

Conflict Management:

Conflict Happens.
Manage it.

Julie Bruno, Sierra College

Dolores Davison, Foothill College

Overview

- ◆ Temperature Check
- ◆ Sources of Conflict
- ◆ Conflict Styles and Considerations
- ◆ Group Conflict
- ◆ Good Practices
- ◆ Scenarios

Temperature Check



Conflict Management

Typical Sources of Conflict

- ◆ Conflict within the Senate and Senate committees
- ◆ Conflict between Senate and Union
- ◆ Conflict between faculty leadership and administration
- ◆ Conflict between faculty and other campus constituencies (classified, students, other)
- ◆ Conflict between faculty leadership and the Board of Trustees
- ◆ Others?

Conflict Management Styles

- ◆ Avoidance
- ◆ Accommodation
- ◆ Competition
- ◆ Compromise
- ◆ Collaboration



Constructive or Destructive?

Conflict Considerations

- ◆ What is at issue?
- ◆ What are the interests?
- ◆ Who should be consulted?
- ◆ What policies, procedures or processes may affect resolution or management?
- ◆ What is the conflict culture?



Good Practices to Avert, Manage, or Resolve Senate Conflict

- ◆ Be informed: get as much information as possible before discussing.
- ◆ Provide Context for discussion.
- ◆ Define terms and conditions.
- ◆ Share college policy or state regulations that apply to the situation.
- ◆ Make sure everyone has the opportunity to participate.
- ◆ Robert's Rules of Order can help to keep the discussion professional.

Good Practices to Avert, Manage, or Resolve Senate Conflict

- ◆ Take nothing personally
- ◆ Keep the interests of the senate and of the faculty overall in the forefront of your mind
- ◆ Guide all participants to do the same.
- ◆ Find Agreement where you can.
- ◆ Take breaks.
- ◆ Fall on your sword, if necessary.
- ◆ Resist the urge to pursue or claim personal victories over others.

Conflicts with the Union



Conflict Between Senate and the Union

- ◆ Keep the conflict in closed meetings as much as possible. Try not to let administration see faculty divided.
- ◆ Do not try to deal with it on your own. A liaison group between senate and union is often a good idea.
- ◆ As much as possible, let the organizations, not just the leaders, come to agreement.
- ◆ Consider an MOU to clarify roles, responsibilities, and relationships.

Conflict with Other Groups



Conflict With Non-Faculty Groups

(Board, Administration, Other Unions, etc.)

- ◆ Always be respectful of the leadership of other groups. You may need them on your side in another situation.
- ◆ Listen carefully to the perspectives of other groups and share senate positions as clearly as possible.
- ◆ Stay faithful to your established processes and agreements.
- ◆ Stay positive. Do not go into a meeting with an attitude of distrust.
- ◆ No administrator outranks a senate president. See yourself as equal to the administration.
- ◆ Remember T5 gives you the authority to bring an issue to the trustees if resolution cannot be reached.

Good Practices

- ◆ Listen, listen, listen
- ◆ Presume good intent
- ◆ Get information
- ◆ Anticipate interests and personalities
- ◆ Recognize content and emotion
- ◆ Adapt and model

Sometimes the
questions are
complicated
and the
answers are
simple.



Scenario #1

- ◆ Your Student Learning Outcomes Committee is a sub-committee of your Curriculum Committee, which in turn reports to the academic senate. The faculty chairperson of the SLO Committee is resisting requests from the curriculum chair to make more complete reports to the Curriculum Committee and to bring decisions to the Curriculum Committee for ratification. The SLO chair claims that her committee has developed expertise in the area of SLOs beyond that held by the average Curriculum Committee member and that this expertise should be respected by allowing the SLO committee to work without having its decisions questioned. The curriculum chair has become frustrated with this conflict and has asked the senate, which has oversight of both curriculum and SLOs, to help resolve it.

Scenario #2

- ◆ Sabbatical procedures and approvals are written into your local bargaining agreement and have traditionally been seen on your campus as a union issue. The union creates a committee to approve sabbatical proposals but does little to ensure the quality of the projects as they are completed. While some of the recent sabbatical projects were very well done, others were of debatable quality or usefulness. Your vice-president of instruction has noticed the questionable quality of some recently completed sabbatical projects and has suggested several times that the academic senate should have a hand in the sabbatical process. Your union insists that sabbatical issues have been and should remain a contract matter. How should the senate proceed?

Scenario #3

- ◆ Your campus has historically elected department chairs for two-year terms. The election procedures are governed by language in the union contract. The Terms of Service section in the contract states the chair shall be elected for a term no less than one (1) semester, nor more than four (4) semesters and may be reelected for additional terms. Your college president and VPI have decided they want one-year terms in order to convince all chairs to take a stipend rather than release time because it's cheaper for the college, and believe they have the right to determine length of terms. What is your senate's response?

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

THANK YOU!