

THE

US vs THEM

MENTALITY



We asked community and technical college employees what divides the various employee groups. Are we really that contentious? What obstacles do administrators face? What do faculty and other employees worry about? Read the responses in this issue.

FACTC Focus

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The Ongoing Saga of Them and Us.

Peg Balachowski, Everett CC

In virtually every college campus in the United States, some tension exists between the administration and faculty. Each group takes their individual roles seriously, and will insist that what they do and when they do it are always in the best interests of our common “client,” the students. However, we also recognize that unless we as faculty have actually served in an administrative role, we rarely know the stresses that administrators face. One faculty member summed up an uncommon situation in her division: “I think I am one of the lucky few who work with a dean that I like. (My dean) is supportive, honest and generally positive, which is not what I hear from others about their deans. She is easy to approach with questions and concerns – the communication is great.” Many deans have so many demands placed on them from higher up that they are generally just putting out fires and have little time to attend to everyday faculty concerns. Because of this increased workload, many of the smaller administrative duties, once the domain of deans are now placed on the shoulders of faculty. The same faculty member said, “I do feel that there is a lot of ‘busy work’ which comes down from the upper administration without having a real and lasting impact on the actual teaching on campus. The target keeps moving, but not necessarily forward.”

Is it possible that faculty have always had an inherent distrust of administration? “The relationship between faculty and administration can always be improved,” said another faculty member. “What seems to get in the way is a lack of trust: faculty who are unable to trust that administration respects their pains, their need to innovate, and their ability to determine what is in their (and their students’) best interests; and administrators who do not trust that honest and real collaboration could lead to improved relationships and could benefit the institution as a whole. Corporate models (with the exception of the most innovative ones) often lead to silos and grumbling.” Could there be a conflict in leadership styles? Are there egos involved? This faculty member also said, “A democratic process is slow, often inefficient, and occasionally painful. Administrators are--perhaps-- less comfortable with ‘process’ and more comfortable with ‘products.’ However, for every administrator or faculty negative stereotype, I can point to an exception: If the exceptions united, we could change the world.” There is hope.

Some faculty members believe that their role at the college is only to teach and not deal with any administrative matters. A faculty member from a small department with no

tenured faculty said, “Are there frustrations? Absolutely, but those usually stem from the continual lack of funding for what, in reality, is a very expensive program to run. We all do our best to work together and get creative. I am rarely given a flat out no to any request, only told that I need to do the legwork to make a case for what I need. This is a sound business practice, if you ask me. I have no reason to feel I am not treated fairly because respect is earned, and I do my best to make sure I have earned it.” Most faculty are 100% committed to their teaching roles and responsibilities, and appreciate the support they get from administrators and especially the administrative staff, without whom we could not do our jobs effectively and efficiently! We hear it repeatedly: the staff helps us to make sure our i’s are dotted and the t’s are crossed. As we take on more of the smaller administrative tasks in addition to our teaching responsibilities, we begin to recognize the value of our competent staff support.

But large problems remain. A faculty in a Prof/Tech field said, “I think one of the several communication problems between administrators and faculty is that faculty are not 40-hour a week, 8-5, M-F employees. We have been given the freedom to teach our classes, conduct our office hours, participate in meetings, and do what it takes to do well in the classroom and in our departments. Unfortunately, many administrators equate not being in the office or classroom with not working. Understandably, there are many faculty who do the minimum, but I believe the majority of faculty put in many hours beyond the teaching day.” The faculty member wonders whether “this has caused more administrative duties to be put on faculty,” and agrees with other comments suggesting we as faculty are doing more and more of what administrators used to do. Large departments at EvCC offer department chairs one-third release time for their administrative duties, but the stipend really isn’t sufficient to cover the time spent scheduling, attending additional meetings, attending to hiring associate faculty, etc. As administrators take on more and more responsibilities, faculty agree that something has to give. Deans will become less efficient in their roles as administrators and faculty will spend more time assuming administrative duties. We agree that the roles of both Deans and teachers are changing, but not always in a way that is to our liking. It will take a great effort on the part of both sides to develop a satisfactory plan for greater trust and cooperation on both sides.

Cease Fire

Angela Russell, Wenatchee Community College

“How is it that Faculty are out of here by 1 o’clock every day when I’m here until 5?”

“Do the classified staff not have enough real work to do that they have time to make cutesy fliers and decorate offices?”

“Do we really need four vice presidents at \$100,000 each instead of another psychology teacher?”

Do any of these sound familiar? Have you said or heard them at your school? I sure have. One of the things that became apparent at my college during the current financial crisis is that **we all work hard**. And this shared burden of doing more with less...our FTEs are higher but our funding is lower...has certainly brought us together. I liken it to the camping trip where everything goes wrong...unexpected thunderstorm, dead car battery, no coffee. It’s always the one everyone remembers and usually remembers fondly. The group pulls together to make the best of the bad situation.

In the last five years, faculty have increased their BIN (class load) counts to allow more students into classes, thereby increasing our tuition revenue (and our workload). Our classified staff still has the same amount of work (probably more!) than existed four years ago, but now there are 25% fewer of them to do it. Our college president is currently acting as VP of Instruction and VP of Student Services...as well as President of the College. Are we tired? YES! Was it worth it? YES!

We have come through the worst (I hope) of the crisis, and, for the most part, intact. We’ve grown together gaining mutual respect for the role we each play in educating our students. We have an administration that *values* what faculty brings to the college: subject matter expertise, tuition revenue, institutional history, etc. We have a faculty who appreciates the niceties of a well put-together staff party where we can socialize with our fellow college employees. And these days when the president says, “Thanks for all you do. We couldn’t do it without *you*,” it doesn’t feel like lip service like it has in the past. I know he really means it.

How did we manifest this change in attitude? It could be that a few employees with toxic attitudes retired, thereby lifting a cloud of misery from our campus. It could be we all feel like we’ve survived a catastrophe and we’re stronger because of it. It could be that the faculty see how overworked our classified and exempt staff are, and we don’t feel like we’re shouldering the burden alone. It’s probably all of those things combined.

I’ve often thought that employees should job shadow each other to fully appreciate all of the work that gets done that no one sees. The staff at the registration window who see me walk out every day at 2 wouldn’t want to hang out with me between 7 and 9 PM when I’m grading, prepping,

setting up online homework, etc. And I don't want to be here at 4:45 on Friday afternoon.

What the financial crisis has given us is a level of respect for what each employee brings to the college. Do I anticipate going back to an "Us vs. Them" attitude in the future? Of course. It's always cyclical; ask anyone who's been here more than 20 years.

So the question is, how do we set ourselves up so that next time it's not so tough. (Right? We're educators, we want to learn from our experiences!) Here's my advice: Make sure we've checked the weather so we're prepared with the right gear. Make sure the complainers have other plans when invitations to the camping trip are issued-really, one person with a bad attitude can drag the whole thing under. Remember, we all share the common interest of educating students. And, you can always count on me to have some extra coffee in my backpack.



LOGIC 101:

I love ya, man.

AN IMAGINARY COLLOQUY

Phil Venditti, Clover Park Technical College

Administrator: You know, this college couldn't exist without the faculty. If they weren't here, there would be no one to teach our students!

Faculty Member: How right you are. But it couldn't exist without the students, because the faculty wouldn't have jobs if the students weren't here.

Student: Correct. But it couldn't exist without the Business Office, because the faculty and staff wouldn't get paid.

Business Office Representative: True, but it couldn't exist without the Financial Aid Department, because at least half of our students wouldn't be able to afford to study here without the money it delivers to them.

Financial Aid Officer: Exactly, but it couldn't exist without the taxpayers, because they provide money to pay the faculty and cover enough of the cost of all the students' education so that they can afford to pay the rest in tuition.

Taxpayer: You're right. But it couldn't exist without the Admissions and Registration Office, because no one could even get into the college without them.

Registrar and Director of Admissions: Certainly, but it couldn't exist without the maintenance staff, because the students wouldn't come to a college overrun with weeds or piled in trash or cold in the winter and sweltering in the summer.

Lead Custodian: I agree, and yet it couldn't exist without the president and the president's cabinet, because they fulfill our legal requirement to oversee and evaluate all our programs.

President: Absolutely, but neither the president nor the cabinet nor any of the rest of us would have jobs if it weren't for the Board of Trustees. They're the only people allowed by law to hire the president and establish the policies that govern us.

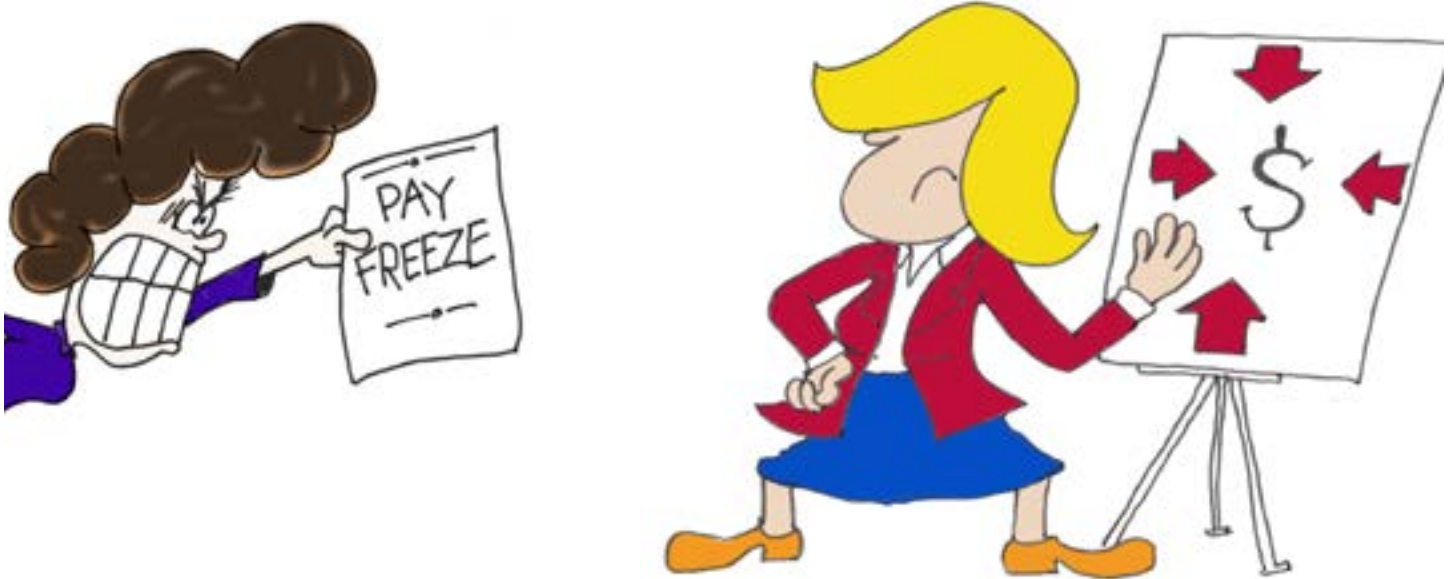
Board Member: Fair enough, but our Board couldn't exist without a legislature to empower it and to approve allocation of money to sustain the college.

Legislator: Indeed, but none of the legislators could do anything without the support of the voters.

Everyone: Aren't we all glad that we appreciate each other and understand that our college couldn't exist without all of us?



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Editor's comments on Bellevue's Healthy Exchange

After the members of FACTC chose the topic relating to the relations among various employee groups, Bellevue college's Jennie Mayer sent out a list of questions to the administration, faculty and staff at Bellevue college. What followed was a discussion both interesting and useful in understanding how we all deal with each other.

We decided to publish this without identifying the authors of each response, something we don't ordinarily do, because it seems to be a reflection of the kinds of views many community and technical college employees have. These issues, ideas and, yes, complaints certainly are not unique to Bellevue college, which is why we at FACTC thought this was worth publishing.

I'd like to thank Jennie and the Bellevue employees for their frank views. They help us understand what we various employees have in common, what we don't have in common and certainly what irritates many of us throughout Washington State's community and technical college system.

A Healthy Exchange

by Jennie Mayer, FACTC rep at Bellevue Community college

I asked the faculty and administrators at Bellevue these questions: “What are your thoughts about the relationship between faculty and administrators?”

Do we seem to battle against each other more than cooperate?

What is the biggest communication problem we have among those at the college?

Should faculty be skeptical of administrators?

What would we (faculty) like to change most about the administration?

What can be done for both parties to cooperate more during these contentious times?

Fifteen faculty members responded. (One administrator responded – I’ve included the response at the end.) Four responses were from adjunct faculty and 11 were from full time faculty. Seven were from former or current program chairs. Division breakdown: Arts and Humanities (1), Soc. Sci (2), Science (5), HSEWI (4), IBIT (2), anonymous (1)

Summary: There is a strong desire for people to understand each other and work together for the common good. However, several repeated themes emerged from faculty feedback:

Faculty morale is perceived to be at a record low. Some believe faculty are more dismissive now, as compared to years ago – they don’t seem to care any more (for example, fewer faculty attend college-wide meetings, (or on campus.)) Effective faculty, staff and administrators continue to leave the college in search for something better, not necessarily in terms of pay. Relationships among administration, faculty and staff are breaking down. The high turnover of employees at all levels makes our jobs harder. We hope that President Dave Rule can help restore morale, or find ways to support faculty by increasing the full time to part time ratio and improving faculty salaries.

Non-competitive salaries impact quality instruction, especially when we compete with industry for quality employees. It also has a big impact on faculty morale and faculty diversity. We cannot recruit desirable faculty (in terms of diversity) without higher salaries. This is the number one obstacle to improving diversity

Poor working conditions contribute to lower quality education and faculty morale (increased class sizes, faculty loads, encouragement to over-enroll classes, the need to moonlight to earn a decent wage). Also, due to the rapid growth of the college, redundancies exist which slow productivity.

Administrators are perceived to be in greater numbers than is the reality. Instructors are critical of the need for so many vice-presidents, for example. Faculty members do not understand why the administrative body continues to grow when there is so much need for faculty and support staff. They are puzzled about big expenditures such as East Campus when basic needs are not met.

One recommendation is that vice-presidents and other administrators should be more visible on campus outside of the boardroom and administrative offices.

The administration is perceived to favor business over what is good for students and faculty. The suggestion is that we are compromising quality and our reputation. We should stop making the bottom line more important than academics. We should focus on being first rate in education and commit to strategies and policies which benefit students, such as administrative drop options for students during the first two weeks of class.

Faculty need to be mindful of their faults, too. They should be held accountable for their duties regarding shared governance. We need more transparency too. Moonlighting can create problems (inequity) as it stands now – it needs to be regulated better. The real issue is that moonlights are used to supplement pathetic salaries. It is also important to pay part time faculty to be involved, rather than penalize them by asking them to be involved without getting paid for it. Instead, they too often have to overload classes just to make ends meet. Again, a commitment to improve full time-part time ratios can help alleviate governance needs, while improving instruction as well.

The lack of transparency (especially with budgets) erodes trust. Faculty want the opportunity to understand budgets and help to make better, more informed decisions for the college. We want to be part of this.

We need to find common ground between faculty and administrators. Administration should start by matching up goals and priorities of faculty and administrators and start learning from each other. How do we wear each other's shoes? Other institutions encourage faculty and administrators to switch roles to gain the understanding required to work together.

Faculty endure some hard feelings (even grudges) from instances of lack of support and administrator inactions which resulted in perceived injustices and unfairness. This results in lack of confidence in the administration and lack of trust. Why should we work at a place where we do not feel supported? How do we work through our differences without avoiding necessary conflicts because people are non-confrontational and uncomfortable? Leaders have to face these situations and make the tough decisions. Be confrontational when it's required.

A couple of responses were from faculty who are concerned for those faculty who are not heard or who are vulnerable (tenure track or adjunct). The responders said they felt shunned. They said faculty who are the loudest get heard over others, and get rewarded when they ought not. They suggest that administrators play favorites with their "stars" but are known to withdraw their support at any time in favor of newer "stars". People feel mistreated.

We must be willing to argue ideas, not attack people. We also need to be more inclusive of other's ideas. Maybe the messages are the same but the implementation is a little different – try to understand differences we face in a different roles at the college(for example, faculty work non-standard hours). We also need to learn to argue the way we ask our students to.

Programs at Bellevue need more publicity and recognition for what they do. They need to be understood better by others. Maybe we at the college should highlight different programs each

quarter and educate the campus. We need a greater commitment from the college to promote ourselves and be proud of what we do.

Where do we go from here?

Clearly there is a lack of understanding from both sides. There is more need to be collegial and sincere in forming real relationships in which people get to see what the other side is like. Why not set up some shadowing for both sides?

The one administrator who responded is fairly new (two years at BC) and doesn't see the distrust. This administrator does have two suggestions: (1) Transparency for both sides to understand what others are doing, and (2) giving conversation a shot. We are all on the same team – let's start working together and not buy into the myth that we can't get along.

I hear faculty worry about being split over some of these issues (college governance, moonlighting, full time vs. part time) but I see that all of these issues arise from the need for more full time faculty and a decent wage for faculty. Others think salaries don't fix problems. Instead, the problems are from lack of effective communication and the inability to create a working community. Perhaps it's both?

The intent of this information was to contribute to a dialogue across campuses in Washington state's community and technical college system. However, I hope this dialogue continues at Bellevue College to unite our college. When I started as an instructor here eight years ago, I remember feeling a much stronger sense of community than today and that my division was more a family than a job. I feel with my duties as a program chair that I work on an impossible and endless list of tasks – some days all joy has been removed from this job. It's not just Chairs... I see the same from overworked faculty... especially those in the tenure process.

I hope we can find our identity once more, and rebuild an institution in which we feel valued, functional, and inspired by our relationships and achievements. Sure, there are good days and bad, but we need to work harder to bring some of the joy back into the job so the number of bad days stop outweighing the good... and our best and brightest stop leaving the college but find it worth staying here.

The following pages include the comments I have received, mostly verbatim. I omitted names to protect those who wished to remain anonymous (as well as omitting those who provided their names, just so I didn't get them mixed up). There were minor edits to protect their identities. I thank all of you who wish to address these issues further.

(Editor's note: More editing was done to make comments more consistent with the FACTC Focus editing standards).

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

Grease the Grooves

By a Bellevue College Faculty Member

Leadership is a key component in the health of a department as well as a division on campus. Understanding that different individuals need varying levels of guidance and support is vital to maintaining a trusting and effective working relationship. Teachers need to be given room to be creative and challenged when they are ready and support when they are acclimating, and it's administrators role to determine which.

That being said, it's important to remember we are in the business of teaching and mentoring students. That should be 90 percent of a faculty member's focus on campus. I believe an administrator's key role on campus is to grease the grooves, to let teachers teach. It's a thankless unglamorous position but if a Dean or VP is doing their job well, much of their efforts go unnoticed and we come to believe they are an unnecessary burden on the budget. Administrators spend more time in the stalls shoveling crap while we're out tethering our racehorses.

In the HSEWI (Health Science Education and Wellness Institute) we have a very positive and healthy relationship with administrators, maybe the best in decades and the future looks bright. Sure there are problems:

*not enough full time instructors are available too cover campus governance demands (full time/part time faculty ratio)

*Bellevue college has grown so quickly over the past decade that we are bound by inefficient and outdated systems which create redundancies.

*We are short on staff support, programs have grown but staff has been reduced to save money

*We have trouble finding qualified faculty in the healthcare field.

*Non-competitive salaries is a huge issue.

All of these demands reduce our focus on students, but these are problems that have been acknowledged and changes are on the way. I'm surprised to hear there are so many frustrated faculty members across campus but quite honestly, we in the Health Science Education Wellness Institute don't get it. Things for the most part are awesome and getting better. All of the present deans are former Instructors and program chairs with an in depth knowledge of challenges associated with teaching. Things aren't going to change overnight, but I trust and respect this new "Dean Dream Team" and believe they are really focused on "greasing the grooves" for faculty and things

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

will get better. I love my students and my job. I think everyone should spend more time over in the G building, the weather is great over here. And stop working during the summer knuckleheads. We live in Disneyland.

Everybody Has a Boss

by a Bellevue College Faculty Member

What is the biggest communication problem we have among those at the college?

Faculty work different hours than the rest of the universe.

Should faculty be skeptical of administrators?

No. I'm not sure why this started, but so many of my colleagues are very negative about administrators. I think they need to walk a mile in administrators' shoes.

What would we (faculty) like to change most about the administration?

Accommodate our strange working hours.

What can be done for both parties to cooperate more during these contentious times?

Our largest problem is rooted in a faculty concept of having no supervisor. I believe that every employee has a supervisor in any business, and in education it is often the Dean. Yes, faculty do have "academic freedom" so they can do their job well. But to totally think that translates into no supervisor, I often see faculty who believe they have no supervisor becoming problems for all parties. There are many cases of this at Bellevue College.

The Navigator

By a Bellevue College Faculty Member

One of my concerns is the appointment of the Assistant Dean in a division.

This individual has to navigate between faculty and administrator in some nether land. I think the position should be full-time rather than half-time (which in my opinion relates to administration's view that it is a half-ass position). It should be a fully funded, full-time gig.

I know from watching my assistant dean how much work he has taken on, yet he still has to teach five classes.

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

Administrator Salaries Are Gobbling Salary Budgets

by a Bellevue College Faculty Member

It seems there are far too many administrators. Comparison with efficient colleges (not the worst administrator-heavy schools) might bolster this notion. Faculty salaries have been frozen (below cost of living change) for MANY years while administrator salaries increase in a “competitive” way. That means we cannot compete on salary when we hire faculty in this very expensive metro area, and this is a particular problem when we try to hire sought-after candidates, such as faculty from under-represented groups.

Comparing Goals

by a Bellevue College Adjunct Faculty Member

There should be a process to remove incompetent employees whether they are faculty or administrators.

We need to make a prioritized list of goals for administrators and a prioritized list of goals for faculty. Then compare them. Some items will have good alignment, and there will be a few disagreements in some areas. It would be a good pair of lists to have and publish. It could help each side recognize and appreciate the positions and constraints of the other.

We need to be courageous!

By a Bellevue College Faculty Member

This past year one of the best pluralism questions was developed as an interview question for presidential candidates:

Have you ever witnessed an unjust situation and what did you do about it?

Bellevue College operates on what is equitable, but this is to avoid the model of fairness. For example, administration does what is required by law but rarely makes the hard choices or courageous decisions to correct practices which are unfair and this is detrimental to all of our well-being and health because of stress. There is no courage in administration for ethical, fair management.

Here's another example: although the practice and provision of work here has a clause about dismissal at will and for cause (misbehavior), no administrator has done so even when several incidents in the past three years have warranted an executive decision to exercise that option. That is failure of leadership to make the courageous decision to terminate someone(whose behavior was widely detrimental and obstructive to students and other college employees alike. In fact, these

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

Individuals continue to be “rewarded” by being granted full year sabbaticals or other broader release time. The message’s intent appears to be that if you act badly, you will be rewarded and administration is permissive and allows continuation of the behavior.

Another recent case in point is the loss of a faculty member due to unsuccessful tenure process which allowed another faculty member to bully the candidate and foster discontent among the faculty colleagues of the candidate. That behavior was never called out and the bullying continued in such a way that the tenure review committee did not grant tenure to the candidate which thus sanctified the bullying process. No administrator or other faculty stepped in to expose or halt the bullying while it was happening. The result is that we have lost two faculty in the process plus years of time and work. We all deserve to be called out on our total failure. I think that a legal suit would serve the purpose of calling us at Bellevue College out as we deserve.

The Business Mentality

by a Bellevue College Faculty Member

The division dean is our most frequent administrator contact, and I think we’ve been lucky in [our division], because the contention here between us and the dean, over the years I’ve been here, has been pretty minimal compared to other faculty’s experiences in other divisions. Do you think some of the “us vs. them” mentality has dissipated with (a former dean’s) departure?

I can give a specific example about the business mentality that just ticks me off: dropping no-shows on the 3rd day of the quarter. The administration has “studied” this, and talked about it, and worried about what it will do to enrollment dollars and FTEs. Blah blah blah. But the bottom line is this — if you REALLY care about student success and retention, then it isn’t about the money and the FTEs. We should focus on the fact that these students are getting poor grades because they start the quarter on the wrong foot—some of them NEVER show up in class and get an F on their transcript because they don’t understand how college works. An F on a transcript is FOREVER. And it can seriously impact future financial aid opportunities. The college should have some sort of administrative drop option, as many other colleges do, to HELP STUDENTS.

I was at a transition team meeting where we discussed this in a sort of formal fashion some time ago and, to my knowledge, no conclusive action has since been taken. They should be embarrassed. THAT’S how much they apparently care about their business model. And I even said to everyone there, “if you REALLY care about student success and retention, then it isn’t about the money and the FTEs. It’s about the fact that these students are getting poor grades because they start the quarter on the wrong foot. So they can’t say that they haven’t heard this viewpoint before. I said it loud and clear, and I got nods all around the table. But still, nothing has changed.

Argh!

Taming the Trash Talk

by a Bellevue College Faculty Member

Do we seem to battle against each other more than cooperate?

I think that the culture of higher education really lends itself to an embattled relationship among faculty and administrators. It's almost as if it's *expected*. Case in point, I'm at [a different institution] now and we had a part time faculty meeting and everyone just...arrived *mad!* I was in an interesting position, having already served as a dean as well as a department chair at Bellevue. I think I may have unwittingly marginalized myself, actually.

But at Bellevue, I do think it's no different. The roles certain administrative bodies play, whether they're real or imagined, make a great impact on expected behavioral traits from faculty members – and vice versa. I can't tell you how many administrator-only meetings I've sat in where the shit-talking about faculty is the norm. It was shocking, really. I remember times where I felt I *did not belong* there.

Another interesting point was something that Lee Lambert, president of Shoreline, said to me once. He thought that deans in the community and technical college system in Washington were (and I quote directly), “whipping posts.” They have no power but are expected to be in a position of authority, making them puppets/tools on the one hand and enemies of the state on the other. They can't win.

What is the biggest communication problem we (faculty and administrators) have among those at the college?

I think the first line of issues stems from what I noted above. It's really about culture. No matter how many videos Laura Sanders posted to the members of the Bellevue College Community, they were hardly viewed and the mood on the campus was generally dismissive. Her heart was in the right place but nobody cares. The attention should go to the admission and recognition of the severe dampened mood of the campus. Morale has been at an all-time low as long as you and I have been on this campus. I see no light at the end of the tunnel. Neither did Star Rush, Agnes Figueroa, Justin Hart, Jennifer Stanton, or the countless other amazing people who have fled to better pastures. In fact, Star, Jen, and I left and are now all part timers! So even tenure or a six figure salary wouldn't keep us. The communication itself might not be the real problem, but it's the root of WHY communication is a problem that needs to be looked at.

Should faculty be skeptical of administrators?

Not any more than they should be skeptical of anything else. What's the saying...condemnation without investigation? Never a good idea! I would offer that faculty who are skeptical should

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

intrinsically understand WHY that skepticism exists and then have a frank dialogue with administration about that skepticism. It's healthy to be cautious about a relationship already rooted in a power struggle, but both sides need to understand it.

What would we (faculty) like to change most about the administration?

I would like to see the administration offer their hand in support of faculty. Create real relationships with faculty. Join our committees. Visit our classrooms. See what we do. When I visited Lee at Shoreline, we walked around the campus and EVERYONE KNEW HIM. Students, faculty, staff, everyone. It took us twenty minutes to walk across the Quad to the cafeteria. There needs to be a deeper commitment on behalf of administration to be *present*.

What can be done for both parties to cooperate more during these contentious times?

I'd probably say the same thing I did above. If we're truly all "for students." We should act like it!

Where's the Support?

by a Bellevue College Adjunct Faculty Member

I'm a part-time instructor, have taught at Bellevue College for 25 years and am retiring in June. I am speaking for myself, but I do think I represent many in my department. I do not think we as a department are doing battle with anyone. We do feel that the largest problem we have with administrators at all levels is the understanding of what we do. For the first time in years, we have a division chair who has been here for more than one year and is beginning to understand what we do. The high turnover of department personnel has been very detrimental to our program.

Our largest problem is communicating to the college, the administrators, other faculty, and the public community what we do, what our classes are about, and how we can be of service. A large part of this problem is our total lack of support personnel. We once had two support persons in our office and are now down to a few hours of support from a person we share with other departments. We all spend more time functioning as secretaries than as instructors and are doing most of our own support work. It takes at least a year of work to understand the needs of our department before support personnel really become helpful and lately support personnel are moved before they have worked in/for our department for six months.

Instructors in our department are very cooperative with the administration and are some of the best advocates Bellevue College has. We are in the community working with parents every day. Many of us are only on campus two or three times a month and feel that the college community as a whole is unaware of the greater reach of the college in the community. **Bellevue College under-sells itself and more publicity of all programs would be a great benefit to the college and to the community.**

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

Too Many Administrators

by a Bellevue College Faculty Member

The colleges are overloaded with unnecessary administrators, including VP's of Diversity, Plurality. We need funds to pay faculty decent wages and benefits and to offer enough classes to meet our students' needs. We do not need more administrators to 'walk' the halls and draw down available funds.

Maybe It's Us

by a Bellevue College Faculty Member

Instead of asking whether faculty should be skeptical of administrators, why don't we ask ourselves if they should be skeptical of us? What are some faculty abuses? For example, I'd like to know what percentage of faculty don't fulfill their duties (college governance)? Why should administrators trust us? For example, how can faculty complain about overloads but take on moonlights?

Why can't people come together for the common good? Faculty can't even come together for the common good... part-time faculty are paid way too less, and we need more full-time faculty.

This is very frustrating. **However, as faculty, we should be setting an example.**

We need to force faculty governance and not allow moonlighting unless duties are met satisfactorily. We can take the first step as faculty to do what we're supposed to be doing and then expect administrators to do their jobs.

(A Healthy Exchange-cont.)

Dialogue, Cooperation and Solutions: Thoughts About the Relationship Between Faculty and Administrators.

By Bellevue College Dean

Do we seem to battle against each other more than cooperate?

I haven't *seen* the battle, I hear about it, I have been warned about it but I have never truly seen it.

What is the biggest communication problem we have among those at the college?

The lack of communication is our biggest communication. The more we can talk and work together the more we see our goals align quite nicely.

What stresses do administrators face of which faculty are unaware (or that they ignore)?

I don't think we carry any more stress than faculty. It is just different. I stress over how I will deal with today's problems and plan for a brighter future. I think faculty have the stress of students in their face, so it is different.

What would administration (presidents, vice-presidents, deans) like to change about faculty?

I am not sure I want to change anything. I want to have dialogue. I want to collaborate and, I want to solve problems....so far almost every faculty member I have talked to shares that. If there is something that needs to change it is probably the urban legend that says we can't work together.

What quality in faculty do administrators appreciate?

Their commitment to students, I like to think I share this commitment, but I am constantly amazed at the lengths faculty will go.

What can be done to cooperate more during these contentious times? Is there common ground?

Are these times contentious? Or is it just change? I ask because I have been here for two years and I haven't found the lack of cooperation on any side of this perceived fence. I have seen a few angry individuals but that seemed so deep seated that I bet they don't even remember why they are angry. This *change* brings us an opportunity, as far as I can see there hasn't been this much change or opportunity at Bellevue College for over 25 years. We should do something with it. I can think of two practices that can bring us together and help us cooperate: The first is transparency, transparency for all of us. Administrators, faculty, all of us need to be transparent; there is way too much fear and urban legend on this campus. The second practice is conversation. We need to talk to each other and not assume we are going to disagree. There are some amazing people here; you just have to go and find out.

End of Bellevue College Discussion

And These Comments From Spokane Falls Community College Faculty

Stop Shirking

by Bradley Bleck

Too many faculty are shirking shared governance work such as serving on committees and the like. That leaves too few faculty doing too much of the crap work. But I don't just want more people to start pulling their weight, but to actually do it in a way that serves their students, discipline, department, division and institution.

We Need a Forum

By Ken Avery

What could faculty do to make this a better college?

Revive the Faculty Senate! There is no forum for the much needed debate over topics that involve academic issues and representation issues. We used to have some very "lively" discussions about our involvement in the AHE (Association for Higher Education). It is no longer even a whimper of a discussion. The only meetings we now have are administration directed and offer little debate. The participation level is very low and probably least attended by those with the most opposing viewpoints to current or proposed policies. Without a strong faculty and a strong student government we don't have the "checks and balances" needed for a vigorous college. We have become a campus and are not the college we were thirty years ago. I feel a huge part of the blame is that the power and prestige the faculty has been squandered over the years. We need to be the driving force; we are the ones in the trenches with the students.

There is still enough faculty history here to perhaps mentor a revival, but they are dwindling fast. The AHE objectors are retiring; those that participated in the Faculty Senate are retiring. While it is a good college, with some great people, it just doesn't have the identity and spark it used to.

Discuss the Issues and Avoid Attacking the Individual

FACTC Focus editor Mark Doerr interviewed Spokane Falls Community College dean of Instruction Jim Brady.

Brady is dean for Computing, Math & Science and, for the 2012-2013 academic year, interim dean for Social Science, Accounting-Economics, Human Services and Academic Initiatives.

MD: How do you view faculty from your perspective as a dean compared to how you viewed faculty when you were teaching?

J.B. I don't see them differently. I see faculty as advocates. It's okay even if they are blind advocates.

MD. What does that mean? Blind advocates?

J.B. They don't need to be completely informed or aware of consequences, like budget consequences. Their role is to advocate; my role is to deal with boundaries.

M.D. Are the relationships, dean to faculty, faculty to faculty, similar?

J.B. I interact more often with faculty now, so I see more faculty than I did then. Then I was interacting more with students. But the first change I noticed was that I had to be more aware of what I said and how I said it because, before, it was just me that they would hear, but now they hear the dean talking, not just Jim. I have to be more cautious about when I was informal and formal.

M.D. How do faculty become advocates in a situation that might appear to be confrontational, but in a way that is productive?

J.B. One time a grievance turned out to be very useful. This is where the faculty don't always have to be perfectly informed. It had to do with an HVAC problem in the math and science building. The grievance was almost irrelevant to the real concerns. This building had a problem with integrity of the ductwork and fresh air capacity. The grievance language was about sick buildings, the danger of Legionnaires disease (a malady spread by bacteria carried in water, sometimes in heating and air condition ducts). The language didn't compel action but we were able to use the fact that there was a grievance to get action. Even though the language in this grievance wasn't perfectly framed, we were able to improve the system. The faculty did what they had to do, and I as a dean did what I had to do. We solved the problem, and that's an example how we maintain a good working relationship.

M.D. What aspects of being a dean were you unaware of—and of which faculty ought to be aware?

J.B. The scale and scope of seeing things from a campus and division perspective. It's not as easy as offering classes that fill, otherwise this would be an A and P (Anatomy and Physiology) and Astronomy campus. Faculty are rightfully more aware of the honest intentions of collegial standards,

but we need to make a strong effort toward helping students succeed. I don't think solid standards and high success rates are mutually exclusive. But that's not a view entirely seen by faculty.

M.D. *Are conflicts natural?*

J.B. They are, but my view is to avoid judging people rather than the actions. It's the way we judge student work—judge the work not the person and make sure the language used to address work reflects that. For example, a fairly rigorous discussion is how to get students out of developmental math. At the same time, there needs to be special respect for standards. We have these discussions that are often controversial and still remain respectful of each other. When I first started teaching here, I was involved in a meeting in which two faculty members got into a pretty heated discussion and they weren't pulling punches. But the discussion focused on the issues and not the individuals. After the meeting, these two adversaries turned to each other, and one said, "let's go to lunch," and the other agreed. Adversaries can become passionate, even angry, but never let it become personal.

M.D. *So the different views of faculty and deans is a matter of scope?*

J.B. Since I've been a dean, I've changed my approach to issues. As an instructor, I could take a one-note position and not care about the budget. As a dean, I have to see how we can get from where we are to someplace better. And I need faculty support to do that. I have to get three or four other strong opinions—from faculty—or I'm not going to get anywhere.

M.D. *I've seen administrators who ignored faculty views and governed from a heavily top down approach.*

J.B. The biggest concern for deans: trying to affect the action of others. If I want to have an impact on developmental math, I have to walk away from my knowledge about math (*ed note: Brady taught math for almost twenty years before he became a dean*). I have to influence and collaborate with the math faculty, and part of that means letting go of notions I have about math requirements. I have to motivate as opposed to being an agent of change. The faculty are agents of change. I have to rally the flag, create the obligation. The change had to come from the faculty in the math department.

M.D. *What do you see that faculty might not see in the way things are done?*

J.B. Our course construction process is archaic. It had been in place for thirty or forty years. All the schools (statewide community and technical colleges) use it, so it's hard to change. It punishes you if you don't offer this year what you did last year. It was hard to look at scheduling from a broader view. The construct makes it easy to put greater emphasis on personal convenience of the instructor and harder to see the schedule from an annual view. I was looking at how easy it was for a student to complete the program in six quarters. It could be done, but only if a student were able to put up with a very strange schedule. The student would have to take classes at 8 a.m., 1 p.m., and 6 p.m. We did fix it, but it took that big view to do it. I couldn't do it by force. I had to work with the people then, and I have to work with them tomorrow. An adversarial, top down (do it my way or else) approach means the administrator could win today but not tomorrow.

Darth Vader is a Fictional Character and That Joke is Never Funny

By Walter Hudsick, former dean of Student Learning, Cascadia

When I became a dean, almost everybody, faculty and administrator alike, responded with the same apothegm: “*Joining the dark side, eh?*” Really? That’s the best we can manage when a teacher becomes a dean – a reference to a character from a 33-year-old movie who represents the seductive power of evil? C’mon. I very publicly rejected this trope every time it was mentioned. We are all educators and we should value all the contributions made to the common cause of serving students.

Walter Hudsick chose to return to faculty status in April 2012.



We Have Seen The Enemy And He Is Us ... And Them

By Mark Doerr, Spokane Falls Community College

Back in the 1970s during the dark days of an earlier financial crisis, SFCC administrators decided to cancel summer classes because, they claimed, the budget wouldn't allow for summer school. That fall, the college president ran into one of the philosophy teachers. "We got more done over in administration than ever before," the president bragged about how good life was as an administrator during that summer of no college.

The instructor replied: "That proves that whatever it is you do over there, it has nothing to do with education."

Some may disagree, but I think the comment was meant to be both sharp and instructive.

The battle has been long, sometimes bitter, sometimes stupid, sometimes petty.

But that philosophy instructor, the great Rex Hollowell, made that comment and continued to teach. At many organizations in our culture, a brash repost like that would be cause for dismissal.

I've heard rumors that our administrators today are trying to put language in the contract trying to tame caustic criticism from the faculty class.

That would be a mistake.

I tell students to speak up if they disagree with me about anything. If I can't take criticism, I don't deserve to be a teacher at a community college.

And I think administrators should welcome that kind of candor and willingness to engage.

If we are to succeed in what we do, we need to stand up and speak to power. When the power is us, we need to encourage others to do the same. I'm proud of my colleagues when they see a problem and address it, even if their approach is laced with rudeness. Being nice doesn't necessarily mean being honest.

Our board of trustees recently inserted some language into their policy statement that would have required faculty to notify students what their grades are at mid-term. This was a strange intrusion on the part of the board into classroom management. A large group of SFCC faculty protested at a meeting. They were loud, perhaps a bit rude (or maybe very rude depending on the point of view), but I think it was important for the faculty to let administration know where it stood.

I don't recall any personal insults, but I do recall one instructor saying something about administrators that may have not been flattering. It wasn't exactly a direct insult, but it wasn't "nice".

I think that's where the notion arose to put something in the contract about faculty behavior.

The odd thing is that administration listened, the board listened and the micro-management language was removed from board policy.

Somebody spoke the truth and somebody else didn't like the way they spoke. I thought this was the perfect example of a situation where the opponents in a discussion used heated language in a perfectly appropriate way. As far as I know, no one "hates" anyone else for what was said, but if administrators decide that faculty should be nice, it's not good for the order.

Bitter attitudes can arise for an abundance of reasons, some of them with merit. Last spring, an article in the Spokesman-Review revealed that a block of administrators at CCS would be getting raises. This was at the same time that staff employees had to take a three percent cut and faculty salaries were, once again, frozen.

The administrator who defended the raises said they were overdue and had to be done at that time because, well, the language was kind of murky why it had to be done then, but let me ask this question. Who wouldn't be bitter when the bosses get the raises and they don't?

I'm amazed the bitterness isn't more widespread.

So we do have good reasons to battle among ourselves, and we shouldn't be quiet about where we stand on these issues.

But I also agree that the bigger, more destructive threats are external. My suspicion is that the effort to improve student success is a step in the direction of changing the funding model. That doesn't mean we ought not figure out ways we are impeding honestly dedicated students, but because politicians who have been choking our budgets are enthusiastic about this brave new approach, I'm seeing a future of less funding and less opportunity for the kind of students who need community colleges.

You want to make sure a higher percentage of students succeed. Cut the open door approach to enrollment. Is that where we're headed? If so, someone better be ready to step up and voice opposition.

Every time I mention that, voices cry out almost in pain that cutting access is not the goal. Neither is reducing standards. They may not be goals, but they sure as hell can become the results if we don't resist.

Good administrators should appreciate a suspicious and ornery faculty as long as the suspicions and orneriness has a basis in reality. Faculty can say things and make objections that administrators can't. They can speak to power and they can speak to each other.

We need to keep the standards high and my sense is that the ones who have to keep the barbarians from that gate are faculty. We faculty, administrators, staff, trustees may be adversaries, but a bigger, more dangerous adversary is silence.

Interconnection

Diana Casey, Pierce College

Problems with communication can get in the way of achieving our objectives whether we are part of faculty or administration. Each group of workers has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo so that 'business as usual' can go on.

Yet, when one group amasses too much power, it can mean that the others are sidelined or at least unable to function effectively. What is the best way for all to achieve satisfaction in their chosen professions?

Different employee groups ought to understand other employees' functions. Boards review policy and look at the broadest possible picture. Administrators try to implement these policies. Middle management tries to enforce the practical aspects of the plans. Line staff applies the details of the plan. Faculty have a specialized part in the institutional plan: they prepare and provide the instruction. The entire college is a support system for the faculty so that students can achieve their educational dreams. However, without each of the employee groups, the undertaking would not be successful. So, what are the problems and how can we make things run more smoothly?

Faculty and administrators need to respect one another's boundaries. This is not to say that fair governance is not desirable. Rather, it suggests that each of the employee groups knows their own jobs better than they do others'. Yet, since every group may have different interests, negotiations need to take place to keep the balance of power reasonable which requires truthfulness, transparency and, especially, goodwill. When trust is broken, it is difficult to mend, and it can take years for understanding and joint investment in new plans to revive. So the best tactic is to be honest, whether or not the conveyed message will be "good news" for the various constituencies. Yet, it is understood that administrators are, above all, politicians who need to keep all groups in the college happy which makes their lives sometimes difficult when they are presented with the unvarnished truth.

In our recent serious budget crisis, our financial people were straightforward about the depth of the red ink; therefore, the college community was more understanding about mandated pay cuts. All groups tried to accommodate without undue complaining. Laying it all out on the table and asking for help is the best way to get employee buy-in rather than simply making dogmatic announcements with no explanation.

Yet, administrators and faculty will never see eye to eye in some areas because of conflicting interests. Inequities in faculty salary are glaring, yet they have been allowed to remain in place for more than 25 years for the ridiculous reason that "it has always been that way because the state uses a different 'formula' to figure the salaries at each college."

Not convincing. If the state college system were a private corporation, discriminating between workers based on a ‘special formula”, they would find themselves in court very soon. (I think attempts have been recently made at legislation to correct this problem).

The status quo is comforting...for those at the top! Administrators should realize that faculty have a right to a reasonable standard of living based on **education and experience**, not on the geographical location and age of the college. Administrators need to feel more sympathetic toward faculty, and certainly faculty should try to understand the stresses on administrators as they try to implement sometimes difficult plans (that they personally may not even **agree** with) with less and less money each year. Each group needs to value and try to understand the viewpoints and difficulties of the other groups.

All of us need to realize that without the maintenance, grounds team, security staff, operations, payroll, student services and especially general line staff, we would not be able to function at all. The entire crew is in this together for the success of the student.



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