

Communication and Conflict Management for Department Chairs | 03.29.16

J. Emmett Winn

Chat Transcript from live webcast

Christine Murphy: Welcome! Please enter any questions here for Emmett today

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: How do you handle it if some of the answers to these questions lead off into extended diatribes/tangents/drawing in past grievances?

University of New England: This seems to suggest that we are mediating a conflict, rather than being a part of it. Is that correct?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: How can you be empathic without them thinking you *agree* with them or are validating their beliefs?

University of New England: Did that work?

Cathy Murphy: Before you start a conflict resolution session, do you ask all the participants to agree on general "rules of conduct" such as being respectful, etc.

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Oftentimes it seems that broad conflicts don't reach a resolution -- they just simmer on until people get busy with other things, then stay in the background waiting to reappear. How do you handle these kinds of long-lived conflicts that don't have a closed solution?

University of Alabama 2: Active listening, summarizing,

Pete Muir: active listening strategies

Christine Lovely: Let the junior staff member vent; actively listen

Univ of Central Missouri: allow the opportunity to voice concerns, listen

Hillsborough Community College: Defuse the anger first to then focus on the challenge

Jennifer Payne: Make sure the senior administrator is aware that the junior is upset by him coming in late. He may not even be aware of it.

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Ask how they would like things to change

Lori Burger: Start with active listening with the junior staff member to find out the concerns, and let them be heard.

Okanagan College: Active listening, review policy/procedures

Univ of Central Missouri: Ask the junior person what solution is recommended

Linda Mery: Active listening; exploring alternative solutions;

University of New England: Ask: what situations are particularly troubling to you?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Phrasing: "What is it that you would like to see happen?"

Pete Muir: end on a high note - ask them for three possible solutions to the problem

California State University, Fresno: ask for one or two things I could do as chair to help the junior staff member do their job effectively

University of the Fraser Valley: Be a listener, let them vent initially

tracy: use active listening, summarize the conversation, empathize with the situation,

Colorado Mesa University: Active listening, making sure you are hearing them out. Afterward, summarize to ensure you know their position.

John Abbott College: agree - listen, but then apply policy/procedures

University of Alabama 2: Expect them to be mad at you, too. Manage expectations of the junior person about what's possible. Empathy and good positive feedback is really key for the chair.

Univ of Central Missouri: Let that person know you will also meet with the senior staff person

Parker University: Ask what tasks he is taking on.

Jennifer Payne: cross training

Phoebe Morgan: Let him vent and tell him you understand and tell him you will talk with senior member

Parker University: active listening

Joe O'Neil: Ask for instances from the junior staff member to illustrate the complaint specifically.

Parker University: Ask him to think of reasons the sr staff member might be coming in late

John Abbott College: speak to person arriving late to find out what is going on in their life - is it a habit or are there serious reasons

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: How do you deal with a habitual complainer, who is unhappy about virtually everything?

Hillsborough Community College: I would offer the prize to another faculty person

Bernd Schroeder: I'll teach the course myself and assign each of them college algebra ;)

Phoebe Morgan: No. Ask them to brainstorm criteria for teaching the class.

Jennifer Payne: Would check /verify policies

Univ of Central Missouri: Consider rotating it or a team teaching situation

California State University, Fresno: why cant they just rotate year to year, seems like a reasonable resolution

Amie Ledgerwood: No because you want them to problem solve

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: What is the normal process for assigning the course? Perhaps it can be alternated or split into two sections

Laura Argys: Involve them in the decision

Ball State University: rotate!

Laura Argys: Rotate the course assignments; explore team teaching

John Abbott College: Need to look at normal process for assigning the course

tracy: as chair, i shold make the decision - perhaps team teaching or rotate them per term

Jennifer Payne: would like to know how many times each as taught the course previously and maybe co-teaching

Linda Mery: Get more information; who has recently taught the course, etc

Dard Neuman: Rotate but among all who are best qualified/want to teach.

Lori Burger: Ask them for suggestions and solutions on solving the conflict

Christine Lovely: Assign in an impartial manner

John Abbott College: if equal rights, then have them rotate

Phoebe Morgan: REmind them that the department's mission comes first

University of New England: I would just impose a solution - you teach it this year and the other next.

Joe O'Neil: We would give it to a juniior faculty member, noting that this person would benefit most from a successful course . It is not a resolution of their conflict.

University of Alabama 2: First ask quetions: How has this been assigned in the past? How is the rotation decided. Don't make a decision right away. Talk about the value of assigning courses to different people.

Spencer: rotating them if there is no seniority or try for them to help decide

University of the Fraser Valley: Seniority may factor in

John Abbott College: I would guide them into decision of rotating or one that meets their needs

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Ask them what they think should be the *process* and criteria for assigning the course, also gathering that information from other grad faculty

Cathy Murphy: I would try some of the conflict management techniques we've discussed rather than make a decision for one or the other. We did this last year and just had them rotate it every year

Allison: We've lost audio. Are you speaking now?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Yes, he's talking

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: How do you walk that line between not coming across as dictatorial, but letting people know the things that seriously need to get done?

University of New England: You're recommending we go to great lengths to show empathy and understand the point of view of the individual. But often these are the folks who refuse to show that same spirit towards us or their peers. Colleagues could feel the difficult one is being coddled.

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Hear hear!

Spencer: How about a new younger chair not letting senior faculty not taking advantage of you with out being dictatorial?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Getting back to those chronically difficult people: what do you do about a bully who is difficult to everyone, but genuinely feels that they are the victim?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: These all seem like signs of those long-simmering conflicts -- but what are some techniques to *handle* those long-term conflicts, especially if you're coming in as a new chair to the middle of it?

University of Alabama 2: How do you deal with conflict in special circumstances. For example, if you have an international faculty member with different communication norms, is it advisable to take that into account overtly in handling conflicts or proceed in a generic way regardless?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Have a consistent policy and follow it

Amie Ledgerwood: What is your definition of conflict?

John Abbott College: definition of conflict/interpersonal versus bullying/mobbing

University of New England: What if you feel you've handled a mediation session poorly. Perhaps you didn't listen well or were impatient. How to fix?

Christine Lovely: What role does the larger institution have in minimizing opportunities for conflict?

Jennifer Payne: How do you deal with mobbing amongst students when much might be based on rumour and social media?

Phoebe Morgan 2: Given the importance of communication, what should you do if these in conflict won't talk to you?

John Abbott College: Cyberviolence policy and awareness campaign of student code of conduct would help re Jennifer's question

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: When should the chair invite the Dean's office to help mediate a conflict?

Parker University: Is it helpful to sometimes have an impartial observer present during sessions?

Phoebe Morgan 2: How do you mediate different values between junior and senior faculty?

University of Maryland, Baltimore County: Thank you

University of New England: Thanks everyone!

Pete Muir: many thanks

irene gustafson: thanks

John Abbott College: Thank you!

Colorado Mesa University: Thank you.

Spencer: Thank you!

Phoebe Morgan 2: Thank you frm Kelley & PPat tii==oo!

University of California, Santa Cruz: Thank you