Developing a Peer-to-Peer Professionalism Program

B. Paige Lawrence, Lisa Rand, Jeffrey M. Lyness
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Rochester, NY

Significance and Rationale

This project seeks to develop and integrate a system for small scale interventions, grounded in informal but structured conversations between two people, to provide collegial feedback—particularly centered on instances in which someone behaves in a manner that is unprofessional. Enhancing the frequency and acceptability of candid feedback within an academic research environment will improve connectedness, reduce escalation of situations, and strengthen workplace culture and the learning environment.

Unprofessional behavior, left unchecked, has a ripple effect of negativity

"Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals have far-reaching effects"
The Dalai Lama

Objective

To improve professionalism, change the implicit culture, and raise awareness that change is possible.

Approach

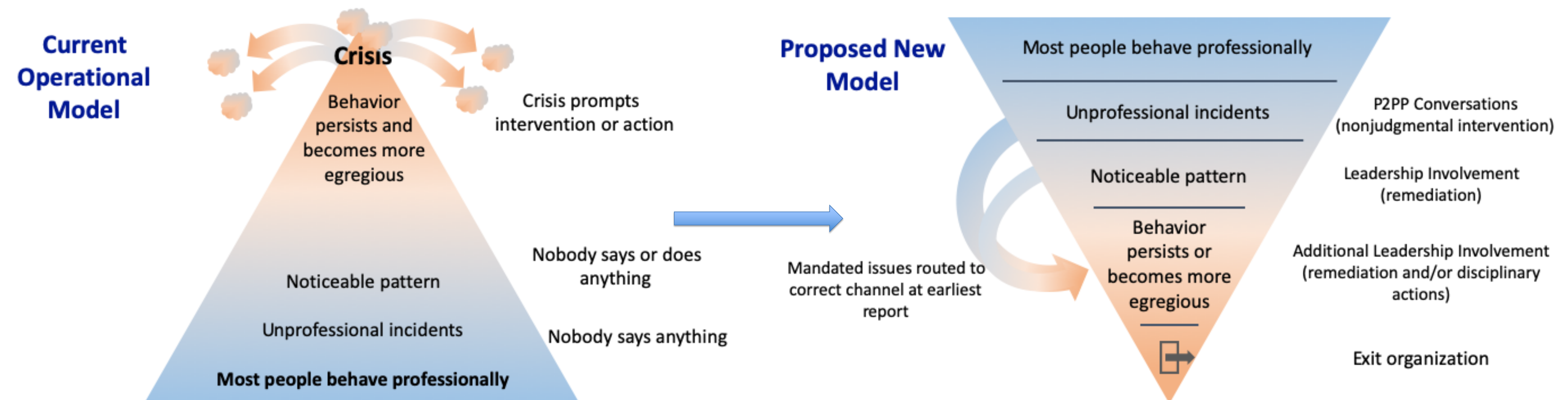Stakeholder engagement → Messenger training → P2PP Pilot → Assess Refine Repeat

Developing the program involves building momentum and seeking input from key stakeholders and potential participant groups, establishing mentor training and a means to receive inputs and assign messengers, building an initial cohort of messengers, collecting information (e.g., number of events), and assessing and refining the program so that it is sustainable, scalable and replicable.

References

[1] Dubree, Kapu, Terrell, Pichert, Cooper, Hickson (2017) "Promoting professionalism by sharing a cup of coffee" *Amer. Nurse Today* 12(5) 18-19.
[2] Hickson, Pichert, Webb, Gabbe (2007) "A complementary approach to promoting professionalism: Identifying, measuring and addressing unprofessional behaviors." *Acad Med* 82(11): 1040-1048

Project Goal

Current Operational Model

Crisis — Behavior persists and becomes more egregious

Crisis prompts intervention or action

Noticeable pattern

Nobody says or does anything

Unprofessional incidents

Nobody says anything

Most people behave professionally

Proposed New Model

Mandated issues routed to correct channel at earliest report

Most people behave professionally

Unprofessional incidents — P2PP Conversations (nonjudgmental intervention)

Noticeable pattern — Leadership Involvement (remediation)

Behavior persists or becomes more egregious — Additional Leadership Involvement (remediation and/or disciplinary actions)

Exit organization

The Peer-to-Peer Professionalism Program (P2PP) will use non-judgmental conversations between two peers about a specific instance. The long-term goal is to deal with issues when they are relatively minor, rather than letting things build up until there is a crisis that requires substantive intervention. To achieve this, we are developing a new system to use structured peer feedback to foster change from the current operational approach to a new interactional model that includes peer feedback to promote professional self-regulation. This type of approach has been used successfully in clinical settings[1,2] but has not, to our knowledge, been adapted to and used in biomedical research settings.

The Five Ws of P2PP Conversations

Who: Messenger and Receiver. The Messenger is a peer volunteer who is trained for this role. The Receiver is someone who has exhibited an unwanted unprofessional or disruptive behavior.
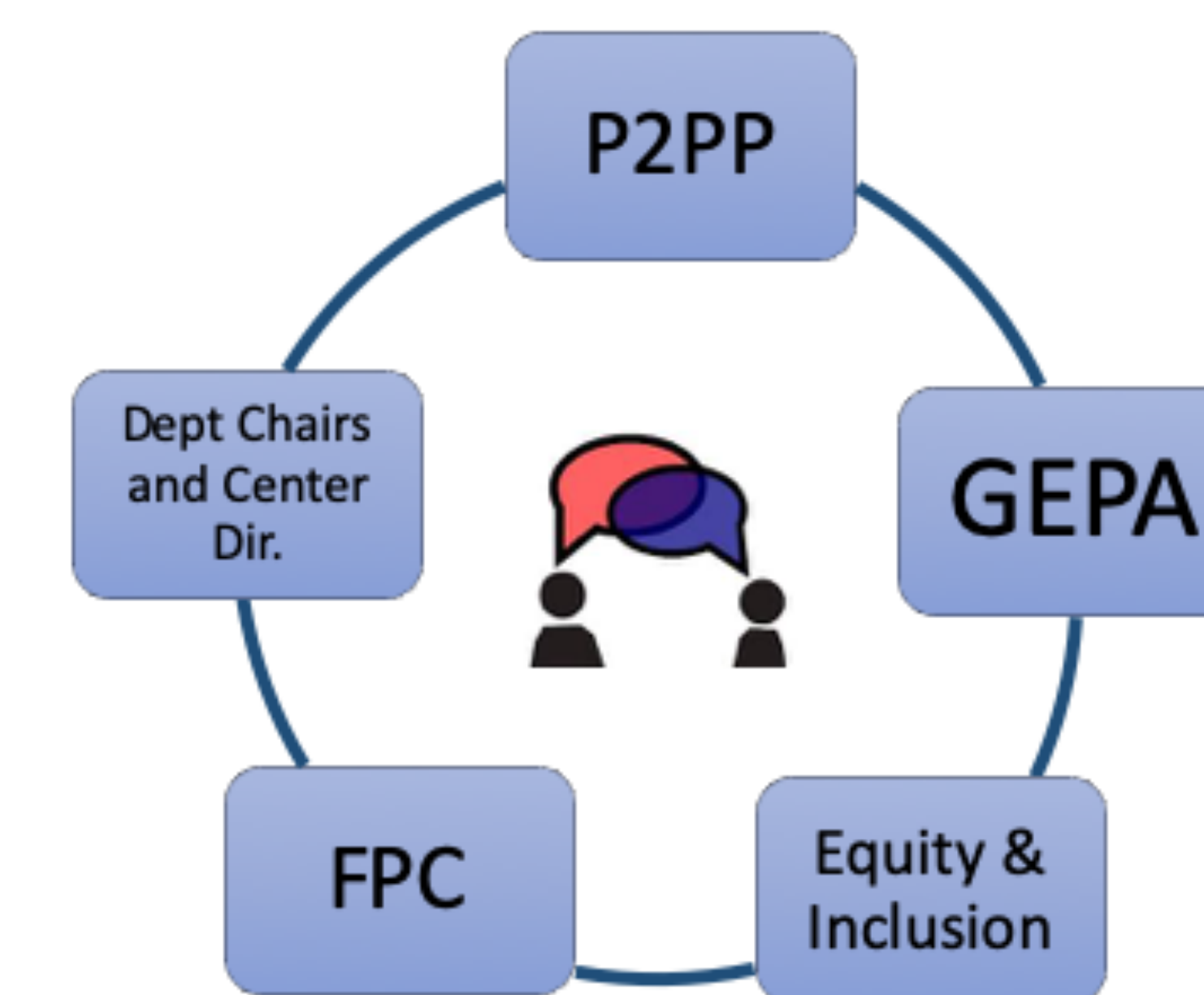
What: A private conversation between two people. The goal is to raise awareness and instill a sense of accountability.

When: Messengers will endeavor to do this within a week of learning about what was observed. The entire conversation should take 2-3 minutes.

Where: A neutral and reasonably private location.

Why: Providing honest feedback and helping a colleague improve are hallmarks of professionalism.
(Graphic: dryeyefoundation.org)

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Integration

P2PP — GEPA — Equity & Inclusion — FPC — Dept Chairs and Center Dir.

The P2PP will be integrated with other groups and programs at the institution, including department and center leaders, the Office of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA), Faculty Professionalism Council (FPC), and Office of Equity and Inclusion.
(Graphic: trainingjournal.com)

Acknowledgements