

Difficult Conversations

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Mississippi State

- Public, Land Grant institution (total enrollment ~21,000)
- Doctoral University, Higher Research Activity
- CSE department housed in the Bagley College of Engineering (one of eight departments)
- Rural location with no other major employers in the area
- ~13 TT faculty, 1 Clinical faculty, 2 instructors
- Enrollment: ~370 UG, ~39 PhD, ~35 MS
- 6 years as DH after 6 years as assoc. dean

Annual Evaluations

- Know the policies and procedures at your institution
- Think about how these mesh with
 - Promotion and tenure
 - Workload assignments
 - Compensation structures

Faculty Evaluations @ MSU

- Done on a calendar year basis vs. academic year
- Faculty completes and submits information (teaching, research, service, awards, center participation)
- Department head ranks (words, not numbers) in big three and overall

Practical Process

- Get all forms before meeting with any individual so you can get the big picture
- Send review to faculty member 1-2 days in advance
- Pre-schedule to avoid “crunch time”
- Focus meeting on “what can I do to help you improve/meet goals/get the next promotion”

Staff Evaluation

- Equally as important as faculty evaluations
- Understand your university process
 - Are raises tied to rankings?
 - What flexibility (if any) do you have on pay
- Staff will compare their ratings
 - With each other
 - With their previous years
- Solicit input from faculty
- Unhappy staff can make the job harder!

Dealing with Faculty/Staff Issues

- Focus on the impact on the department and their career, not personal issues
- Provide concrete examples of problem areas
- Lay out clear expectations for improvement including how you will support the person in their goals
- Practice with a colleague – anticipate arguments
- Follow up with an email to document discussion
- Underperforming faculty/staff member has a negative impact on morale

Difficult Cases @ Tenure

- Should not be a surprise at year 6!
- Annual evaluations should be pointing the way
- Meet with the candidate to go over reasoning – draw on past reviews
- Discuss the process for appeal

Things I Have Learned – sometimes the hard way!

- There are (at least) two sides to every story – make sure you hear both before acting
- Sometimes people just want to vent and don't want you to *do* anything
- You may be perceived to be biased if you are (or are perceived to be) friends with certain individuals/groups
- Take all of the blame, give away all of the credit
- Be an advocate for your faculty and buffer upper administration requests

When to Ask for Help

- Early – when the issue can perhaps be resolved without blowing up!
- Any time a parent, faculty member, staff member or student involves an attorney
- Any time there is a hint of Title IX or harassment issues – know your university policies on disclosure

Who to Ask for Help

- Chain of command
 - Particularly for faculty issues
 - Give folks a heads-up so they are not blindsided
- HRM
 - Particularly for staff but also faculty
 - Usually provides support for Title IX, Harassment, etc.
- Dean of Students – for student issues
- General Council of the university

Title IX

- Could be a whole session by itself!
- Know your university policy/procedure
 - Who is your Title IX coordinator?
 - Who is required to report?
 - Who can individuals talk to and maintain confidentiality?
 - What training is required and who enforces?

Questions?

