and extend to faculty, including departmental chairs, see for example [Brown's Leadership Certification Program](#) (high impact, medium effort)
- L. Create a process by which discriminatory grievances for members of non-protected classes can be brought to mediation, where an expert helps with communication and potentially prescribes training, with consequences if not followed: counselling, training, behavior modification rather than escalation to legal battle (high impact, medium effort)
- M. More universally and consistently applied actions, with actual, meaningful consequences, to deal with violations of policy (high impact, medium effort)
- N. Onboarding and mentoring for junior faculty (see, for example, [Launch committees](#) at the University of Michigan or [Mentoring Best Practices](#) at Columbia University) (high impact, medium effort)



## High Impact, High Effort

- O. Submit a campus-wide ADVANCE grant to further improve the diversity and power dynamics of the academy at Dartmouth (high impact, high effort)
- P. Determine a mechanism to deal with situations in which current or former faculty relationships (intimate relationships) negatively affect the academic and professional environment (e.g. relationships with faculty of equal or lower rank, relationships with students) (high impact, high effort)
- Q. Share supporting reasons from previous evaluations of the four-term academic year--does this create additional stressors with respect to power dynamics? Have the practical reasons to do this outlived their usefulness in the current social structures? (high impact, high effort)

## Medium Impact, Low Effort

- R. Provide an opportunity for junior faculty to voice concerns about fairness and clarity of the tenure and promotion process (medium impact, low effort)
- S. Examine practices related to hiring, status, and treatment of lecturers, to bring into line with Dartmouth's educational mission (e.g., voting, contracts, committee representation for lecturers) (medium impact, low effort)

## Medium Impact, Medium Effort

- T. Create a committee that examines how to handle permanent faculty members and administration who engage in exclusionary, offensive, hostile behavior; equitable with what we do with staff, tenure-track faculty, etc. (medium impact, medium effort)
- U. Consolidate / organize relevant policies for ease of use and transparency for the community. See, for example, Princeton University's [consolidation strategy](#) (medium impact, medium effort)