Achieving More Diverse and Inclusive Departments

through a Force Field Analysis

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The Force Field Analysis is a tool adapted from work originated by Kurt Lewin designed to diagnose a current point of stasis in order to plan change. The Force Field Analysis identifies forces working toward change (resources) and forces working against change (barriers) on the premise that stasis represents an equilibrium between resources and barriers and change is enabled by strategically disrupting this equilibrium.

Once the current equilibrium is understood, the balance of forces can be changed in five ways:

1. Strengthen the valence/power of existing Resources
2. Weaken the valence/power of existing Barriers
3. Add new Resources
4. Eliminate Barriers
5. Transform/flip Barriers into Resources

This tool examines resources and barriers associated with diversity and inclusion at four levels: individuals, a change team, the department, and the broader environment.

# The Individual Level

Specific individuals may be a resource for creating a more diverse or inclusive department through:

* Their formal fields of knowledge/expertise
* Their role or connections inside the institution
* Their role or prestige in the discipline
* Their social identity or life experience
* Specific skills and abilities (e.g., leadership skills, mentoring skills, diplomacy skills)
* Their stated commitment to diversity and inclusion
* Their teaching/pedagogical expertise
* A highly diverse lab group

Individuals may be a barrier to creating a more diverse and inclusive department through:

* Ineffective classroom or teaching behaviors
* Disrespectful or uncivil interactions with staff
* Territoriality or the creation of cliques among faculty and/or students
* Assertions that diversity is associated with lowered standards
* Being a non-participant in the life of the department
* Rude or belittling behavior with peers, external visitors, or search candidates

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# The Team Level

Resources and barriers associated with a given change team include:

* The diversity of the team – how well does this team represent the various stakeholders involved?
* The credibility of the team – how well is this team able to speak to these issues? Who will listen to them? (include considerations of rank, prestige, reputation, length of time in the department)
* The balance of skill sets represented on the team
* The functionality of the team (includes interpersonal interactions, organization and planning, continuity of membership, etc.)
* The ability of the team to weather setbacks and conflict

# The Departmental Level

Resources and barriers at the department level related to being a more diverse and inclusive department can come from any aspect of department life and can related specific to diversity and inclusion or more generally to the capacity of a department to work together or to go through change.

Consider the following:

* how diverse are the current demographics of faculty, students, staff?
* what is the balance of faculty rank?
* how collegial, collaborative, and/or interdisciplinary is the department?
* are faculty meetings attended and effective? or dominated by sub-groups or predictably devolve into gripe sessions?
* do staff generally feel respected and integrated into the department?
* how resilient is the department – are faculty and staff stretched too thin already? fatigued by other recent large change?
* are there long-standing conflicts or divisions in the department?
* have there been recent triggers that raise the awareness of the need to become more diverse and inclusive? how has the department responded to these?
* how empowered do people in your department feel to speak up, make change, or lead new initiatives?
* what resources do you have to develop awareness or to develop the capacity to make change?

# The Larger Environment

The larger environment includes the college, other departments, the disciplinary community, funding agencies, national/international professional associations, etc.

Examples of external resources include:

* institution-wide initiatives
* ASME initiatives, funding opportunities
* offices, policies, or institutional roles already committed to diversity and inclusion
* particularly productive alliances or affinities between your department and these activities and offices
* external staffing or other infrastructure that could support your change goals

Examples of external barriers include:

* the absence of an activity or office
* a university resource that *does* exist but is somehow ineffective or under-resourced
* when your department’s needs or goals differ from other institutionally supported investments in diversity and inclusion (i.e., your need is different than what is currently getting funded)

## **Force Field Analysis Worksheet for Planning Change**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Forces Pushing for Change**Resources (+) |  | **Forces Pushing Against Change**Barriers (-) |
|  | **Individual** |  |
|  | **Team** |  |
|  | **Department** |  |
|  | **Larger Environment** |  |