Bullying and Civil Discourse

• Is it truly bullying, or a case of poor civil discourse?
  – We’ve become more verbally aggressive and competitive
  – Slurs and put-downs are common language, and hidden in “comedy.” Might they be misconstrued as threats?
  – Popular media: Manipulation is the way to success

The Ecology of Bullying

• Socio-Ecological Model: Behaviors flourish in environments that:
  – Actively or passively enable the behavior through access and availability to the means to accomplish the behavior
  – Send a set of intended or unintended messages about the community standards surrounding the behavior
  – Maintains inaccurate normative perceptions about the prevalence and attitudes concerning the behavior by the population
A Bully-Supportive Environment on Campus?

• What is the discourse about bullying on my campus?
  – What are the stories? Where do they focus environmentally? What people/places?
  – What is the “typical response” in conversations about this subject across sub-groups on campus?
  – What is NOT discussed about this topic? Who is not included in the conversation?

A Bully-Supportive Environment on Campus?

• What are the policies concerning bullying on my campus?
  – How is it adjudicated? What are the penalties?
• What are the “lived standards” about this behavior, despite the policies?
• What misperceptions exist about this behavior among various sub-groups?
Changing the Environment:
Lessons learned from alcohol environmental management efforts

• Consistent attention and awareness matters
  – Are we collecting and analyzing data?
  – Does the data tell us the WHEN and WHERE?
  – Are we talking about this across campus?
• Policy that is educated and enforced matters
  – Are we communicating the policy, especially to high-risk groups?
  – How do we enforce the policy?
  – How does policy differ from day-to-day practices?

Changing the Environment:
Lessons learned from alcohol environmental management efforts

• Resetting the social norms of the behavior matters
  – Is bullying expected as a membership ritual for student clubs and organizations?
  – Is bullying expected as how the academic world lives and operates?
• Establishing models and places for appropriate behavior matters
  – Do we know how to get what we want without bullying?
  – Do we have places and events where bullying doesn’t exist?
Cyberbullying: “The Perfect Storm”

- The Perfect Storm for Cyberbullying
  - A student at a limited stage of personal development who is unable to process long-term outcomes or effect on others;
  - An environment that fosters the inability to resolve conflict openly and through civil means
  - A technology that allows for instant expression of emotion, often through creative means that feel private

Approaches to Cyberbullying

- Education
  - Civil Discourse Online 101 to all digital natives
  - Immediate feedback about inappropriate postings

- Policy
  - Recognition of online life as part of student behavior
  - Appropriate measures at identification, reporting, and adjudication

- Environment
  - Surrounding students with more effective opportunities for conflict resolution and expression