



Office of the Chair and Graduate Chair

DPES 2011-5 Civility

From: William Gough, Chair, DPES

Date: January 20, 2011

The vast majority of interactions within our department and with those outside of the department can be characterized as professional, friendly and civil. However on a few rare occasions, often unintentionally, conduct can be characterized as uncivil. The University in recent years has developed a policy on civility. This policy is being sent to you with this memo. It is a thoughtful document addressing the issue and recognizing various cultural influences, power structures and personal experiences that contribute to some confusion on what is or is not uncivil. I urge you to consider carefully this document and how it can apply to our interactions with each other and what we should do if we feel we have been victimized by unwanted conduct.

Within in any organization there are pressure points we should be mindful of. In an academic department, these points include but are not limited to the interactions in which there is a power dynamic, for example, teaching staff and administrative and/or technical staff, professors and lecturers, and professors and graduate and undergraduate students, including teaching assistants. Other common pressure points revolve around gender, race, culture and age and may not have an overt power component (i.e. reporting structure).

There are a number of recourses available to you if you feel you have experienced uncivil conduct. Often confronting the issue directly may help to sensitize others to what you find uncomfortable. This may not be possible in all situations especially those involving relationships that have a

power dynamic. If you feel your safety is compromised, this should be reported immediately to me and to Campus Security. I am always available for consultation. Collective agreements often address uncivil conduct with specific grievance procedures, although in most cases, attempts to resolve issues before reaching such formal proceedings are strongly encouraged. If the conduct comes from the Chair, you can go one up to the Dean. Failing these regular channels, the University's Ombudsperson Office can be contacted.

I in no way wish to be alarmist. As I noted at the beginning of this memo, incivility is the exception in our department and I believe we form a vibrant, supportive community.