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Proceedings

36th Academic Chairpersons Conference,
Houston, TX

Navigating the Micropolitical Landscape of Higher Education

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Recommended Citation

Rawlings, Jared (2019). "Navigating the Micropolitical Landscape of Higher Education," *Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings*. <https://newprairiepress.org/accp/2019/working/3>

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Title: Navigating the Micropolitical Landscape of Higher Education

Presentation Theme: Working with Faculty and Administration

Presentation Type: Brown Bag Lunch (30 minutes)

Abstract (25-50 words):

Academic chairpersons experience conflicts with a variety of stakeholders in higher education. The purpose of this session is to present current research about micropolitics in education and discuss strategies for understanding the micropolitical landscape of academia and for attaining micropolitical literacy to navigating conflicts.

Keywords: Five (5) keywords about your presentation. These are used to help participants search for sessions in the conference proceedings.

Micropolitics, Higher Education, Faculty, Support Staff, Conflict Resolution

Overview (300-500 words):

Studies suggest that academic chairpersons experience conflicts with a variety of stakeholders in higher education. However, little research has reported on the nature of these conflicts, how they are addressed over time, or how they impact the academic leaders. Therefore, there is a need to better understand micropolitics in higher education settings so as to inform those providing professional development for academic chairpersons, policy, and research for educational leadership. Referenced as one of the seminal texts on politics of school management, Hoyle (1986) described the culture and organizational structure of schooling and requisite micropolitical knowledge necessary to successfully navigate school politics. He suggested the “organizational underworld” of schools existed in four domains (a) strategies (implicit bargaining); (b) individual or group interests (professional or personal); (c) interest groups/sets (unions, cliques based on interests, age, or responsibility); and (d) power. Hoyle suggested that micropolitics are rarely discussed in any field and that micropolitical activity exists in schools because of the “space” allowed for micropolitics to thrive as well as the competing forms of legitimacy in academic leader decision-making processes.

As academic chairpersons, we must be able to resolve conflicts. In this session, participants will discuss current research about micropolitics and model practices for academic chairpersons to address micropolitical scenarios. This presentation will include advice related to faculty development, mitigating conflicts, initiating new programs and working with higher administration.

Relevance of session to chairpersons:

Given the purpose of the conference, along with the related themes (Leadership and Management, Working with Faculty and Administration and Operating the Department), this session is relevant to all chairpersons. Newly-appointed and experienced chairpersons will benefit from this presentation as the information presented will provide them information, guidance, and recommendations related to their position.

Presentation focus:

This presentation will focus on strategies for attaining micropolitical literacy. Participants will be able to experience the content through small group collaboration and discussion of the micropolitical landscape.

Recommendations for chairpersons:

Overall, the purpose of this session is twofold: (1) to provide academic chairs with information, guidance, and recommendations for addressing micropolitical situations in their jobs and (2) to allow participants to work with each other to share experiences and their resolutions.

How the audience will be involved:

Session participants will be actively engaged throughout the presentation, both with each other and with the facilitator. Although there will be minimal formal information presented, the overall structure will encourage an ongoing dialog within the presentation. Additionally, participants will be asked to work with each other to share their experiences and resolutions.