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.)