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Houston, TX

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# Meeting in the Middle: Strategies for Successful Union-Administration Collaboration

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### Recommended Citation

Haik, Kristi and Zimmer, Mary Elizabeth (2019). "Meeting in the Middle: Strategies for Successful Union-Administration Collaboration," *Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings*.

<https://newprairiepress.org/accp/2019/issues/7>

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- 1) Presentation Title: Meeting in the Middle: Strategies for Successful Union-Administration Collaboration
- 2) Presenter Information-Primary presenter CV/resume or biographical sketch:

Kristi L. Haik

Kristi Haik holds a Ph.D. in Applied Experimental Psychology with a Neuroscience Concentration from Central Michigan University. In 2005, she became a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Northern Kentucky University where she became Professor and Chair of the Department. In July 2016, she became Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Ferris State University. She has presented invited talks and research on over 100 different occasions including national and international events such as the Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting and the American Society for Neural Therapy and Repair. She is author of several peer reviewed journal articles in *Experimental Neurology*, *Journal of Nanomaterials*, *Journal of Neuroscience Methods*, and *The Department Chair* as well as book chapters. She has also received over 6.8 million dollars in grant funding from agencies including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

M. Beth Zimmer

M. Beth Zimmer is Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Ferris State University. Prior to that, she moved up the ranks from Assistant, to Associate to Full Professor and served as Assistant Chair. She actively engages undergraduate students in research and examines the effect of spinal cord injury on behavior. M. Beth Zimmer earned her BS in Zoology and a MS in Animal Health and Biomedical Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her PhD at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver BC. She completed a postdoctoral position at the School of Medicine at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI.

- 3) Disciplines: Education; Educational Leadership; Higher Education Administration
- 4) Presentation Theme: issues and trends in higher education
- 5) Presentation Type: Interactive Workshop (105 minutes)
- 6) Abstract: Presenters and participants will discuss best practices and develop strategies to create a collaborative working environment within a higher education-union culture.
- 7) Keywords: Union, collective bargaining, faculty, staff, clerical, university culture, relationship building

8) Presentation Documents: Description of the Session (300-500 words)

Data from the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions indicate that 31 states (and the District of Columbia) have faculty and student employee unions in public and private sector higher education.<sup>1</sup> Ferris State University (Ferris) has eight (8) bargaining units, including clerical technical (CT), tenured/tenure-track faculty (FFA), and nontenure-track faculty (FNTFO). These three collective bargaining units are the three that have members in the FSU academic colleges.

Faculty unions have a myriad of structures that affect department chairs and can be difficult to navigate. For example, at Ferris State University (Ferris), department heads were administrative leaders of academic departments until 2013. The department head was 100% administrative and not a member of the union. In 2013, tenured/tenure-track faculty in most colleges voted to eliminate the department head position, opting for department chairs to lead academic departments. The outcome was that as department heads resigned/stepped down, they would be replaced with department chairs. These new department chairs perform in an administrative role (the same tasks as department head) for 75% of their time and teach for 25%. Because of the 25% teaching, they are considered FFA union members. In this situation, Chairs find themselves as colleague and supervisor, dependent on their dean for a variety of issues (e.g., personnel).

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that unions cannot charge fees to non-members for collective bargaining gains.<sup>2</sup> While this ruling has the potential to negatively impact union finances and membership, there is still a strong culture within some union environments that may prevail in light of this ruling. Academia is a good example. With the significant increases in nontenured faculty (and subsequent decreases in tenure-track faculty), across the country, there has been an increase in the number of unions for these faculty.<sup>3</sup> Others report that increasing union membership is in response to “increasing politicization of higher education administration.”<sup>4</sup> It is likely that these trends will continue in academia even with the recent Supreme Court ruling.

In this workshop, we will help department chairs develop strategies to collaborate with union leadership and members. Participants and workshop leaders will discuss (1) the latest research and trends on collective bargaining in higher education; (2) real-world case studies of collaboration between unions and administrators, including the role of the department chair; and (3) strategies to address specific issues identified by workshop participants.

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert, William (Executive Director). 2018. National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, personal communication.

<sup>2</sup>Liptak, A. (June 27, 2018). Supreme Court Ruling Delivers a Sharp Blow to Labor Unions. *New York Times*, online. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/us/politics/supreme-court-unions-organized-labor.html>

<sup>3</sup>Botelho, S. (Feb 2, 2015). Living with unions in higher education. *University Business*, online. <https://www.universitybusiness.com/article/living-unions-higher-education>

<sup>4</sup>Bakeman, J. (Jan 9, 2017). Faculty union grows as professors fear conservative policies. *Politico*, online. <https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2017/01/faculty-union-grows-as-professors-fear-conservative-policies-108547>