

Negotiating Cynically, Ethically and Effectively

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What we all want:

Smooth, respectful negotiations
that lead to solutions everyone
can be happy with and proud of.

Framework:

Principled Negotiation

Source: *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*. Roger Fisher and William L. Ury. Penguin 2nd ed, 1991

Example:

The case of the library window

Impetus for this project:

Failed vote on General Education

Case Study:

Faculty in the Arts and Humanities disciplines are upset with the proposed General Education program. Their recommended solutions tend toward starting the process over, making it "more inclusive and less hasty." Their stated interests include

1. Addressing our BS/BA problem
2. Returning Humanities to prominence (in the mission statement)
3. Requiring that students take a Religious Studies course

Practicing cynicism:

What are the real interests here?

What are the real bottom lines?

Your turn to be cynical:

What is an example on your campus of an ineffective negotiation (or failure to negotiate)?

What are the real interests at work?

Does identifying those interests make a good solution clearer?

Reflection:

The need to deal with the real issues

The limits of appeals to mission

Resolution:

After two months of intensive negotiation, first with the liberal arts faculty who were initially opposed, then with the faculty in the professional schools who preferred the original proposal and felt left out of these negotiations, faculty passed the new General Education program with revisions that maintained most of the disciplinary requirements of the old curriculum.

Resolution (continued):

Since the vote faculty have put forward more new and revised courses for inclusion in the new curriculum than existed in the old one. Difficulties in the course approval process have been minimal in spite of the dramatic increase in interdisciplinary course offerings (a major topic of intense discussion in the months leading up to the votes).

Resolution (continued):

No professional relationships have been sundered as a result of this process.

If we stopped here:

What are the lessons from this case?

How broadly can those lessons be applied?

An invitation to ethical meta-cognition:

What are the downsides of practicing cynicism?

An invitation to ethical meta-cognition (cont.):

What sort of resources can you as a dean draw upon in order to circumvent these pitfalls - while making the most of your ability to be cynical?

Case:

Junior faculty member A approaches you. A is moving into a new office, which is still filled with the books and files of its previous occupant, professor B. A is trepidatious about asking B to move these materials to her new office, because B is quick to take offense. A feels she cannot ask her department chair C for help, as C and B have a difficult history. When you talk to B about this issue, she says that she cannot make this move now that the semester has begun. She would consider undertaking this move in the summer. She would not be comfortable with someone else handling her property.

Case:

After months of taking note, you observe three instances in quick succession that demonstrate that the members of a department are handling conflict in ineffective and predictable ways. You set up a meeting with the chair to talk about how the two of you can help the department change course. Soon into your meeting, the chair interrupts you to ask whether this is about another issue - one in which it might initially appear that the department was at fault, but where someone else was actually to blame.

Your turn to be ethically cynical (and cynically ethical):

What is an example of a solution to a significant problem that seems manipulative or otherwise ethically questionable?

How do you ensure the ethical soundness of your problem-solving process?

Closing:

We all want smooth, respectful negotiations that lead to solutions everyone can be happy with and proud of.

Closing (cont.):

What are the lessons from this discussion?

Thank you!

To the staff of the ACAD and AAC&U for this conference
and to you for attending and participating.