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Negotiating Conflict at the Intersection: Identity and Problem Solving

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As department chairpersons we navigate conflicts between various constituents regularly. In his oft referenced volume on servant leadership practices within higher education, Wheeler (p. 14) notes that “self-understanding is critical to success and making wise decisions.” Therefore, to be more effective leaders and facilitators, we must be aware of the numerous characteristics that come together to constitute our own identities, as well as how they shape our responses. In this workshop we address how who we are shapes the choices we make and can exacerbate problems or facilitate personal and organizational growth (Cipriano). We will explore how our values, beliefs and attitudes inform our leadership strategies and responses to conflict. Recent research demonstrates that individuals working in situations with low interpersonal conflict behave in more ethical ways and engage in better decision making (Ness and Connelly). Further, Moeller and Kwantes posit that the outcomes of interpersonal conflict are driven primarily by the way the conflict is handled as opposed to the conflict itself. Given this research, and that opportunities to experience task and personal conflicts abound in the academy, this workshop will give chairpersons the opportunity to explore their “social self,” their intersectional identity, and their current conflict management strategies before working in teams to navigate three case studies. After working in teams, participants will return to the larger group and process strategies employed, expected outcomes, and discuss other potential strategies for managing the conflicts presented. The final segment of the workshop will include participants sharing conflicts they have managed in the past with the goal of determining if other approaches could have provided better outcomes.

Cipriano, R.E. (2011). *Facilitating a Collegial Department in Higher Education: Strategies for Success*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Moeller, C. and C. Kwantes. (2015). “Too Much of a Good Thing? Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Conflict Behaviors.” *Journal of Social Psychology* 155:4, pp 314-324.

Ness, A.M. and S. Connelly. (2017). “Situational Influences on Ethical Sensemaking: Performance Pressure, Interpersonal Conflict, and the Recipient of Consequences.” *Human Performance* 30:2-3, pp57-78.

Wheeler, D. (2012). *Servant Leadership for Higher Education: Principles and Practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.