

# **AN EVIDENCE-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC WORKPLACE CLIMATE**

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**TEXAS A&M**  
UNIVERSITY.

# Academic Workplace Climate

- **Perceptions of a university in terms of policies, practices, procedures, routines, and rewards**
  - An experientially based description of what people see and report happening to them in the university context
  - The prevailing conditions of the university environment
  - The “personality” of the university
- **Empirically documented effects on faculty/staff and, in turn, university**
  - Better climate = happy productive faculty/staff = university excellence
- **Can be altered and improved**

# How Can Faculty/Staff Benefit?

- **Increased job satisfaction**
- **Higher morale**
- **Better physical and mental health**
- **Enhanced motivation**
- **Improved ability to manage stress**



# How Can the University Benefit?



- Improved quality, performance, productivity
- Better able to attract and retain exceptional employees
- Reduced absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover
- Fewer accidents and injuries
- Improved customer (e.g., student) service and satisfaction
- Lower healthcare costs



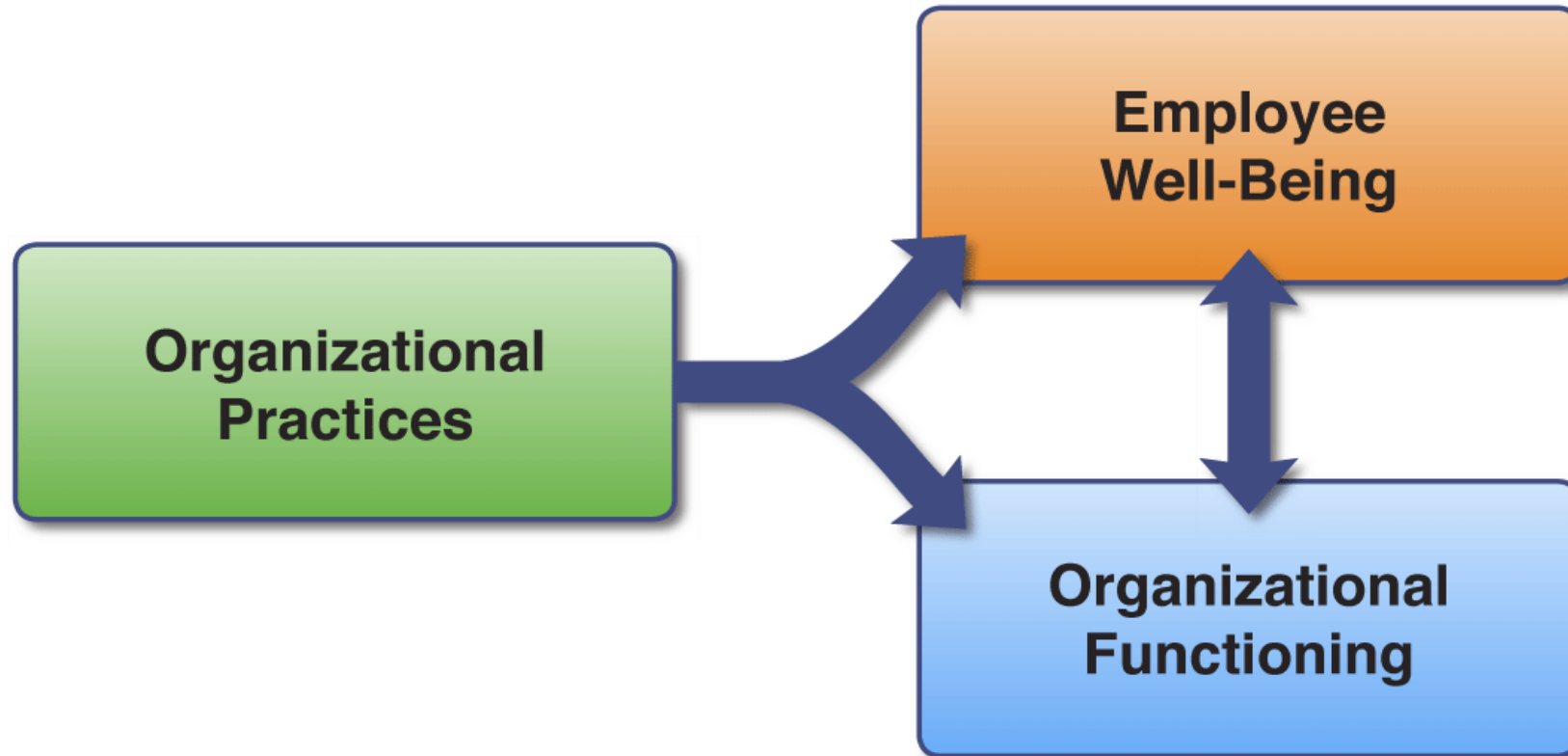
# **The American Psychological Association's *Psychologically Healthy Workplace***

- **Designed to educate employers about the link between workplace climate and employee health/well-being and organizational performance**
- **Emphasizes importance of organizational- and unit-level actions**
- **Characterized by “intentional, systematic, and collaborative efforts to maximize employee well-being and productivity by providing a supportive social-organizational environment, and accessible opportunities for career and work-life enhancement”**

**(Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2004)**



# The Psychologically Healthy Workplace



# Psychologically Healthy Workplace Practices

**Employee  
Involvement**



**Growth &  
Development**



**Work-Life  
Balance**



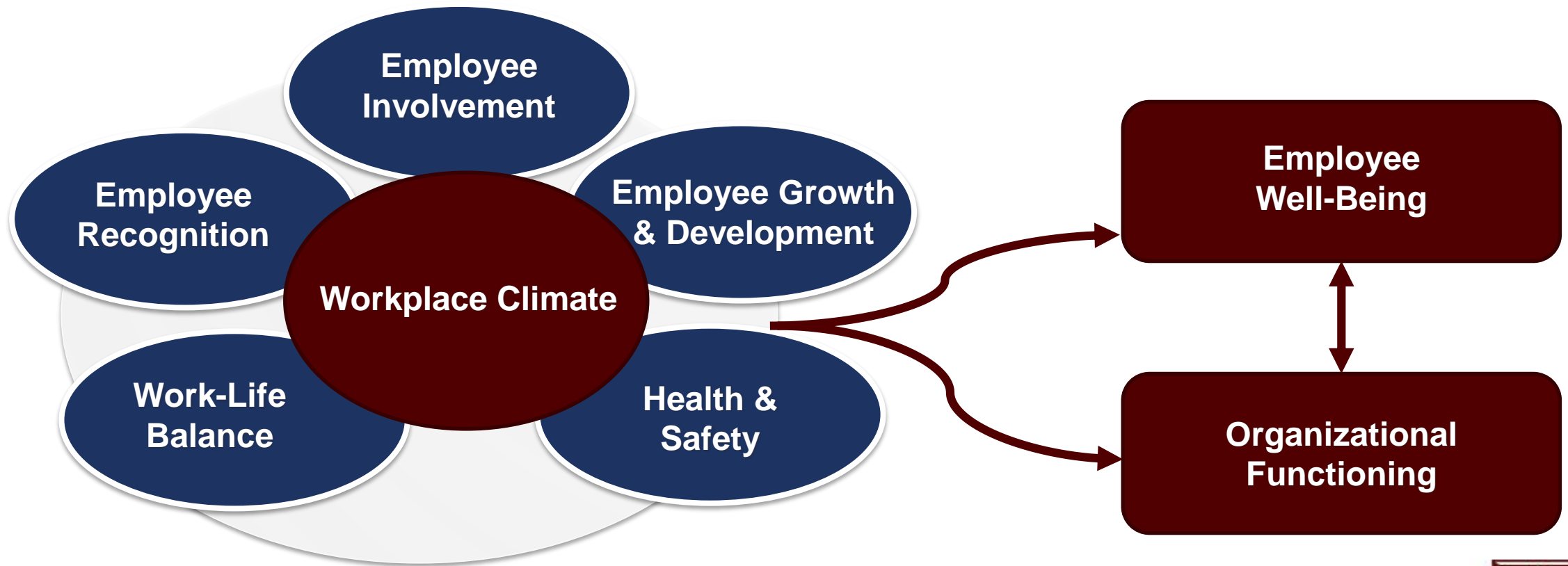
**Health & Safety**



**Recognition**



# The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Model





# Employee Involvement

- ***Defined:***
  - Formal and informal means of getting employees involved in decision-making, problem-solving, and other aspects of the organization
- ***Key Empirical Findings:***
  - Heightened well-being and commitment to the university
  - Lowered emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions
  - Greater team effectiveness and quality of work life
  - More favorable attitudes toward leaders
  - Increased perceptions of organizational support

# Faculty/Staff Involvement Implementation

- **Allow employees to bring ideas and perspectives as a part of organizational decision-making**
  - Faculty/staff governance
  - Autonomous decision-making
  - Participation in strategic planning
  - Quality Enhancement Programs (QEPs)
  - Independent committees and task forces
  - Faculty/staff surveys
  - Suggestion forums



# Employee Growth and Development

- ***Defined:***
  - Formal and informal educational opportunities that increase the likelihood of career advancement
- ***Key Empirical Findings:***
  - Heightened well-being and commitment to the university
  - Greater job satisfaction
  - Greater organizational effectiveness
  - Increased leadership skills
  - Increased perceptions of organizational support

# Faculty/Staff Growth & Development Implementation

- **Provide opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities, and apply competencies to new situations**
  - Leadership development
  - Grant writing/administration workshops
  - Teaching workshops
  - Skills training
  - Mentoring programs
  - Tuition reimbursement
  - Career development and counseling services
  - Promotion and internal career advancement opportunities



# Work-Life Balance

- ***Defined:***
  - Formal and informal ways to help employees better balance the demands of their work life with the demands of their personal life
- ***Key Empirical Findings:***
  - Lower turnover intentions
  - Higher life satisfaction and family well-being
  - Heightened commitment to the university
  - Lowered job burnout
  - Greater job satisfaction

# Work-Life Balance Implementation

- **Help faculty/staff to balance the multiple demands in their lives**
  - **Eldercare benefits**
  - **Assistance with childcare**
  - **Resources to help faculty/staff manage personal financial issues**
  - **Flexible work arrangements, such as flextime and telecommuting**
  - **Availability of benefits for family members and domestic partners**
  - **Flexible leave options beyond those required by the Family and Medical Leave Act**



# Health & Safety

- ***Defined:***
  - Formal and informal programs and practices designed to promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce the negative effects of stress; creating an environment of respect, inclusion, and free of interpersonal maltreatment
- ***Key Empirical Findings:***
  - Heightened well-being and commitment to the university
  - Greater job satisfaction
  - Lowered job burnout
  - Better performance
  - Decreased absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover
  - Fewer accidents and injuries

Beus, Payne, Bergman, & Arthur, 2010; Kaplan & Tetrick, 2010; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007



# Health & Safety Implementation

- **Maximize the health/well-being of faculty/staff through prevention, assessment, and treatment of potential health risks**
  - **Programs/policies to promote equality and inclusion in the workplace (gender equality, sexual harassment, diversity training)**
  - **Programs/policies to promote the physical safety of employees (workplace violence policies, training in handling dangerous materials)**
  - **Programs to promote wellness (wellness programs, health seminars, health screenings)**
  - **Programs to help employees manage stress (stress management training, exercise facilities)**
  - **Programs/services to help employees manage physical or psychological health issues (counseling, employee assistance programs)**





# Employee Recognition

- ***Defined:***
  - Monetary and non-monetary ways of recognizing employee contributions to the organization
- ***Key Empirical Findings:***
  - Heightened retention
  - Greater job satisfaction
  - Enhanced motivation
  - Better performance
  - Greater organizational citizenship behaviors

# Employee Recognition Implementation

- **Single out and reward faculty/staff for their contributions**
  - Faculty/staff awards
  - Recognition ceremonies
  - Fair monetary compensation
  - Competitive benefits packages
  - Acknowledgement of contributions and milestones
  - Performance-based bonuses and pay increases

# Communication Strategies

- **Provide regular, on-going opportunities for faculty/staff to provide feedback to administration**
- **Make the goals and actions of the university and administration clear**
- **Assess the needs of faculty/staff and involve them in the development and implementation of PHW practices**
- **Use multiple channels to communicate the importance of PHW**
- **Lead by example, by encouraging key organizational leaders to participate in PHW activities**
- **Communicate information about the outcomes and success of PHW practices to all members of the university**



# Alignment Between ADVANCE Activities and PHW Practices

ADVANCE Activity	PHW Practice				
	Growth & Development	Health & Safety	Involvement	Recognition	Work-Life Balance
<i>Climate Change</i>					
LEAD Program	•			•	
Dept. Mini Grants	•	•	•	•	•
FASIT Program		•	•		•
Merit Pool Incent.				•	
Stud. Div. Training	•	•			•
<i>Recruitment &amp; Retention</i>					
Speaker Series	•				
STRIDE Program	•	•	•	•	•
Faculty Recognition		•		•	
Roadmap Workshop	•	•			•
<i>Success Enhancement</i>					
Admin. Fellow	•	•	•	•	
Scholar Program	•	•	•		•
Success Circles	•	•	•		•

# University Examples

## *University of Southern California “One Stop Wellness”*

- **Center for Work and Family Life**
- **Provides services, resources, and tools for faculty/staff and their families (e.g. confidential counseling, stress assessments)**
- **Launched *Healthy Trojan* website which features campus resources to enhance physical, emotional, intellectual, and social wellness**
- **Operates stress-reduction laboratories that allow users to see in real time the negative effects of stressful thoughts on their hearts**



*University of Akron*  
*“Learning to Work Together”*

- **Conflict Resolution Services program requires employees to work together to find equitable agreements while avoiding acrimony and de-escalating conflicts**
- **Quarterly training sessions, in which outside guest speakers are brought to campus to discuss dispute resolution**
- **Presence of trained mediators on campus provide employees with a resource for guidance on dealing with interpersonal work situations**
- **Voluntary turnover at the university has decreased dramatically, substantial savings in legal costs have been realized, and the university attributes its increased productivity over the last two years to improved working conditions and a climate of mutual respect**

