

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

Volume 2, Number 3, May 2002

## Extending Campus Conflict Resolution Efforts Beyond the Mediation Table

by Bill Warters

It would be foolish to assume that mediation initiatives in and of themselves have the capacity to serve all the dispute resolution needs of a college campus. The sources and forms of conflict are varied and thus a variety of methods, both proactive and reactive are needed in response. Campus conflict occurs within the context of a community, and this broader community must share in the work of preventing, resolving, and learning from the conflicts in their midst.

This article describes creative responses to campus conflict that don't rely on mediation as their central strategy or approach, providing links to online examples when available. While mediation program staff must not shoulder sole responsibility for addressing campus conflict, they are usually in a good position to help promote and support creative "non-mediation" initiatives such as the ones described below.

### Group-Process Intervention Strategies

Working at the group level is often a necessity. Individual disputes may (and most often do) occur within the context of work or social groups that may serve to exacerbate the dispute, or to moderate its effects. Campus conflicts also often involve multiple primary parties who all have a stake in the issues. It can be difficult to bring these kinds of conflicts to closure unless the entire group is involved at some level. A number of different approaches can be useful for this purpose.

### Group Facilitation Services

On a growing number of campuses, for free or a small fee, neutral trained facilitators are made available to groups who are about to engage in critical decision-making meetings, meetings on controversial topics, or in problem-solving sessions where some outside support could be helpful. The concept of facilitation support is often accepted by troubled groups more easily than a formal mediation process might be.

In addition to running general meetings, facilitators may offer more specialized services that meet very specific needs. For instance, [strategic planning facilitators](#)

(<http://www.psu.edu/president/cqi/programs/consulting.htm>) may assist a group in moving through a structured planning process, helping them reach consensus on the future directions of their unit. Some departments or divisions host annual retreats and facilitators help develop the agenda and staff the meetings. Sessions like these provide a good opportunity to explore many conflict-generating issues.

### **Process Consulting Models**

Another useful method, particularly when addressing organizational or departmental conflict, is commonly known as process consulting. Process consulting emerged from the organizational development field, building on the work of Edgar Schein and others. It is essentially a method of group problem solving that addresses issues and themes that are hindering the optimal functioning of the group. [Campuses are now seeing the value of this kind of approach](#) (<http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/parc/crcg.htm>). Rather than treating the consultant as the expert with the answers, issues to be explored are surfaced using [data-gathering procedures such as individual interviews or surveys](#) ([http://www.crinfor.org/masterresults.cfm?&rtype=wr,pri,prg,org,ev&title=CRInfo&clr=660000&prm\\_ver\\_f=v2&prm\\_additional\\_buttons=null&prm\\_org\\_url=null&kwds=Amy%20Otto](http://www.crinfor.org/masterresults.cfm?&rtype=wr,pri,prg,org,ev&title=CRInfo&clr=660000&prm_ver_f=v2&prm_additional_buttons=null&prm_org_url=null&kwds=Amy%20Otto)) that gather the thoughts and perspectives of all members of the group. The responses to the questions are then pooled (with the identifying information removed) and presented in a feedback session to the group as a series of themes or issues that the group is dealing with. The group, with the aid of a facilitator, reviews and interprets the data, formulating action plans as necessary to deal with issues of concern that have been surfaced. Quite often, groups decide to engage in some kind of additional training in communication skills or conflict resolution methods as part of their action plans.

### **Generic Interventions**

Another group-level approach, often used by campus ombuds, is what is known as the generic approach. This model is generally used to respond to concerns about the behavior of specific members of a unit or department, without directly confronting them or identifying the complainants who brought the concern forward. Usually this involves a presentation, film or distribution of materials made at a regular staff or faculty meeting, or perhaps at a specially called session. The session typically addresses appropriate norms or procedures (for instance sexual harassment, humor in the workplace, or use of support staff) related to an area of concern. The suggestion for the educational presentation is often framed by the ombuds or some other appropriate administrator as a normal part of the ongoing life of the university, rather than as a response to specific complaints from within the department. The general goal is to protect complainants from possible retaliation, while reinforcing expectations for appropriate behavior.

### **Conflict Resolution Skill Training and Coaching**

Some of the most valuable work that campus mediation personnel do is to provide conflict resolution skill training. This often involves training a diverse group of volunteer mediators from across the campus community. This training can build valuable new networks, and lead to increased levels of volunteer self-esteem and the regular use of these skills in volunteer's daily lives. Many mediation programs have branched out by offering training to other sectors of the campus community. [Other departments on campus may also provide training support](#)

(<http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/traindev/customized.html>).

Conflict resolution and mediation training has been offered to summer college preparedness programs for disadvantaged youth, new student orientations, residential life staff trainings, student organizations, fraternities and sororities, human resource programs, peer helper programs, faculty professional development seminars, campus police, noncredit and credit short-courses, teaching assistant training programs, department chair workshops, and more.

### **Conflict Coaching/Problem-Solving for One**

Individuals already embroiled in a conflict can also benefit from training on how to resolve their disputes effectively and nonviolently. Informal conflict resolution coaching is provided by many ombuds offices and EAP services, and by a growing number of campus mediation programs. This kind of one-on-one training makes sense because in many cases, individuals involved in a dispute are not necessarily looking for a mediator, as they would prefer to handle it themselves. However, they may feel uncertain as to how to best approach the other party, and they appreciate help and support from a "coach". Other individuals who might prefer the services of a mediator may discover that the second party in the dispute is unresponsive to invitations to mediate, or agrees to mediate but then does not show up at the appointed time.

To respond to this need for additional assistance, some mediation programs now offer special sessions and materials for individual who are motivated to handle conflicts on their own. Allan Tidwell's 1997 and 2001 Mediation Quarterly [articles on "Problem-Solving for One"](#) ([http://www.crinfor.org/masterresults.cfm?&rtype=wr,pri,prg,org,ev&title=CRInfo&clr=660000&prm\\_ver\\_f=v2&prm\\_additional\\_buttons=null&prm\\_org\\_url=null&kwds=%22Problem%20Solving%20for%20One%22](http://www.crinfor.org/masterresults.cfm?&rtype=wr,pri,prg,org,ev&title=CRInfo&clr=660000&prm_ver_f=v2&prm_additional_buttons=null&prm_org_url=null&kwds=%22Problem%20Solving%20for%20One%22)) provide a rather detailed example of a service developed by the Macquarie University campus mediation project in Australia. The process seeks to assist the lone party in developing conflict management plans and strategies. The procedure includes a problem analysis, review of options and costs, review of communication skills needed, and the creation of a problem-solving strategy that includes plans for future action.

The Conflict Education Resource Team at Temple University is an example of another program that provides individual coaching support, but in a somewhat different form. See the [conflict coaching article by](#)

Ross Brinkert ([http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/ReportArticles/Edition2\\_2/Brinkert2\\_2.html](http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/ReportArticles/Edition2_2/Brinkert2_2.html)) in our last issue for more information on their work.

In addition to face-to-face coaching, many mediation programs also distribute [conflict handling "tips" sheets](http://www.residentassistant.com/advice/roommateconflict.htm) (<http://www.residentassistant.com/advice/roommateconflict.htm>) as handouts, web-documents, and as educational columns in campus newspapers or newsletters.

## **Conflict Prevention Activities**

While there is considerable overlap, another broad category of useful non-mediation activities are those that are designed specifically with conflict prevention in mind. Campus conflict handlers are in a good position to notice patterns of conflict over time and thus are often able to suggest methods to reduce the recurrence of similar disputes in the future.

### **Preventing or Reducing Student/Faculty Conflicts**

Conflicts between students and their instructors or advisors are relatively common. A growing number of initiatives have been developed addressing what is being called incivility in the classroom as well as conflicts over grading and evaluation practices, advising, interpersonal relations and harassment. Many of these prevention and training initiatives are housed in offices of teaching and learning, teaching assistant preparation programs or faculty professional development offices. A relatively common technique involves assisting faculty in more carefully [spelling out course expectations](http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm#syllabus) (<http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm#syllabus>) in syllabi and verbally at the beginning of class, including such topics as a professor's absentee policy, exams and exam make-ups, academic integrity, extra credit, and acceptable classroom behavior. Some campuses have also developed statements of student, faculty and university shared responsibilities for classroom learning that are included in syllabi. Other campuses have developed brief documents providing suggestions for dealing with in-class conflicts that are distributed to TA's and faculty.

### **Prevention Training for Faculty**

A good example of a broadly targeted faculty conflict management and prevention training tool is the [Critical Incidents vignettes](http://web.uvic.ca/terc/critical_incidents/index.htm) ([http://web.uvic.ca/terc/critical\\_incidents/index.htm](http://web.uvic.ca/terc/critical_incidents/index.htm)) series developed by the Learning and Teaching Centre at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. Their collection of 4 different videotapes, each containing 10 dramatized vignettes, depicts a wide variety of challenges associated with teaching and learning in higher education. The tapes present a series of highly compressed case studies that pose

a problem but offer no preferred solution. Each scene lasts for 3-4 minutes and discussion questions follow each episode. A discussion guidebook is included to assist would-be facilitators. The Center for Instructional Development at Syracuse University has also produced a set of 17 vignettes of difficult classroom situations. These kinds of tapes are most effectively used in teaching development workshops for faculty, adjunct faculty and teaching assistants where a facilitator is present to guide the discussion.

### **Reducing Graduate Student/Advisor Conflicts**

Some student/faculty conflict prevention projects are more focused and intensive. For example, at Michigan State University the [Building Mutuality/Setting Expectations Program](http://www.msu.edu/user/gradschl/conflict.htm) (<http://www.msu.edu/user/gradschl/conflict.htm>) proactively addresses issues that can lead to conflicts between graduate students and faculty. Unresolved conflicts with their advisors can have very real and painful consequences for graduate students. They are usually quite dependant on their advisors for financial support via assistantships, as well as more general political support as they develop and conduct their research, defend their dissertations or thesis, and request letters of reference and recommendations. The MSU project has a number of key goals, including introducing faculty and students to the practice of interest-based negotiation skills and the process of setting expectations and resolving conflicts; raising awareness of issues of potential conflict in doctoral education; and improving graduate handbooks.

### **Reducing Student/Student Conflicts**

Other prevention efforts are aimed specifically at reducing conflicts between students who live together. The work often begins before students arrive on campus, as some conflicts can be headed off through careful matching of roommates based on information provided on application forms.

Many residence life programs also promote the use of "[roommate agreement forms](http://www.campus-adr.org/Student_Center/tips_student.html)" ([http://www.campus-adr.org/Student\\_Center/tips\\_student.html](http://www.campus-adr.org/Student_Center/tips_student.html)) and "floormate agreement forms" in residence halls. The forms prompt students to discuss, often with the aid of Residential Assistants, a list of potentially conflicting issues with their roommates and sometimes floormates, at the start of their time living together. The forms provide a starting place for discussion and agreement building, and may be used to encourage further discussion and renegotiation if problems arise.

### **Improving the Student Work Group Experience**

Some campuses are also working to increase students' ability to function effectively within the kinds of adhoc groups that they may encounter in labs and when doing group assignments for class. Some departments or individual faculty members with courses requiring a

significant amount of group work have [group skills training built into their curriculum](http://www.agcomm.iastate.edu/harp98/harp297.a4.html)

(<http://www.agcomm.iastate.edu/harp98/harp297.a4.html>). They sometimes draw on campus mediation program personnel to help develop and staff these training sessions, or to prepare [specialized group work handouts](http://www2.canisius.edu/%7Emorriss/bio201/groups.html)

(<http://www2.canisius.edu/%7Emorriss/bio201/groups.html>).

Mediation programs have also worked hand-in-hand with student governments. For instance, due to their perceived neutrality, mediation program volunteers have been called on to help monitor hotly contested student government elections by observing the polling sites, and serving as the first point of contact for student election-related grievances. They have also moderated candidate forums, provided recount services, and facilitated contentious budget meetings.

### **Partnering to Enhance Campus Construction Efforts**

Another kind of dispute prevention concept catching on at colleges and universities is called Partnering. The process is most commonly used to [facilitate the successful completion of major campus construction projects](http://www-dateline.ucdavis.edu/080296/080296no8.html) (<http://www-dateline.ucdavis.edu/080296/080296no8.html>).

Pioneered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the early 1990s, Partnering has quickly become very popular within the construction industry. The Partnering process normally involves a one or two-day retreat attended by all stakeholders (decision makers as well as job site supervisors) in the particular project. The retreat is usually held at a neutral location (a resort or private meeting facility) and is led by experienced facilitators who help the participants to focus on communication, negotiation, identification of mutual goals and objectives, and details of project-specific potential problems and solutions. The purpose is not to change any contractual responsibilities but rather to focus on building the working relationships among the participants. Common documents created at sessions to smooth onsite problem-solving include "issue escalation matrixes" detailing who has decision-making authority over what issues, and a "partnering charter" that lays out general agreements in principle supported by all participants.

### **Changes in Labor Relations on Campus**

Unionized colleges and universities are exploring ways to reduce the time and considerable costs associated with disputes that go to outside arbitrators. On some campuses this has meant increased support for and use of internal grievance mediation as a step prior to outside arbitration. Another interesting model is the one [developed by four campuses within the Connecticut State University System](http://www.campus-adr.org/Main_Library/Articles/Pernal.html) ([http://www.campus-adr.org/Main\\_Library/Articles/Pernal.html](http://www.campus-adr.org/Main_Library/Articles/Pernal.html)). In this system, an arbitration-type step was built into the grievance process, but it remains within the State System rather than being sent

outside. When handling faculty grievances, the CSU System uses grievance arbitration panels comprised in equal parts of employees representing the administration and faculty members. These individuals, drawn from each of the 3 neighboring institutions, have sufficient distance from the area of dispute to guarantee some measure of detachment. Each panel is comprised of three members of the AAUP and three members of the administration, with the stipulation that no panel member can be from the university where the grievance originated. The grievance-arbitration panel is the final step before professional arbitration is engaged. Only in the event of a 3-3 tie vote can either party, if it chooses, take the issue to outside arbitration.

### **Interest-Based Bargaining**

Unionized campuses are beginning to experiment with a new form of collective bargaining known as interest-based or collaborative bargaining, in an attempt to reduce some of the negative effects of traditional contentious negotiations. [Interest-Based Bargaining \(http://www.unitedfaculty.org/bargaini.htm\)](http://www.unitedfaculty.org/bargaini.htm) is essentially an alternative style of negotiating used to achieve positive results for both parties. The emphasis in traditional bargaining is on the relative power of the parties and their willingness to use it both in regard to specific issues as well as the overall settlement. Interest-Based Bargaining is instead a problem solving/consensus approach to negotiations that focuses on the interests of the parties.

In order to apply Interest-Based Bargaining administration and faculty usually begin by participating in joint training provided by bargaining consultants. The workshops introduce parties to non-adversarial collective bargaining concepts, give both sides a common language, educate them as to what's involved and who is involved, and explore the steps that would be required to develop a collaborative working relationship. The interest-based bargaining process used at the University of Montana and Eastern Washington University is well documented in a 1997 Negotiation Journal article by [Dennison, Drummond, and Hobgood \(http://www.crinfor.org/masterresults.cfm?&rtype=wr,pri,prg,org,ev&title=CRInfo&clr=660000&prm\\_ver\\_f=v2&prm\\_additional\\_buttons=null&prm\\_org\\_url=null&kwds=Dennison%20Drummond\)](http://www.crinfor.org/masterresults.cfm?&rtype=wr,pri,prg,org,ev&title=CRInfo&clr=660000&prm_ver_f=v2&prm_additional_buttons=null&prm_org_url=null&kwds=Dennison%20Drummond) on collaborative bargaining in public universities.

### **Supporting Non-violent Social Protest and Change**

**W**hile student protests today are less visible nationally than in the turbulent 1960s, they still occur with surprising regularity. Because protestors and campus administrators may not have open lines of communication, campus mediation program coordinators should consider [developing a capacity to respond in campus protest situations \(http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/ReportArticles/Edition2\\_1/Burgess2\\_1a.html\)](http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/ReportArticles/Edition2_1/Burgess2_1a.html).

Trustworthy neutrals can greatly facilitate the negotiations required to settle many campus protests. However, getting all the parties to the table can be difficult, and sometimes is inappropriate based on the timing, the level of organization of involved groups, or considerable power imbalances. Program coordinators may thus wish to expand their view of their role beyond that of mediator, to include a larger function as a community peacemaker and networker.

It is important to be clear on the role one is playing in conflict situations, and not to assume that you or your office can provide all necessary supports. To help mediators locate their role, the late Jim Laue, a former Community Relations Service mediator and faculty member at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution identified a range of primary roles or functions that may be played out in community disputes. These roles include activism, advocacy, mediation, research, and rule enforcement. Part of maintaining credibility as a mediator involves developing ways to demonstrate respect for and develop rapport with individuals playing other equally important functions. Mediation program staff should take the opportunity to develop relationships and work cooperatively (if informally) with others on campus who serve the function of helping to research the existence or root causes of conflict; enforcing community rules and standards; advocating for needed changes; or assisting disadvantaged groups get organized through activism and education. Developing these kind of relationships takes time and care, but are important if one hopes to adopt more of a peacemaking role on campus and to be respected as a mediator when the time is ripe.

A number of non-mediation innovations have developed on campuses that directly support nonviolent campus protest and expression of dissenting views. They are often called [Observer](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2001/10/10_obser.html) ([http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2001/10/10\\_obser.html](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2001/10/10_obser.html)), Peacekeeper or Monitor programs. The peacekeepers typical job description is to stand on the fringe of a protest action or between two rival groups and keep their eyes open for potentially dangerous or threatening situations, and to move to intervene when necessary to prevent violence. They are usually made easily identifiable using hats, t-shirts, or armbands that set them apart from the group.

Other projects work directly with current and potential student protesters. Sometimes this involves teaching the basic organizing skills necessary to educate and mobilize others to a cause. In other circumstances work involves teaching potential protestors the skills of disciplined nonviolent protest, using role plays, and other training activities known as hassle lines and quick decision exercises to prepare participants for possible challenges.

Campus mediation programs that help a university respond effectively and respectfully to campus protest are providing a valuable service by helping the campus to respond and adapt to change, and by providing students with the opportunity to develop leadership skills and an awareness of their ability to make a difference.



## Responding to Conflicts over Diversity, Culture and Values

Many campuses face conflicts involving clashes between diverse cultures, political views, and strongly held moral values. These kinds of conflicts may often involve acts of incivility or violence, and can quickly become quite heated. A good general source of information on campus diversity initiatives is [DiversityWeb](http://www.diversityweb.org/) (<http://www.diversityweb.org/>), an online project developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the University of Maryland. A great deal of thinking and experimentation has occurred on how to best respond to these kinds of issues, and just a few examples of current practice are noted below.

### Town Hall Meetings

The public convening of individuals or groups in a town meeting format to discuss controversial issues can be a very effective tool for promoting respectful coexistence. In order to be successful, town meetings require an even-handed moderator and very clear, well-publicized groundrules and procedures to prevent conflict escalation or domination of the meeting by one participant or group. [The application of campus town meetings is perhaps most well-developed at John Jay College of Criminal Justice-CUNY](http://www.campusadr.org/cyber/LStudent.html) (<http://www.campusadr.org/cyber/LStudent.html>). What began as a short-term response to a crisis (a 1989 student take-over of the college's buildings), has become a regular (monthly) part of the campus life.

### Dialogue Groups

A many campuses have been experimenting with [the use of dialogue groups](http://www.campusadr.org/CMHER/ReportResources/Edition2_2/Intergroup2_2.html) ([http://www.campusadr.org/CMHER/ReportResources/Edition2\\_2/Intergroup2\\_2.html](http://www.campusadr.org/CMHER/ReportResources/Edition2_2/Intergroup2_2.html)). Due to their training, mediators are often asked to help facilitate these. On some campuses, groups are used during times of crisis or as a short-term experiment and on others as an ongoing part of life in their community. One of the best examples of the latter approach is the [Program on Intergroup Relations, Conflict and Community](http://www.umich.edu/%7Eigrcc/) (IGRCC) (<http://www.umich.edu/%7Eigrcc/>) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Peer-facilitated meetings between students from different social identity groups are held each semester focusing around a particular theme or issue. Participants, numbering from ten to sixteen, meet weekly in a small-group, semi-structured discussion format. Readings and experientially based activities are incorporated to encourage dialogue and discussion of pertinent issues. Program facilitators define the groups by ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, age and other characteristics, depending upon the chosen focus of the dialogue. IGRCC trains their student peer facilitators in methods of dialogue and facilitation by means of an intensive training course. They are also enrolled in a three-credit practicum/supervision course during the semester they lead dialogues.

## **Modified Mediation Models**

The "traditional" mediation model as commonly practiced focuses on avoidance of blame, limits discussions of the past, limits participation to those directly involved in the immediate conflict, and emphasizes settlement of issues, all of which can be problematic when dealing with racism and prejudice. [Mediation program developers have worked to modify their models](http://www.cahro.org/html/ucla.html) (<http://www.cahro.org/html/ucla.html>) to increase their utility in cases involving racism, prejudice and intolerance. Often this means changing the focus toward increased understanding rather than a formal and final settlement, and often changing the name of their program to something other than mediation such as [Public Conversations](http://www.publicconversations.org/) (<http://www.publicconversations.org/>), New Community Meetings, [Community Dialogues](http://cdp.hampshire.edu/mission.html) (<http://cdp.hampshire.edu/mission.html>), etc. The models may share characteristics of family group conferencing and victim offender reconciliation programs that are growing in popularity in criminal justice circles, or some of the characteristics of dialogue groups and family therapy discourse models.

## **Creative Controversy in the Classroom**

One well-developed classroom approach to developing skill dealing with diverse points of view is known as [Academic or Creative Controversy](http://www.nltf.com/html/pi/9710/johnson_1.htm) ([http://www.nltf.com/html/pi/9710/johnson\\_1.htm](http://www.nltf.com/html/pi/9710/johnson_1.htm)). The model, developed by social psychologists David and Roger Johnson, is particularly effective when used as part of a broader cooperative learning classroom philosophy. The process engages students by taking controversial subjects and using them as the focal point for the development of critical thinking, complex reasoning, and problem solving skills. The basic format requires members of a group to (a) research and prepare different positions, (b) make a persuasive presentation of their researched position, (c) refute the opposing position while rebutting attacks on their own position, (d) view the issue from a variety of perspectives (i.e., reverse perspectives), and (e) synthesize/integrate the opposing positions into one mutually agreed upon position. In addition to providing faculty with a tool for teaching controversial subjects, research suggests that structuring controversy into lessons can result in greater motivation to learn, higher achievement, greater retention, more frequent higher-level reasoning, more creative thinking and problem-solving, and more constructive social and cognitive development.

## **Group Self-Assessment and Dialogue Tools**

In addition to projects focusing on potential conflicts between groups, sometimes mediation program staff are asked to assist groups that are struggling with internal divisions. While formal mediation may at times apply, especially if a small number of identifiable individuals are at the center of the controversy, many times the entire group is affected by the dispute. Group members often develop strong feelings that can lead to problems or polarization within the group if they are not dealt

with. Fortunately, many different exercises have been developed that can be used by trained group leaders to help examine and address divisions within groups. These kind of tools are designed to enable people to talk in a large or small group session when anxiety is high, with the focus being on public disclosure of information about differences within the group in a tightly structured format. Useful methods include:

*Human Spectrums:* Spectrums provide a group with information about its members and its overall composition. That information can include attitudes, preferences, or positions on a topic a group is considering. The facilitator describes the opposite ends of a spectrum. The group members' task is then to arrange themselves in the appropriate order. People stand and place themselves somewhere on the Spectrum.

*Fishbowls or Samoan Circles:* Participants gather in two concentric circles -- an inner circle with a table (optional) and four chairs, and an outer circle, with ample walking and aisle space. Everyone begins in the outer circle. The issue is presented, and discussion begins. Those most interested take chairs in the inner circle. Those less interested stay in the outer circle. All are able to move in or out of the center as the discussion flows or topics change. Each speaker makes a comment or asks a question. Speakers are not restricted in what they say, but they must sit in the inner circle. Someone wishing to speak stands behind a chair; this signals those already in the circle to relinquish their chairs. No outside conversations are allowed. Comments are often recorded. Votes of opinions held by non-speakers may be taken at the end, if desired. To close a meeting, empty seats are taken away one by one until there are no more chairs.

*Interviews:* Interview one to three individuals from each perspective in the presence of the entire group, followed by open discussion.

*Role-Reversal Interviews:* Each interviewed person (similar to above) is asked to pretend that they are a person with the opposite view.

*Role-Reversal Presentations:* Someone from each side is asked to spend time with someone from the other side, and then present their point of view to the group, allowing for corrections or additions from the interviewee.

## **Debate Moderation**

A final example in this general category of services is the training and [provision of moderators for campus debates](http://spot.pcc.edu/slp/nif.html) (<http://spot.pcc.edu/slp/nif.html>) on controversial issues. While debates are very often adversarial, they do provide a forum for community discussion of important issues, and they can be followed up by small group discussions providing opportunity for more integrative dialogue. Serving as a moderator for a public debate may also provide useful publicity for the mediation program.

## Working with Offenders (post-sanction services)

In many cases, campus conflicts involve the actions of someone who does an act that falls outside the bounds of acceptable community behavior, as spelled out in various codes of conduct or law. A useful role that is developing on some campuses is what might loosely be referred to as post-sanction services. These services are designed to work with individuals or groups who have acted inappropriately to help them learn from their behavior and reintegrate themselves into the community.

In some cases both parties to a dispute have acted inappropriately and may receive some sanction from the campus judicial program or conduct board. For instance in the case of a physical altercation between two or more students, multiple students may be found guilty of a violation. However despite the sanctions, these parties still have to see each other in class or in the residence halls or on a sports team. To respond to this issue, some mediation programs facilitate post-sanction sessions involving all the parties to discuss how they will relate to one another in the future. The sessions provide participants an opportunity to reestablish friendly relations if appropriate, and to set basic "rules of engagement" if they don't hope to ever be on friendly terms.

Another useful initiative targeted for offenders are skills courses on [Anger Management for students](http://www.mun.ca/student/wellness/genpages/anger.htm) (<http://www.mun.ca/student/wellness/genpages/anger.htm>) who have been charged with an assault or who have exhibited difficulties managing their anger appropriately. Other campuses have developed their own workshops for men identified as being sexually or physically aggressive in dating relationships.

For cases where there are very clear victim(s) and offender(s), many communities (and now some campuses) have developed programs that bring together victims and offenders for a structured interactions. The programs fit loosely under the framework known as restorative justice, going by various names such as Victim Offender Mediation or Reconciliation Programs, Family Group Conferencing, and Circle Sentencing. These models are very different in their emphasis from the kind of community or civil mediation model most people are aware of. For instance, the Family Group Conference model involves friends and family members of both the victim and offender who also have the opportunity to talk about their concerns. All the models typically involve more intensive preparatory meetings with the parties, and focus much less on reaching an agreement and much more on dialogue, understanding, empathy, healing and jointly discussed methods of restitution and reparation. These programs are designed permit victims to tell offenders how their behavior has affected them, and to ask questions of offenders to learn more about why and how they did what they did. In some cases, the victim has the opportunity to influence the kind of sanction or restitution that will be expected of the offender as a result of these meetings. [Restorative justice models](#)

on campus ([http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/ReportArticles/Edition1\\_1/Restorative1\\_1.html](http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/ReportArticles/Edition1_1/Restorative1_1.html)) are valuable because they provide a setting where sanctions can be combined with an opportunity for the offender to begin to make things right again through restitution or community service.

## **Fostering Positive Interaction in the Local Community**

A final category of projects are those that work to improve relations with and in the local community. Sometimes this means addressing conflicts that arise between the university and the surrounding local community. In response to these kind of concerns many campus programs now offer mediation services for neighborhood disputes as well as for those that occur on campus. In addition to mediation, a number of other interesting initiatives have been developed. For example, [Boston College has a Community Assistance Program](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/rvp/pubaf/chronicle/v5/O3/cap.html) (CAP) ([http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/rvp/pubaf/chronicle/v5/O3/cap.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/rvp/pubaf/chronicle/v5/O3/cap.html)) using a team of graduate students available to respond to neighbors' complaints or concerns involving BC undergraduates living off-campus. The goal of the program is to resolve issues without involving other authorities. The teams are on duty weekends and some holidays, and may also work during special events such as home football game days. Typically CAP responds to complaints regarding student behavior that are relayed by the College Police Department, but they also receive direct referrals.

Other campuses, often via their off-campus housing office, have developed [Good Neighbor Handbooks](http://www.ups.edu/dsa/off-campushousing/neighbor.htm) (<http://www.ups.edu/dsa/off-campushousing/neighbor.htm>) that explain various community bylaws, list useful community services that may include mediation, and encourage students to introduce themselves to their neighbors. These handbooks are provided to all students who use the campus rental housing listing services to locate a place to live. Some colleges host regular "Get to Know Your Neighbors" barbecues, often in conjunction with local neighborhood associations, or provide staff who make contact with neighborhood residents and arrange informal meetings at homes within the neighborhoods.

Another valuable service offered by some colleges and universities is offering the use of the "good offices" of the university to help resolve local conflicts by providing space and support for local groups seeking to work through community issues. This also extends to include provision of [support for community planning efforts](http://www.uap.vt.edu/cdrom/default.htm) (<http://www.uap.vt.edu/cdrom/default.htm>) that occur off-campus but with assistance from university faculty, students or staff.

## **Service by Academic Programs in Dispute Resolution**

Finally, another broad set of valuable community services that are hard to categorize are those provided by faculty, grant-funded staff and students working in the growing number of [academic programs in conflict studies](http://www.campus-adr.org/Classroom_Building/degreeprograms.html) ([http://www.campus-adr.org/Classroom\\_Building/degreeprograms.html](http://www.campus-adr.org/Classroom_Building/degreeprograms.html)). Because conflict studies is an applied field, most graduate level and many undergraduate programs require students to be involved in some kind of internship or practicum. The work being done by students and faculty in these practicum and service learning contexts is tremendously important, both for the students and for the groups and agencies that they support.

## **Conclusion**

Conflict intervention, transformation and resolution projects of many forms are being developed and applied on and by college and university campuses across the country. While complementary to mediation, these efforts go well beyond it in scope. Initiatives addressing conflict prevention, training, group processes, living amidst diversity, dealing with value disputes, and maintaining positive town gown relations have all added tremendous value to the life of the campus community. As the field of dispute resolution in higher education matures, these kind of innovative efforts are likely to spread, and campus mediation program personnel are sure to be involved.