

From: [Campus Climate Proposal form](#)
To: [Libby Peterek](#); [Carrie Olson](#)
Subject: New submission from Campus Climate Proposals
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2016 9:37:54 AM

First name:



Last name:



Email address:



What is your affiliation with UW-Madison? For group submissions, please respond for main contact.

- Student (including undergraduate, graduate, professional)

Describe the concept. If already in use here or elsewhere, please indicate this.

In response to the Chancellor's call for actions to address the social issues and threats of hatred and racial biases to campus climate, we propose building a just and merciful community at UW-Madison. This concept, a just and merciful community, is inclusive, holistic and humanistic because it takes a complete, balanced approach of applying principles of justice and mercy to treat all diverse members in the community, as witnessed by a teacher working in a just and merciful school community, "Kids love it here. They can fail, learn and grow." * This finding comes from the research of Dr. Robert Enright and his team, over the past 30 years on this campus, and one particular research that aims to explore the potential application for both principles of justice and mercy in school discipline with Wisconsin middle school teachers in the year 2000. The research shows promising prospects of a just and merciful school community because of its potential to promote student self-development, better school environment/climate, as well as better citizenship (66% of respondents in the study just mentioned). We believe that a just and merciful community will fit the needs of UW-Madison because justice will help combat hatred and biases and mercy will cultivate a harmonized and inclusive climate.

To understand the concept of a just and merciful community, we must first understand the principles of justice and mercy. The principle of justice is about fairness, equality, and application of laws and rules. The principle of mercy is not only about forgiveness but also about kindness, compassion, generosity, benevolence and love of people. When groups operate only from the virtue of justice, they tend to focus only on rules and laws that can be somewhat arbitrary in nature, which can lead to being cold and uncaring to the persons involved in the interactions. As mercy recognizes persons as ends in and of themselves, mercy helps balance the rule-based justice operation and humanize the justice principle. In summary, both principles of mercy and justice are valued and utilized in a just and merciful community where policies, programs, and procedures are applied justly and kindly for the benefits of all community members.

How would this affect cultural change on campus?

One of the major cultural changes in turning the UW-Madison campus into a just and merciful community is that we will have a common goal and direction as members of the community (i.e. administrative staffs and leaders, faculties and students). The virtues of justice and mercy will become our common interest and language as a Badger. The elevation of these virtues is critical as a huge community like UW-campus that is made of various schools, department and centers, we need to ground ourselves on meaningful values with a common purpose of ensuring benefits for all. It should be noted that when we use the word "virtue," this does not imply a religious orientation but instead fidelity to Western classical philosophy with the advent of the ideas expressed by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in ancient Greece. We know of no world culture that does not value the two virtues of justice and mercy.

With the goals of being just and merciful, community members on campus will begin to be more cognizant on these approaches to healthy interaction while they play their roles in teaching, learning, delivering administrative services or exercising leadership on the campus. Over time, the enhanced cognition of justice and mercy helps shift the customary mode of operation from mechanical heeding to the rule to humane attention to the individuals involved in the context. As Kant so famously put it, we begin to see people as ends in and of themselves rather than as means to my own pleasure or power. So teachers, administrators, and students will find more humanistic means of interaction when issues arise. For example, when a student makes a mistake, a teacher will give second chance to the student rather than a penalty based on arbitrary rules. When conflicts occur between a teacher and a student, or between students, they can learn to forgive each other while finding a fair approach to address their conflicts. In an environment where we are encouraged to be more humanistic by being just and merciful, we can become "less self-centered, more respectful and cooperative, (... and having ...) a better balance and happiness in life" as noted by the respondents (#2, #45 and #53) of the just and merciful survey in the year 2000.

Perhaps the major cultural shift in a just and merciful campus is the affirmation of our belief and respect for each individual as an independent self with an inherent worth as a human being. Just like you and I, each of us has our own unique set of human weaknesses and limitations, as well as strengths and potential to learn and grow to become better. While we may not avoid our differences, we can all learn to work on our biases and anger and address conflicts together in a civil manner with our just and merciful minds and hearts as a just and merciful community (JMC) member.

Overall, a just and merciful campus will improve the overall climate and learning environment at UW-Madison. It will also improve student learning and development. As echoed by the teaching professionals in the 2000 survey, students "could feel empowered (#73)", "start afresh (#42)", "become self-regulated (#35)" and "motivated to improve (#47 and #42)". At the end, our students will be more prepared to be just and merciful citizens for the society in the future. Further, we are unaware of any large organization that has had the vision and courage to adopt such a model on the community level. The UW-Madison again would be a leader in showing the world a better way, a way thoroughly researched in the context of Forgiveness Therapy and Forgiveness Education by Professor Enright on this campus, starting in 1985 and now with a worldwide reach.

For new ideas, how would you propose piloting this idea to see if it would work? If the idea is already in use at UW-Madison, how would you propose expanding or altering this program for greater impact?

(Note: * denotes ideas that have been used.)

Creating a just and merciful community on campus where we will be kind, respectful, and appreciative of one another as an equal member, despite our differences, is an ideal pursuit for all of us at UW-Madison. To achieve this valuable goal, we propose the following short-term and long-run strategic actions:

1. Chancellor explicitly announces the goal of creating a just and merciful community for the campus. This sets a tone for us that we have a common interest and moral purpose to pursue as a community so that people from all stripes can flourish together despite our differences. This will require some education regarding what justice and mercy are and what they are not. It will take some time for these new ideas to be absorbed by people within the community.

2. Conduct "Forgiveness as a Choice" education and training* to help reduce anger, anxiety, stress or depression due to recent outcry of hatred, racial slur, biases and tensions on campus.

The American Psychology Association (APA) has approved forgiveness therapy as an effective clinical approach "among the important psychotherapies of our time" (Dr. Frank Farley, Former President of APA)¹. The preponderance of evidence from empirical research led by Dr. Robert Enright over the last 30 years has shown that forgiveness is efficacious in reducing anger, anxiety, stress, and depression for many people suffering pains and emotional wounds from injustices such as incest violations, substance abuse, emotional abuse, violence, as well as racial-ethnic discrimination and wars. Forgiveness intervention not only reduces negative emotions and pains, but also it helps increase self-esteem, hope, and joy. These findings have been consistent for forgiveness research studies in different regions of the

world including contentious regions such as Milwaukee, Wisconsin's central city, Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Korea.

Although Dr. Robert Enright has provided forgiveness lectures and forgiveness training in the past, we can expand its utilization by institutionalizing forgiveness programs/intervention on campus by:

- a) encouraging the use of forgiveness therapy as a clinical approach at University Health Services Center for the counseling and consultation service to students and staff.
- b) providing annual forgiveness training¹ to counseling staff at University Health Services, if they are new to forgiveness therapy, to ensure understanding and proper application of forgiveness therapy.
- c) giving two public lectures on forgiveness and its latest research¹ in the fall and spring semester each year. This public lecture will be open to all members at UW-Madison campus as well as public community members of the society at large.

3. Encourage faculty and staff to cultivate a just and merciful community in their academic circle. To assist in this effort, we can create a short film (15 minutes) highlighting the importance and needs of a just and merciful community, and present the film at faculty and staff meetings.

4. Create a new course called "Creating a just and merciful community" that will be held twice a year beginning the Spring semester of 2017.

Using the method of community-based learning and participation research, we will explore the concepts of justice and mercy and its relevant applications for participants in real life situations.

In the process, we also will examine the formation of prejudice and biases as well as the different elements of moral agency that may affect our knowledge, emotion, and behaviors toward ourselves and others in a community. This course emphasizes practices through class participation as well as real life application. Class participants will share, learn, and co-construct the just and merciful community together as both students and researchers. The expected outcomes for the course include the followings:

- (a) Class participants can acquire a better sense of who they are as a moral agent and how they can apply the principles of justice and mercy in their respective roles on campus.
- (b) By integrating the knowledge and practical wisdom of participants, we can formulate a practical model of the just and merciful community that can be scaled and applied across campus over time.

This course is open to student, staff and faculty. It can be a 1 to 3 credits course for undergraduate and graduate students.

What resources would be needed to implement your suggestion?

- (1) A Project Assistantship beginning the Fall of 2016 is needed to assist in the coordination and implementation of the aforementioned action-items 1 and 2.
- (2) A lecturer position is needed for developing and delivering the course, "Creating a just and merciful community" in both the fall and spring semester. This course can begin in the Spring of 2017. It is preferable that there will be at least a 3-years commitment for this exploratory course so that we can gather empirical evidence for the best practices of a just and merciful community and build a practical model that serves each sub-community group within and between groups across UW-Madison campus.

If this proposal was developed in partnership with any other organizations, please list them below.

The partners for this proposal includes [REDACTED] and Dr. Robert Enright at the Department of Educational Psychology in the School of Education. [REDACTED] and she had worked as an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy Analyst in the Wisconsin state government for over 13 years. She had developed policies and programs in the state including EEO/AA and diversity training such as prejudice and its impacts in the workplace. Dr. Robert Enright has taught and researched in forgiveness for over 3 decades. He is the trailblazer for forgiveness research, an author of seven books on forgiveness with over 130 publications. He is highly demanded as a public lecturer on forgiveness in many parts of the world including the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Greece, the United Kingdom, Italy, South Africa, and the United Nation.

Please use this space for any additional information about your proposal that you wish to share:

There are many misunderstandings about mercy and forgiveness and how these co-exist with justice. First and foremost, forgiveness is a choice. A person can choose to forgive without condoning injustice. Forgiveness is not just "letting go" of unjust situations either. A forgiver can choose not to reconcile with

the offender. Forgiveness is not forgetting. A forgiver can still remember an offense long after it happened, but a true forgiver will not continue to harbor the resentment from the offense. Based on the empirical findings on forgiveness interventions in the past few decades, we have seen how forgiveness helps to heal the wounds of many who have struggled over injustices and how forgiveness may help relationships improve between conflicting parties. While forgiveness is not a panacea, it can play a critical role in maintaining the sanity of people in a community without dismissing justice.

Climate is a broad term; it endures over a long period of time; and it may or may not be affected by occasional outbreaks of violence or disputes on campus. While there may be additional actions that are helpful for our climate, we believe that the proposal for building a just and merciful community is fundamental and necessary to cultivate a healthy climate for us to thrive together at UW-Madison. Such a community challenges all of us to see the inherent worth of all persons and to act on this life-giving insight. Biases, social tensions, and discrimination will not go away overnight. However, with continuous development of the just mind and a warm, merciful heart, we can begin seeing our connections as human beings and reduce our misunderstandings and mistrust, and finally rejoice together as a one community at large.

Note:

1. Robert Enright and Richard Fitzgibbons, *Forgiveness Therapy*, 2015. "This book elevates forgiveness therapy to its rightful place among the important psychotherapies of our time," Frank Farley, PhD, Former President, APA.