



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Ombuds Outlook — April 2015

Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty

<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

Working Through Adviser-Advisee Conflict

During this graduate student-led workshop we will explore:

1. Why adviser-advisee relationships are important to both graduate students' and faculty members' success;
2. What contributes to conflict within these relationships;
3. Strategies that can be used to address this type of conflict interpersonally and structurally.

We look forward to engaging in this conversation with you.

PRESENTERS: Erin Watley and Lindsay Scott, Graduate Assistants, ODR
Heather Sands, Graduate Student, Ombuds for Grad Students

DAY/DATE: Friday, April 17th, 2015

TIME: 10:00—11:30

PLACE: UNM Business Center, Room 1018

Please RSVP to Jean Civikly-Powell, Ombudsperson for Faculty, at jcivikly@unm.edu

What is “Expanding The Pie”? And How Can It Help Resolve Conflicts?

A small pie can only go so far. Imagine a pie that expands — there is more to go around. So, the questions may be: What is in the pie? How does a pie expand? And how does this relate to resolving conflicts?

Expanding the pie is an image for expanding our capacity to create multiple ideas and ways for finding benefits to both individuals who are seeking resolution of disputes. A starting point is that each person takes time to explain what is important for them — what each values. Their interests can be concrete or abstract. It may be things like time, training, reputation.

For example, if a salary raise is not an option at this time, what else might be possible? What can you propose/offer to the person? What can you ask for from the person? What might be attractive to both of you? It would really help me if you would . . . And it would really help you if I would

The gain for one does not need to mean a loss for the other (the win-lose position-based distributive model). The goal is creating mutual benefits (the win-win interest-based integrative model).

The probability of mutual benefits increases when there are more ideas and options to choose from — when the pie is expanded.

My own approach to this concept of expanding the pie is to use a different depiction — the Venn Diagram. I like Venn because it shows **overlapping interests and benefits** — should I call this expanding the Venn?

—
Jean Civikly-Powell
Faculty Ombudsperson



Resolving Conflict between Faculty and Graduate Students

This summary is adapted from a 2009 presentation by The Graduate School at Michigan State University, titled "Setting Expectations and Resolving Conflict in Graduate Education: Developing Communication and Conflict Management Skills to Save Time and Enhance Productivity."

<http://grad.msu.edu/conflictresolution>

While faculty and graduate students may not focus on their symbiotic relationship, their interdependence is evident in that both rely on one another and both realize that strong power dynamics embody their relationship. Graduate students need the support of faculty members in order to complete their programs of study, and faculty and the department as a whole rely on graduate students to help keep the program functioning through teaching and research. Factors in the overall success of the department include graduate student retention and graduation rates. Accordingly, it is important for both to attend to the maintenance of their relationships and to work through conflicts that can arise.

Conflict between graduate students and faculty members can impact a department's teaching and research mission. Research cited by the Michigan State University workshop presenters, John Beck and Karen Klomparens, has shown that poor faculty-student relationships is one reason often cited by graduate students for leaving their programs after having invested at least 4 years. Some of the unique factors that heighten the potential for stress in faculty-graduate student relationships are:

1. The research mentor, or advisor, is a key individual in guiding the progress of a graduate student. That relationship often follows the graduate student after graduation as connections via recommendation letters and as professional societies and interactions continue throughout the careers of both parties.
2. Faculty power can be enforced through the allocation of stipends, work assignments, resources, and advice.
3. Within the university community there is a high overall dependence on a small group of faculty members, so that if one relationship becomes strained or contentious, the options for sources of alternative guidance are more limited, and there is less flexibility in accessing alternative sources.

Because of these heightened spaces for potential tension, it is also important to evaluate the ways that conflict in these areas can be handled. Beck & Klomparens note that the most frequent approach to resolving faculty-graduate conflict has been the Positional Approach. In this method the options for a solution are limited to two positions from the very beginning. For example starting a discussion with "You have to defend in the Fall of 2015" or "Dr. Green has to leave my committee." This stance may end with a winner and a loser, or even two losers, and harm the relationship as a result.

Beck & Klomparens recommend an **Interest-Based Strategy** where both parties agree on the larger issue at hand (such as graduation) but also acknowledge that there may be multiple approaches. "When might I defend my dissertation" and "Who would be a good fit for your committee" are entry points into a conversation that is more focused on issue identification and hopefully fewer stressors. The interest-based approach is often counter-intuitive because we have been trained to be solution oriented. But with practice and awareness, this is one tool that can help with faculty-graduate student conflicts.