

New U, June 4, 2005
Case Study: Balancing Loyalties
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Instructions: Divide participants into groups of 4. One member of each group gets each of the 4 different scenarios. Members read their own scenarios to their group and the group discusses the problems posed by that point of view. After all groups run through all points of view,

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1 **You are the President of MacKinlay College Student Union:** Through the year

you have had a good relationship with the Dean of Arts & Science, finding her usually receptive to your enquiries, as long as proper process is followed. You are friends with the President of the Pearson College Council (another college in the Faculty of Arts & Science). You have heard that they are having continuous trouble with maintenance in their residence, and their complaints are not being dealt with promptly. They are planning to disrupt a meeting of the Arts & Science Faculty Council with demands for a resolution. You believe they haven't followed the best process, having never met with their residence manager about the most recent problems, and having sent a list of demands directly to the Dean. The Dean directed them back to the residence manager for an initial response. The students were not satisfied and are claiming that "the University" won't listen to them.

Problems to discuss:

- Do you warn the Dean of the impending disruption and break solidarity your fellow students?
- Do you let the disruption happen as is "isn't your problem"; the Dean can deal with it herself?
- Do you try to intervene and advise your friends that they really should seek the advice of the appropriate staff person and risk offending them?
- If the Dean asks you if you know anything about this – what do you say?

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2 **You are the President of Pearson College Student Union:** Your members have been complaining for weeks of a moldy smell in the main residence building. You decide to write directly to the Dean of Arts & Science. The Dean writes back, requesting you to speak first with the residence manager. You know that the residence manager is probably the most appropriate person to contact, but you find him unhelpful and condescending. He often says he “doesn’t have the budget” for your requests and calls them frivolous. You decide that you can’t do as the Dean has asked, and you are going to disrupt the Faculty Council meeting in protest. You know your friend, the President of MacKinlay College Union (another college in the Faculty of Arts & Science) will not approve of this method. But addressing the problems of your members quickly is your first priority. You contact the campus press to complain that the University doesn’t listen to students.

Problems to discuss:

Your friend has advised you several times to either work things out with the residence manager or tell the Dean about the difficulties of working with the residence manager.

- Do you take this advice or will complaining to the Dean about residence staff only offend the Dean and further alienate you from the residence manager?
- You wonder whether your friend at MacKinlay will warn the Dean of your planned protest – do you consider this a break of student solidarity or just a difference of opinion?

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3 **You are the Dean of Arts & Science:** You have had a good working relationship with the President of the MacKinlay College Union for the first half of the year. You have recently received a complaint from the President of the Pearson College Union about the conditions in their main residence. After consulting with the residence manager, you find out that the students have not yet spoken to residence staff about the problems. So, you direct the students back to the residence manager for first response.

You see in the campus paper that the students were not satisfied with this response and that “the University” won’t listen to them. You are very frustrated with this, as you feel the proper procedure for dealing with complaints must be followed; you are happy to listen, but you don’t have time to hear everything!

Problems to discuss:

- Do you call the President of MacKinlay College and ask them to talk to the students at Pearson?
- Is it possible that the problem lies with the residence manager’s approachability and respect for students? If so, how do you deal with this without offending your staff?
- When the campus press calls, do you do damage control and offer the Pearson students a meeting (alienating your staff), do you stand your ground and risk escalating the situation, or do you put the President of MacKinlay on the spot and ask them to vouch for your “open door policy”?

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4 **You are the Residence Manager for Pearson College.** Your budget is really tight and you know that the building is not an ideal place to live. However, it's not your fault, and you are sick of students blaming you. The current College Union President has been asking for repairs and improvements that you consider frivolous, such as putting a new big screen television in the lounge. You often have to decline her requests. Each time you do, she acts very angry and accuses you of not caring about students.

The Dean recently telephoned to ask if you had heard about a mold problem in the building. You replied that you hadn't, and the Dean said the College Union President had written her about it. The Dean said that she would refer the Union back to you to deal with the problem. You see in the campus press that the College Union president is complaining that the University doesn't listen, yet you still haven't heard anything.

Problems to address:

- Could the relationship with the College Union President be better handled? Has your method been effective?
- What do you think the College Union knows about your budget? Are you really listening to student concerns when you arbitrarily decide what is a frivolous request?
- Could you allocate a set amount for Union requests?
- Do you contact the Dean to explain your situation (potentially looking ineffective) or do you swallow your pride and contact the Course Union President to ask for a meeting?