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SPECIAL ISSUE: COLLEGIALITY

In this special issue of *Academic Leader*, four distinguished authors provide an in-depth look at collegiality—its significance to the functioning of the academic unit, how to address collegiality issues in faculty evaluations, U.S. courts' views on using collegiality in personnel decisions, and advice on how to foster collegiality. For more on the topic, join us on September 18 for the Magna Online Seminar "Fostering a Collegial Environment: Guidelines for the Department Chair," which will be led by Robert Cipriano, whose article is featured in this issue. For more information, visit *www.magnapubs.com/catalog/fostering-a-collegial-environment/.*

Researching Collegiality: Can We All Get Along?

By Richard L. Riccardi, ScD

In its most simplistic state, "collegiality" could be defined as all of us "getting along." And yet, for a topic that is universally considered a critical component of the essence of the academy, its definition and application continue to be fiercely debated throughout higher education, with battle lines drawn among faculty, administrations, and unions over its appropriateness. In perhaps the ultimate irony, the boundaries of "getting along" are being tested about that very topic: getting along.

Collegiality can be a challenging concept to define, much less quantify. Put 10 faculty members together in a room and you will likely get 10 different answers to the question "What is collegiality?" In the spirit of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, some may not be able to define collegiality but know it when they see it. A recent thread in the online forums of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* was started with the simple question "What is collegial behavior?" Among the many people to respond was one person who mused that "only higher education has to have a word for 'not being a big jerk.'" In fact, absent some explicit definition, Bugeja (2002) argues that collegiality results in one's perception rather than one's contract of employment. Bess (1992) suggests several meanings of collegiality: a cultural definition that encompasses shared values and beliefs, a structural type that promotes participatory decisions among organizational units, and a behavioral model where the actions of the faculty are directed toward institutionally valued ends. Connell and Savage (2001) use words such as "compromise," "collaboration," and "cooperation" to describe the concept. Hatfield (2006) suggests three dimensions to collegiality: the conflict management dimension (focusing on resolving conflicts as part of the shared decision-making process), the social behavior dimension (focusing on the social relationships among faculty), and the organizational citizenship dimension (focusing on being a good citizen among colleagues and doing one's share). Perhaps the most telling explanation of collegiality comes from Cipriano (2011), who presents "cooperative interaction among colleagues" and "collective responsibility shared by each member of a group of colleagues with minimal supervision from above," and, for those who are against it, "a person who is overweight, smokes, dresses badly, and has a different way of seeing things, and so on."

This lack of a common definition is contrasted by the complete agreement in terms of importance: *collegiality matters*. According to national survey data collected by Trower and Gallagher (2008) between 2005 and 2007 for the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education, a collegial department figured heavily in faculty satisfaction—ahead of the institution's work and family polices, clear tenure policies, and compensation.

The Pew Higher Education Roundtable (1996) concluded that departments that function most effectively have demonstrated an ability

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ACADEMIC Leader

President:
William Haight; whaight@magnapubs.com

Publisher:
David Burns; dburns@magnapubs.com

Managing Editor:
Rob Kelly; robkelly@magnapubs.com

Advisory Board:

Robert E. Cipriano, chair emeritus of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Southern Connecticut State University, *ciprianor1@southernct.edu*

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James O. Hammons, professor of higher education, University of Arkansas *jhammons@uark.edu*

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The Unique Role of Collegiality in Higher Education

By Robert E. Cipriano, EdD

What we strive for in the academy is a healthy and respectful sharing of thoughts, ideas, and concepts where people feel free to express their divergent and oftentimes conflicting views. In fact, many historians consider this concept to be one of the hallmarks of higher education. We most certainly do not want affable Babbitts mimicking everything a senior faculty member subscribes to or thinks. What we do want is dissent—more specifically, positive dissent. One of the dominant characteristics of higher education is that professors have opportunities to express their ideas openly and not be afraid of castigation in the form of petty reprisals of a personal nature. Discussions may be passionate and may become heated. But discussions should never become mean, nasty, or spiteful. Professionals may disagree and express their thoughts ardently, but never vindictively or personally. It is clear that constructive arguments over ideas—but not personal arguments over ideas—drive greater performance and creativity.

Our society seems to be in short supply of civility these days. Sadly, this is also true for the world of higher education. A campus climate that values collegiality and civility is among the most important contributions a university can make. Facilitating a culture of collegiality can be the synergetic agent of good relationships among members of a department (Cipriano 2011). It is important for the chair—who is often placed in the untenable position of resolving conflicts—as well as other faculty members in the department to deal with and, as stridently and quickly as necessary, address the malefactors on the staff.

I have been privileged to have been invited to many campuses to speak with department chairs and deans about the chair's role in facilitating a collegial department. When questioning the chairs and deans in attendance at various universities, typically 80 to 100 percent indicate that they have had at least one noncollegial or uncivil faculty member in their department. I have spoken with many chairs, deans, and provosts who recount horror stories of how one venomous person spewing nastiness and malice in a vindictive manner caused a department to be dissolved.

An overview of what the U.S. courts have ruled regarding collegiality

Although there are many critics, the courts have continued to uphold the use of collegiality as a factor in tenure and other personnel decisions. Lack of civility or collegiality can be used as a basis to terminate a full-time faculty member. The courts have acknowledged all of the following in rendering their decisions relative to collegiality (Connell and Savage 2001):

1. An ability to cooperate is relevant because faculty do not operate in isolation. Decisions on things such as curricula, class scheduling, and advising are made as a group.
2. Collegiality is important for universities to fulfill their missions.
3. Universities do not have to specify collegiality as a specific criterion for personnel decisions.
4. The courts have long deferred to university decisions regarding who should teach. They have continued to do so when issues of collegiality and termination of tenured faculty have been involved.
5. Because of the subjective nature of

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collegiality, courts should not substitute their judgment for that of faculty and administration.

6. Because universities make a substantial commitment to the individual, they should have wide discretion.
7. The courts have concluded that collegiality, even when not specified as a separate evaluation criterion, is a relevant consideration in assessing teaching, research, and service.

The most persistent arguments raised by faculty members who were denied tenure because of a lack of collegiality are (1) breach of contract (not part of the university's written tenure policy) and (2) the First Amendment (repression of free speech).

Breach of contract argument

The most constant argument put forth by faculty who were denied tenure because of a lack of collegiality is that the university's consideration of his or her personality, collegiality, or "fitting in" during the tenure evaluation violated either the employment contract or the institution's tenure policy as part of the criteria for tenure. The U.S. courts have ruled that this does not violate tenure policy (University of Baltimore v. Peri Iz, 1993). The Maryland Court of Special Appeals indicated that collegiality is a valid consideration for tenure, even though it is not expressly listed among the university's criteria for tenure. The reason for this ruling is that collegiality is implied within the criteria that are specified (that is, teaching and service).

First Amendment argument

Arguments raised by faculty who were denied tenure state that the refusal to grant tenure based on collegiality issues represents a callous attempt to suppress lawful speech. Further, the First Amendment clearly prohibits public officials (that is, the university) from retaliating against those who engage in unpopular or offensive speech. This is considered to be germane in the university setting in view of the fact that the Supreme Court has made clear that First Amendment freedom must be vigilantly protected. However, the courts have continued to uphold the use of collegiality as a factor in tenure and other higher education employment decisions in which First Amendment claims are raised.

Based on the above, it is clear that the courts have clearly and consistently spoken: they will not protect vitriolic faculty!

The chair's role in facilitating a collegial department

The job description of a department chair is ill-defined and ambiguous. In fact, most universities do not have a job description specifically for chairs. At best, many universities compile a laundry list of job duties and responsibilities that chairs are expected to perform. Suffice it to say that the chair's role is changing. In fact, the chair's role has morphed into a large and varied multiplicity of skills, not the least of which is managing and leading a civil, respectful, and collegial department. The road to a successful reign of chairing a department is highly reliant, if not totally dependent, on having the internal constituencies perform in a civil manner that optimally advances the mission of the department.

It is instructive to note that 75 percent of the chairs I have surveyed indicate they will go back on faculty when their term as chair ends. Department chairs are typically tenured faculty members who are appointed or elected into a position with no formal training (that is, 96 percent have received no education or training) in how to succeed in this leadership position.

So what exactly can a chair do to promote collegiality in his or her department in a practical way?

1. Discuss collegiality at a department meeting. The discussion should be transparent and have a goal of building consensus. Discussion points can focus on what collegiality is and is not, why collegiality is important and how noncollegial behavior can ruin a department, and what represents objective collegial behavior.
2. Understand that people do not respond to your techniques—people respond to your values.
3. Invest in people. This can be operationalized by the following:
   - Help people achieve their goals.
   - Develop a genuine interest in every faculty member.
   - Treat people with respect and dignity—always.
   - Remember that relationships built on trust and fed by personal integrity are the foundation.
   - Recognize that poor behavior by others does not require you to respond in kind.
   - Model characteristics you wish the faculty and staff to exhibit.
   - Acknowledge that leadership is more a function of people's relationships than the position.
   - Recognize people publicly for their achievements.

As members of a university, we should strive for nothing less than civility and respect in our daily encounters with our colleagues. Anything less will besmirch the noble role we hold so dearly as academicians.

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Robert E. Cipriano is a member of the Academic Leader editorial advisory board. He is a senior partner is ATLAS (www.atlasleadership.com), *an internationally acclaimed consulting firm that specializes in academic leadership training.*▼

Addressing Issues of Collegiality in Faculty Evaluation

By Jeffrey L. Buller, PhD

Two concerns are often raised when department chairs attempt to address breaches of collegiality through the faculty evaluation process. The first is whether they're permitted to do so at all, since very few faculty handbooks list collegiality as a criterion for reviews. The second is whether evaluation is an effective means of dealing with these challenges, since collegiality is often regarded as something highly subjective and not measurable or verifiable in any consistent way. The first of these concerns can be dealt with rather quickly, while the second will require a much more extended discussion.

In the United States, courts have ruled consistently that it is appropriate to consider collegiality in personnel decisions, even when an institution's policies do not specifically list it as a criterion. See, for example, Cipriano (2011) 153–163. So deans and chairs are at liberty to take collegiality into account whenever they regard its presence as a positive factor in a faculty member's performance or its absence as a detriment. But since it's relatively uncommon for colleges and universities to describe collegiality in their policies and procedures, the second concern can actually become more difficult. After all, how do you evaluate something that is undefined, apparently nebulous in nature, and not even referred to on most forms used as part of a faculty evaluation?

Identify specific behaviors, not opinions or personality traits

Perhaps the best way of dealing with this challenge is to identify the specific behaviors that, in the professional setting where you work, may be regarded as contributing to or diminishing collegiality. In other words, it's not enough to say that a person is irritable or argumentative. People are entitled to their own personalities, even when those personalities annoy us or are far different from our own. However, people are not entitled to engage in behavior that makes the work of your program more difficult. Everyone can be in a bad mood occasionally; they can even be in a bad mood every single day. But if their mood causes them to engage in activities that affect the quality of your program, you not only have the right, you have the duty to address it. What you're trying to change is not the person's mood, attitude, or personality itself, but rather specific behaviors that are resulting from that mood, attitude, or personality.

If you're in doubt about how to tell the difference, ask yourself the following three questions:

1. What is the specific problem that I am observing?
2. What are the specific actions or behaviors of the faculty member that are causing those problems?
3. What are the specific steps I need the faculty member to take in order to eliminate or reduce those problems?

Let's explore how these questions might function in an actual situation. Imagine that you're responsible for evaluating faculty members in a program that includes Dr. Curmudgeon, a professor who always seems to be irritable and treats colleagues and students with contempt. You've received a lot of complaints about Dr. Curmudgeon, and you yourself have been on the receiving end of this faculty member's foul temper. So you decide to do something about it the next time you're evaluating Dr. Curmudgeon. Near the end of your written review, you include the following paragraph:

> Finally, I feel that I must address the issue of your frequent irritability. It's getting to the point where I dread your presence at meetings, and a number of your colleagues have mentioned that they feel they must "walk on eggshells" whenever you're around. If you continue in this manner, it seems unlikely that many of those in your department will vote in your favor the next time you undergo post-tenure review, and I find myself reluctant to assign you junior faculty members to mentor because your temperament is so consistently unpleasant.

You dispatch this evaluation to Dr. Curmudgeon, a grievance is filed against you, and you're shocked to find that the appeals committee rules that your evaluation was completely inappropriate. What you did wrong was to base your evaluation, not on any specific actions that caused a documented harm to your program, but on Dr. Curmudgeon's personality and how it made you and others in the department feel. Your feelings of annoyance matter neither more nor less than do Dr. Curmudgeon's feelings of irritability. What you've done is confuse a pet peeve with a valid indication of a faculty member's performance, and that mistake could invalidate your entire evaluation.

What you should have done instead is to focus on those three questions raised earlier.

1. **What is the specific problem that I am observing?** Are students dropping Dr. Curmudgeon's courses at a significantly higher rate than those of his peers and indicating to you that the professor's behavior is the cause? Has the advising load of other members of

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the department increased disproportionately because Dr. Curmudgeon does not believe that any student is good enough to work with him? Have committees failed to meet deadlines because they can't obtain a quorum when they know that Dr. Curmudgeon is likely to attend?

2. **What are the specific actions or behaviors of the faculty member that are causing those problems?** Do students report when they drop the class that Dr. Curmudgeon called their questions "stupid" and made demeaning remarks to them? Have advisees reported that Dr. Curmudgeon belittled them because of the way they dressed or the books they read in their own time? Do members of Dr. Curmudgeon's department say that there has been a chilling effect on discussions because no one is willing to be the next person publicly ridiculed?

3. **What are the specific steps I need the faculty member to take in order to eliminate or reduce those problems?** Can you establish guidelines for what Dr. Curmudgeon needs to do as a result of the problems you've documented? You may need to say something like, "Look. It doesn't matter to me at all how you feel about me, your colleagues, and your students. But it does matter to me how you treat us. In order for our program to grow and receive increased funding, I need every member of the department to treat every other member with professionalism and respect. From now on, when you disagree with someone, I'll expect you to direct your objections to the issue, not the person who supports that issue. You'll treat your students like the future colleagues that some of them will develop to be, not as the objects of your scorn and humiliation. Those actions are hindering your pedagogical effectiveness."

Use the evaluation process to begin a continued dialogue on the type of behaviors that are acceptable in your professional setting

In order to make the evaluation process more constructive and forward-looking, reviewers should spend more time talking about what the faculty member should do than about what he or she should not do. Even in the case of Dr. Curmudgeon, it's not particularly effective to end the conversation by talking only about what went wrong. But it's far easier to accentuate the positive if you've already held a unit-wide conversation about what collegiality is and come to a consensus about the type of behavior you expect of one another. See Buller (2012) 218–219, 237–238. For instance, if your discussions have led to the creation of a conduct code or statement of departmental values, you'll have a context in which to offer positive advice. "Remember what we said when we discussed collegiality and professionalism at our retreat last August," you might say. "Working together constructively means acting on the assumption that we all care about our program equally. So, when you badger the newer faculty as 'self-centered and lazy,' you're stifling the sort of debate we need in order to make our discipline successful."

Of course, the danger with setting behavioral guidelines that are too specific is that passive-aggressive faculty members may attempt to use those statements against us. "Our departmental code says we have to restrict our disagreements to the issues instead of the person," someone might claim. "Show me where it says that we can't roll our eyes when we do so." In these cases, you may find it valuable to review with the faculty member what the intent of the code was and how benefits accrue from a collegial work environment. It's impossible to develop a statement of principles so comprehensive that it addresses every possible contingency, so it may be necessary at times to discuss what the principles are designed to achieve, rather than the specific phrasing of the principles themselves.

While matters of collegiality can never be addressed solely through the process of faculty evaluation, periodic reviews do provide administrators with an opportunity to deal with clear breaches of professional conduct, recommend alternative behaviors for the future, and underscore the significance of treating one another with respect and mutual support. Since the fundamental mission of a program is to provide a high level of instruction, scholarship, and service, it becomes difficult or impossible to achieve that goal when faculty members indulge in noncollegial behavior. It's for that reason that unprofessional actions may appropriately be addressed as part of a faculty evaluation.

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Jeffrey L. Buller is dean of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University and senior partner of ATLAS, a firm providing academic leadership training and assessment worldwide. His latest book, Best Practices in Faculty Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Academic Leaders, *is available from Jossey-Bass.* ▼

to work collegially; they view themselves as a team—a collective whole. Felps, Mitchell, and Byington (2006) studied the influence of team members who were downers (who "express pessimism, anxiety, insecurity, and irritation"), deadbeats ("withholders of effort"), and jerks (who violate "interpersonal norms of respect"). They concluded that having just one slacker or jerk in a group can bring down the team's overall performance by 30 to 40 percent.

In a 2011 *Wall Street Journal* special report, Stanford University professor Robert Sutton concluded that a growing body of research shows that "having just a few nasty, lazy, or incompetent characters around can ruin the performance of a team or an entire organization—no matter how stellar the other employees."

But the discussion comes to a boiling point when collegiality is referred to as the fourth criterion in promotion and tenure, joining the other three pillars: teaching, research, and service. The American Association of University Professors (1999) issued a formal statement criticizing the use of collegiality as a distinct criterion, characterizing it as "dangerous to academic freedom." Interestingly, they agreed in its importance, that "few, if any, responsible faculty members would deny that collegiality, in the sense of collaboration and constructive cooperation, identifies important aspects of a faculty member's overall performance." But they emphatically stated that elevating collegiality to a fourth criterion was "inconsistent with the long-term vigor and health of academic institutions" and concluded that "the absence of collegiality ought never, by itself, to constitute a basis for nonreappointment, denial of tenure, or dismissal for cause." On the other hand, our research of department chairs (Riccardi and Cipriano 2012) clearly indicates an opposite viewpoint, as almost three-quarters (73.3 percent) of those surveyed indicated that they wanted collegiality to be a fourth criterion in promotion and tenure decisions. And courts have generally upheld the right of universities to use collegiality in some evaluative form in tenure and other promotion decisions, regardless of whether the institution specified collegiality as a separate criterion or not. Perhaps Connell and Savage (2001) make the most succinct appraisal of collegiality in higher education:

> Does collegiality count? While academics, legislators, and board of trustee members debate the relative importance of collegiality in faculty personnel decisions, the courts have clearly and consistently spoken: they will not protect truculent professors!

Given the conflicting forces at work, what is clearly needed is some consistency in meaning as well as some type of standard instrument to measure collegiality, such as the Collegiality Assessment Matrix developed by Cipriano and Buller (2012). This instrument can help identify observable behaviors that are most commonly associated with collegiality. Coupled with a Self-Assessment Matrix that faculty members can complete, it provides an objective measure of collegiality that previously had not existed. As a member of the advisory panel that assessed the content of the instruments, I honestly believe that the matrices have validity and meaning.

Can we all get along? Ultimately, the future success of higher education rests on answering that question in the affirmative. The stakes are high, and our tolerance for incivility must be low in a time when the lack of collegiality is becoming more the norm than the exception.

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Richard L. Riccardi is the director of the Office of Management Information & Research at Southern Connecticut University. ▼

The Dean's Eight Compass Points to Navigate College Collegiality

By Walter H. Gmelch, PhD

The dean's calling is to "build a community of scholars to set direction and achieve common purposes through empowerment of faculty and staff" (Wolverton and Gmelch 2002, 33). This presupposes three conditions deans must meet if they are to effectively lead their colleges: *building community, setting direction, and empowering others*. The first condition, **building community**, is the most difficult and potentially most enjoyable journey of the dean. The challenge is to create a dynamic, positive, productive, and collective culture in your college. This takes moving faculty in the direction so they are not only loyal and dedicated to their discipline but work equally hard for the cause of the college and their colleagues.

The Pew Policy Perspectives (1996) noted that departments that function most effectively have demonstrated an ability to work collegially, both in formal matters such as deciding promotion and tenure and informally through sharing research findings. Effective departments viewed themselves as a team whose "members talk openly about their different strengths and weaknesses as they go about the business of allocating energies and efforts of different players" (Pew 1996, 2). Unfortunately, such faculty collectives are more the exception than the rule. In fact, incivility and lack of collegiality are on the rise in higher education (Cipriano 2011). Faculty are not totally at fault, as the way institutions are organized and operate contribute to self-interests, individualism, and behavioral miscues. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* frequently reports stories about faculty incivility: "Academe, with its rigid hierarchy in what is supposed to be a collaborative culture, is a natural incubator for conflict" (Fogg 2003).

Given the tension between faculty autonomy and collective interests, how can deans move their faculty toward a collaborative/collegial culture? Consider engaging in the following strategies to encourage and support faculty collegiality. They represent eight points on your compass to help navigate the collegial waters of higher education.

1. **Hire right.** No other decision in your college will be as important as the selection of a faculty colleague. Deliberate and careful selection of new colleagues has more to do with collaboration and civility than any other action the dean or department chair may take. You are adding a family member to your college culture.

2. **Promote collegiality.** Make it clear from the beginning that collegiality and the ability to work in a team environment are first and foremost in reaching your destination. Over the past two decades of hiring faculty, candidates often ask me in interviews, "What are you looking for in a faculty member?" My answer has been consistent and emphatic over the years: "Of course we are seeking to hire triple-stars who excel in teaching, scholarship, and service, but I am ultimately searching for a faculty member who also works well with colleagues and contributes positively to the community of scholars." In fact, as a department chair, the job description we created for faculty openings listed a fourth criterion besides teaching, research, and service—*the ability to work in a team environment*.

3. **Model collegial behavior.** As a dean, by making your decisions transparent and visible, you can help foster a collaborative culture. For example, if your colleagues understand that you weigh college and institutional needs when approached with individual requests, they will adapt their behaviors to those standards. If in faculty and staff meetings you consistently raise the question of what is best for the common good, you will set a standard for collective community decision making.

4. **Foster collegial teamwork.** Some colleges and departments, like elite professional sports teams, behave like a collection of scholars, recruiting known stars in their disciplines and putting up with their privileged and at times uncivil behaviors. Rather than hiring a collection of scholars, departments are better served to think of themselves as a *community* of scholars, shifting their thinking and actions from my work to our work.

5. **Celebrate faculty excellence** when you see it (Gmelch and Miskin 2011). While deans try to promote collegial teams, they also need to show genuine appreciation for each colleague. As you move your faculty toward a more collegial mode, there are some questions to ask yourself. Do you value each faculty member's contribution to your mission, vision, and values? If so, how do you make that clear to each individual, both faculty and staff, and how do you let others know of the importance of individual but collegial contributions? In the end, what do faculty members want the most from their journey with the dean? Money, a corner office, extra merit pay, more travel funds? Not really. What faculty want most is to be valued and appreciated. Write a note of congratulations for an award received, article published, or collegial

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action observed.

6. **Check inappropriate behavior NOW.** Just as *The One-Minute Manager* (Blanchard and Johnson 1982) needs to give "one-minute praises" to reinforce positive behavior in a timely manner, so do the deans and chairs need to deliver "one-minute reprimands" for inappropriate actions and uncivil behavior. This cannot wait until the proverbial annual review. By then the "uncivil cancer" will have grown. You need to meet face to face, in private (Buller 2012), articulating clear expectations and consequences for unprofessional behavior.

7. **Expose the "isms"** that may cause uncivil behaviors. At a former university, the entire college community attended yearlong, in-house workshops to discuss and address the "isms" that prohibit collegiality, such as sexism, racism, ageism, and classism. When the School of Education at USF engaged in long-term planning, all faculty and staff were invited to join in the team effort. Are staff members also part of your academic community? Are all faculty valued equally? Assistant, associate, and full professors? Tenure-track vs. term? Clinical? Adjunct?

8. Aggressively pursue a **collaborative agenda** to build collegiality. By case study analysis, Jon Wergin (1994) found that collaborative agendas encountered four pressing issues: (1) balancing group interests with individual interests; (2) developing academic communities as teams; (3) redefining individual faculty evaluation; and (4) evaluating and rewarding group productivity. What strategies, policies, activities, or practices could you create that would help build a collaborative agenda? At USF, the dean's office supports a faculty three-day writing retreat every semester. Not only does this increase scholarly productivity, but even more importantly, a new culture of faculty collaboration and collegiality has emerged.

Universities and colleges have developed considerable expertise in rewarding individual performance. In fact, at times it is the uncivil, but productive, faculty member who threatens to leave with grants and reputation in hand who may reap the highest reward. Is this reinforcing a "collection" rather than a "community" of colleagues? How can deans and chairs foster a culture of collective accomplishment? By using a portfolio of faculty responsibilities and employing an annual unit evaluation, many valued faculty members can work collectively toward common goals and be recognized within the school or college for their contribution. If reinforced at the institutional level, teams of colleagues that are most valuable to the institution can be rewarded and publically recognized (Krahenbuhl 2004; Gmelch, Hopkins, and Damico 2011). In essence, "if academic units are to define themselves as collectives and if they agree to be held accountable as collectives, then the unit as a whole must accept responsibility for what it does and for the impact it has. The only way for this to happen is for the departments to function as teams in which there is both individual and mutual accountability" (Wergin 1994, 3). As a consequence, an uncivil faculty member would not be rewarded and much less likely to survive the journey in such a collegial environment.

The essence of academic leadership lies in the ability to develop a collegial and productive faculty. Deans and chairs are only as good as their faculty. Their skill in developing a collegial culture will make the difference between a unit that functions as either a collection of autonomous individuals accidently thrown together under a discipline heading or an effective, productive, collectivity of colleagues able to meet the needs of the institution, its students, and society at large. Building collegiality is not a destination, but an ongoing journey worthy of your stewardship.

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Walter H. Gmelch is the dean of the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. ▼