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Study Aims to Curtail Classroom Incivility

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – A welcoming classroom environment can make a big impact on the academic success of a student. But what happens when incivility in the classroom disrupts the learning experience, and how can the issue be remedied?

Becka Wagner, Ed.D., assistant professor of nursing at Cedarville University, is answering those questions through a collaborative research project with Wright State University.

“Uncivil behavior is very damaging and discouraging to the educational experience and has a pervasive effect on the quality of education,” said Wagner. “If we can address incivility, we can make the academic experience better.”

Incivility in higher education manifests itself through a variety of rude or disrespectful behaviors between students or faculty.

“There is a wide range of behaviors that are considered uncivil,” said Wagner. “It could be anything from a student arguing with a professor, being disrespectful in class or displaying threatening behavior toward others. Likewise, faculty can also show disrespect to students in a variety of ways, such as not showing up for class or not working well with students.”

Wagner initially began researching the topic while obtaining her doctorate, where she studied perceptions of incivility in higher education across business, education and nursing disciplines. While her initial study showed an equal distribution of incivility in those three areas, she concluded that more extensive research was needed across a wide range of academic disciplines.

“As a nursing professional, I wanted to know if there was more incivility in nursing education than in other disciplines,” said Wagner. “As educators, we want to reduce the incidents of incivility in higher education. But before we can do that, we have to know if incivility is more prevalent in certain academic disciplines.”

In order to determine the perception of incivility across various programs, Wagner and her research partners, Rosalie O'Dell Mainous, Ph.D., dean of the Wright State University College of Nursing and Health and Cindra Holland, D.N.P., assistant professor of nursing at Wright State University, will survey faculty and undergraduate students at Wright State to measure their perceptions of incivility in the university environment.

Information obtained from the survey will be used by Wagner and others to create suggestions for how best to combat classroom incivility and create a more welcoming and productive learning environment.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,711 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.