Introduction

The University of West Georgia’s core values are obvious in the institution’s mission statement: “Opportunities for intellectual and personal development are provided through quality teaching, scholarly inquiry, creative endeavor, and service for the public good” (“Mission and Vision,” 2007, ¶ 2). We emphasize these values in the academic and extra-curricular programs that we offer to students and the broader Georgia community. Implicit in our emphasis on teaching is the value we place on the exploration of ideas, the need for diversity of perspectives in that exploration, and the importance of an atmosphere of respect to support this exploration. By valuing research,
we acknowledge the importance of creating and pursuing new ways of expressing ourselves and our world, as well as the desire to create new understandings. And with service, we acknowledge our commitment to each other, and the importance of understanding our roles in the community—however we define that community.

This understanding of our core values is critical to the success of a conflict management program as well. Conflicts offer opportunities for learning—for understanding the perspective of other individuals and/or groups, for creating new means of communicating with each other, and for re-affirming our individual obligations to the whole.

At the University of West Georgia, the conflict management program comprises a variety of informal and formal efforts that reflect the university’s desire to address sources of conflict and also to resolve it in productive ways. We use the term “program” loosely, however, because much of what exists on this campus is not known to the full range of UWG community members who might benefit from them and thus may not be viewed as parts of a cohesive effort. For the past eighteen months, UWG’s Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution has undertaken an assessment of the conflict management program on campus in order to see what exists, how well it functions, and where the program can improve.

In this report, we will present a broad description of the various efforts taking place on this campus and demonstrate how they represent commendable steps toward a structural approach to conflict management. We provide these recommendations according to institutional and program level guidelines that were presented by the
Institutional and Program Level Guidelines

The CCMGC consists of a group of academics and professionals who work to address conflicts in higher education institutions in the United States and Canada. As they developed the framework that we use for this report, their target audience was “key decision makers such as senior administrators, deans and department heads, ombudspersons, anti-harassment officers, housing and security administrators, faculty, student affairs professionals, and various frontline conflict services staff” (Warters & Smith, 2003, p. 2). In providing their guidelines, they state that “appropriate conflict management work requires an understanding and acknowledgement of factors at both the institutional and program/practitioner level” (p. 5), and for that reason the guidelines address broader campus “conflict culture” as well as specific campus conflict management programs and practices.

We took these considerations into account as we prepared this report. In order to aid the reader of this report, we include here the CCMGC’s definitions of commonly used terms.
Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary of Key Terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL – The institutional level includes the overall structure and mission of the university, the administrative levels within the institution, budget and programmatic decisions affecting conflict management, and the overall conflict management culture of the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAM/PRACTITIONER LEVEL – The program level includes university programs that are designed to deal specifically with conflict management as well as individual practitioners who take on this role in their everyday work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS DESIGN – Conflict management systems design refers to the process of designing an effective, sustainable and integrated system of conflict management practices within an institution. Effective conflict management systems seek to prevent destructive forms of conflict and to encourage the early identification and resolution of conflict. Often the focus includes efforts to limit the use of potentially more costly forms of dispute processing (like grievances and litigation) to situations that truly require it. Effective conflict management systems address conflicts within institutions in a systemic manner, not in piece-meal fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFLICT – intense interpersonal or intrapersonal dissonance between two or more parties (individual or groups) based on incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs, attitudes or perceptions of entitlement.</td>
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<td>DISPUTE – conflicts that have become particularized around a specific issue or issues.</td>
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<td>GRIEVANCE – the formal expression of a dispute in the form of a complaint by one or more of the parties.</td>
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(Warters & Smith, 2003)
Overview of the UWG Conflict Management Program

Figure 2

Six-Stage Model for Development and Implementation of CM Systems

- Appoint Liaison and Committee (CCRC)
- Evaluate & Improve
- Implement Program/Service including plan for Capacity Building
- Educate & Train Stakeholders
- Assess Disputing and Conflict Handling Mechanisms
- Recommend Design for CM Program

(Inlow & Yarn, 2007, p. 1)

The University Co-Liaisons for Alternative Dispute Resolution, in cooperation and consultation with the Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution (CADR), administer UWG’s conflict management program.

As required by the Initiative and Policy Direction on Conflict Resolution adopted by the Board of Regents in 1995, the President appoints the liaisons (one for faculty and one for staff) and the committee. The CADR works with the Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution (CNCR), the technical consultant to the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution. In the fall of 2005, Lin Inlow, Director of Education and Training at CNCR, presented two three-hour workshops on Conflict
Resolution and Effective Communication, and the faculty and staff who participated became the core of the current CADR.

The liaisons and the committee, in consultation with the Director of Education and Training at CNCR, have followed the six steps outlined for implementation of the Initiative (“Six steps,” 2007). After re-forming the committee (forming a Campus Conflict Resolution Committee is the first step), the next step is to provide education and training in conflict management theory and design. The committee has developed an ongoing approach to training, as we will discuss below in the section on Building Capacity.

Step three directs each institution to “take an honest, in-depth assessment of its conflict environment” in order to “identify current conflicts, anticipate future conflicts, analyze current conflict handling procedures,” and step four consists of making recommendations based on the results of the assessment regarding conflict management system improvements if necessary (“Six steps,” 2007, ¶ 1 & 3).

The initial step in our assessment process was a Campus Culture and Climate Survey for faculty and staff. In fall of 2006, the online survey was sent to all faculty and all staff listservs, and a paper and pencil survey was given to the facilities staff. Over 208 faculty members (39.4%) and 301 staff members (39.1%) responded. The decision to create a campus culture and climate survey, which in this case included questions not only specific to conflict management but also to governance procedures, workload, job satisfaction, and more, was based on a variety of factors. These included the growing number of requests for mediation that revealed patterns in the types of conflicts reported and discussions in various formal and informal settings on campus that revealed patterns in conflicts across the institution. We needed an honest in-depth assessment of the
environment on campus in order to gain a greater understanding of the issues before we could develop recommendations and an action plan for improving our conflict management program.

Figure 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACULTY</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of trust in procedures and policies</td>
<td>Not feeling valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources (lack of with regard to salary, facilities, etc.)</td>
<td>Low salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of faculty in governance structure</td>
<td>Lack of professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Pride (staff expressed a great deal of pride in being affiliated with UWG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not feeling valued</td>
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Knowledge of conflict resolution procedures was also a top issue.

Based on the results of the survey, CADR identified top areas for further investigation (see Figure 3). Survey data was presented to the President’s Advisory Council (PAC), the Faculty Senate, and other campus groups in order to allow the staff and faculty who had spoken through their participation in the survey to speak about their perceptions of the campus environment and their confidence or lack of confidence in conflict management procedures. Additionally, these presentations gave the campus an opportunity to discuss ideas about addressing the issues.

In the fall of 2007, Kelley Alexander, an intern from Kennesaw State University’s Master’s program in Conflict Management, conducted a follow-up assessment report (Alexander, 2007). The CADR requested this study as a result of suggestions and questions raised by faculty, staff, and administrators at presentations of the survey data. Kelley was originally supposed to work as an assistant to a faculty member who
volunteered to do this follow-up study, but when that faculty member left the institution, Kelley took over the project. An important factor in our deciding to work with Kelley was her objectivity with regard to UWG. In this follow-up, we chose to use focus group methodology as a way of clarifying the data from the culture and climate survey, particularly as it related to issues of diversity.

The final phase of the assessment step involved conducting interviews on campus with Vice-Presidents, Deans, the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Public Safety, the chair of the Faculty Grievance Committee, the Special Associate to the President for Minority Affairs and others who serve as dispute resolvers. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain information about what is working and what is not working in the handling of disputes on campus and to ask for suggestions on how to improve our current conflict management program and procedures.

**Building Institutional Conflict Management Capacity and a Conflict-Friendly Context**

**Capacity-building at the Institutional Level**

Conflict in an institution of higher learning can be treated as a learning opportunity for the organization—in this sense, it is a potential resource, not a problem that should be suppressed. Fundamentally, it is how the conflict is addressed that determines its usefulness. When it is avoided, escalation and proliferation of the conflict occurs, thus diminishing the possibility of constructive change. A conflict-friendly institution understands and utilizes conflict for educational and social purposes (Warters & Smith, 2003).
There have been a number of efforts at UWG that demonstrate an institutional understanding of this positive potential for conflict. The President’s office has provided resources to expand its pool of on-campus mediators, as well as funding for on-campus conflict management workshops. These efforts are examples of what conflict-friendly institutions do: they devote resources to provide more resources, and they demonstrate their willingness to normalize the existence of conflict by making available to those who need it the experience and skills of trained conflict handlers.

We wish to recognize the support of the President in this section. In the past three years, the President has sent out a letter to the university community supporting mediation as an alternative to formal complaint procedures, and he has also supported the extensive efforts of the Committee in providing training for faculty and staff on campus. With his assistance, we have been able to provide on-campus workshops as well as send several faculty and staff members to mediation training (a minimum of 30 hours) to create a well-trained and diverse pool of mediators on campus. Such high-level support is critical to the success of any conflict management program.

**Capacity-building at the Program and Practitioner Level**

When disputes arise, they are best handled by those trained to deal with it. Because conflicts arise in all parts of a university community (students, faculty, staff), these specialists need to be integrated into all parts of that community. Such integration creates a diverse pool of skills, experiences, and knowledge from which the community can draw. While individuals who are experiencing problems of some kind tend to gravitate toward friends or trusted colleagues (known here as natural problem-solvers),
there are many others who, through their professional positions, are designated problem-solvers. Such individuals may be supervisors, police officers, human resources staff, academic advisors, counselors, mediators and more. It is not uncommon, however, for the natural problem solvers and the professionally designated problem-solvers to be unconnected. Such fragmentation does not create opportunities for sharing knowledge of underlying sources of conflict and thus addressing root causes.

On the UWG campus we have found a remarkable range of individuals who are devoted to the issues surrounding conflict management. We take this opportunity to cite their efforts and commend them:

The Student Services Division has been particularly successful in implementing strategies to address the wide variety of issues that students experience. These include the Critical Incident Team (CIT), a group that not only looks at individual incidents but also identifies potential hot spots in an effort to address conflicts before they get out of control. This group, which includes Leslie Cottrell, Melanie McClellan, Trish Causey, Jerry Hall, Tom Mackel, and Jill Hendricks, demonstrates a proactive commitment to addressing issues and is an obvious recognition of the need for networking and collaboration.

We also wish to recognize the efforts of Jill Hendricks, Patient Advocate, in addressing the broad range of conflicts that students bring to her. Her work requires communication with faculty, students, and staff, and we applaud her efforts. While the entire Student Services Division works hard, Jill is well-known among every constituency on campus, and we use this opportunity to recognize her.
Student Services also recently designated DeLandra Hunter of the EXCEL Center as student ombudsperson. As such, he primarily works with minority group students and assists them in resolving problems and answering questions. DeLandra has completed mediator training, and he is a member of our Committee.

The appointment of a Staff Training Coordinator and Ombudsperson in the College of Arts and Sciences is an example of institutional-level commitment to creating a conflict-friendly environment. Patricia Pinkard assumed this role at the beginning of August, 2007, and she has received extensive training in mediation, conflict coaching, and ombuds work (she is a member of the International Ombuds Association). Again, the work she does is both proactive and responsive. She has developed a program of training opportunities for the staff of the College, and she also serves as a resource for individuals with particular problems and questions. In order to provide training, she has drawn on the skills and expertise of such resources as the ombudsperson at Kennesaw State University, the Employee Assistance Program, Tom Mackel and Jill Hendricks of the Critical Incident Team, and Lin Inlow of the Consortium for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution.

Additionally, we, the Committee for Alternative Dispute Resolution, have facilitated conflict resolution workshops on campus for Vice-Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs, Directors and Supervisors (approximately 300 employees attended these workshops during the fall of 2006), as well as for other interested individuals. We have also been fortunate to expand the pool of trained mediators on campus through funding from the President’s office.
However, even with these activities, results from the Culture and Climate Survey, as well as information gleaned from a variety of unit heads on campus, indicate that there is still much work to be done in this area. Survey respondents expressed concern that inexperienced supervisors were ill-equipped to deal with the range of conflicts that tend to surface and thus often choose to practice conflict avoidance or conflict suppression. The staff portion of the survey, as well as many of the follow-up interviews, yielded some strong concerns about professional development and training. Staff in particular voiced concerns about not feeling prepared to take on new responsibilities that had been assigned to them, and they also felt that their supervisors had not been adequately prepared for the supervisory tasks to which they had been assigned. The faculty survey yielded similar concerns, although they were not as strong. The frustrations that accompany this sense of being overwhelmed by professional demands can lead to a variety of conflicts that reveal themselves in personal interactions and thus affect the functioning of a unit both internally and with other units. Because of these concerns, we offer the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that individuals in supervisory positions in particular should receive training in conflict management; however, the skills developed in such training can be useful for any employee in any situation. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that such training must be ongoing. For such training to be effective, the institution must make it clear that such skills are valued by the leadership. Some examples of institutions in the USG system that provide such training include the following:
a. Georgia Perimeter College includes a conflict resolution module in leadership training.

b. Georgia Southwestern State University provides leadership training which includes conflict management skills. It has also conducted Dealing with Difficult People Workshops for all employees.

2. We also recommend that the institution expand upon the outstanding efforts we noted above to utilize a variety of preventive services as well as interventions to address the range of issues that surface in our university. Regular, ongoing formal assessment is required for the development of such services, as well as the promotion of informal conversations among those who address conflicts.

**Draw On and Encourage a Broad Spectrum of Conflict Management Options Based on Principles and Values**

In 2001, the Faculty Senate approved UWG’s ADR program for faculty. The ADR Program for staff was approved in 2002. Both programs added the option of mediation (grievance procedures were already in place) for employees who were willing to work with a neutral party (the mediator) to resolve conflicts. When the BOR mandated the development and implementation of a conflict resolution system at the institutional level in 1995, there was little funding to do more than train mediators. For this reason, mediation was recommended to be the program at institutions. As a result of CNCR’s selection of basic mediation training as the introductory course to the Initiative for the University Systems’ institutions, “many institutions have designed their dispute
resolution systems around mediation…ignoring other potentially appropriate prevention and resolution tools” (“Lessons Learned,” 2007, ¶ 3).

Since UWG adopted its program, the university has grown in both scope and size. This growth brings with it an increased variety of perspectives, backgrounds, knowledge, and assumptions. Inherent in this is the need for additional approaches to conflict management. The co-liaisons for UWG have noted that mediation intake interviews often become conversations in which the liaisons are seen as ombudspersons who are asked to clarify procedures, explore options, and act as advocates. The co-liaisons are sometimes able to assist with the first two items (the third is not an option), but they often find in the course of these intakes that individuals who come requesting mediation are interested in other options for which our campus has no mechanism. Some of these are included in the Appendix.

In order to provide these options, a campus needs a broad range of experts in conflict management, and these individuals must have opportunities and resources to communicate and collaborate. By providing these options, an organization can identify and deal with conflict long before it reaches a stage that can damage the individuals and/or the organization. An Office of Conflict Management, staffed by an ombuds and working with structures such as Human Resources, Minority Affairs, as well as individuals across the campus, can be a hub for such collaboration. Where these offices exist (Kennesaw State University has one), they serve as a vehicle for assessment, education, outreach, and communication.

In both formal and informal discussions after the administration of the Culture and Climate survey, UWG community members consistently stated a desire for the
creation of an ombudsperson position for the university. Commonly referred to as an ombuds, this person is trained to assist members of a community or organization, and is a confidential, impartial, informal, and independent resource for staff, faculty, and administrators. An ombuds identifies trends and challenges and makes recommendations for change in University policy or practice when appropriate. However, s/he is not a decision maker and does not have the power to establish, change, or set aside any University rules, policies, or management decisions (“About Us”, n.d.).

At the system level, the most recent report by CNCR (for the period January 2004 to January 2007) on the University Systems’ implementation of conflict management systems states that “based on the success of [USG institutions with] ombuds programs, it is recommended that other institutions seriously examine the establishment of ombuds programs, particularly the larger institutions” (Inlow & Yarn, 2007, p. 6).

This desire to establish such a position on the campus is not unique to UWG. Individuals at the University of Georgia have initiated a petition that requests, among other things, the development of an ombuds office. This petition is the result of recent crises on that campus. Valdosta State is also investigating the feasibility of developing such a position.

Some examples of the services that ombuds provide in other institutions in the University System of Georgia include the following:

- Clayton State University, which provides mediation, consultation, and facilitated discussion services
• Kennesaw State University, which provides mediation, consultation, facilitated discussion, and explanation for individuals and groups who need assistance with the interpretation of policies and procedures

• Georgia State University, which provides mediation, consultation, facilitated discussion, education and training, referrals to resources, conflict coaching, and policy and procedure explanations.

Other USG institutions that have an ombuds include Augusta State University, and Georgia Institute of Technology.

**Recommendations**

With the above issues in mind, we make the following recommendations:

1. We recommend that a university ombudsperson be appointed and that this person report directly to the President.

   We envision the ombuds as having responsibilities in the following areas:

   a. Evaluation and assessment of the conflict management program

   b. Advising individuals who are struggling with managing interpersonal issues that are affecting the overall performance of a unit. For instance, if a department supervisor is struggling to address interpersonal conflicts that hinder the unit’s performance, the ombudsperson may assist in identifying resources and options for addressing the issue. “In seeking responsible resolutions to individual conflicts, the ombuds is accustomed to taking into
consideration the welfare of all parties, including the interests of
the university” (Wagner, 1998, p. 6).

c. Facilitating training opportunities in conflict management for
the entire campus. In this capacity, the ombuds might work with
Human Resources, Continuing Education, individual units and
other groups to aid them in assessing the needs of community
members.

d. Directing the Office of Conflict Management, which leads us to
our next recommendation.

2. As implied in item d, we make the recommendation for an ombuds in conjunction
with the recommendation that the university establish an Office of Conflict
Management. We firmly believe that the institution needs to formalize its current
program and utilize such an office as a way of re-framing conflicts as
opportunities rather than problems. The ombuds, the co-liaisons, the Office of
Conflict Management, and the CADR would work together and, of course, with
other groups on campus to create and assess a conflict-friendly environment that
serves to support the core values of the university’s mission. We envision this
office as a supplement to and not a replacement of the university’s existing
resources for conflict resolution.

We must note here that it is critical that expert legal advice be readily available
not only for an ombuds but also for other individuals who are expected to assist
individuals in exploring options and resources. We emphasize here that a university
ombuds must report directly to the President. This ensures that the nature of both broad
issues and case characteristics can be communicated to key decision makers at the highest institutional levels. Having a university ombuds does not take the place of having individuals with ombuds responsibilities in various units. It does, however, create a way to coordinate and assess the effectiveness of various aspects of a conflict management program.

**Clarify Administrative Practices and Protocols**

Fundamental principles of a conflict management program include confidentiality and clarity about its limits, the commitment to doing no harm, provision of a full range of options and assistance in exploring those options, impartiality, independence, the avoidance of conflicts of interest, non-discrimination, supporting the concept that involved parties should make their own decisions about participating in conflict management processes and how to resolve issues (self-determination), and maintaining integrity of the processes by utilizing skilled, knowledgeable individuals (Warters & Smith, 2003).

It is in this area that we believe that the conflict management program at UWG has a number of actual and perceived weaknesses. Survey respondents and interviewees stated that confidentiality is nearly impossible to maintain in any situation—or that such impossibility is perceived to be the case. Thirty-six percent of staff said that lack of confidentiality might prevent them from requesting assistance if they had a conflict with a co-worker. Situations that require confidentiality are numerous, but issues with regard to mediation and grievance initiation were cited in the survey. Forty-four percent of faculty indicated that power disparities would prevent them from seeking ADR options.
Fear of retaliation and intimidation were also reasons given by both faculty and staff for not trusting the conflict resolution processes currently in place. Either way, these are some fundamental problems that must be addressed.

In addition to these issues concerning conflict management practices at the University, lack of knowledge of what is available when faculty and staff find themselves involved in a dispute is another problem that must be addressed. Almost 46% of faculty survey respondents in fall 2006 indicated that they were not aware of policies related to conflict resolution. These responses were made after the distribution of a brochure titled “Managing Conflict through Mediation” to all faculty and staff at the beginning of the semester prior to the administration of the survey.

Another component of the current conflict management program which will need to be examined is the grievance procedures for staff and faculty, particularly the staff procedures. A detailed grievance procedure is clearly laid out for faculty in their Handbook, and according to the Chair of the Faculty Grievance Committee, the faculty who serve on the grievance committee “perform exceptionally and adjudicate the grievance to the best of their ability.” In our follow-up interviews, we discovered that the grievance procedure for staff concerns the Director of Human Resources. The Grievance Procedure lists the Director as being the third level, but she also has responsibilities for advising management on how to proceed when a grievance is filed. Because of this conflict, the Director of Human Resources refers grievances to the fourth level rather than make a recommendation or decision at level 3.

Recommendations
1. We recommend that the Office of Conflict Management, in conjunction with the Faculty Senate, be charged with the responsibility for clarifying procedures and options available for conflict resolution. Because we see this Office as being the primary source for confidential information about the range of options available to UWG community members, as well as overseeing the assessment of the conflict management program, it makes sense that it would also serve to clarify existing procedures and make recommendations for revisions to them if necessary. Additionally, the Office could provide information that would not conflict with other roles, as is the case with the current role of the Director of Human Resources.

2. We also recommend that all handbooks and manuals be updated to reflect all changes to procedures, and that both the print and electronic versions of these be made available. We have discovered a great deal of confusion regarding whom to contact in the case of sexual harassment issues, Affirmative Action and other matters.

3. Finally, we recommend that an aggressive informational campaign be initiated to better inform the campus about what currently exists. For instance, even Tom Mackel indicated that the biggest challenge for him and Jill Hendricks in providing the training mentioned above is letting people know about it. This campaign may include but not be limited to:

   a. Regular contact with department chairs and directors to address the role of UWG’s ADR program.
b. Develop “commercials” (very short announcements, etc.) that can be used
to open campus meetings such as the annual faculty meeting, the Staff
Advisory Council meetings, etc.

c. Develop and provide two annual workshops (fall and spring semesters).
The workshops should be designed to address the roles of alternative
dispute resolution and conflict management on the UWG campus.

d. Continue general improvements to the ADR website.

e. Develop an awareness campaign through posters and other printed
materials (notepads with ADR website, etc.). This could also include a
stand-alone newsletter or regular articles in the Campus Chronicle.

f. Publicizing other existing resources such as the Employee Assistance
Program should also be included here. We were somewhat surprised to
find out from a non-UWG community member that EAP provides free
training and is available for presentations to groups on campus.

We make all of the above recommendations without specifying who should be
responsible, and that is intentional. Because our first and most important
recommendation is the development of an Office of Conflict Management, we believe
that the services provided by that office will include the above. However, we also
believe strongly that all such activities listed above should be developed in consultation
with the Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution, as well as with the campus co-
liaisons and other key units (such as Human Resources). We are committed to the
principle that it is only with a structural approach to such activities that they can be
successful.
Stay Vital and Relevant Through Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

In its guidelines, the CCMGC states that the assessment, evaluation and refinement of conflict management practices are the responsibility of the institution, the program, and individual practitioners (Warters & Smith, 2003). Indeed, as President Beheruz Sethna said in an e-mail response to the UWG campus after the survey, “Assessment is part of our lives today. We cannot shy away from it; indeed we must all welcome it. It is only through assessment that we can strive to improve ourselves, and so this survey fulfills an appropriate need. We will repeat similar surveys periodically to maintain the spirit of assessment and improvement” (2006).

The “spirit of assessment” is the desire for continuous improvement. CCMGC notes that such a process requires “rigorous collection of data, analysis and action” (Warters & Smith, 2003, p. 23). CCMGC provides the following as starting points for such a process:

- Campus-wide climate assessments exploring issues of moral, perceptions of safety, community engagement, and more
- Feedback loops to professional development and institutional planning and budgeting mechanisms
- Reports to appropriate faculty and administrators identifying conflict patterns, systemic trends, and structural problems.

In order to achieve these, the CCMGC also recommends the following specific methods and areas for evaluation:

- Ongoing evaluation of program processes and practices
- Evaluation of conflict parties’ experiences with the service
• Case characteristics reporting
• Development of target learning outcomes for practitioners and participants that can be assessed
• Mediator self-assessment
• Formal evaluations of professional and volunteer staff
• Feedback gathered from other offices and programs
• Evaluations of trainings

We are pleased to note that many of these suggestions are in fact the practice on the UWG campus. For instance, the co-liaisons recently implemented an anonymous feedback mechanism for parties who engage in mediation so that they can provide information on whether or not the process was helpful (they are provided this opportunity whether or not an agreement was reached in the process). Our training sessions routinely request evaluations at the end of the sessions. The ombuds office in COAS recently administered a survey to the College’s staff to determine their needs.

However, we clearly have to implement more ways of assessing conflict management on campus.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that a Culture & Climate survey be administered every three years. We believe that this time span will allow sufficient time for any changes made as a result of a survey to take place and be assessed. This survey should be developed, administered, and analyzed by representatives of
many groups on campus, including the Office of Conflict Management, the Senate, the CADR, staff representatives and more.

2. We recommend that an annual report be provided to the Senate and the administration about conflict patterns, structural issues, etc. However, we are keenly aware that this type of reporting could make individuals who experience conflict feel vulnerable. For this reason, we believe that an Office of Conflict Management and an ombudsperson are critical to the success of such reporting. Furthermore, we wish to state that such reporting requires a broad, institutional-level view of issues in order to identify patterns.

It is essential that all data be shared and reviewed by stakeholders if it is to have any impact.

**Conclusion**

It is important to give people the opportunity to express themselves safely and openly, although we realize that if there are not also solutions to the problems that contribute to frustrations and conflict, the expression of such things can be stagnating. However, it is only through the expression of these that we can know what we must address. University of Wisconsin-Madison Provost Peter Spear said, in referring to efforts at his campus to measure and improve campus climate, “For us to continue to be a world-class university, it is essential that students, faculty, and staff have a positive, supportive environment in which to work, learn, and live…We can strive for an environment that welcomes differences among people and ensures an atmosphere of respect and acceptance. And when there are conflicts, we should have the ability to
defuse them before they explode into formal grievances and lawsuits” (“Climate Q & A,” 2007, ¶ 8 & 10)

It is obvious that UWG has the potential for a structural commitment to a conflict-friendly campus. We have noted in this report some of the strongest examples of this desire to create this community. We are certain that there are many more, and we apologize to the quiet problem-solvers in our midst who are not recognized here.

In 2006, during the presentation of the survey results to the Faculty Senate, we noted that whatever process the campus utilized to address the issues and questions that the survey presented would have to be a “model of transparency” that would reflect the contributions of all groups on campus. We wish to commend here the work of the Senate Ad Hoc Rules Committee and the UWG Strategic Planning Committee as they have worked to answer the questions that we have used as a guide in our own work: Where do we want to go? How do we get there? While the charges of those committees are not specific to conflict management systems design, committee members have demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of how an effective system design can support and further organizational goals.

To summarize, we believe the strong response rate to the survey and the focus groups, as well as the substantive work of the above committees and the ongoing efforts of the many individuals on this campus who engage in conflict management on a daily basis, create a strong basis for a conflict-friendly campus. The UWG community members who voiced their concerns and offered praise in the survey and in other forums did so in a spirit of collaboration that bodes well for the future of the institution. It is clear that individuals on this campus are deeply committed to their work and their
colleagues, and they show that commitment every day. Frustrations are common occurrences in any workplace; the creative management and resolution of conflicts that underlie those are what distinguish exceptional workplaces from the ordinary.
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Appendix

Informed Discussion. This refers to communication among parties involved in a potential conflict in which information is shared and perceptions are measured separate from any declared intent to reach a formal agreement on resolution of the issues. Informed discussion reduces pressure on the discussants, and may be helpful in avoiding barriers to resolution experienced during a conflict management process.

Conciliation. This is a very informal process, whereby a third party may come in to assist in “fact finding” or help the disputants form the relationships necessary to “come to the table”. The parties are responsible for conducting negotiations and decision making themselves. The term “conciliation” has often been used interchangeably with “mediation.” The term “conciliation” often refers to a process in which the disputants are not present in the same room and the conciliator speaks with each side separately using “shuttle diplomacy.” However, some people use the terms “conciliation” and “mediation” interchangeably.

Facilitation.

Facilitators are used to help make group processes more effective and efficient. The facilitator is impartial and leads the parties in a structured process that helps the group achieve agreement and resolution of an issue by providing a “safe” setting for the airing of differences, keeping meetings on track, insuring equal time for all participants, instilling a sense of fairness in the process, offering optional processes and approaches, and moving parties toward consensus. Variations include co-facilitation, circles, and town meetings. Facilitators are also used for informed discussions, which do not have agreement building as the task or goal of the meeting.

Mediation.

In mediation, an impartial third party helps disputants improve their relationships, clarify their future plans, resolve a dispute or plan a transaction, but does not have the power to impose a binding solution. There are many varieties and styles of mediation some of which are more facilitative and others, which are more evaluative (including mediator suggestions or recommendations). While many alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs have standardized on “interest-based” problem-solving mediation, made famous by the Harvard Program on Negotiation, there are new directions in mediation (e.g. “transformative mediation” or “narrative mediation”) which focus less on specific settlements and more on improvement of working relationships. Some mediators are familiar with a variety of approaches and design each mediation processes to suit the particular parties, the situation and the cultural context.
Partnering.

A formal, but non-binding agreement among parties playing different, but interdependent roles in an undertaking. In general, partnering is a proactive attempt by interdependent groups to create a working relationship conducive to trust, understanding and the pursuit of mutually acceptable goals. Parties make agreements in principle to share risks and promote cooperation. Partnering may be used, for instance, in construction projects.

Shared Decision Making

In “shared decision making,” representatives of affected parties and sectors of the institution, other organizations and the public (termed “stakeholders”) work together with decision makers to develop policies or institutional strategies. These multi-party processes utilize impartial facilitators experienced in multi-party conflict resolution. These participatory (and often) public decision making processes differ from top-down administrative decision making processes, or decision-making by elected representatives. In this model of decision-making, decision-makers participate as stakeholders at the negotiating table. The legitimate authority of decision makers remains intact, but to the extent that consensus decisions of a representative group accommodate all stakeholder interests (including the interests of the decision maker), the decision will be irresistible to decision makers. The rationale for shared decision making is that high levels of stakeholder participation will result in better informed, more balanced, better accepted and more stable decisions.

Community or Group Conferencing.

A community or group conference is a forum that brings together the community of people affected by conflict. The number of participants in a conference tends to range from twelve to thirty. Participants generally deliberate for between three and five hours. The conference provides them with an opportunity to express, in a setting of safety and confidentiality, concerns that they have about relations and communication in their setting. Conferences are not primarily for solving problems, but for catalyzing processes of systemic change. Workplace conferencing can be used in cases of breached regulations, wrongful dismissal, malicious gossip, discrimination, harassment, abusive supervision or management, safety breaches, and inadequate management. See also “restorative justice.”

Public Dialogue.

This term refers to discussion processes that are carefully designed, convened and facilitated to promote constructive conversations and relationships among those who have differing values, world views, and perspectives about divisive public issues. Sometimes these processes are called “public dialogue” and sometimes “public conversations.” These are not public debates, attempts to reach settlements or work out systemic changes, but public conversations with the goal of building an atmosphere of respectful dialogue and of respectful relationships
among those who have opposing points of view about deeply contentious issues. Dialogue processes have been used for public discussion about issues such as abortion and race relations.

Restorative Justice.

Restorative justice has been defined as a response to wrongdoing that emphasizes healing the wounds of victims, offenders and their communities caused or made manifest as a result of the offence. Some higher education institutions have been experimenting with restorative justice processes for issues related to student discipline, harassment or other matters. Practices and programs for restorative justice work to identify and take steps to repair harms done particularly to those who have experienced injury of one form or another. They involve the offender and all those affected and sometimes broader segments of the community. Those most affected or involved have opportunities to participate in processes as fully as they wish. Programs and processes often associated with restorative justice include victim offender mediation, conferencing, circles, victim assistance, restorative assistance to offenders, restitution, and community service.