Effective Communication: A Primer for Department Chairs

Krystyna S. Aune
Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Agenda for Today

- Introspective “Nudges”
- Communication Basics/Principles
- Communicative Competence
- Listening
- “Take-Aways”, Q&A
Know Thyself

- Introspection
- What pushes your buttons?
- What are your typical responses to communicative predicaments?
- How wide is your interpersonal communication repertoire of skills?

How Well Do The Following Words Apply to You? 
1= not at all, 5 = extremely well

- _____ self-confident
- _____ tactful
- _____ irritable
- _____ quiet
- _____ empathic
- _____ energetic
- _____ well-adjusted
- _____ cooperative
- _____ friendly
- _____ dogmatic
- _____ responsible
- _____ ambitious
- _____ physically attractive
- _____ open

- _____ prejudiced
- _____ unpredictable
- _____ selfish
- _____ leader
- _____ considerate
- _____ good natured
- _____ tense
- _____ accepts criticism
- _____ aggressive
- _____ easy to get to know
- _____ imaginative
- _____ sense of humor
- _____ mature
- _____ trusting of others
Taking it one step further...

- You might consider asking relevant others for their honest (but tactful) feedback as to how THEY see you....
- If there are significant discrepancies, to what do you attribute them?
- Are you satisfied with the way you see yourself and how others see you?

What is Communication?

- The sending and receiving of messages, verbally and nonverbally
- It is dynamic
- It involves mutual influence
- One of the primary goals is to achieve understanding or shared meaning
- Other goals or functions of communication:
  - Inform, Persuade, Entertain
  - Manage Relationships
Basic Principles of Communication

- Irreversible
- Unrepeatable
- Contexts Influence Meaning
  - Cultural
  - Physical
  - Temporal
  - Psychological
  - Social

Relational Messages

- Every communicative action has two components:
  - A content component -- what the communication is about
  - A relational component -- a negotiation between communicators regarding how each sees their relationship

- Relational messages are those that signal:
  - dominance, intimacy, trust, similarity, formality, composure, importance, emotional arousal, task-social orientation, depth-superficiality
What is Effective Communication?

- Managing Multiple Goals
  - Identity
  - Interpersonal
  - Instrumental
- Adapting to the other person, the topic, and the situation to achieve a desired response
Communication Competence

- Two Dimensions of Competence:
  - Appropriateness
  - Effectiveness
- Credibility
  - Competence, Character, Dynamism
    - Reliability (dependability, predictability, consistency)
  - Perceived Intentions/Trustworthiness
  - Warmth & Friendliness
  - Expertise

Listening

- The active process of receiving, attending to, and assigning meaning to sounds.
- Hearing vs. listening
- Most people do not listen at a high level of effectiveness.
- Critical importance of listening:
  - Time spent each day (> half of your communication time)
  - Critical factor in accomplishing personal & professional goals (e.g., showing support, working better in committees, building rapport, resolving problems)
Listening Self-Assessment

- Think about 3 people whom you consider to be good listeners.
  - What is it about them that makes them good listeners? What do they do/say?
  - What is your attitude about these people?
- Do you consider yourself a good listener? Why/why not?
  - When do you have the greatest difficulty listening?
  - When do you have the least difficulty listening?
- Why would you want to improve your listening?
  - When do you consider it important to listen?
  - In what ways could you improve your listening?

Poor Listening Habits

- Pseudo-listening
- Stage-hogging
- Selective listening
- Insulated listening
- Defensive listening
- Ambushing
- Insensitive listening
Improving Listening Skills

- Prepare to listen
- Control or eliminate distractions
- Create a need to listen
- Monitor the way you listen
- React to the message, not just the speaker
- Use confirming behaviors

Keys to Interpersonal Effectiveness

- Know yourself
- Be aware of the impression you leave on others
- Be interested in what others have to say
- Keep in mind the norm of reciprocity
- Keep an open mind (don’t rely on stereotypes)
- Ask questions, paraphrase
Any Questions?

Mabalo!