

FACULTY TIPSHEET

Preventing Workplace Bullying

“Bullying” is characterized as negative, unwelcome behavior that is repeated and/or severe enough that a reasonable person would find it marked by intolerance, hostility, harassment, and/or intimidation. Bullying can have a significant effect on the person or people targeted and can take a physical and emotional toll. Here are some tips to help you demonstrate intellectual and ethical leadership by taking a strong position against workplace bullying.

- 1. If you are the target of bullying behavior** – First, consult with a trusted colleague or friend and describe what happened. Second, try to informally resolve by talking directly to the individual exhibiting bullying behavior or by enlisting the help of a colleague, chair/head, supervisor, associate dean, or dean. Importantly, document everything: who was involved, what happened, and where and when the bullying occurred.
- 2. If a colleague is the target of bullying behavior** – Listen with empathy but also with objectivity. You have a responsibility to make sure that disclosure of bullying does not devolve into unsubstantiated gossip. Encourage your colleague to seek assistance from a faculty ombud or person in authority.
- 3. If you are accused of bullying behavior** – Document what happened. Do not meet with the accuser without facilitation and/or approval from the office reviewing the formal complaint, as this might make the situation worse and constitute retaliation or other policy violations.
- 4. If you are in a position of authority** – (e.g., principal investigator, chair/head, supervisor, director, dean) Leaders are responsible for creating a healthy workplace free from bullying. If workplace bullying occurs, here are some suggestions for responding:
 - Take every complaint seriously and make sure that everyone recognizes the seriousness of these behaviors.
 - Respond directly to the bullying by labeling the behavior (i.e., “Your behavior can be seen as bullying and it’s not okay to talk to/treat people that way.”).
 - Keep allegations as confidential as possible.
 - Immediately contact your immediate supervisor and discuss options for addressing concerning behavior.
 - Ensure that retaliation against the target does not occur and that the alleged perpetrator is not disciplined solely on the basis of the allegations alone.
 - Maintain records of the complaint or incident; they may be requested by the university.
 - Work with Human Resources, the Executive Vice Chancellor’s Office, or the IANR Vice Chancellor’s Office to set up protections to prevent bullying from happening again.
 - Consider requesting Workplace Bullying in Academia (go.unl.edu/facultyworkshops) for your area.

RESOURCES

- *Professors Behaving Badly: Faculty Misconduct in Graduate Education* by John M. Braxton, Eve Proper, and Alan E. Bayer go.unl.edu/pbh2011
- *Faculty Incivility: The Rise of the Academic Bullying Culture and What to Do About It* by Darla J. Twale and Barbara M. DeLuca go.unl.edu/abc2008
- *Workplace Bullying in Academia: A Canadian Study* by Ruth McKay, Diane Huberman Arnold, Jae Fratzl, and Roland Thomas go.unl.edu/errj2008
- The Chronicle of Higher Education: “When Academic Bullies Claim the Mantle of Free Speech” go.unl.edu/academicbullies
- The Muse: “Don’t Let Workplace Bullies Win” go.unl.edu/workplacebullies
- Workplace Bullying Institute workplacebullying.org

