

Navigating Difficult Conversations with Confidence and Care

Please sit with others who
are **NOT** part of your team!

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2024 Institute for Chief Academic Officers and Their Teams //



The Council of
Independent Colleges

Presenters

Janet Clark, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College

LeeRay Costa, Professor and Executive Director of Leadership Studies & the Batten
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YOUR SPEAKERS & THEIR INSTITUTIONS



SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS
COLLEGE

- Janet Clark
- Provost/VPAA for 14 years
- Professor of Chemistry
- Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College
 - Located outside Terre Haute, IN
 - Approximately 1400 undergraduate and graduate students
 - Historically women's college; coed in 2015
 - Steady enrollment growth from Nursing addition and athletics



- LeeRay Costa
- Executive Director, Batten Leadership Institute (new position!)
- Director of Faculty Development for 5 years
- Professor of Gender and Women's Studies, and Anthropology
- Hollins University
 - Roanoke, VA
 - Approximately 780 undergraduate and graduate students
 - Historically women's college, since 1842

SESSION OVERVIEW

- **The importance of tackling difficult conversations**
- **Strategies for managing difficult conversations**
 - + Before, during and after
- **Case studies and role play**
- **Share Out**
- **Additional Resources**



WORKPLACE STRESS AND HEALTH

- **Feeling like you haven't been heard ranks as the most stressful aspect of interpersonal work relationships.**
- **"It's a helplessness that comes when employees feel like they've expressed themselves and been discounted, or someone hasn't taken the time to listen to them."**
 - **Carol Kauffman, PhD, Harvard Medical School**
- **WebMD: <http://www.webmd.com/men/features/work-stress>, accessed 3-11-22**

HOW CAN WE HANDLE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE BETTER?

- **Approach conversations from a place of care and compassion**
- **Keep people in the conversation**
- **Have hard conversations in person rather than virtual or via email**
- **Have a plan before you begin**

HAVE A PLAN





GET YOURSELF ORGANIZED & IDENTIFY THE INTERESTS OF EACH PARTY

- **What is the problem?**
- **What do I need to know and who do I need to talk to?**
- **What message do I need to convey (content, tone) and what outcome do I want?**
- **Identify the basic intangible or abstract needs of a party, such as values, principles, needs**
- **Interest satisfaction must be achieved if conflict is to be resolved**
- **Prepare your opening and key points.**



APPROACH YOUR ROLE, AND THE CONVERSATION, WITH CARE & COMPASSION

Rumble Starters (Brown)

1. I'm curious about...
2. Tell me more.
3. That's not my experience (instead of "You're wrong about her, him, them, it, this...")
4. I'm wondering...
5. Help me understand...
(see handout for more)

Keep colleagues in community

Loretta Ross, *Speaking Up without Tearing Down*

Interrupting Bias

(see handouts for more)

Want to develop your Compassionate Leadership skills?

Check out the Center for Compassionate Leadership



LABEL THE BEHAVIOR, NOT THE COLLEAGUE

Focus on colleagues' humanity and remember they....

- **Have fears/anxieties & hopes/aspirations**
- **Want to feel successful & competent**
- **Hate to be judged, dislike control & value autonomy**
- **Need affirmation & want to be understood**
- **Want to “matter”**



USING COMPASSION & CARE

- **Don't react: stay above the fray**
- **Disarm colleague: step to his/her side**
- **Change the game: don't react; reframe**
- **Make it easy to say yes: build a bridge; compromise**
- **Listen, Listen, Listen**

Getting Past NO by William Ury (Bantam, 1993)

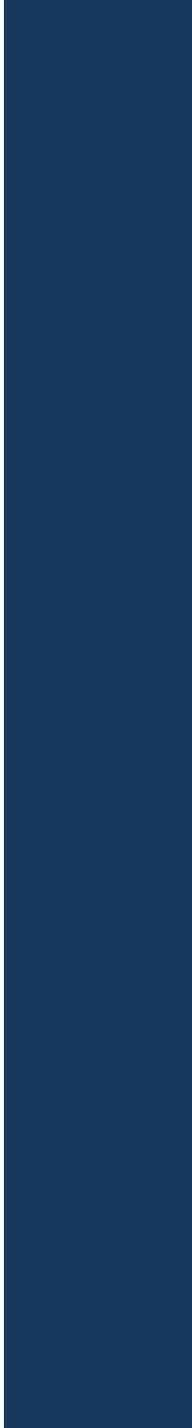


Be careful about promises. While almost everyone has been in the situation of being unable to deliver as expected, if you overpromise as a practice, you will lose credibility. Some overpromises (to job candidates, to faculty colleagues, to students) can create legal liabilities for you and for the college.

- **Document and verify details and results**
- **Follow-up with participants, thanking them for participating**
- **Don't over-promise**
- **Reflect – what went well; what can you do better next time?**

PAUSE. REFLECT. CENTER.

- **What helps you to pause, get centered, and prepare to be fully present?**
- **Take 2 minutes to breathe and get centered**
- **“I am here. I am clear. I am open.”**



CASE STUDIES & ROLE PLAY INSTRUCTIONS

For each of the following case studies:

- Create groups of 3 – One plays the chair, one the colleague with the difficult behavior, & one an observer.
- Pick 2 cases to role play (your choice from the 5)
- For each case, rotate so that each person plays a new role.
- 7-8 minutes per case, including planning and holding the meeting. The observer should record the results to share out.
- After each role play, take 5 minutes for discussion (observer too).

PICK 2 CASE STUDIES

Handouts are available or locate in the app

Case 1: Classroom Climate & Microaggressions

Case 2: Adapting To Change

Case 3: Inequity & Racism

Case 4: Budget/Program/Staff Cuts

Case 5: Social Media

SHARE OUT OF ROLE PLAYS

- 1. Was your preparation sufficient for the conversation?**
- 2. What did you find most effective in keeping the conversation going?**
- 3. Were you able to address the critical issues?**
- 4. Were you able to get a satisfactory outcome?**

HELPFUL RESOURCES

See the additional handouts provided in the CIC app:

- **Role Play Scenarios**
- **Conflict Management Styles Quiz**
- **Documentation Template for Difficult Conversations**
- **Interrupting Bias: Calling Out vs. Calling In**
- **Rumble Starters (Brené Brown)**
- **Microaggressions handout (U of Denver)**
- **Resources for Difficult Faculty Conversations - Bibliography**

**When we avoid difficult conversations,
we trade short-term discomfort for long-
term dysfunction. - *Peter Bromberg***

- **May you find the courage to approach every conversation with confidence and care.**
- **Thank you for your engagement!**

Q&A



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Thank you for attending
this session!