

FACULTY TIPSHEET

Inclusive Meetings

Shared leadership is a mutual responsibility. We are leaders in our classroom, labs, centers, and departments. Leaders often run and participate in meetings. We have all been in meetings where someone monopolizes the discussion, someone is brusque and argumentative, or someone has great ideas but does not speak up. Facilitating and managing inclusive meetings takes skill and practice. Here are some tips for promoting inclusivity in meetings.

- 1. Understand relationships.** Meetings are likely to run more smoothly if you understand the relationships between people in the room. Who gets along? Who does not get along? Are there long-standing hurt feelings? Taking time to understand and nurture relationships is important. If you take time to get to know people in your unit, then they will feel more included and motivated to participate. One suggestion is to take the time to get to know people in your unit one-on-one. It will be time well spent, especially when difficult situations arise. You will have invested in the relationship, which will give you a problem-solving foundation when difficult issues arise (which they will!). Moreover, by investing in relationships, you are communicating that every perspective matters and has value.
- 2. Create collective ownership.** Each unit on campus – whether it is a classroom, laboratory, center, or department – comprises a group of people. Be mindful of displays of power and status that can undermine open communication. Creating a sense of shared ownership for the success of the unit is critical for setting the conditions for inclusive meetings. Collective ownership means that everyone feels included. The common phrase “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” applies here. Units are stronger when the priority is on the unit, not on an individual person.
- 3. Be consistent.** When you are leading a meeting, create an agenda and follow it. Take notes in meetings and have a consistent system for disseminating them. Meetings are opportunities for open communication. Consistent meeting times allow people to plan and organize their time. Taking minutes and disseminating them helps with open communication.
- 4. Know when and how to confront.** There are times when people are simply rude. We all need to know how and when to confront people about their behaviors, whether in the moment or at another time after the meeting. Communicating clearly and candidly is important. Ignoring rude and disrespectful behavior communicates that the behavior is okay. Each situation will be different; however, a good rule is that the sooner you confront problematic behavior, the better.
- 5. Facilitate open and honest conversation.** There are times when difficult topics arise. Try to keep the conversation focused on ideas, not egos. Be honest and direct in your communication and listen with intention.
- 6. Agree to disagree.** Safe and civil discourse means we treat all ideas and suggestions as having merit. There will be many times in unit meetings where people will disagree and that is fine. Whether you are leading a meeting or participating in one, you can help facilitative inclusive meetings by subscribing to the tenet “we can agree to disagree.”

RESOURCE

- *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott [radicalcandor.com/the-book](https://www.radicalcandor.com/the-book)