

MnSCU Staff Development Grant – Final Report

Inver Hills Community College

Project: Conflict Management

Description: Provide Conflict Management training for the college leadership and Institutional Effectiveness Council.

Project leaders: Joan Costello, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Liz Newberry, Human Resources Director

Award: \$5,000

Project Re-cap:

Anna Maravelas, a nationally recognized presenter and author, gave the college convocation keynote address to approximately 150 staff and faculty on “Pulling Together in a Time of Change” in August 2008. Inspired, many attendees asked, “What’s next?”

Funded with this grant money, in January 2009 Ms. Maravelis presented two sessions of a daylong training in which she: 1) Reviewed the emotional stages of transitions and endings, and described how supervisors can sensitively manage them; 2) Described three cultures that typically surface at work when there is conflict and change; 3) Described reflexive and reflective approaches to conflict and led us through an exercise where we applied both; 4) Presented a tool for calming emotionally charged people; and, 5) Led us through the application of a tool for effectively initiating dialogue on issues of disagreement. Thirty-nine supervisors, campus MSCF, MAPE and AFSCME leaders, and members of the Institutional Effectiveness Council and Staff Development Committee participated.

Participants of the January training later met and evaluated which tools from the training had the most potential for application at Inver Hills, and brainstormed ideas for inculcating the tools in the college culture. Based on the recommendations of this group, at the April staff retreat employees practiced applying the tool for initiating dialogue to employee conflict scenarios generated by supervisors. Seventy-five staff participated in this exercise.

Costs: Facilitator \$6,800. (\$5,000 paid for by this grant)

Impact:

The tool for initiating dialogue is being used by supervisors to frame their coaching sessions with individual employees. The training has given the college a common language for talking about issues of conflict and of reminding each other how we can engage in that dialogue constructively.

Reflections:

Several employees reported anecdotally that this training has focused them on addressing conflicts in the workplace from a problem-solving attitude. The training has helped dispel a common emotional perception that conflict is negative. Several employees reported using the techniques with family members and teaching the techniques to their children. We continue to look for ways to make the techniques learned a part of our college culture.