How Students Can Handle Conflict with Faculty

Tips from the Office of Human Rights and Positive Environment

Barbara Roberts, Ph.D., Human Rights Officer

10 Tips for Addressing Conflict

- Make an appointment to speak with the instructor in private; don't try to have a discussion at the beginning or end of class.
- 2. Seek first to understand. Ask open-ended questions. For example, "Can you help me understand why...?" "Can you explain this more fully?"
- 3. Think win-win. How can you both come out of this with better understanding?

 Focus on finding a mutually agreeable solution.
- 4. Refrain from judgment. There is always more than one side to a story; try to understand the other side, too.
- 5. Treat the other person with dignity and respect, set a respectful tone, and expect to be treated respectfully as well.
- 6. Separate the people from the problem. Be soft or gentle with people, clear with problems.
- 7. Listen to each other in turn, avoiding aggressive or accusatory language. Speak for yourself without blaming, name-calling, etc. Try using statements such as "I feel..." or "I don't understand..." or "I wonder..."
- 8. Respond, don't just react. Take time to think before you speak.
- 9. Keep an open mind. Be open to the possibility that the grade is appropriate for reasons you did not understand. That's OK; that's called learning.

10. Seek support. Ask the departmental Chair, an academic advisor, the Student Advocate, or the Human Rights Office for advice or a Volunteer Mediator for assistance. For information on how to contact them, go to http://www.unb.ca/humanrights/volunteer-mediators.html.

Bibliography

Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (2011) *Module 1: Becoming a third party neutral.* Ottawa: CICR.

Covey, S. R. (2004). The 7 habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic. New York: Free Press.

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (1991). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. New York, N.Y: Penguin Books.