



MRFA PD Lunch and Learn Series 2024 - 2025

Creating a Culture of Respect: Having Difficult Conversations

Leda Stawnychko, Assistant Professor in General Management and Human Resources

Summary and Key Takeaways:

This session highlighted strategies for fostering inclusive, supportive academic environments with a focus on navigating challenging interactions. Key themes included the importance of building mutual understanding, respecting individual dignity, and addressing issues candidly. The session emphasized that effective leadership succession planning—spanning roles from academic director to chair to president—requires cultivating individual self-awareness, accessing mentorship opportunities, and tapping into professional networks. A key takeaway was the prevalence of workplace incivility, which impacts individual, unit, and institutional performance and acts as a barrier to effective leadership development and succession planning.

Key Strategies for Faculty Navigating Difficult Conversations:

- **Set the Stage:** Mindfully select an appropriate setting to foster openness.
- **Express Feelings:** Speak candidly, managing power dynamics and using “I” statements.
- **Describe the Impact:** Clearly articulate how the behaviour(s) impact you or your unit.
- **Request a Change:** Ask for specific adjustments and reinforce the importance of the request.
- **Invite Dialogue:** Encourage responses, questions, and feedback to build mutual understanding.
- **Use an Ethical Apology:** We all make mistakes. Apologize freely and ethically, acknowledging the impact, expressing genuine remorse, engaging in reparations, and committing to change.