

The Conflict Report

Conflict Fluency for UVic Employees

- Phase I Findings
- Phase II Recommendations
- End-note: Emerging Considerations

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BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2021, HR added a Conflict Competency project to our service plan with the intention of creating a systemic approach to how conflict is addressed at UVic. HR allotted carryforward dollars and assigned an OD Consultant to scope the project in 2021/22 and develop deliverables in 2022/23. Phase I and existing conflict resources were outlined in a Briefing note and involved consulting internally and externally to define the scope and outcomes of the project, reviewing some literature and training around the topic of conflict competence, and seeking subject matter expertise and advice from similar organizations on best practice in the fields of conflict leadership, conflict capacity, and dispute resolution.

Between January and June of 2022 both formal and informal interviews were conducted with key campus stakeholders to determine how workplace conflict is manifesting on campus and to explore what potential deliverables would most service the development of conflict competence in the workplace. Representatives from Human Resources, Equity and Human Rights, Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement, Faculty Relations, Office of the General Counsel, Campus Security, Privacy and Access to Information Office, Internal Audit, University Secretary, University Marketing + Communications, Office of Student Life, Counselling Services, Co-op & Career International, Indigenous and Strategic Initiatives, and the Ombudsperson were all consulted formally using an interview template. The following themes, recommendations and a draft framework were generated as a result.

We acknowledge this conflict work is being done in an overlapping context of organizational conversations regarding equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and antiracism, several aspects of which are woven throughout the following themes and recommendations. These findings were developed before the Equity Action Report was made public

PHASE I THEMES

THE COST OF UNPRODUCTIVE CONFLICT ON CAMPUS

While decentralized (and therefore not aggregated) the impact of unproductive, unaddressed, unresolved or unskilled conflict at UVic is high and often quantifiable. These costs closely align with the cost of conflict escalation categories in [UBC's Conflict Engagement Initiative](#).

- I. **Money:** Fees for legal, mediation, investigation, wellness and cultural support; Salaries and honorariums for those involved in the conflict (which when they escalate to the executive levels can often be the highest paid in the university); While not always directly linked, numbers pertaining to EFAP access, sick leave and LTD benefits, and general costs of turnover indicate delaying or mishandling conflict is costly.

- II. **Time:** Employee and organizational time as demonstrated in report numbers from grievances, mediations, investigations, policy and Ombudsperson complaints; and time lost in repeated conversations to explain policy, authority and process.
- III. **Wellbeing:** The impact of stalled conflict on individuals, leaders, teams and organizational culture is substantial and is often detrimental to employee's mental and physical health. Prolonged conflict avoidance depletes our individual and collective resilience as it is moving through conflict that builds accountability and resilience.
- IV. **Reputation:** How UVic is represented to the public through social and traditional media as well as word of mouth is greatly impacted by how conflict is (mis/)handled and has direct connections to our domestic and international reputation and ability to recruit and retain students and employees as well as develop partnerships.
- V. **Opportunity Costs:** If conflict is embraced and handled well it frees up our ability to be more proactive and strategic, to provide better service, experience less burnout and more clarity. Strong conflict engagement skills allow us to have the difficult conversations we need to advance our goals in areas such as sustainability and antiracism as well as increase our risk tolerance in research and innovation spheres.

Bottom Line: It is in UVic's best interest to increase our conflict competence at all levels of the organization.

TYPES OF CONFLICT

While there is a wide range of how workplace and interpersonal conflict manifests at UVic, the following categories emerged:

- I. **INTERPERSONAL Conflicts: (*Most common)** Arise between individuals for a variety of reasons involving misunderstanding, personality, communication, cultural differences, values clashes policy breaches and human rights violations. Common traits of these instances involve conflict escalating because it is not addressed early.
- II. **Structural Conflicts:** Arise between units or individuals due to a lack of understanding of how things are supposed to work including scope of authority, policy specifics, and other procedural issues. This may go as far as non-compliance, but is rarely malicious and usually arises from misunderstanding or a lack of awareness of shared goals, unclear service standards, a lack of communication, or gaps in turnover and cross-training.
- III. **POWER Conflicts:** Arise between power structures (leaders/unions, supervisor/employee, staff/faculty, UVic/community, faculty/students, tenure/untentured, jr/sr faculty etc.) and/or between individuals using power-over dynamics to achieve outcomes (including racism, ableism, transphobia, sexualized violence and other forms of marginalization and discrimination). Both the retributive* nature of our systems and processes and a lack of EDI informed practice increases adversarial behaviour and entrenches positionality and change resistance.

- IV. **NECESSARY Conflicts:** While it is easy to problematize conflict, healthy, functional conflict is an important part of our strategic goals, and interviewees agreed that dialogue, difference and debate are still part of a way forward. Positive case studies of UVic learning from its conflict past were cited in our community engagement and communications strategies around things like tree-felling, building consultations, and the hosting of sacred fire.

**retributive is the word used in the literature from restorative justice and transformational culture practices to encompass a rule-focused approach (laws, policies, procedures, formal agreements) where discovering and applying consequences to non-adherence are centred.*

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

I. Conflict Avoidance and Risk Aversion: The Downside of our Collegial Culture

UVic was described several times as being a conflict avoidant organization. While avoidance can sometimes be useful, UVic employees tend to over-rely on this tactic in ways that are unproductive and destructive often leaving conflict unaddressed until it reaches a critical mass that requires large scale and costly intervention. The presence of fear and an absence of skill are part of this, but the larger theme that emerged was the unintended consequences of our collegial culture (often cited as an amazing strength). This example of “too much of a good thing,” creates a false binary that pits maintaining relationship against engaging meaningfully in conflict. This results in:

- Ignoring conflict in its early stages out of fear of damaging relationships; expressing agreement without agreeing for real; accommodating rather than addressing concerns.
- An emphasis on pre-empting and avoiding risk, disruption, grievance or litigation rather than on skilled responsiveness, courageous leadership, bold innovation, and engaging in necessary difficult conversations; Attempting to precipitate future behaviour rather than responding to actual behaviour; Dishonest conversations.
- Privileging “niceness” and being caring to the point of perceiving direct and accurate communication as harsh, or failing to respectfully challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- Over-relying on professional relationships to the detriment of clear process such as: Perpetuating poor operational patterns by not enforcing policy or clarifying expectations; Duplicating effort and expense to appease those who are non-compliant; Blaming the people/offices who administer processes when the complaint is with the process itself.
- Emphasising relationships to the points of: delaying new community members’ ability to be productive until they have made the right relationships, implying that colleagues must be friends in order to work together respectfully, or assuming that a lack of social connection is the same as an adversarial relationship (i.e. if you’re not with me you’re against me).
- Not coming forward about conflict that involves someone who is marginalized or struggling with mental health concerns for fear the complaint will add to prior trauma or will be perceived as bias.

- A lack of role clarity in decision making that leads to over consulting or not consulting in meaningful ways by defaulting to doing things for political gain or requesting opinions without allowing them to impact the outcome.

II. Inconsistent Processes Leading to Lack of Trust

Addressing conflict at UVic is dependant on individual, leader and unit approaches where advice and direction depends on who is consulted and what behaviour is being modelled. At its best this leads to stellar customized conflict solutions. But at its worst, those seeking conflict support may receive varying and even competing advice for how to address matters and different individuals/leaders may be held to different levels of accountability. This confusion leads to:

- Decreased trust between and amongst employees, leaders, support offices as well as a general lack of faith in process or the organization at large.
- Conflict escalating to the point that solutions lie almost exclusively in a retributive, investigatory, and/or legal domain, which often causes individual and relational damage and almost always leads to dissatisfaction (an example of when our collegiality is not actually kindness).
- Overreliance on formal process as a way of being taken “more seriously.”
- Fear of engaging conflict as the perception is that to do so means “going big” which enhances the fears and/or risk of retribution, increased discipline, and more bullying.
- Increased politicking and back channeling.
- Being entrenched in a win/lose mindset regarding conflict resolution.
- Misunderstanding around when and with whom consultation is appropriate.
- Increased workload on support offices to triage/address conflict that could be addressed at the leadership or individual level

III. The Challenges with Confidentiality

A key challenge that emerged across various methods of addressing conflict is the matter of how to manage confidentiality, disclosure and transparency such as when...

- Confidentiality is perceived as (or is in actuality) a protection of wrong-doing
- Confidentiality applies more to the outcomes of a process than the process itself (everyone knows I’m under investigation, but nobody knows the results) or as one interviewee said, *“we often keep the solution a far better secret than we keep the problem.”*
- Confidentiality is used as an excuse to not be transparent, vulnerable, or communicate.
- Participants are left wondering what the point of going through a process if they can’t be informed of the outcome.
- Bystanders/witnesses/impacted parties are left confused, hurt, and mistrustful.

All of these factors limit motivation for engaging in conflict resolution, and highlight the need for greater transparency, resolution and closure.

IV. Narrative Based Decisions

Several interviewees discussed conflicts that arise from a tendency for members of UVic to behave in ways that don't acknowledge current realities. These fell into 3 broader categories

- i. Phantom Conflict: (over privileging past bad impressions) Assuming things are worse than they are or that historical problems at the organization still persist despite evidence to the contrary (Ghosts of UVic Past). This is often inherited conflict that involves broad brushing units/teams/systems based on previous interactions without taking subsequent corrective experience into account. This can lead to operationalizing conflict between units. A close cousin of this is Anticipatory Conflict which is assuming conflict will happen and pre-empting it, rather than dealing with the consequences.
- ii. Good Ol' Days Nostalgia: (overvaluing past good impressions) Clinging to old concepts, processes, and ideas that are problematic, no longer viable or aren't achieving their intended impact in our current context. This involves ways of managing and decision making that may be based on stories that are no longer true or that are inappropriate in our EDI context. This can lead to discord between long service employees who hold historical knowledge and new community members who may bring new ideas and best practices from their profession and other fields.
- iii. Aspiration/Reality Disconnect: UVic community members often espouse to ways of being without practically implementing steps to achieve desired outcomes. This makes efforts that are intended to be transformative seem performative, frustrating early adopters, and leaving late adopters without the resources to catch up. Especially when it comes to initiatives around sustainability, decolonization, and embedding EDI practice, we can be guilty of talking a talk we may not be ready or equipped to walk yet. Similarly, aspirational service standards and expectations that don't account for the current labour shortage context, can leave clients frustrated and service providers feeling like failures.

V. Lack of /Perceived Lack of Skills

The most commonly cited contributing factor in unhealthy conflict was a lack of skills or a perceived lack of skill at the individual level, leadership level or both. **The most common and foundational skill gap cited were allowing fear or a lack of courage to prevent action or failing to address conflict at its early stages.** Other gaps can be linked to a lack of knowledge regarding communication, personality, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, understanding of privilege and power dynamics, and effective management and leadership strategies. It is important to note that all of the skills (or lack thereof) in individuals are amplified in leadership positions.

How this can show up in individuals:

- Inability to distinguish between safety and comfort
- Inability to distinguish between personal preference and workplace expectations

- Inability to separate people from behaviours
- Overreliance on formal processes/roles to manage personal problems
- Perceiving conflict as inherently bad (instead of something to move through)
- Inability to distinguish misunderstanding from matters involving: abuse, violence, bullying, discrimination, harassment, racism, and mental health.
- Ineffectively or disrespectfully communicating a difference of opinion
- Engaging in lateral violence: talking badly about colleagues, gossiping, gaslighting, minimizing background, etc.
- Use of Power-over: Racism, ableism, transphobia, sexualized violence
- Lacking self-awareness including in matters of both white and male fragility

How this can show up in leadership:

- Abdicating their role in conflict management; unnecessarily deferring to support offices (not seeing it as “my job”)
- Not knowing or misunderstanding their management rights
- Overreliance on the conflict talents of a particular leader rather than a predictable process (vulnerable to challenges of turnover and inconsistency)
- Overestimating their skill and not asking for help when they need it
- Neglecting good change management
- Behaving as a peer when in a supervisory or leadership role
- Attaching conflict to ego or organizational politics: behaving defensively, not acknowledging problem patterns, fearing reputational damage, waiting for leadership succession to deal with problems
- Not making time to address conflict appropriately
- Settling for a false sense of peace

Skill deficits or inconsistencies among support offices (HUMR, EQHR, FRAA, IACE, GENC, etc.) were also cited and may manifest as:

- Owning the problem; doing the leader’s job for them
- Taking on work beyond scope of skill and/or authority; referring to other offices inappropriately (not referring when necessary, referring when not necessary)
- Focusing on avoiding litigation to the point of not doing necessary problem solving
- Overconfidence in and overreliance on individual skillsets/ not knowing when to shift approach or ask for help.
- Providing advice that seems to conflict with other advice given.

PHASE II

A VISION FOR UVIC’S CONFLICT FUTURE:

Our UVic community is filled with passionate, skilled, kind hearted people looking to contribute their best to our organization, community and the world. When we do conflict engagement well our organization increases our capacity to achieve our strategic goals around [Truth, Respect & Reconciliation, Healthy People & Planet, Innovation in All That We Do, and Partnering for Positive Change](#) (draft strategic plan language from Sept 2022).

The declared aspirational dream for this project is that, *when faced with a workplace conflict, all UVic employees will have a similar understanding of and ability to articulate and action the appropriate and helpful next steps for which they will be held accountable.* Doing so will require different levels of accountability for different roles within the organization but will involve buy-in at all levels to shift some of our existing conflict management practices and culture, as we are our own biggest risk to achieving conflict fluency. The ultimate goal is to build capacity and competency so that all UVic employees see conflict engagement as part of their job.

Phase II of this project aims to finalize a principle-based framework and associated resources that can move our conversations and practices forward towards this goal.

PROJECT PLANNING

SCOPE

This project has been scoped according to an umbrella term of “workplace conflict.” We acknowledge there is both overlap and distinction between conflict and misconduct, which we will distinguish in our framework definitions. There is strong appetite for the outcomes of this project to apply to both staff and faculty which will require continued partnership and support amongst HUMR, FRAA, EQHR, IACE, GENC and beyond. As a consistent approach and the needs for skills modelled by leadership were dominant themes, having the support of the Executive will also be important. While the project is being informed by, may naturally align with existing approaches towards, and will inevitably impact student perspectives through our employees, students are not presently the audience for project deliverables.

Embedding conflict competence into UVic’s systems requires participation, training, and agreement in 4 domains: Executive, Conflict Support Offices, Supervisors and Leaders, and Individuals.

PHASE 2 BUDGET

\$21660 from HR Carryforward

- \$12000 for OD Consultant Time
- \$9660 for resource development

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Sponsor: Kane Kilbey; Liaison: Sarah Hood

Lead: Karissa Sovdi

Project Manager: Sarah Howe

Advisory Group: Representatives from HUMR Consulting, FRAA, EQHR, IACE, OSL, GENC.

TIMELINE (Revised): September 1 2022 – Summer 2023 (Phase III to begin Fall 2023)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ALIGN EXISTING SYSTEMS FOR CONSISTENCY IN CONFLICT RESPONSE

Key Deliverable: Finalize a set of conflict principles (which address Phase 1 themes) to guide leaders, individuals, and support offices in a consistent approach to conflict engagement and accountability.

While we may need more bench strength in responding to conflict specific themes, the big picture solution to UVic's conflict challenges doesn't seem to lie in creating a new silo of campus activity around conflict. In fact, centralizing triage would in many ways undermine the intention of creating conflict competence at all levels of the organization. Recognizing each conflict scenario has unique factors, the consistency in approach can instead be found in key roles/offices holding themselves and each other accountable to shared principles. The goal is that no matter where you go to have conflict addressed on campus, similar steps and messaging are shared.

The draft framework includes sample principles and a Conflict Pathway in response to Phase I and will require consultation with key stakeholders to provide language and meaningful commitment to the concepts and implementation plans for all employees. These principles **PRIORITIZE CONFLICT ACCOUNTABILITY AT ALL LEVELS.** Other deliverables include finalizing the framework and resources itself, but agreement on the principles will be the driving force.

2. EMBED CONFLICT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INTO OUR DAILY PRACTICE

To empower UVic employees to take responsibility for their role in healthy conflict engagement, requires both skills development resources and accountability structures that require people to use those skills and decrease overreliance on formal systems. Conflict competence requires a both-and engagement approach between top-down, leader-modelled and bottom-up, individual-responsibility. Allowing poor conflict behaviour at the individual contributor level means conflict both escalates and is perpetuated when those employees promote within the organization. Conversely, modelling and requiring good conflict practice is a necessity of existing leadership. While we look to conflict support offices to help, if those in consulting roles take on the responsibility of solving conflict issues that could be resolved by individuals or leaders involved we enable the continuance of poor conflict practice. To shift our conflict approach requires us to educate the individuals and the system itself so that we **MAKE CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT EVERYONE'S JOB.**

This type of shift is more than possible as our UVic community has seen prior success with similar large scale cultural change through campus-wide initiatives such as the Student Mental Health Initiative, Sexualized Violence and Prevention policy (consent culture), and our ongoing efforts around Indigenous and Cultural Acumen Training. UVic already has many resources, tools, and learning opportunities to support employees in enhancing their conflict skills and is already focusing on shifts that will improve conflict skills through other initiatives (eg. The Equity Action Plan). While some development of our options is required, much of the work is to revisit and repackage existing supports with a lens to increase conflict competence.

Deliverables:

- Incorporate conflict fluency into the next iteration of UVic's Competency Model
- Develop an implementation plan to ensure the conflict principles are shared and socialized widely amongst support offices, executive and leadership. Plans should ensure each support person has the skills and supports required to honour the principles. Each support unit will determine (and fund) the resources, training and support required for their own environment
- Include options for practical and self-serve resources as part of the conflict framework
- Enhance Employee Learning Opportunities:
 - Create a conflict fluency learning series by assessing the learning outcomes of existing employee learning opportunities to trace a conflict fluency pathway of skills throughout (a draft pathway is part of the framework). Ensure this includes learning opportunities for all levels (Leaders, Individuals, and Supports).
 - Embed the completed conflict framework and principles into existing training opportunities
 - Provide access to on-demand conflict resources for basic skills to allow for responsibility taking and skills development at any time

- Redesign the L4E Navigating Conflict as a UVic Leader content to encompass UVic’s framework and principles (Leading for Conflict Competency).
- Update Conflict Coaching course and offer to all current and new support office hires
- Realign the Learning Program to include Cultural Intelligence as a core course instead of as an elective
- Early learning will also involve an emphasis on UVic’s principles, processes and resources, but this may only be necessary as a way of communicating and socializing project outcomes.

3. ENHANCE INFORMAL RESOLUTION OPTIONS

Aligning our conflict system (recommendation 1) and conflict skills (recommendation 2) will allow us to fill in the gaps of conflict response. In exploring UVic’s approach to conflict, it is evident that there is an overreliance on formal processes to address conflict, or, more specifically, that processes designed to deal with misconduct are often applied to other conflicts. Ideally our systems and practices would shift to a more restorative or dialogic process on the whole (such as that defined in David Liddle’s [Transformational Culture](#)) rather than maintaining retributive processes. While that level of large scale organizational change is beyond the immediate scope of this project, the conditions needed for change and the consistent and continual application of the resulting conflict framework are likely to yield an organizational shift over time. An immediate focus is to **increase ways of addressing conflict that treat it seriously, even when it is not being treated formally**. This is less about requiring more of our support offices and is ultimately about holding each area of the organization to account for dealing directly with conflict before escalating. In other words, to **SHIFT FROM MAINTAINING DEPENDENCE TO FACILITATING COMPETENCE**.

While the urge may be to simply add more personnel to manage conflict at the support-office level and provide these informal approaches, Conflict has a relentless, insatiable appetite with a proven track record of absorbing the resources that are added to address it. We are far better off commissioning and offering resources to all leaders and individuals to take active roles in doing the work of intervening and third-party witnessing.

This may be the key recommendation from this project, as failure to reduce dependence will undermine all of our efforts at principles, education and skills development and in many ways is our biggest risk to becoming a conflict competent organization. This will sometimes require well meaning, kind and caring support offices to say “no” to doing the helping directly and instead providing resources for leaders to help themselves.

The deliverables for this recommendation are included in recommendations 1 and 2, but the above mindset of applying those deliverables is what will enact meaningful change.

4. INCREASE CROSS-PORTFOLIO ORIENTATION

A proactive step in specifically preventing the Structural Conflicts identified in Phase I is for the organization to revisit its service standards for internal partners. This requires unit leaders to take responsibility for explaining their unit's role in the organization and for individuals to take responsibility for learning about other roles and processes on campus. As one interviewee said, "the more we realize we ultimately share the same goals as an organization, the less conflict we encounter when it comes to process."

We need to be in a mindset of perpetual orientation where we **CONTINUALLY LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER**. This includes behaviours like maintaining web content, clarifying service responsibility, enacting policy, engaging in good change management and communication, offering relevant learning sessions, hosting meet the teams and open houses, and creating space for drop-in hours. It also requires individuals and leaders to replace disparaging of other leaders and units with curiosity.

This recommendation is strongly in alignment with the new Strategic Plan theme of Partnering for Positive Change and many of these tasks may fall to the purview of that tag team, but many are about reminding executive leaders about good and frequent communication practices.

HR already provides or is developing many initiatives that service this goal:

- Reinstating a bi-annual "Info Fair" for employee units to provide show-and-tell style information to internal clients.
- Designing and developing a "Design Great Service" course in our Learning Program, for unit leaders to learn how to assess needs set standards and communicate scope and authority.
- Designing and developing a "Navigate UVic" course in our Learning Program, for employees to learn about UVic's context, governance, structure, operations, and strategy.
- Continuing (and increasing where possible) cross-organizational learning opportunities for academic and administrative leaders: Leading for Engagement, Daring to Lead, Academic/Admin Retreats, Orientation events
- Hosting annual Welcome activities
- Continuing with informal opportunities for recognition and gathering (such as You're the Best Fes) created by the Recognition Oversight and Coordination Committee).
- Continuing onboarding units onto Learning Central to offer centralized access to learning.
- Maintaining an Orientation Toolkit for units to bring in new community members.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this report with:
 - a. HR Leadership Team
 - b. Prior Interviewees
 - c. Director, President's Office

- d. Representatives from Strategic Planning Tag Team 4
2. Convene a temporary advisory group (HUMR, FRAA, EQHR, IACE, OSL, GENC) regarding the framework including principles, pathway and implementation.
3. Complete a draft conflict framework and resources and contract UC+M for toolkit design
4. Develop a Conflict Literacy Learning Series including additional courses and resources
5. Identify Phase III next steps around implementation and communication

CONCLUSION

Through reviewing conflict literature and interviewing various components of UVic’s conflict management system, it is apparent that some of our organization’s biggest strengths—namely our relational culture, our decentralized management structure, and the diversity of our skillsets—can also be our biggest liabilities when it comes to conflict competence. To address our conflict avoidant culture requires us to make some shifts at the individual, leadership, and support levels of the organization that prioritize accountability, skill development and community orientation.

By convening support offices to finalize the development of a principle-based framework for responding to workplace conflict, and further embedding conflict skills and resources into our learning and development opportunities for leaders and staff we can begin the work of bringing conflict clarity to all UVic employees.

END NOTE – UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2023

In circulating the above findings and continuing to consult internally and externally on the topic of conflict resolution, the following considerations have emerged.

Accountability: Several reviewers have commented that a true culture change for UVic needs to be both bottom up and top down. While the emphasis of resources and training is for individuals and leaders to manage conflict directly (bottom up), this will be undermined if senior leaders don’t engage with and model similar behaviours (top down). Furthermore, a lack of leadership engagement with the principles could convey a message of holding individuals responsible for structural problems. It may also need to be articulated that shining a light on conflict response may create the illusion of more conflict, and a “back log” of long-standing conflict may take time to address. The culture change will need to eventually be codified into other practices, policies and procedures to have lasting impact.

Academic Interest: A high degree of interest in applying the tenants of this project to a faculty audience have been expressed among reviewers. Representatives of FRAA have been consulted at each phase of the project and may choose to expand the existing scope of the project to include faculty leaders. Phase II consulting with various community members about the academic perspective of conflict revealed the following faculty-specific considerations that could amend the original report above if needed.

Costs (Conflict Report P. 3/4) Among the financial and wellbeing costs of unresolved conflict articulated in the report, a specific mention of the cost of recurring chair turnover was identified.

Types (Conflict Report P. 4) Whereas the project identified “structural conflict” as a misunderstanding of how things work at the organization, for academic staff it may more be a matter of questioning how things *ought* to work.

Contributing Factors (Conflict Report P. 5+) Additional contributing factors are to be considered for academics in conflict.

- Conflict and competition are embedded into many academic discussions about things such as tenure, allocation of resources, teaching load, and intellectual property.
- Faculty members tend to have an entrepreneurial or contractor mindset when considering the university as an employer and may be less likely to consider their role in contributing to a workplace culture. Furthermore different employment standards for staff and faculty working in the same areas can create conflict among faculty and staff (eg. vacation policy).

Resources (Online Toolkit) While the conflict toolkit may help many faculty navigate difficult conversations with colleagues, some specific resources could help the “consider” and “discuss” steps to resonate more deeply.

- How to facilitate difficult conversations with/among academics
- How to navigate difficult conversations with students
- The role of an academic chair: a resource outlining the expectations, challenges, limitations, motivations, incentives, and benefits and responsibilities of a chair

Training (Learning series) A demand for conflict skills training was identified at a level that is beyond the employee learning program’s current scope. Specific components that could be useful include:

- Interest based training that goes beyond a check box to cover a legal liability or deniability
- Higher Ed 101/UVic primer for new faculty and staff
- Peer mentoring groups

** Should VPAC choose to adapt the conflict learning series for faculty, additional Phase III funds will be required.*

Strategic Resonance: Since consultation occurred in a similar timeframe as the information gathering for UVic’s Equity Action Plan, Strategic Plan, and pending Indigenous Plan, the Conflict Project recommendations align well with several strategic recommendations and with a general call for increased accountability, leadership, and ability to dialogue across difference. Phase III implementation may also support UVic’s response to the Ombudsperson British Columbia Post-Secondary Institutions at a Glance 2023 recommendations and the 2024 implementation of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (2019). In reviewing publicly available conflict resolution processes at other Canadian Post Secondary schools, UVic’s conflict approach seems to be on the leading edge of the field.