Conflict Resolution Best Practices

Source: Mending the Cracks in the Ivory Tower: Strategies for Conflict Management in Higher Education by Cynthia Berryman-Fink

Prevention Strategies (Examples)
- Create multiple avenues for feedback
- Convene meetings that allow for faculty input with ground rules developed by the faculty, explore problems before meetings
- Encourage all faculty to engage in discussing how we address conflict here? What are the boundaries?
- Encourage parties to engage with each other directly
- Inquire if you sense something is wrong
- Educate about microaggression, bullying, create awareness, understanding & strategies in dealing with abrasive behaviors

Intervention Strategies
- Plan and, if necessary, buy time
- Engage instead of avoiding
- Dispel misperceptions
- Gain better understanding of needs/expectations/interests
- Interrupt problem interactions
- Leverage your knowledge of the individuals in conflict to benefit resolution
- Intervene if you observe dysfunctional conflict

Planning the Dialogue
- Consider your approach
  - what do you want to say
  - what are the goals of the dialogue
  - what points must be covered
  - should there be a third party present?
- Consult with Chair, Academic Affairs & Dean’s Office, Equity Advisor.
- Consider possible solutions and have that ready, but be open to changing direction depending on what you learn
- Consider engaging Ombuds office, depending on the needs

Ombuds Office: Confidential Impartial Informal Independent
- The Ombuds Office is a safe, confidential, conflict management resource for students, faculty and staff.
- Ombuds assist visitors with university-related concerns by:
  - Listening to disputes
  - Identifying underlying issues
  - Generating options
  - Exploring policies and procedures
  - Recommending campus resources
  - Providing conflict-model and communication coaching
  - Facilitating conversations
  - Mediating conflicts

The Discussion
- Help the individual frame their main points
- Remind them to be open and listen
- Dispel misperceptions, gain better understanding of concerns
- Avoid being “sworn to secrecy”
- Work to come to practical solutions with action items

Follow-up
- Consider an appropriate time to check in, typically requires more than one check-in
- Did action items occur?
- Any consequences that need to managed (for others in the department)
Scripting and Documentation
Purpose: Scripting Benefits
1. Stays on track
2. Provides a process
3. Promotes consistency with future issues
Document – to confirm what was discussed
1. To yourself (note to file)
2. Back to the individual
3. Don’t keep unnecessary documents (drafts, your rough notes, etc.)