

“THE INEVITABILITY OF PLAYING POLITICS AS CHAIR: ADVANTAGES AND PITFALLS”

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MY HISTORY

- At Sacred Heart University 40 years
- 5 years adjunct instructor of mathematics
 - 3 years FT instructor of mathematics
 - 32 years in computer science dept
- Chairperson of Computer Science for 29 years

SO WHAT IS POLITICS IN ACADEMIA?

- **NEGATIVE connotations**
 - **Backstabbing**
 - **Fighting for Resources**
 - **Navigating through pitfalls within one's department**
 - **Looking for personal gain**
 - **Selling one's colleagues short**
 - **Turf Issues**

SO WHAT IS POLITICS IN ACADEMIA?

- **Positive connotations**
 - **Doing good for the department**
 - **Involvement in Strategic Planning**
 - **Involvement in budget and fundraising**
 - **Leading academic change**
 - **Achieving and maintaining academic excellence**
 - **Having the needs of the department heard**

Problems Problems Problems

- **Turf issues have become the norm in many departments on college campuses as universities diversify their programs and try to maintain both a traditional and innovative menu of course offerings.**
- **Declining populations in many cases have forced universities to significantly increase their “base”. Recruiting international students, non-traditional students, adding non-traditional courses of study and exploring new delivery methods are all part of the new “entrepreneurial” chair position.**
- **All of this takes resources often resulting in these turf issues**
- **Where one stands POLITICALLY CAN make a difference!!!!**

Some Ways to Handle all of this

- Exploring interdisciplinary programs
- Sharing resources and gaining support among faculty from other departments and colleges is a positive way to blend politics into the workplace.
- Working closely with deans, provosts, other senior administrators and even the president (if possible) are ways to put oneself “out there” and showcase the strength and potential of one’s program and faculty. Alas this is not always easy to do.
- One of the most successful ventures I have undertaken is to take part in faculty governance.
- This is, to me, one of the most productive and honest political ventures.

DOMENICK'S ~~TEN~~ (14) RULES TO NAVIGATING ACADEMIA POLITICALLY

- Know YOUR PERSONAL and departmental goals and be honest about them
- Find your allies and your “count on people” within your department
- Be sure your support staff is loyal to you
- Work with your dean(s), provost, other senior administrators and even the president when possible
- Know when to give up on an idea
- Think POSITIVE
- Don't be afraid to get angry once in a while,,it's OK!!!!
- Try NOT to get personal
- Always look ahead
- Do what you can to increase enrollment and revenue in your area
- Have friends in all colleges and departments
- DON'T be AFRAID to ask for something!!! Ask for MORE than you expect!
- REMEMBER..no one is going to hand you something on a silver platter
- Be PLEASANT...most of the time!

Some Scenarios to discuss

1. How to handle the braggart at meetings
2. What to do with the self serving administrator
3. What to do when conflicted by vastly different views by administrators in the chain
4. How far can you go to rely on key faculty in your dept
5. How important is your non academic staff
6. How respected and “well-liked” are we within our department



CLOSING WORDS

“Be true to yourself, enjoy the ride and never lose sight of the ultimate goal in higher education: making a difference in people’s lives”

Domenick J Pinto
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