

Civility Workshop - 22May 2013 sponsored by Professional Development Center, facilitated by Judy Rookstool, consultant

The attendees began with a brief overview of the term, “civility,” followed by a discussion of possible resolutions using civility based upon a scenario depicting a demanding student and an unpleasant staff member. Several suggestions emerged, including:

- There should be consistent policy enforcement with clear procedures. This means that student cannot go to another department or “up the ladder” to get the answer they want. Staff should be supported.
- Rules should be clearly explained in a neutral voice. Don’t “brush-off” the person but listen with empathy; someone with a complaint can be right.
- Correct information is essential. (If you don’t know the answer, send the person to someone who does and even make an appointment.) Communication among departments is important, so everyone has the right info. (Note that Academic Affairs and Student Services meet at the beginning of each semester. Maybe should be once a month?)
- Re-institute a college newsletter (formerly Openline) and even various electronic screens around the college to share information about campus activities (so everyone who wants can participate).
- In a strong department, staff are both valued and supported. Protocols are well-established and there is trust among members. Managers need to be supportive, back-up employees, and provide clear expectations of tasks and process. Request a workshop on how to treat classified staff with dignity, respect, and appreciation, while not “micromanaging.” REQUEST THIS FROM HR.
- It pays to have periodic customer service training, including phone etiquette. Use the “Nordstrom model,” where everyone is assumed to be important. REQUEST THIS FROM HR.
- Physical surroundings can influence both employees and visitors, but there are restrictions on this. Color and photos and other personal items may help “humanize.”
- Don’t make the staff member the “bad guy” when managers don’t want to talk directly to a student or faculty member.
- Administrators at all levels need to walk around to both be visible and to see what is going on.
- We need to build on our alumni. Students remember how they were treated. We want them to be proud of having attended and maybe willing to “give back.”
- If a majority of employees practice (and model) civility, those who are uncivil become isolated and over time less likely to be rude. In the meantime, it is possible (though hard) to ignore incivility. Just raising the issue of civility is a good reminder to all.
- Civility and compassion start from the top. The Chancellor is supportive of civility.

This workshop group reviewed notes from a focus group discussion of SJCC Classified Staff from 8-3-11 and noted the importance of several points.

Finally, the group reviewed the draft SJECCD draft civility statement, and several people pointed out particular phrases they favored: “In the face of incivility, silence can indicate consent;” use of the word, “compassion;” “recognizing the contributions of others.”

Repeat (and expand) this type of meeting and include deans; maybe continue as a support group where ideas of how to promote civility can be shared regularly.