

# Chairs Leadership Academy: Conflict De-Escalation



Yan Searcy, Dean, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Zeina Otaky-Ramirez, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Student  
Conduct and Ethical Development

November 6, 2020

CSUN

# Table of Contents

- **Conflict is Inevitable**
- **Why does conflict occur?**
- **Managing Conflict**
- **Taking Ownership of  
Communication**
- **Handling Abusive**

# Conflict is Inevitable:

- **Normal part of life {in all relationships}**
  - Role differences (perceptions of responsibilities in roles)
  - Status differentials (hierarchy and institutional standing)
  - Resource control (views on how resources should be used and who makes the decisions)
  - Value differences
- **Without anticipation and preparation conflict can be scary, and uncomfortable**
  - Acknowledge your own feelings around conflict
    - Hide? Thrive? Dive?
- **But, if not resolved can become toxic and harmful**
- **Can be an opportunity for growth**

# Factors that contribute to conflict:

## **Poor communication**

- Role expectations
- Responsibilities

## **Process expectations**

- This is what I am doing, when I am doing it, how I am doing it, how I will communicate it, and how frequently I will communicate it

## **Result expectations and accountabilities**

- In higher education there may be a desire for shared governance and decision making but there is not shared accountability

# Factors that con

## Failing to listen

- Interpersonally
- Structurally (abs  
faculty, alumni,

## Feeling unheard

- We shout when

## Feeling unrealized

- Frustration whe

# How to Manage Conflict



# Know Yourself

- *Have you done your emotional work?*
- *Who are you?*
- *Who do you want people to believe you are?*
- *How do you think people see you?*
- *How do people see you?*
- *What are your values?*
- *What are your triggers?*

Our decision making is influenced by both our values and who we want people to believe we are (whether or not that is who we are.) We often do not like in others what we do not want to see in ourselves. These traits are often our triggers.

# Manage Yourself

- Anticipate triggers
- Speak calmly without raising voice
- Avoid “you” statements and accusations (Focus on the behavior or circumstance. State, for example, “It was reported that assignments were not graded for one month.” This decreases personalization in comparison to, “You didn’t grade assignments for a month.”)
- Avoid interrupting



# Manage the Conversation

- Set the time and allow for adequate discussion
- Set goals of the meeting at the outset (express verbally)
- Express and clarify what is heard and how it is interpreted (interpretation is important for all parties)
  - Acknowledge both agreements and disagreements of interpretation
- Set an action plan and identify responsibilities and time frame for completion
- Summarize the results of the meeting at the conclusion

# Address Early

**Ignoring does not mean it will go away. Some suggest that ignoring issues or behaviors is a strategy for conflict management but it tends to worsen the conflict over time. Only ignore as a tactic when the cost outweighs the benefit. It is best to address issues as they arise.**

## **Understand the difference between addressing and intervening**

- Addressing involves calling attention to a situation or behavior
- Intervening involves assigning a solution

# Accommodate

**If the issue or situation addressed has a remedy that is in line with policies and institutional values, accommodate. Be certain that short term accommodation has long term benefits and that it is viewed as in alignment with equity across the division/institution.**

- Be careful not to personalize as a win or a loss
- Do not confuse with abandoning personal or institutional values or ethics

# Compromise

**Circumstances often have elements where parties may have opportunities to gain partial accommodation to demands. Ask the person how they would like to address the conflict. As with accommodation:**

- Be careful not to personalize as a win or a loss
- Do not confuse with abandoning personal or institutional values or ethics

## Consult with Others

- Inform others of the problem
- Gain policy guidelines
- Gain institutional support
- Enlist other perspectives
- Determine whether

# Communication: Taking Ownership (in-person/virtual)

- Remember: Tone cannot be determined in writing: Interpretation happens in the listener's/reader's/receiver's head – Ask for feedback/thoughts
- Avoid blaming language – Seek understanding instead
- Pick up the phone or set up a meeting (in-person or virtual) when you know the subject matter can become escalated.
- **REMINDER: There is a human on the other end of that conversation**
- **GOLDEN RULE: Treat others the way you want to be treated.**

# Handling Abusive Conversations (in person/virtually)

- You do not need to subject yourself to abusive conversations.
- Let the person know that you are not in agreement or the meeting is not productive, and end the meeting.
- Follow up in writing and share what you needed to say and/or what the outcome is.
- If the person insists on continuing, please follow the disruption guidelines.

# Disruption in the Classroom Guidelines/Recommendations

- ALWAYS address the behavior privately
- Set parameters around the behavior in the discussion
- Follow up in writing and let the student know that the next time they may be asked to leave the classroom/virtual session.
- If the student continues the behavior, ask the student to leave the session/classroom
  - If in person: the student does not leave, let them know you will call DPS.
  - If they do not leave, please call DPS.
  - If virtual: allow them an opportunity leave the meeting.
  - If they do not, then disconnect them from the meeting
  - **REPORT TO MY OFFICE**







**For Questions/Comments:**

**Yan Searcy**

**[yan.searcy@csun.edu](mailto:yan.searcy@csun.edu)**

**Zeina Otaky-Ramirez**

**[Zeina.ramirez@csun.edu](mailto:Zeina.ramirez@csun.edu)**